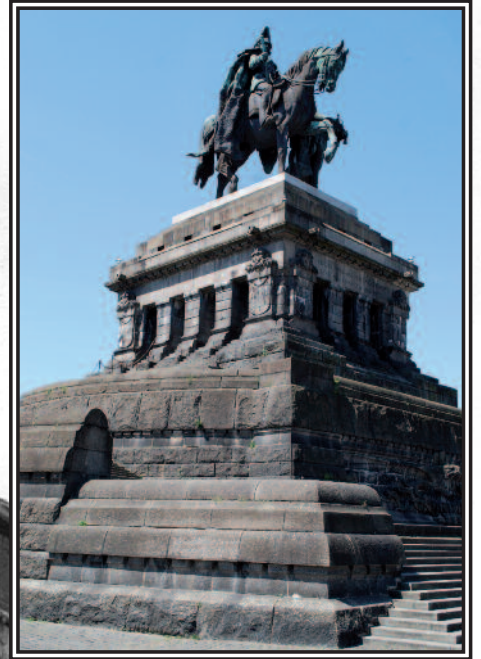


AFTER THE BATTLE



THE BATTLE FOR KOBLENZ
THE AXIS-HELD ISLAND OF RHODES
FILMING *THE GUNS OF NAVARONE*



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CONTENTS

THE BATTLE FOR KOBLENZ

2

IT HAPPENED HERE

Tragedy at Lake Poursollet

30

GREECE

The Axis-Held Island of Rhodes

36

WAR FILM

The Guns of Navarone

46

Front Cover: The Kaiser-Wilhelm-Denkmal at the confluence of the Rhine and Mosel rivers in Koblenz, destroyed by heavy American artillery on March 16, 1945. *Inset:* It was not until 38 years later, in 1993, that a replica of the equestrian statue of Kaiser Wilhelm I was put in place, restoring the city's famous landmark. (USNA/Karel Margry)

Back Cover: Jubilant crowds celebrate the liberation of Rhodes — see page 45.

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Photo Credit Abbreviations: MRDI — Musée de la Résistance et de la Déportation de l'Isère. USNA — US National Archives.



Koblenz lies in the German Rhineland and, according to the stipulations of the Versailles Peace Treaty, was therefore included in the demilitarisation of that territory after the First World War. Following Hitler's unilateral rescinding of the demilitarisation on March 7, 1936, German troops immediately marched into Koblenz, reinstating the large military garrison that had been stationed there in Prussian times. Here the military columns are marching down Kaiser-Wilhelm-Ring on the south side of the Old City.

The German city of Koblenz is situated on the triangle of land formed by the confluence of the Mosel (the German name for the French Moselle) and the Rhine rivers. A settlement of the Franks since ancient times, the Romans already recognised its strategic importance and reinforced their castellum with a strong wall. Emperor Heinrich II granted the settlement to the bishop-elect of Trier in 1018, in the hands of whose successors it remained until the end of the 18th century. Started in the 12th century, successive archbishops built and strengthened the Ehrenbreitstein citadel, perched high above the city on the east bank of the Rhine. From the Thirty Years War (1618-48) to Napoleonic times Koblenz was an object of strife between France and its competing nations, the 1815 Congress of

Vienna finally assigning it to the Kingdom of Prussia, which made it the capital of its Rhineland province.

Its strategic position at the juncture of two main rivers prompted Prussia to surround the city with a cordon of three strong fortresses. Built between 1815 and 1834, these included the Feste Kaiser Alexander on the Karthause plateau directly above the city, the Feste Kaiser Franz on the north bank of the Mosel and the massive Festung Ehrenbreitstein overlooking the city from the east bank of the Rhine. These main fortifications were further strengthened with a system of outlying gun batteries, sub-forts, bastions and earthworks. The troops manning these fortifications made Koblenz the largest garrison town within the kingdom of Prussia.



Kaiser-Wilhelm-Ring is today named Friedrich-Ebert-Ring and the tribulations of wartime destruction and post-war reconstruction have completely altered the avenue's appearance. However, the tower of the Christus-Kirche forms a link between past and present.



CAPITAL CITY MUSEUM

The German city of Koblenz lies at the confluence of the Mosel (Moselle) and Rhine rivers. In March 1945, as a side show to the main offensive by Lieutenant General George S. Patton's US Third Army through the Saar-Palatinate region, the US 87th Infantry Division launched an attack on the city. After carrying out an assault crossing of the Mosel some distance to the south-west, the division rapidly pushed into the city, meeting light opposition in some places and more-determined resistance at others. In two days of street-fighting, the Americans

cleaned out the entire city, the last enemy stronghold surrendering early on March 19. The part of Koblenz lying on the east bank of the Rhine was cleared eight days later. This aerial photo, taken from an Allied aircraft shortly after the fall of the city, shows the main town on the east bank of the Mosel (left), the commune of Lützel (right) and three of the city's Mosel bridges: (top to bottom): the Adolf-Hitler-Brücke with only its pillars standing; the Lützel Railway Bridge and the stone-arch Balduin-Brücke.

THE BATTLE FOR KOBLENZ

With the unification of Germany in 1871, Koblenz became part of the German Reich. To honour the first Kaiser, a huge equestrian statue of Wilhelm I was erected in 1893-97 on the Deutsche Eck, the tip of land where the Rhine and Mosel merge. Known as the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Denkmal, it quickly became the most-famous landmark of Koblenz.

Its proximity to the vineyards in the Rhine and Mosel gorges, producing the world-famous wines, made Koblenz prosper as the principal seat of the German wine industry. Long since the administrative, commercial and cultural centre of the region, by the end of the 19th century the city had also become a traffic hub, with its road and rail bridges over the two rivers, its junction of the Cologne–Mainz and Berlin–Metz railway lines, its two goods train marshalling yards, not forgetting its two harbours handling river traffic.

After the First World War, Koblenz became the headquarters of the American Army of Occupation in the Rhineland. Following the stipulations of the Versailles Peace Treaty, the city's mighty fortress system was dismantled, large parts of the forts and bastions being blown up or demolished, their gun batteries disarmed. The only exception was the Fortress Ehrenbreitstein, used by the Americans and then from 1923-29 by the French, which remained basically intact.

Shortly after the Nazis came to power in January 1933, Koblenz became governed by a Nazi mayor. On March 16, after the

NSDAP had won the communal elections with a landslide majority, Oberbürgermeister Dr Hugo Rosendahl, who had already been molested by SA and Stahlhelm mobs earlier that month, was removed from office and replaced by Otto Wittgen. He would be succeeded in July 1939 by Theodor Habicht, who only stayed in office for a short period, his place being taken by another trusted Party member, Dr Nikolaus Simmer, in January 1940.

However, true power lay with Gustav Simon, the NSDAP-Gauleiter (Nazi Party Regional Leader) of the Gau Koblenz-Trier. In June 1931, after years of campaigning, Simon had finally achieved his goal of disconnecting the Koblenz-Trier region from the larger Rheinland Gau and establishing it as a separate party province, making Koblenz the Gau capital. He would reign over his fiefdom (renamed Gau Moselland in February 1941) until 1945, assisted in Koblenz by the NSDAP-Kreisleiter (Nazi Party Local Leader) Robert Claussen, succeeded in 1940 by Willi Catterpoel.

Gauleiter Simon had ambitious plans for the reshaping of Koblenz along National-Socialist lines, architects drawing up many designs for a new layout of the city and for large-scale building projects. One plan envisaged cutting a central axis right across the inner city, from the Kurfürstliches Schloss (Castle of the Electors) on the bank of the Rhine to a new Gau-Forum on the Mosel bank on the other side of town. However,

By Karel Margry

few of the planned schemes ever materialised. Apart from a few governmental buildings, such as the Reichsbank building on Hindenburg-Strasse, completed in 1937, and the Reichsbahn headquarters on Kaiser-Friedrich-Strasse, inaugurated in 1941, the only other big architectural projects completed under Simon's rule were the so-called Thing-Stätte (amphitheatre for Nazi mass meetings) in front of the Kurfürstliches Schloss, inaugurated in March 1935, and the 'Hermann-Göring-Kampfbahn' sports stadium on Oberwerth Island, opened in June 1935.

With the remilitarisation of the Rhineland and its reoccupation by German troops on March 7, 1936, Koblenz was strongly garrisoned, becoming the home depot of the 34. Infanterie-Division and again becoming — like in Prussian times — Germany's largest garrison town. To house all the troops, no less than seven new military barracks were constructed between 1936 and 1939: the Goeben-Kaserne, Gneisenau-Kaserne, Flak-Kaserne Niederberg, Falkenstein-Kaserne, Augusta-Kaserne, Boelcke-Kaserne and the Deines-Bruchmüller-Kaserne in neighbouring Nieder-Lahnstein. The huge influx of military troops helped to considerably increase the city's population, which rose from nearly 68,000 in 1936 to over 93,000 at the outbreak of war in 1939.

The Nazi persecution of the Jews, which started right away in 1933 and was officially sanctioned with the promulgation of the Nuremberg laws of 1935, decimated Koblenz's small Jewish community. Beset by anti-Jewish measures, many of the city's Jews decided to emigrate, especially after the 'Reichskristallnacht', the nationwide night of pogroms on November 9/10, 1938, when many Jewish shops and homes were ransacked, the synagogue on Florins-Markt pillaged and the Jewish Cemetery on Scherz-Strasse destroyed. In 1939, the remaining Jews were concentrated in 18 so-called 'Judenhäuser' (Jews' houses) under dismally cramped conditions. The first train deporting Jews from Koblenz, carrying 338 persons, left from the Lützel railway station on the west bank of the Mosel on March 22, 1942. It was followed by six more, all of them from the same station, the last one in February 1945. In all, 936 Jews from Koblenz and the surrounding region were deported to death camps in Eastern Europe, where the vast majority of them perished.

theory they could hold 22,500. In addition, hundreds of shelters were constructed in housing blocks and private homes, providing protection to another 70,000 persons, and there were eight gallery shelters dug in the rock face, mostly at Ehrenbreitstein, plus the railway tunnel at Pfaffendorf-Horchheim. The Reichsbahn had two bunkers for railway personnel. Thus, in theory, the entire population could find a safe place during air attacks.

For the first four and a half years of the war, Koblenz was left largely unharmed by the Allied bomber forces. Excepting a few intruder raids by small numbers of Mosquitoes, and a minor RAF attack on the night of April 5/6, 1942 (the first to cause fatal casualties), the first significant raids did not occur until April 1944. On the 19th, eight B-24 Liberators of the US Eighth Air Force's 2nd Bomb Division dropped 14 tons of high explosive on the city, followed three days later by 47 Liberators adding another 170 tons of HE plus seven tons of incendiaries, which set much of the Old City on fire. In all, there were to come 37 bombing raids, 33 of

which; around Löhr-Strasse, Koblenz's main shopping street, and in the southern part of town. A total of 237 people were killed and at least 180 injured.

Following the two April raids, and with increased enforcement after the September raids, Gauleiter Simon and the city authorities ordered the evacuation of the civilian population. Large numbers of women and children and elderly people were sent away to the far-off province of Thuringia, in Eastern Germany, others found refuge in towns and villages in the surrounding countryside. As the raids continued through October and November, more and more people were evacuated and by December over half of the 67,000 inhabitants had gone. However, many were unwilling to leave and stayed to brave the bombs.

The first large RAF raid on Koblenz occurred on the evening of November 6, 1944, when 122 Lancasters from No. 3 Group, Bomber Command, dropped 520 tons of high-explosive and incendiary bombs. It was the most devastating of all the raids, causing a fire storm that destroyed 87 per cent of the Old City and burned out nearly all of the historic courts of the ancient mobility, three churches and the Kurfürstliches Schloss. The city's air raid shelters gave good protection and only 100 people were killed and 558 injured. However, 25,000 were made homeless.

With Koblenz being one of the main supply centres serving the Ardennes battlefront, following the start of the German counter-offensive on December 16 the city received an almost continuous series of heavy raids, the US Air Force bombing it on December 18, 19, 24, 27, 28 and 31, with another seven attacks in the first eight days of January 1945, and the RAF contributing its share on the evening of December 22 and during daylight on the 29th.

The RAF raid on the evening of the 22nd saw 166 Lancasters and two Mosquitoes of No. 1 Group unleashing 929 tons of high explosive on the Koblenz-Mosel railway yards. The main weight fell west of the target where the suburbs of Güls and Rübénach were badly hit. A total of 154 persons were killed and some 22 injured.

Of the 13 American raids during that period, that of December 28 was particularly heavy, with 529 B-17s of the 1st and 3rd Bomb Divisions dropping 1,170 tons of high explosive and 93 tons of incendiaries — the largest raid to hit Koblenz during the war. Destruction was widespread and extensive but, with the population now down to some 31,000 and the availability of good shelters, the number of casualties was remarkably low with only 33 dead and 60 wounded.

The RAF daylight raid on the 29th, by 162 Halifaxes, 107 Lancasters and eight Mosquitoes of Nos. 3, 4 and 8 Groups, completed the severe damage inflicted by the American attack of the previous day. The whole railway system was blocked, the Koblenz-Lützel railway bridge was out of action for the rest of the war and all the cranes of the Mosel harbour were destroyed.

The last bombing raid on the city, by 138 B-17s, happened on January 29 — seven weeks before the Allied capture of the city. However, it would not be the end of the air attacks, fighter-bombers of the US Ninth Air Force maintaining bombing and strafing attacks on railways, bridges, Flak positions and motor traffic in and around Koblenz right up to the fall of the city.

By war's end, 87 per cent of central Koblenz lay in ruins. Numerous historical buildings, churches, schools, administrative offices and business premises had been wrecked or gutted by fire. Of the total of 25,800 homes in the city, 15,300 (61 per cent) had been destroyed or heavily damaged. This made Koblenz one of the most heavily devastated larger cities in all of Germany. Bombs had killed a total of 1,016 civilians and wounded 2,925 more.



Koblenz suffered heavily under the Allied bomber offensive, particularly in 1944, 87 per cent of the town being destroyed. Here B-17s fly over Koblenz during the American raid of September 9, 1944. The river at the top is the Mosel with the Rhine visible at lower left. Bombs are falling around the Mosel bridges and in the Old City at lower right. The large open area just left of centre is the Luftwaffe airstrip on the Karthause plateau.

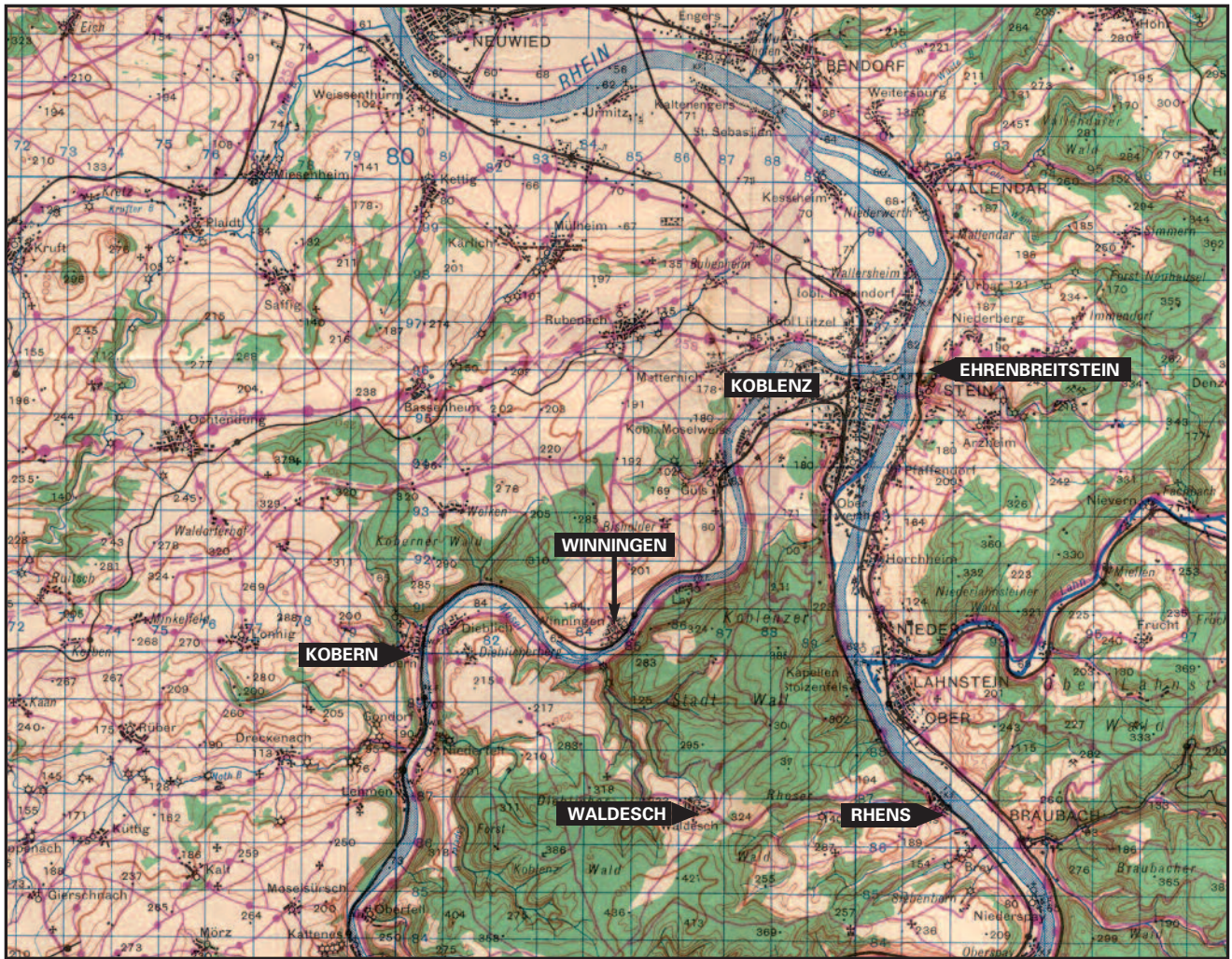
AIR RAIDS ON KOBLENZ

Like all major cities in Nazi Germany, Koblenz suffered heavily under the Allied air offensive.

In anticipation of a bomber war, the city authorities had already begun building air raid shelters in 1937, an effort that greatly increased with the advent of war in 1939. Following a Führer decree on air raid protection in October 1940, the city had started the construction of 15 air raid bunkers, six of them underground shelters, three surface bunkers and six with one or two storeys below ground and the rest above. Of the 15, three were hospital bunkers, two emergency-rescue bunkers, one a police command post bunker and the remaining nine general-purpose shelters. The total official capacity of the nine GP bunkers was 7,500 persons — a mere eight per cent of the total population — but since it was possible in emergencies to fill them with three times that many people, in

them by the USAAF and only four by the Royal Air Force. Most of these were aimed at the city's two cargo railway stations and marshalling yards — Koblenz-Mosel on the east bank of the Mosel and Koblenz-Lützel on that river's west bank — with several raids also targeting the Mosel or Rhine bridges, but in the process large tracts of the city were laid to waste.

The first large raids came in September 1944, when the USAAF returned to Koblenz three times in six days. First, on the 19th, 119 B-17s of the 3rd Bomb Division dropped 244 tons of high explosive. Two days later, on the 21st, 144 B-24s of the 2nd Bomb Division delivered 184 tons of HE and 178 of incendiaries, followed four days later by 251 Liberators adding another 603 tons of ordnance. Damage to the Koblenz-Mosel railway yards was extensive but the raids also caused widespread damage to residential areas, especially in the Goldgrube and Karthause dis-



Map GSGS 4416, published by the War Office in 1944, showing the 87th Division's sector of operations.

THE ALLIED ADVANCE ON KOBLENZ

With the entry of the Allied armies into Germany after the failure of the German Ardennes offensive, the situation in the bomb-ravaged Rhine city was bleak and dreary. Gauleiter Simon continued to incite the population to evacuate, the last such order being given on January 12-13. On February 12, Oberbürgermeister Simmer, at age 42, was called up for army service and Gauleiter Simon appointed the Oberbürgermeister of Trier, Dr Konrad Gorges, to replace him.

The Allied force moving towards Koblenz was the US Third Army under Lieutenant General George S. Patton. The attack that would finally capture the city was part of Third Army's general offensive towards the Rhine, the last major obstacle for an advance to the heart of Germany. Lined up for this offensive at the beginning of March, Patton had three army corps: from north to south the VIII, XII and XX Corps — a massive force comprising four armoured divisions, ten infantry divisions and four cavalry groups.

Between March 1 and 7, while the XX Corps in the south captured Trier (see *After the Battle No. 176*), the two northern corps closed up on the upper reaches of the Mosel from Trier to Koblenz and reached the west bank of the Rhine along a 15-kilometre stretch north of there, the 4th Armored Division of XII Corps, after a spectacular dash of 90 kilometres, reaching the river at Neuwied, close to the inter-army boundary between the US First and Third Armies.

That same day, on March 7, the neighbouring First Army captured the Ludendorff

Bridge at Remagen, 35 kilometres north of Koblenz, thus achieving the first Allied bridgehead across the Rhine (see *After the Battle No. 16*).

However, before he could contemplate a crossing of the Rhine by his own army, General Patton had to first assist in the clearing of the so-called Saar-Palatinate Triangle, the huge triangular area bounded by the Mosel on the west, the Saar in the south and the Rhine in the east, at the apex of which lay Koblenz. This was a major offensive that was to be undertaken in conjunction with the US Seventh Army further south. Re-grouping his forces, Patton now lined up his three corps — still the VIII, XII and XX Corps from north to south — along the Mosel for a major attack across the river. The plan was for a converging attack to the south. The XII Corps was to jump the lower Mosel near Koblenz, sweep south along the west bank of the Rhine to cut the enemy's supply lines, while at the same time the XX Corps was to press east from its previously established Saar-Mosel bridgehead near Trier. The VIII Corps, meanwhile, was to hold the Rhine above Koblenz, finish the mop-up in the Eifel, and eventually reduce Koblenz.

Commanded by Major General Troy H. Middleton, the VIII Corps at that point comprised the 11th Armored Division, the 87th Infantry Division and the 6th Cavalry Group. The 11th Armored had relieved the 4th Armored and was holding the stretch of Rhine river north of Koblenz while the 6th Cavalry held the line of the Mosel to the west of the city. The 87th Division was still some 70 kilometres to the west, recuperating from the heavy fighting in the Eifel.

THE GERMAN SITUATION

Opposing the Third Army's drive to the Rhine, and defending the Mosel river line from Koblenz to Trier, was the German 7. Armee commanded by General der Infanterie Hans Felber. This army was the northernmost of the three armies of Heeresgruppe G, commanded by SS-Obergruppenführer Paul Hauser. Koblenz lay on the extreme right flank of the army group's zone, the boundary with its northern neighbour, Heeresgruppe B, crossing the Rhine immediately north of Koblenz.

Charged with defending 40 kilometres of the Mosel, from Koblenz south to a point near Cochem, was the LXXXIX. Armeekorps, led by General der Infanterie Gustav Höhne. In the line, from south to north, Höhne had the 159. Infanterie-Division (Generalmajor Heinrich Bürcky), the 276. Volksgrenadier-Division (Oberst Werner Wagner) and a force known as Kampfgruppe Koblenz.

The defence of the city of Koblenz was originally in the hands of the city's Wehrmacht-Kommandant, Generalmajor Gerhard Fischer, who was subordinated to Wehrkreis XII, the home army district. However, on March 7, Hitler appointed a special Kampfkommandant (Combat Commander) for Koblenz, appointing Oberstleutnant Erich Löffler, a veteran and highly-decorated combat officer, to the position. The forces at his disposal were meagre, consisting of alarm units that included Grenadier-Ersatz- und -Ausbildungs-Bataillon 34; Feld-Ersatz-Bataillon 80, including its convalescent company; Pionier-Ersatz- und -Ausbildungs-Bataillon 34, and Reserve-

Right: In the early hours of March 16, the 87th Division began the attack on Koblenz with an assault crossing over the Mosel, the 347th Infantry Regiment going across at two places south-west of the city. The 1st Battalion made its crossing at the village of Winningen, some six kilometres upstream from Koblenz. Here GIs were taken across at the village's ferry landing. They probably belong to the 345th Infantry, two battalions of which were diverted to Winningen during the morning to take advantage of the 347th's lightly-opposed crossing and with orders to make use of the same site.

Bataillon Ulmen — in all some 1,800 men. The whole force had only one anti-tank gun, no armour and no artillery, its only support being from stationary anti-aircraft guns, mostly east of the Rhine. Artillery ammunition was low.

Löffler, who set up his command post in the Reichsbahn building at No. 44 Karl-Friedrich-Strasse, lost no time in taking strict measures. On March 8, he ordered the city's four Mosel bridges blown. The railway bridge at Güls, on the south-eastern outskirts, was blown that afternoon; the Adolf-Hitler-Brücke, the Lützel railway bridge and the Balduin-Brücke (road bridge) followed the next day. That same day, the first of the two bridges across the Rhine, the Pfaffendorfer Brücke, went up. The last bridge standing, the Horchheimer Railway Bridge at the south end of the city, was blown on the morning of the 11th.

To days later, on the 13th, Löffler declared Koblenz a Fester Platz (Fortified Place), announced a military state of emergency and ordered the entire remaining population to evacuate the city. Anyone permitted to stay had to have a special pass and a curfew was in place from 7 p.m. to 6 a.m. Anyone caught pillaging, offering civilian clothes to soldiers, or calling for surrender would be summarily shot. A 300-metre-wide area along the Mosel on the city side — from the suburb of Moselweiss to the river's confluence with the Rhine — was declared a battle zone off-limits to all civilians. Over the following days, most of the city administration and other state agencies evacuated to the east bank of the Rhine.

Seeing the need to strengthen the Mosel defences, SS-Oberstgruppenführer Hauser, the Heeresgruppe G commander, in early March decided to reinforce the LXXXIX. Armeekorps with the 6. SS-Gebirgs-Division (SS-Gruppenführer Karl Heinrich Brenner), perhaps the most combat-worthy division remaining in his army group. However, the American attack on Trier caused that division to be diverted to that sector and only SS-Gebirgs-Aufklärungs-Abteilung 6 (the divisional reconnaissance battalion) and the I. Bataillon of SS-Gebirgsjäger-Regiment 11 would reach the Koblenz front in time. The latter unit arrived on March 14 and dug in around Waldesch, a small farming town that crowns the Hunsrück mountain ridge midway between the Mosel and the Rhine, eight kilometres south-west of Koblenz.

THIRD ARMY'S OFFENSIVE

Third Army's Saar-Palatinate offensive began in the night of March 12/13 with three infantry divisions of XX Corps attacking from the Saar bridgehead south of Trier. The following night (March 13/14), the XII Corps joined the fray, launching two of its divisions in assaults across the Mosel. Progress was promising and on March 15, XII Corps com-

Right: Two Press photographers from the War Picture Pool covered the Koblenz operation, Byron H. Rollins of Associated Press and Charles Haacker of the Acme Photo Agency. This picture was taken by Rollins.



ROLLINS



ATB

The riverside at Winningen remains unchanged in over 70 years.



ROLLINS



ROLLINS

Two Jeeps being ferried across on a light support raft built by the division's 35th Engineer Combat Battalion.

mitted its armour, the 4th Armored Division making a spectacular advance of 25 kilometres in five hours. The following day, they plunged forward another 20 kilometres. To reinforce success, Patton on March 16 took away the 11th Armored Division from the VIII Corps, transferring it to XII Corps with orders to join the eastward drive on the 17th. Further south, XX Corps committed its armour early on the 16th, the 10th Armored Division launching another exploitation across the Saar-Palatinate.

That same day, Middleton's VIII Corps in the north joined the offensive. With the taking-away of the 11th Armored Division, his force was now reduced to but one infantry division, the 87th, and one cavalry group, the 6th. Nonetheless, when Patton visited him on the 15th, Middleton suggested that he immediately capture Koblenz with the 87th Division alone, a suggestion that Patton enthusiastically accepted. Middleton immediately issued orders instructing the 87th Division to cross the Mosel and capture Koblenz.

Commanded by Brigadier General Frank L. Culin, the 87th 'Golden Acorn' Division, had received its baptism of fire during the Battle of the Bulge and after that participated in Third Army's attack through the Siegfried Line in the Eifel region. The division had enjoyed a few days of rest and recuperation but on March 13 orders were received to move forward to new positions along the west banks of the Rhine and Mosel. The 346th Infantry Regiment moved out first, on March 13, followed by the 345th and 347th Regiments and the rest of the division on the 14th. All day, the divisional truck convoys rolled over highways and byways and by the end of that day the entire division was concentrated in the sector of the confluence of the Mosel with the Rhine. The 346th Infantry was on the left, around the village of Rübenach, and facing the Rhine. The 347th, on the right, had taken positions along the Mosel at the villages of Kobern and Winnigen. The 345th was assembled at Mülheim, to the left rear of the 346th. All battalions set up bivouac areas prior to practicing assault boat drill for the river crossing which was soon to come.

German observers on the hills across the river could watch their every move and enemy mortars and 88mm guns were zeroed in on all the main roads in the area. Third Army Artillery, dug in on the surrounding hills, maintained an incessant barrage, lob-

bing heavy shells of all calibres at the German positions. Koblenz now began to feel the explosive force of medium and heavy artillery shellings. Division Artillery, with attached units, prepared the city for the coming attack with nearly a full week of steady bombardments. On March 16, a shell from an 8-inch howitzer hit the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Denkmal on the Deutsche Eck, causing the equestrian statue — famous landmark of Koblenz — to come crashing down from its base.

The divisional Psychological Warfare team made an attempt to persuade the enemy defenders of the city to surrender, broadcasting loudspeaker messages across the river, but was unsuccessful.

PREPARATIONS FOR CROSSING THE MOSEL

On the morning of March 15, Division Headquarters issued an order calling for a crossing of the Mosel by the 345th and 347th Regimental Combat Teams. The 345th was



ATB

The terraced vineyards across the river from Winnigen have been abandoned but the small tunnel entrance visible along the river bank on the right remains as a link with the past.

to cross at the village of Güls, directly opposite Koblenz and reduce the city. The 347th was to cross about eight kilometres upstream from Koblenz and, through a narrow clearing in the high woodlands that feature most of the triangle between the Mosel and the Rhine, drive south-east about 12 kilometres to the Rhine, thus cutting off the defenders of Koblenz. The crossing was to be made on the night of March 16/17.

Having received these orders, the regimental commanders and their staffs went to work on the mission. Basing his decisions on personal reconnaissance made by himself and his battalion commanders, Colonel Sevier R. Tupper of the 347th decided to make one crossing at Kobern and the other in the vicinity of Winnigen. Between these two villages the Mosel makes a wide salient-like bend to the north. It was his plan to cross two battalions simultaneously and seize the high ground on the east bank by a two-directional flanking attack. As soon as this bridgehead was secured, the battalions were to push on to the west bank of the Rhine in the vicinity of Rhens, Brey, Niederspays and Oberspays.

All during the day, while Colonel Tupper and his staff were drafting final plans and orders, the battalion and company commanders reconnoitred the crossing sites and put their companies through assault boat training. Then, suddenly, late in the afternoon, orders were received from Division that the time of the crossing had been changed and that it would be made at 0300 on the morning of the 16th rather than the following night. The draft plans were hurriedly amended and at 1700 Colonel Tupper met with the battalion and other unit commanders to give out his orders.

The 1st Battalion (Lieutenant Colonel Robert B. Cobb) was to cross the Mosel in the vicinity of Winnigen, secure the opposite bank, drive south-east to the high ground and be prepared to continue the attack on order. The 3rd Battalion (Lieutenant Colonel Richard D. Sutton) was to cross near Kobern, secure the opposite bank, drive east to the high ground and likewise prepare for a continuation of the attack. Each battalion would have the direct support of one platoon of Company A, 607th Tank Destroyer Battalion; one platoon of Company C, 735th Tank Battalion, and one company of the 35th Engineer Combat Battalion. The 2nd Battalion (Lieutenant Colonel William S. Bodner), initially in regimental reserve, was to make



USNA

Left: Meanwhile, the 347th's 3rd Battalion went across at the village of Kobern, five kilometres upstream from Winnigen. It was here also that the first tanks of the supporting 735th Tank Battalion were ferried across on pontoon rafts. Signal Corps



ATB

photographer Private Charles A. Sullivan pictured two Shermans from the battalion waiting to be taken over, concealed by a chemical smoke-screen. Right: The narrow valley of the Mosel makes for a timeless comparison.

the crossing at the Kobern site as soon as the 3rd Battalion had cleared, and was then to drive south-east to secure the high ground in the vicinity of Waldesch.

Providing 17 assault boats per company, the 35th Engineer Combat Battalion would cross two companies of each assault battalion in the first wave. They also had power boats to cross the reserve 2nd Battalion immediately behind the 3rd Battalion. The engineers were to have control officers at each battalion crossing site who, in connection with the Regimental Control Officer, were to closely control the assault boats and represent the regimental commander in cases of emergency. As soon as the opposite bank of the river was cleared of small-arms fire, the engineers were to start supplies and light vehicles across on support rafts.

The enemy troops holding the far bank were known to be from Grenadier-Regiment 987, the left-wing regiment of the 276. Volksgrenadier-Division. The assaulting troops were to hold their fire until surprise was known to be lost, and to push forward vigorously, by-passing or containing small enemy centres of resistance, leaving them to be cleaned up by the reserve battalion.

In preparation for the attack, Division Intelligence made use of an unorthodox ruse. A special patrol in German uniforms and using a captured German vehicle ventured out into Koblenz and came back with detailed information on German troop strength and combat morale. Their report estimated the garrison a mere 500 strong and in low spirits, and that a sustained defence of the city was unlikely.

MARCH 16

An hour before midnight on March 15/16, the long lines of men began their silent movement forward to the banks of the Mosel and the assault boats waiting to take them to the opposite bank in this, their first river crossing. Colonel Tupper and his command group left their command post at Ochten-dung at 2345 and moved forward to an advance command post in Kobern on the bank of the river. Shortly after midnight the Regimental Communications Officer announced that the forward lines were in and by 0330 the first units were assembled, counted off and ready to move out.

At 0345, the men of the 3rd Battalion at Kobern shouldered their boats and half carried, half dragged them through a hedgerow, over boxcars, through wire barriers and

Right: The vineyards across the river from Kobern make an exact comparison possible.



USNA

Only nine Sherman tanks were carried across on the first day. The first six, comprising the 3rd Platoon of Company C of the 735th, went to support the 1st and 3rd Battalions of the 345th Infantry on the river road to Koblenz, and the next three, a section of the 1st Platoon of Company C, climbed up to the high ground to join the 1st Battalion of the 347th Infantry at the hamlet of Mariaroth, just short of Waldesch. The rest of the assigned tank support, Companies B and the remainder of Company C, did not cross the river until the following evening, making use of the floating treadway bridge which the divisional engineers had completed at 1730 hours.



ATB

Right: The 1st Battalion, 345th, on the river road reached and cleared the village of Lay, meeting little opposition. The following morning, March 17, Rollins pictured men of the 3rd Battalion moving out towards Koblenz, now less than three kilometres away.

apple orchards until finally they had them on the cobblestone bank and silently began to load. Starting across at 0500, Companies K and I made the first wave and crossed without incident. Bringing the boats back immediately, the engineer crews reloaded them with the second wave and were returning to the opposite bank when they received machine-gun fire from the left flank. However, by now all four companies had crossed. By 0700 they had secured the high ground on the first objective and were advancing to the villages of Dieblicherberg and Dieblich.

At the same time, the 1st Battalion sent their first wave, composed of Companies B and C, across the river at Winningen. There was no firing on the troops until they reached the shore and had started on their way to their first objective. The two companies immediately seized the high ground in front of their crossing and began clearing the enemy out of the steep, terraced, vineyard-covered hills. While they were fighting their way forward, the boats made repeated trips for the balance of the battalion and by 0545 the entire unit except for vehicles and the rear Command Post had successfully established itself on the opposite shore.

Immediately, Colonel Tupper ordered the 2nd Battalion to prepare to follow the 3rd Battalion as soon as they had cleared the crossing site. Starting across at approximately 0745, heavy machine-gun fire opened up from the vicinity of Niederfell as the first group of power boats left the friendly shore. At the same time, German mortars zeroed in on the crossing site. One of the boats went down and the battalion lost three of its medics.

Meanwhile, the 1st and 3rd Battalions started pushing on to their second objectives. Storming the steep slopes across from Winningen, Companies B and C of the 1st Battalion captured 154 prisoners, including several SS-Gebirgsjäger. As soon as the 3rd Battalion started to move forward, Company I was pinned down by machine-gun and small-arms fire coming from a church steeple in Dieblich. Company L sent a platoon to assist, moving it around on the high ground above

Right: The hotel on the corner has gone out of business but otherwise the junction of Kaufunger Strasse with the B49 river road remains little changed.



ROLLINS



ATB



USNA



ATB

Left: Soon after, the leading troops reached the southern entrance of the city. Signal Corps photographer Sullivan pictured the first German prisoners being guarded in the

shelter of the arch of the Güls railway bridge, which spans the Mosel at this point. Right: Looking south under the same archway today.

Right: With the same prisoners looking on, Rollins pictured the arrival of another group, hands on their heads, and being led by an officer and a medic.

the village, from where they neutralised the harassing fire, enabling Company I to move on to Dieblischerberg. During the battle for Dieblisch, Company I captured 20 prisoners and one English-speaking girl. Sending them back to Company L, the company set out in pursuit of the remainder of the Germans who were now pulling out toward Koblenz.

The 2nd Battalion, having completed their crossing at 0830, moved south-eastward on the division's right flank to secure the high ground near Niederfell. Bypassing the village, Lieutenant Colonel Bodner first secured the high ground, then sent one platoon from Company F to take care of the village, stopping all resistance by 1200. En route to this objective, the battalion cut off a column of retreating Germans, capturing a kitchen and supply train with a complement of 20 German soldiers. The horses drawing these wagons were immediately put in use carrying ammunition and supplies forward from the bridgehead.

So far, resistance had been relatively light but this changed in the afternoon when the regiment advanced on Waldesch, the town that sits on top of the Hunsrück mountain ridge halfway between the Mosel and Rhine. Here, the recently arrived mountain troops of SS-Gebirgsjäger-Regiment 11 effectively blocked the little corridor of cleared land leading to the Rhine.

Meanwhile, back at the river, the engineers had begun construction of support rafts at both crossing sites, which would enable light vehicles and extra rations, ammunition and dry clothing to be brought across. At the same time, in order to speedily transfer heavy equipment across the river, they started construction of a pontoon tread-way bridge at Kobern. (It would be completed the following day.)

Meanwhile there had been a change in the divisional plan. Aware from intelligence reports that the enemy had few troops for defending the little triangle of land, General Culin had anticipated no major fight but the utter ease of the 347th's crossing nonetheless came as a surprise. Not a shot, not a round of shell-fire, indeed not a sign of the enemy had met the two assault battalions as they went across, and the first scattered small-arms opposition had only been met



ROLLINS



ATB

The trees and the vehicles at the bus stop hide the Mosel river from view.



HAACKER

Left: A few metres up the road, Acme photographer Charles Haacker pictured a GI escorting a group of Russian forced labourers, four women and one man, out of the battle zone. They were at first thought to be German until the interpreter found out their nationality. The number of forced labourers from Eastern Europe employed in Koblenz was at least 1,500, most of them working for the Reichsbahn (German State Railways).



ATB

The German soldier in front was described in Haacker's caption as 'a nasty young Nazi who was quite a snotty little character. He objected to everything, including capture and was so uncooperative that he was fair on the way to getting himself a bit of rough treatment.' **Right: The houses on the river road, Nos. 93-95 Gölser Strasse, remain, a new house having been built next to No. 95.**

Right: A short distance further on, the built-up area of Koblenz started. These GIs from the 345th Infantry pictured by Private Sullivan are at the Y-junction of the river road with Gülser Strasse, the street leading into the Moselweiss town district.

some distance away from the river. In view of this, Culin saw no need to go through with the planned assault crossing by the 345th Infantry opposite Koblenz. Instead, he now ordered the 345th to cross in the 347th's sector, then swing north-east against the city from there.

Like its sister regiment, the 345th Infantry (Colonel Douglas Sugg) had expected to make its crossings during the night and was still practicing loading and unloading the assault boats when Brigadier General John L. McKee, the Assistant Division Commander, arrived at Regimental Headquarters with the changed orders. Shortly thereafter, Company A moved to Winningen, crossed the Mosel, and by 1400 was advancing up the river road toward Koblenz. Within two hours and a half, the entire 1st Battalion (Lieutenant Colonel Hardin L. Olson) was over, and before dark the 3rd Battalion (Lieutenant Colonel Robert B. Moran) had joined them on the far shore. Six tanks were ferried across, three of which went to each battalion as mobile support guns.

The 1st Battalion moved along the river road against little opposition. The usual log road-block was across the highway at Lay, but was speedily passed and removed. Turning eastward, the battalion moved up the mountainside to drive another wedge to the Rhine and isolate Koblenz. After dark, the early sporadic small-arms and sniper fire grew into stiff resistance. A Wehrmacht rifle range on the mountain, immediately west of Simmerner Strasse, had been converted into a miniature fortress by the hard-pressed defenders. Machine guns, anti-tank guns, bazookas and sub-machine guns supplemented the regular complement of rifles and pistols. All three of the 1st Battalion's rifle companies were committed before the fiercely fighting SS-Gebirgsjäger were overcome. One hundred twenty prisoners were taken at a cost to the 345th of two killed and six wounded.

The 3rd Battalion, following the 1st into Lay, cleaned it out house by house before continuing toward Koblenz. Company K left the highway here, pushing up on the high ground to wipe out snipers and machine gunners firing at Company I who led the column. As they came abreast of the leading elements, the company commander, 1st Lieutenant Donald R. MacSpadden, was killed by a sniper's bullet.



USNA



ATB

The distinctive house at the corner remains. It can also be seen in the left background of Haacker's picture on the previous page.



ROLLINS

As he followed the troops into town, Byron Rollins met and photographed a group of captured Germans carrying a wounded comrade into captivity.



ATB

Over the years many of the houses on Gülser Strasse have been modernised or rebuilt but No. 65 on the right remains to be seen as it was in 1945.

Right: A few hundred metres into town, Gülser Strasse changes its name to Koblenzer Strasse. Rollins pictured GIs moving up the street past the body of a killed comrade, his helmet lying in the roadway. As the dead soldier cannot be identified, the SHAEF field press censor saw no problem in releasing the picture for publication.

While the 1st and 3rd Battalions were battling on the east bank of the Mosel, the 2nd Battalion (Major Clarence W. Patten) moved into the village of Güls, the regiment's original planned crossing site on the west bank directly opposite Moselweiss in suburban Koblenz.

As darkness fell on March 16, the 87th Division had successfully completed its first river crossing and gained control of the commanding ground between the Mosel and the Rhine. They had captured over 320 German prisoners with a large quantity of materiel. Opposition had been relatively light, except in front of Waldesch, where the SS-Gebirgsjäger had halted the 347th Infantry.

To General Felber, the commander of the 7. Armee, the advent of the new American force removed any rationalisation that might have existed for the LXXXIX. Armeekorps to attempt to hold any longer west of the Rhine. At noon on the 16th he ordered the corps commander, General Höhne, to begin his withdrawal, though in Koblenz itself Kampfgruppe Koblenz was to fight to the last. Orders for the retreat went out to the fighting troops at 1500 hours. The bridges had gone but ferries at Rhens, Brey and Boppart were available to carry the troops across. As it turned out, their capacity was insufficient to bring back all forces on the first night, so SS-Gruppenführer Brenner of the 6. SS-Gebirgs-Division decided to keep his units on the west bank and carry on the fight for one more day. As darkness fell on the first night, a heavy fog favoured the evacuation. Some 1,700 men — all that remained of the 159. Infanterie-Division, 276. Volksgrenadier-Division and corps troops — made it to the east bank.

MARCH 17

The following morning (March 17), the 3rd Battalion, 345th Infantry, continued on north and took Moselweiss. Here they prepared a landing site, allowing the 2nd Battalion at Güls to cross over to the east bank to join them, their first boatload landing on the east bank at 0800. The entire regiment was now in position to attack Koblenz itself. Deploying in a semi-circle, the three battalions moved forward.



ROLLINS



ATB

Looking back to the junction of Koblenzer Strasse with Gülser Strasse and Bahnhofs-Weg.



USNA

Further up the street, Private Sullivan pictured infantrymen, guns ready, preparing to break into a house, probably in search of the sniper that killed the soldier seen in the previous picture.



ATB

The wartime caption gave no clue as to the location, so Karel was fortunate in recognising the house and courtyard at No. 20 Koblenzer Strasse, immediately next to the St Laurentius Church.



USNA

Above: Meanwhile, back at the river, a ferry service had been improvised. The previous evening, the 2nd Battalion of the 345th Infantry had occupied the village of Güls on the west bank of the Mosel (where the 345th had originally been scheduled to make its assault crossing). Now, with friendly troops having arrived on the far bank, the 2nd Battalion was quickly ferried across in assault boats. Signal Corps photographer Pfc George N. Mallinder pictured a trailer being brought over, with Jeeps awaiting their turn at the Güls landing. On the right is the broken railway bridge, with its intact archway that we have seen in earlier photos on the far bank. **Right:** German prisoners were taken across on the return trip.



USNA

The 2nd Battalion swarmed into town with the banks of the Mosel on their left flank — Companies E and F on line, followed by G in battalion reserve. Advancing down Moselweisser Strasse with a few Sherman tanks from Company C, 735th Tank Battalion, in support, they captured Koblenz's main hospital, the Kemperhof, and enveloped the Rauental industrial and business district between Schlachthof-Strasse and Moselweisser Strasse. Their front was solid, halfway across the city and by nightfall they had their objective well in hand. Company F's prisoner-of-war count for the day was 300, while Company E chalked up 145.

The 3rd Battalion, in the centre, had the bulk of the difficulties. Moving into the streets of the city from the south-west at 0700, Companies I and K seized the big Moselweiss marshalling yards, and advanced on Karthause, the high-ground plateau that overlooks the centre of the city, capturing the Luftwaffe airfield there. As they pushed ahead, resistance stiffened. Moving forward to the city centre, Company L received fire from Fort Konstantin, an outlying fortress of the larger Feste Kaiser Alexander, sitting on top of the Beatusberg and with a clear view of the whole inner city. Mortar fire and

Right: Looking to the east bank from Güls today.



ATB



Left: As the advance into the Moselweiss quarter continued, the troops spread out to make use of other streets leading into town. Private Sullivan pictured infantrymen conducting a house-to-house search to eliminate snipers in Kloster-Strasse, the street that runs one block to the west of and parallel with Koblenzer Strasse. The Sherman tank on the left is one of the six from 3rd Platoon, Company C of the 735th Tank Battalion that



crossed by ferry at Kobern on the first day. That company was normally assigned to support the 347th Regiment, which was then fighting in the mountains above Koblenz, so later that evening, the 3rd Platoon would be relieved by the 345th Infantry's regular tank support unit, Company B of the 735th. *Right:* The house at the crossroads of Kloster-Strasse with Bahnhofs-Weg and Margareten-Weg stands completely unchanged.



Pushing deeper into the town, the Americans captured the Kemperhof city hospital. In the grounds stood two air raid bunkers, the eastern one of which had served as the headquarters of Koblenz's mayor, Oberbürgermeister Dr Konrad Gorges, and several city departments from mid-February onwards. Gorges left the bunker earlier that day, evacuating to the east bank of the Rhine, leaving harbour director Franz Lanfers and a small team of six city officials in charge of communal affairs. When the Americans reached and occupied the Kemperhof later that day, they quickly appointed Lanfers as the new Burgomaster under Allied Military Government, probably because he spoke good English and despite the fact that he was a member of the Nazi party. *Above:* The bunker still stands in the hospital grounds.

deadly airbursts from high-velocity anti-aircraft guns firing from beyond the Rhine supported the machine-gun, automatic weapon and rifle fire of the entrenched German troops. Despite this, Lieutenant Colonel Moran's men cleared three quarters of their sector before dark, and helped raise the prisoner-of-war total for the day to 744.

The 1st Battalion on the right began clearing the southern residential and industrial section of the city, fighting its way to the banks of the Rhine in this sector. When Generals Culin and McKee crossed the Mosel and entered Koblenz in the afternoon, Colonel Sugg could report that half the city had been won in the day's operations.

Meanwhile, Colonel Tupper's 347th Infantry was fighting through the Hunsrück Mountains south of the city. The 1st Battalion, on the regimental left, advanced through

Right: Today completely built up, this is the same bend.



Advancing beyond the Kemperhof, the 2nd Battalion of the 345th followed the Moselweisser Strasse, which is the continuation of Koblenzer Strasse. Rollins pictured GIs dashing across an open space. They are approaching the Mosel railway yards, a tower of which can be seen protruding above the buildings on the right.



ROLLINS



A Sherman from Company C, 375th Tank Battalion, fires down the street, while infantrymen take cover from snipers beside it.



ATB

The big apartment block on the right, Nos. 55-59 Moselweisser Strasse, remains to pinpoint the comparison.

ROLLINS



Shortly afterwards, German soldiers come running out of the same building in surrender. Another Rollins photograph.



ATB

Although the wartime caption gave no clue as to the location, Karel recognised the building from the pillared entrances.

the woods north of Waldesch, bypassing that troublesome town, and in spite of heavy resistance pushed on to the high ground overlooking Rhens, on the Rhine river ten kilometres south of Koblenz. The village was heavily defended but the battalion inched its way forward and by 2245 had secured the place. Throughout the rest of the night they continued cleaning the town and organising a defensive position.

The 2nd Battalion, on the right, moved out at 1400 and by 1730 was in sight of its objective, the high-ground farming hamlet of Krieserkopf. Company E sent a platoon to investigate the houses and they found the village empty but, as the battalion was moving in, a fire-fight developed just over the ridge.

Right: With the fighting moving on into the Old City, Rollins pictured civilians fleeing from the battle zone by way of bomb-ravaged Moselweisser Strasse. The trees on the right mark the city's Jewish Cemetery, which had been desecrated and destroyed during the Kristallnacht pogroms of November 1938. Right: The Jewish Cemetery was restored by the Jewish community after the war. In 1947 it was discovered that gravestones from it had been used to build a flight of steps in the garden of a Volksschule in Koblenz-Lützel. After the scandal came out in the open in 1950, the French occupation authorities had the Hebrew inscriptions ground away from the slabs but, when protests continued, the Jewish community decided to have the steps removed completely. Sixty years later, in 2010, it was discovered that another, smaller flight of steps nearby also consisted of tombstones from the cemetery. These were returned to the cemetery the following year.



ROLLINS



ATB



USNA

As the main force of the division was fighting on the east bank of the Mosel, the part of the city west of the Mosel was also being occupied by the Americans, part of the 2nd Battalion, 345th Infantry, moving on from Güls to clear the districts of Metternich and Lützel. Signal Corps photographer Lieutenant Harvey E. Weber pictured an infantryman dashing across the

platform of the Lützel railway station, while another on the left can be seen ducking from sniper fire. (It was from this station that the six train transports deporting the 936 Jews from Koblenz and the surrounding region had left for the ghettos and death camps in Eastern Europe between March 1942 and February 1945.)

Quick action on the part of the platoon knocked out this last bit of resistance. Shortly after, a message arrived instructing the battalion to send a strong force to the closest point of the Rhine and cut the river road. Lieutenant Colonel Bodner dispatched Company F, led by Captain William F. Dahlke, who moved out after dark with mission to cut the highway at a point two kilometres north of Boppard.

The 3rd Battalion, meanwhile, had renewed its attack on Waldesch, stoutly defended by men of SS-Gebirgsjäger-Regi-

Right: The building on the far right remains to link the past with the present. There is a plaque at the station recording its role in the persecution of the Jews and the victims from Koblenz are commemorated on two memorials, one in the Jewish Cemetery, the other at the site of the former synagogue on Florins-Markt.



ATB



USNA

Left: From his side of the river, Weber pictured the broken Lützel railway bridge. Already damaged by Allied bombs several times in 1944, it had at last been put out of action by American and British attacks in late December, and was finally blown on orders of Kampfkommandant Oberstleutnant Erich



ATB

Löffler on March 9. Right: First rebuilt shortly after the war, in 1974-75 the steel arches spanning half of the river on the city side were replaced by a single span of reinforced concrete, but the six brick arches on the Lützel side were retained. This is best comparison possible today.



Löffler was born on March 22, 1908, and joined the army as a private. He was commissioned shortly after the outbreak of war and thereafter enjoyed a speedy career with Grenadier-Regiment 57 of the 9. Infanterie-Division, fighting in France in 1940 and on the Eastern Front from 1941, and rising to become battalion and then regimental commander. Exceptionally courageous in combat, he was awarded the Infanteriesturmabzeichen (Assault Infantry Badge), Verwundetenabzeichen (Wounded in Action Badge), four Panzervernichtungsabzeichen (Tank Destruction Badges), the Iron Cross 1st and 2nd Class, the Deutsches Kreuz in Gold and in October 1942 the Knight's Cross.

ment 11. Advancing under cover of a heavy artillery concentration, the Americans were suddenly counter-attacked by 20 young SS troopers with automatic weapons but the battalion's machine guns cut them down in a matter of seconds with no casualties to their own. Waldesch was completely taken at 1515 and after re-organising the battalion immediately moved out to its next objective, the village of Brey, located on the Rhine just south of Rhens. However, as they reached the high ground overlooking the latter village, which they were to pass through, they met the 1st Battalion still engaged in a heavy fight to take it.

Right: New buildings have sprung up all around the huge concrete building, preventing an exact comparison from the northern side. This is the southern façade.



As they penetrated deeper into the Old City, the 2nd Battalion, 345th, reached and captured the huge air raid shelter on Nagelsgasse, a few blocks away from the confluence of the Mosel and Rhine. With three storeys above ground and one below, its official capacity was 1,799 persons. From January 1945, this bunker had been used to house several sections of the city administration, among them the office co-ordinating the evacuation of civilians from the Old City under NSDAP-Ortsgruppenleiter Josef Plönissen and the so-called Bauleitung Rumpel, a construction headquarters (led by Artur Rumpel, a confidant of Gauleiter Gustav Simon) co-ordinating debris clearance and provisional repairs in the city. As it lay inside the Sperrgebiet ordained by Kampfkommandant Löffler on March 13, all agencies had to evacuate from the bunker the following day, the city departments transferring to the bunker at the city Bahnhof. The Americans quickly took it into use as a medical aid post, Army photographer Mallinder picturing it on the 18th.



Left: Much of area around the bunker had been laid to waste by the Allied bombing. Byron Rollins pictured an American soldier



Right: Looking south down the same street today.

ROLLINS

USNA

ATB

ATB

Right: By noon on March 18, the second day of fighting in the city, the 2nd Battalion had reached the centre of the Altstadt (Old City). Haacker pictured a party of French forced labourers who had managed to hole up until the Americans arrived to liberate them. In the background, tucked alongside the building, stands an M10 tank destroyer of the 607th Tank Destroyer Battalion preparing to blow a few holes in a building in which some German soldiers are still holding out.

MARCH 18-19

On March 18, the 345th Regiment continued the job of clearing Koblenz. The 2nd Battalion, driving past the wreckage of the blown Adolf-Hitler-Brücke and clambering its way through the bomb-ruined streets, cleaned out the northern part of the city and the 1st Battalion captured the large Oberwerth island in the Rhine, seizing the Hermann-Göring-Kampfbahn sports stadium and the industrial section to the north of it. By nightfall all three battalions had reached the Rhine.

The most heavy fighting occurred with the 3rd Battalion, which was held up in front of Fort Konstantin. Sitting on top of the Beatusberg above the city, its stone and concrete walls two metres thick and cut three storeys deep into the hilltop, it was a formidable obstacle. Entrenched inside was a garrison of some 100 men led by a determined commander, Hauptmann Franz-Josef de Weldige-Cremer.

The first to come up against the fort was Company L, which contained it while the rest of the battalion carried on to the Rhine. As it became clear that the fortress was putting up a strong fight, Companies A (from 1st Battalion) and G (from 2nd Battalion) were ordered to take over the clearing of the remaining sector assigned to the 3rd Battalion so that the latter could concentrate on the fort.

By noon, Lieutenant Colonel Moran had all his companies and supporting tanks surrounding the ancient stronghold. When all was in readiness, he called for a cessation of hostilities to have a talk with the Fort Commandant. Hauptmann de Weldige came out of the main gate under a flag of truce and Moran advanced with an interpreter to confer with the enemy officer. Seeing the youthful-looking American officer, who had a scarf high around his neck covering his insignia of rank, de Weldige told the interpreter that he could not negotiate with a man who did not have rank. He could not believe



HAACKER



PETRA WEIß

The wartime caption did not include a location but Karel spotted the building on the left as he walked the streets of the city. It was the former Reichspost building on the corner of Post-Strasse and Clemens-Strasse. Petra Weiß of the Koblenz City Archives took this comparison for us looking from Post-Strasse into Hindenburg-Strasse.



ROLLINS

Hindenburg-Strasse was the tree-lined avenue running in front of the Kurfürstliches Schloss. Shortly after Haacker took his picture, his colleague Rollins pictured GIs firing down the



ATB

street during the last phase of the battle. They are outside the Trierischer Hof Hotel-Restaurant, which stands on the corner with Clemens-Strasse.

the battle-dirty soldier in the field jacket was a battalion commander. Colonel Moran unbuttoned his sweater, showed his silver maple leaf, and the talk was on.

De Weldige asked for an armistice to evacuate his wounded but Moran said he would take every one in the fort or no one would leave alive. Tapping his Iron Cross, the German then explained he could not surrender as he had direct orders from Hitler to hold. With the negotiations over the wounded leading nowhere, de Weldige said Moran not only did not have an insignia, but he did not have a heart. 'I'm not short of artillery though', Moran retorted and he gave the garrison a half hour to surrender.

Thirty minutes later de Weldige reappeared and made a proposition: he could not surrender while the Americans were outside the fort, but if they came inside with tanks and infantry, he would quit. This was unacceptable to Moran so the German party returned to their redoubt and the battle continued. Moran brought up tanks and tank destroyers and placed direct fire on the fort.

All night, Moran, who had moved his headquarters to a hotel only 25 metres from the fort, fired machine guns, rifles and high-explosive shells through holes the tank destroyers had blown in the two-metre-thick walls. The incessant pounding brought results. At 0830 on March 19, having exhausted all his ammunition, Hauptmann de Weldige, wearing all his medals on a spotless uniform, led five officers and 70 enlisted men out of Fort Konstantin under a white flag, surrendering them to Lieutenant Colonel Moran.

Even before de Weldige's capitulation, and unknown to him, a part of the fortress garrison had already surreptitiously surrendered — to a lowly private. Private First Class Harry Van Horsten was a 3rd Battalion medic working at the Battalion Aid Station, which had been set up in a German hospital, the Sankt-Josef-Krankenhaus, less than 100 metres from Fort Konstantin. While Lieutenant Colonel Moran was talking to Hauptmann de Weldige, Van Horsten learned from a German nurse that there were 20 soldiers in the fort ready and willing to give up if they could get safe passage to the American lines. Collecting 20 Red Cross armbands, he gave them to the nurse with instructions for the men to come out wearing them. She left that night and entered the fort. Early next morning, Van Horsten went to the appointed rendezvous to see if his plan worked and before long an arm-banded column of 20 soldiers emerged from the fort. Van Horsten led them directly to the POW cage, taking care to collect the armbands as they went through the gate, and then returned to his normal duties of caring for the sick and wounded.

With the fall of Fort Konstantin, 1st Lieutenants William J. Dawson and William C. Holter, the 3rd Battalion's Supply and Ammunition Officers respectively, decided that it was fitting and proper that the American flag fly once again over Koblenz. Nailing their battalion's colours to a sturdy 30-foot-long telephone pole they had found, and enlisting the services of six enlisted men, they dashed across the fortress courtyard — despite the fact the enemy could see them from Fortress Ehrenbreitstein across the Rhine — and put the flag up midway in the fort's east wall. Twenty-two years, one month, and 27 days after being lowered in Koblenz, the Stars and Stripes again flew over the city.

Right: Hindenburg-Strasse is today named Neustadt. The hotel (its name now spelt as Trierer Hof) and city theatre are still in business and the former Reichsbank building further down the street is currently housing the Koblenz office of the Deutsche Bundesbank.



HAACKER

Soon afterwards, Haacker pictured this group of German prisoners being escorted past the same hotel-restaurant. The next building is the Stadttheater (City Theatre) and further down the street, at the far end, is the Reichsbank building.

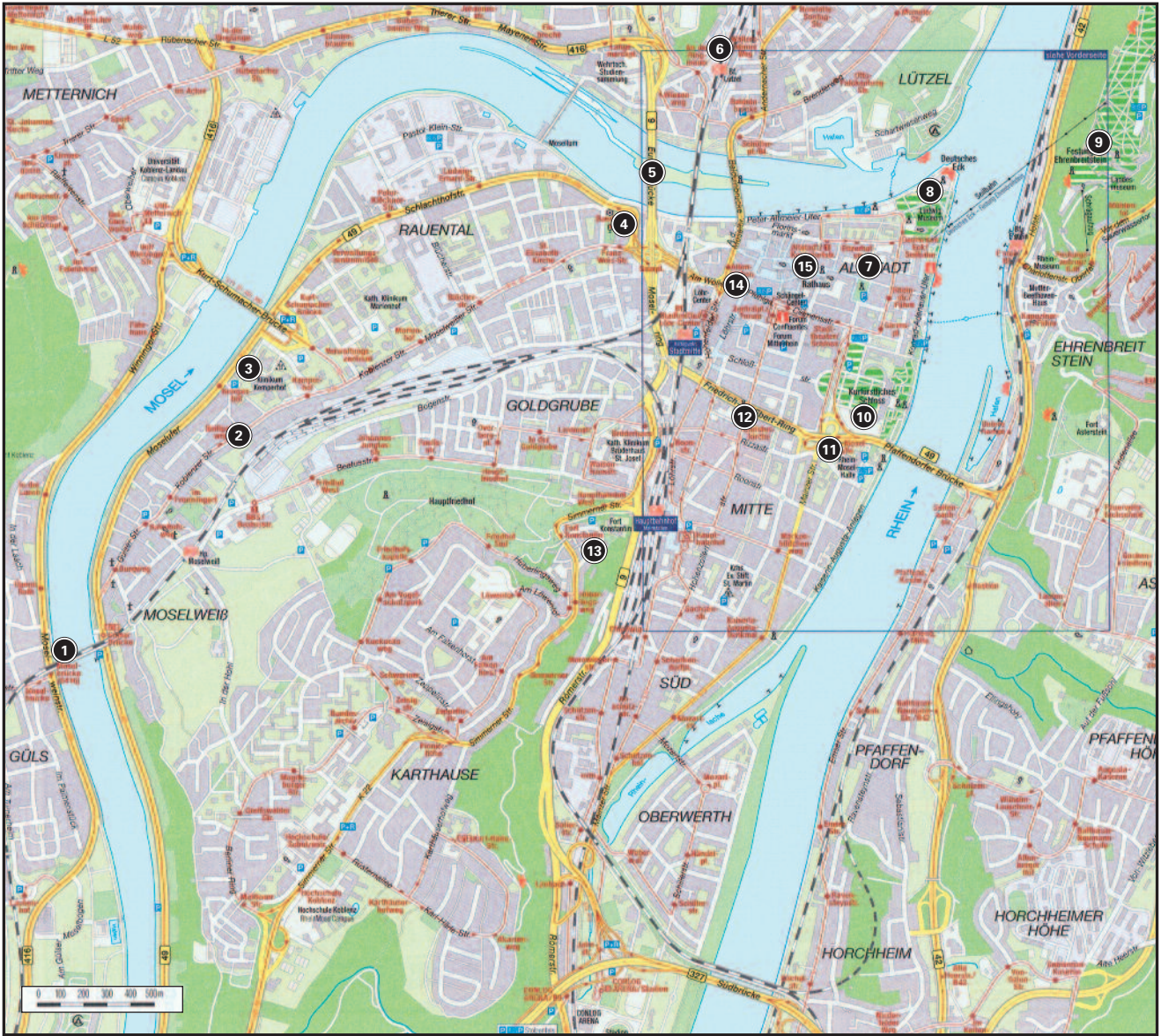


HAACKER

The prisoners are being searched outside the hotel. Another picture taken by Haacker.



ATB



Modern town plan of Koblenz showing the main locations that feature in our story. [1] Güls Railway Bridge. [2] Gülser Strasse — Koblenzer Strasse — Moselweisser Strasse. [3] Kemperhof Hospital. [4] Jewish Cemetery. [5] Adolf-Hitler-Brücke (today Europa-Brücke). [6] Lützel Railway Station.

[7] Nagelsgasse. [8] Deutsches Eck and Kaiser-Wilhelm-Denkmal. [9] Fortress Ehrenbreitstein. [10] Kurfürstliches Schloss. [11] Stadthalle. [12] Kaiser-Wilhelm-Ring (today Friedrich-Ebert-Ring). [13] Fort Konstantin. [14] Löhr-Strasse. [15] Rathaus (Town Hall).



Left: The fighting in this part of the city over, Rollins went back one block, to bomb-ravaged Goeben-Platz. Here he came across three Germans — two men (one of them apparently a cook) and a woman — who according to his caption, were



'reputed Gestapo agents'. Right: Goeben-Platz is today named Josef-Görres-Platz, and the bomb-gutted buildings stood on its eastern side. This is the same view today, with Gerichts-Strasse running off on the right.



USNA

Left: As one part of the 2nd Battalion was clearing the north-eastern section of the Old City, another part was doing the same in the streets to the south-west. Lieutenant Weber, whom we last saw at the Lützel railway station, had now crossed the Mosel to the city side and joined Company E of the 2nd Battalion, engaged in fighting in Löhr-Strasse, Koblenz's main shopping street. His first shot showed a machine-gunner covering a Sherman tank of Company B, 735th Tank Battalion, rolling forward to support the advance through the rubble-banked street. Large parts of Löhr-Strasse had been destroyed



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by Allied bombs, including the Kaufhof department store on the right. One of the largest and oldest departments stores in Koblenz, the Kaufhof had until 1933 been an affiliate of the chain owned by Leonard Tietz, a Jewish entrepreneur. To avert dispossession under anti-Semitic legislation, the concern was renamed Westdeutsche Kaufhof AG and put under 'Arian' management in 1933, allowing it to continue in business through the Nazi period. *Right:* Completely rebuilt after the war, and enlarged from Nos. 83-85 to 77-85, the Kaufhof is still one of the city's largest department stores.



USNA

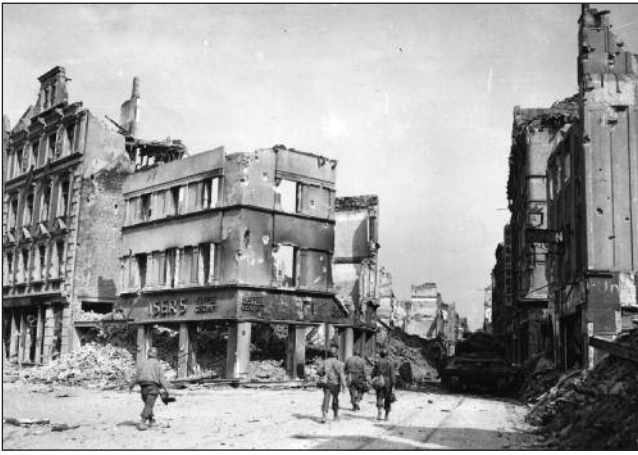
Left: A Company E soldier dashes across Löhr-Strasse under sniper fire. On the right, covering the northern section of the street, stands an M10 of the 607th Tank Destroyer Battalion. *Right:* Weber took the shot at the intersection with Fischel-Strasse, leading off to the left. That street no longer exists,



ATB

having been turned into a shopping venue known as the Fischel-Passage. However, the building on the corner of Kleinschmittgässchen on the right, with its distinctive Madonna statue in a wall alcove, has survived both the bombing and modernisation.

HAACKER



Left: The same intersection, pictured by Charles Haacker after the fighting has moved on. The four men are all carrying cameras so they must be members of the detachment from the 166th Signal Photo Company assigned to cover the Koblenz battle. In addition



ATB

to the four still photographers that we have met — Lieutenant Weber, Pfc Mallinder and Privates Sullivan and Van Maanen — the team included one cine cameraman, Sgt Aaron C. Lubitsh. Right: Löhr-Strasse is now part of Koblenz's pedestrian district.

HAACKER



Three German soldiers, one of them a medic carrying a Red Cross flag, come out of the rubble to surrender. They are in fact on Kaiser-Wilhelm-Ring, the main thoroughfare on the south side of the Old City, and approaching the railway bridge at the western end of it. Just visible on the left is the Herz-Jesu-Kirche.



HAACKER

The German medic, obviously much relieved that he has come through unscathed, is questioned by an officer with the help of an interpreter.

Meanwhile, south of the city, the 347th Infantry was completing its move to the Rhine. During the night Lieutenant Colonel Sutton, the 3rd Battalion commander, was evacuated through medical channels and Major Cecil W. Chapman assumed command. Realising that he would have to make his attack on Brey during the hours of daylight, he decided against a frontal attack and sent Company L around to the rear of the village while Company K covered their manoeuvre by fire. Brey was taken, as were two other villages further south on the river, Niederspays and Oberspays.

Meanwhile, Company F of the 2nd Battalion was still pushing forward under the cover of darkness to cut the river road north of Boppard. At 0500 word was received that they had run into serious trouble and had incurred 20 casualties, including the loss of their company commander, Captain Dahlke. Lieutenant Colonel Bodner immediately sent a platoon from Company E to assist Company F, with a platoon of heavy weapons from Company H as further support. This move was successful and the supply road was cut. Replacing Company F with the balance of Company E, the battalion occupied Jacobsberg Farm and Krieserkopf



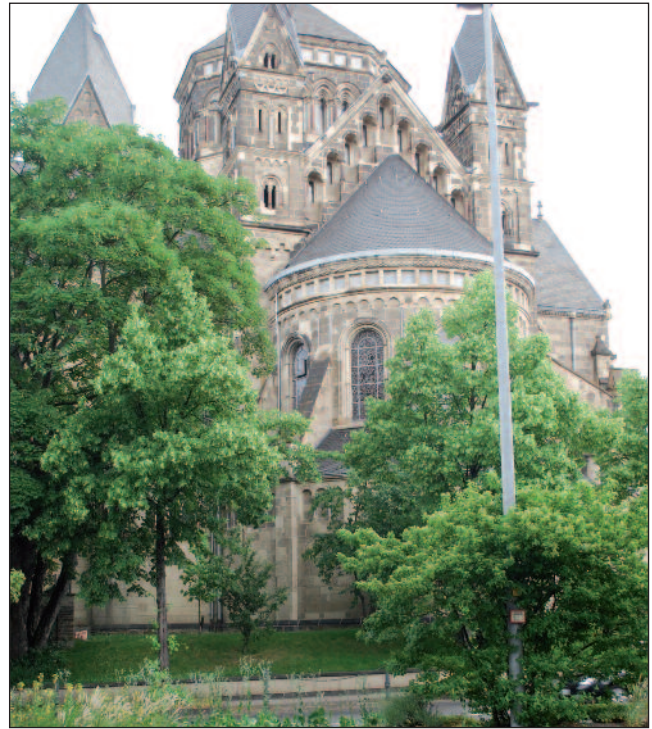
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Kaiser-Wilhelm-Ring is today named Friedrich-Ebert-Ring but this is the same view today.



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The Herz-Jesu-Kirche had been destroyed by fire in the RAF raid of November 6, 1944, and only its gutted shell remained.



ATB

The church was completely rebuilt and restored in 1950-53, to become again one of the city's main landmarks.

with patrols controlling the river road between Company E and the 3rd Battalion at Oberspays.

The rest of that day and the following (March 19), the 347th Infantry, now reinforced by some tanks, spent in clearing enemy pockets in the hills south of Koblenz that had been by-passed in the rapid advance to the Rhine.

With the surrender of Fort Konstantin early on the 19th, Koblenz (i.e. the main city,

west of the Rhine) was announced as cleared of the enemy. Thirty-four German soldiers had fallen in battle and 33 civilians had been killed by American or German shelling. In all, the 87th Division had taken 972 prisoners. Absent from the bag of POWs was the city's Kampfkommandant, Oberstleutnant Löffler. Having led the final stages of the battle from a command post set up in an air raid shelter on Kaiser-Friedrich-Strasse,

together with some 50 men he had escaped across the Rhine late on the 18th. (Nine days later, on March 27, Löffler would be appointed combat commander of Frankfurt-am-Main to replace Generalmajor Friedrich Stemmermann. Taking over in the middle of the battle, three hours later his command post would be struck by an American shell that fatally wounded Löffler and he died later that day. See *After the Battle* No. 154.)



USNA



ATB

Left: Men of the 345th enter the Polizeipräsidium (Police Headquarters) in search of records, pictured by Lieutenant Weber. Above: The Polizeipräsidium building stood on the corner of Kaiser-Wilhelm-Ring (now Friedrich-Ebert-Ring) and Bahnhof-Strasse. The old building has been replaced by a modern office block housing the Kreisverwaltung (district administration) but the two lions at the entrance have been preserved.



USNA

Above: Meanwhile, less than a kilometre to the south-west, the 3rd Battalion was still held up by enemy rifle and machine-gun fire from Fort Konstantin, a fortification built into the slopes of the Beatusberg, an outcrop of the Karthause plateau that overlooks the inner city. Army photographer C. van Maanen pictured men of the battalion running across open space to avoid the fire. We are in fact looking towards the Karthause plateau and Fort Konstantin is just off the picture to the left. The Sherman visible on the left is on Beatus-Strasse that runs along the bottom of the slope.

CLEARING THE EAST BANK OF THE RHINE

Although Koblenz had now been captured, German forces — the remnants of the 267. Volksgrenadier-Division, reinforced with a few Flak, Volksturm and police detachments found on the east bank — were

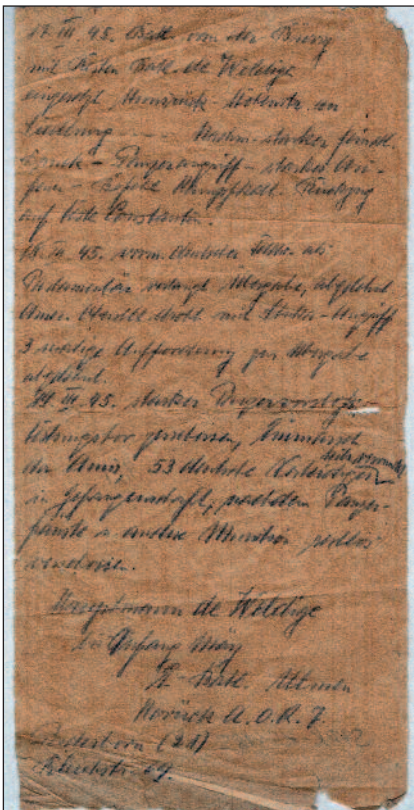
still in position across the Rhine river, directly in front of the city. Their artillery observers had full observation of it from massive Fortress Ehrenbreitstein, perched high on the east bank, and well-directed German artillery and mortar fire continued to come down on anything that moved in the city, even individuals. Sniper and machine-gun fire from across the river was also a risk for any American troops showing themselves in the open.

The 87th Division continued to hold Koblenz and the riverbank south of it for another five days. During the day the men were allowed a chance to rest and clean up but at night extensive patrolling across the Rhine was carried out. The Psychological Warfare team began operations at the river's edge, broadcasting loudspeaker messages to

Below: The house on the right was, and still is, the last one on Linden-Strasse, one of the streets in the Goldgrube residential district. Next to it now stands the Beatus-Bad indoor swimming pool.



ATB



STADTARCHIV KOBLENZ KH 185

TRANSLATION

17. III. 45.

Battalion von der Burry with remnants of Battalion de Weldige deployed on the Hunsrück-Höhenstrasse at the hamlet of . . . [not named]. Strong enemy pressure in the afternoon — attack with armour — strong artillery fire — order from Kampfkommandant to pull back on Feste Konstantin.

18. III. 45.

Morning. A German[-speaking] sergeant as parliamentary demands capitulation, refused. American lieutenant-colonel threatens with dive-bomber attack. Three times call for capitulation, refused.

19. III. 45.

Strong armoured strike forward. Fortress gate blasted with fire, entry of the Americans; 53 German defenders, part of them wounded, go into captivity after all Panzerfäuste and other ammunition has been exhausted.

Hauptmann de Weldige,
Until early March
Reserve-Bataillon Ulmen
Korück AOK 7

Paderborn (21)
Bleichstr. 69

Left and above: After several fruitless attempts to talk it into surrender, the German force holding Fort Konstantin finally gave up on the morning of March 19. The officer commanding the defence, Hauptmann Franz-Josef de Weldige-Cremer, later while in a POW camp, scribbled a brief report — on toilet paper!

the far side. They succeeded in persuading three men, including a representative of the Burgomaster, to brave a crossing from Nieder-Lahnstein. Although German troops fired at them with machine guns and small arms, they crossed unharmed and, on being questioned, reported that the civilian populace was anxious to co-operate but that the Wehrmacht and SS were still in complete control. Another man, who had crossed from Ober-Lahnstein, reported there were 80 Volkssturm troops in that town. They had arrived the day before, relieving the SS troops in the area. Early that morning, the residents had hung out white flags but the troops had forced them to take these down again.

The Germans from their side were active too. On March 25, a German patrol raided central Koblenz, which resulted in some civilians and a smaller US patrol running to the Rathaus (Town Hall) for safety.

It was not until eight days after the cessation of fighting in the city, on March 27, that the east bank opposite Koblenz and the town districts on that side of the river were finally cleared of German troops. On March 26, a task force from the US 69th Infantry Division (Major General Emil F. Reinhardt) crossed into the Remagen bridgehead, which by now extended to within ten kilometres north of Koblenz. Known as Combat Team 272, it comprised two battalions of the 272nd Infantry Regiment, the 1st Battalion of the 273rd Infantry, the 2nd Ranger Battalion, the 777th Tank Battalion, Company B of the 661st Tank Destroyer Battalion, the 62nd, 879th and 955th Field Artillery Battalions, the 269th Engineer Combat Battalion and the 102nd Cavalry Squadron — a strong motorised force of nearly 6,000 men. Operating on the right flank of First Army's break-out from the bridgehead, its mission was to seize the area opposite Koblenz and capture Fortress Ehrenbreitstein.

Starting out at 0630 on the 27th, the force pushed first south-east and a part of it then cut back westwards to the river, arriving opposite Koblenz at mid-morning. The 1st Battalion, 273rd, and 2nd Battalion, 272nd, captured Fortress Ehrenbreitstein in a pincer movement, taking 150 prisoners, and by nightfall had occupied the riverside suburbs of Ehrenbreitstein and Pfaffendorf. Now, finally, both sides of the Rhine at Koblenz were in Allied hands and the city was out of reach of German artillery.

By that time, the 87th Division was no longer garrisoning Koblenz. Four days earlier, on the 23rd, the division had left the area, moving 15 kilometres south, to Boppard, where two days later they carried out an



USNA

The fighting over, the combat photographers went on to document the bomb damage in the city. This is Am Plan, the central square in the Old City, pictured by Pfc Mallinder on March 19.



ATB

With trees and terrace sunshades obstructing a good view of the whole square, Karel took his comparison from the staircase of the former Stadtkommandantur. The square's southern side, wholly demolished by the bombs, has been rebuilt in modern style but some of the 18th-century baroque buildings on the northern side have survived.



USNA

Left: The American Military Government team assigned to govern Koblenz — Detachment F3G2 under Lieutenant Colonel F. W. Reed — set up its headquarters in the Rathaus (Town



ATB

Hall) on Jesuiten-Platz, which had survived the air raids relatively unscathed. Note the American flag hanging from the roof window. Right: The building is still used as Town Hall today.



Left: Sometime after the end of hostilities, a group of airmen from the US Eighth Air Force visited Koblenz, probably combining a survey of the results of their bombing missions with some



sightseeing. Here the men are on Jesuiten-Platz, debussing from the trucks that brought them to the city. Right: The north-eastern corner of the square, looking into Firmungs-Strasse.



Two of the airmen at the Stadthalle, Koblenz's big meeting hall built in 1899-1901, the venue for numerous mass meetings and propaganda events in the Nazi period.



The Stadthalle stood at Am Mainzer Tor. Pulled down after the war, it was replaced by the Rhein-Mosel-Halle, erected in 1959-62 some distance to the rear of where the old building stood.

assault crossing of the Rhine — thus establishing Third Army's second bridgehead across the river after that achieved by the 5th Division at Oppenheim one night earlier (see *After the Battle* No. 16). The crossing went well, although the left-hand regiment, the 347th, had a difficult and heavily-opposed crossing, costing them seven men killed and 110 wounded. By nightfall on the 25th, the regiment had turned north and reached Ober-Lahnstein, where they contacted patrols of the 69th Division two days later.

AFTERMATH

On March 18, as the fighting was still in progress, US Military Government Detachment F3G2 arrived in Koblenz to take over administration of the city. Commanded by Lieutenant Colonel F. W. Reed, it first set up headquarters in the Kemperhof city hospital along Moselweisser Strasse, moving to the Rathaus on Jesuiten-Platz in the city centre on the 20th. Already on the 18th, the Americans had appointed Franz Lanfers, Koblenz's harbour and traffic director, as the new

Oberbürgermeister of the city. Working under close supervision of the MG detachment, Lanfers within a few days had the communal departments back on their feet to organise housing, food, water, electricity and medical care for the some 4,000 civilians remaining in the city. With evacuees returning from the surrounding countryside, the population soon grew to 9,000.

A major task was clearing the debris from blocked roads in the city, for which the Americans required Lanfers to mobilise a work-



Left: The 'Watch on the Rhine' by Pfc Arno T. Gangewere of Company E of the 345th Infantry. Right: The statue is the Görres-Denkmal, honouring the philosopher-publicist Joseph



Görres (1776-1848) who was born in Koblenz. It stands on the bank of the Rhine immediately behind the garden terraces of the Kurfürstliches Schloss, making for an easy comparison.

Right: A soldier looking up at the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Denkmal at the Deutsche Eck, destroyed by American artillery fire on March 16. The destruction of Koblenz's famous landmark, 37 metres high and with the statue alone weighing 17.5 tons, is surrounded by many stories, some true, some false. According to Colonel Robert S. Allen, a member of Patton's G-2 (Intelligence) staff, in his 1947 book *Lucky Forward*, the huge memorial was destroyed at the instigation of the Supreme Commander, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, who reputedly during a meeting at Patton's headquarters on March 16 jovially remarked: 'George, be sure to take a shot for me at that big iron statue of some Kaiser the Germans have at the bend of the Rhine at Coblenz. That hunk of metal would look a lot better at the bottom of the river than stuck up in the air. It would do their culture a lot more good that way.' According to Allen, Patton replied: 'Be delighted, General. We'll take care of that little matter for you without delay. It will be a pleasure'. Shortly after, Lieutenant Charles W. Fletcher, Intelligence Officer of the 174th Field Artillery Group, received a phone call from Brigadier General Halley G. Maddox, the G-3 (Operations Officer) at Third Army Headquarters, who asked him if he had observation of the Deutsche Eck and any guns trained on the area and, if so, that he was to destroy the statue. As he was preparing the fire mission, Fletcher suddenly remembered to consult the Protected Memorials List and, seeing the Kaiser Memorial on it, he telephoned back — the switchboard operators leading him from Group through VIII Corps HQ to Army G-3 — to get confirmation of the order. 'Sir', said Fletcher, 'I don't mean to question your orders but the monument of Emperor Wilhelm is in the book as protected.'



USNA

'Wait a minute', replied Maddox. Shortly after, Fletcher heard a high-pitched voice. 'Are you questioning me?', Patton bellowed into the phone. People of the Third Army don't question Lucky 6! Destroy it! Now having firm orders, Fletcher directed the fire of a heavy 8-inch gun onto the target, which from a distance of ten kilometres lobbed about 20 rounds on it before it finally hit and wrecked the statue. The fire was adjusted by Lieutenant John W. Stuckey, Jr., a forward observer with the 336th Field Artillery Battalion, a unit of the 87th Division, who had clear observation of the statue. (In Codman's account in *Lucky Forward*, the destruction of the statue is credited to dive-bombers of the XIX Tactical Air Command but this is obviously incorrect. In yet another version of the story, Patton ordered the statue to be destroyed after seeing it during a reconnaissance flight over Koblenz.)



DPA/OLIVER BERG

The wrecked statue was removed after the war and for over 38 years only the huge stone base remained. Then on September 2, 1993, as a result of a local civilian initiative and after much



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controversy and political debate, a replica of the 14-metre-tall statue was placed on the pedestal, restoring Koblenz's historic landmark to its former glory.



USNA

Left: The massive Fortress Ehrenbreitstein, on the east bank of the Rhine and dominating the city below, was not finally captured until March 27, eight days after the fall of the main city. Here two GIs from the 69th Infantry Division enjoy the view from the top of the



ATB

fortress. The Mosel bridges are clearly visible and the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Denkmal can just be seen above the stock of the soldier's carbine. **Right:** They were looking out from the parapet of the Obere Schlossohof (upper castle yard), the fortress's main courtyard.

force of 2,000. The populace proved unwilling and even when a round-up had caught 1,000 adult men, half of them proved too old or too weak to be of use. Lanfers would stay in office until June 8, when he was removed (probably because of his membership of the Nazi party) and replaced by Wilhelm Kurth, a social-democratic labour union secretary.

After the departure of the 87th Division from Koblenz, occupation duties within the city were taken over by the 69th Division. After they had left on April 13, the 54th Anti-Aircraft Brigade took over. They in turn were relieved on May 20 by the 66th Infantry Division, who in turn were replaced by the 35th Division six days later.

On April 6, Army Day for the Americans, a special ceremony was held in the courtyard of Fortress Ehrenbreitstein. Twenty-two years earlier, on January 24, 1923, the American flag had been lowered at the fort to mark the end of four and a half years of American occupation of the Rhineland after the First World War. Now this same flag,



USNA

Finale at Ehrenbreitstein. On April 6, 1945 — Army Day — the Americans staged a special ceremony to celebrate the capture of Koblenz. Twenty-two years after the Stars and Stripes had been lowered at the Ehrenbreitstein on January 24, 1923 — the occasion being the cessation of American occupation of the Rhineland after the First World War — the very same flag was again hoisted over the fortress. It had been retained since 1923 in a case on the wall of the Secretary of War's office in Washington and was brought back specially for the occasion, Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy accompanying it to Germany.



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Attending the ceremony, which was organised by the 28th and 69th Divisions, were more than 20 generals and combat soldiers representing every division, corps and army in the US 12th Army Group. A platoon of soldiers selected from all companies of the 69th's 272nd Infantry received the colours from members of the 4th Infantry Division, the unit that had been at Koblenz in 1923, prior to it being raised. The Guard of Honour was provided by Company E of the 110th Infantry, 28th Division, and the 28th Division band played throughout the ceremony.



LECARDEUR

Addressing the assembled troops, General Omar N. Bradley of the 12th Army Group said: 'Today in victory, Americans acknowledge with gratitude the sacrifice and hardships of their

Allies. The flag here raised is a signal of triumph, and a banner of hope, the hope of united nations that this time its significance will endure.'

especially flown back from Washington, was raised once again over the city — the first Stars and Stripes to be officially hoisted on German territory. The ceremony was presided over by Lieutenant General Omar N. Bradley, the commander of the US 12th Army Group, and Major General Reinhardt, the commander of the 69th Division. In attendance were US Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy; three American army commanders — Lieutenant Generals Courtney H. Hodges of First Army, Patton of Third Army and William H. Simpson of Ninth Army — and detachments of combat soldiers representing every American division in the 12th Army Group.

However, the American presence in Koblenz would only last a little under four months. This part of Germany fell within the French Zone of Occupation and so on July 10 the US forces left the area and French troops moved in to establish their occupational administration. Their rule would last for ten years, until May 1955.



ATB



LECARDEUR

Left: The army and air force generals posing for the benefit of the Press photographers: (L-R) Patton of Third Army, Major General Otto P. Weyland of the XIX Tactical Air Force; Bradley of the 12th Army Group; Major General Hoyt Vandenberg of



ATB

the Ninth Air Force; Lieutenant General Courtney H. Hodges of the First Army, and Major General Elwood 'Pete' Quesada of the IX Tactical Air Command. Right: The balcony overlooking the Deutsche Eck provides a timeless comparison.

Right: On August 13, 1944, troops of the German 157. Reserve-Division made a surprise attack on a small force of French Maquis fighters at Lake Poursollet, high up in the Oisans mountains south-east of Grenoble in the French Alps. Outnumbered by the enemy force, in the ensuing battle several of the Maquis were killed, the Germans also setting fire to the chalets near the lake before they left. Right: Although the precise origin of this photo (one of a number showing members of the same maquisard group) is unknown, their uniforms — with alpine beret, shorts and jacket — are reminiscent of that worn by the men of Compagnie Stéphane, one of the Maquis groups active in the Grenoble and Maurienne areas (see *After the Battle* No. 97).

From late 1943, the German command in the West became alarmed by the increase in number and size of resistance groups all over France and issued orders for their annihilation. Those in the Alps mountains in the south-east of the country were the most worrying for they posed a threat to the Rhône valley — the vital artery for the German forces holding the Mediterranean coastline — and the 157. Reserve-Division, a training formation stationed in the area, was switched to anti-guerrilla operations. Starting in February 1944, Generalleutnant Heinrich Niehoff, the Kommandant Heeresgebiet Südfrankreich (Commander Army Area Southern France) employed the division in a series of operations in an effort to destroy the various resistance forces in his region: Operation 'Korporal' in February against the Maquis in the southern part of the Ain department; Operation 'Hoch Savoyen' against the Glières stronghold in the Haute-Savoie in March; Operation 'Frühling' in the Jura in April, and Operation 'Bettina', a major undertaking to wipe out the strong Resistance force that had assembled on the Vercors plateau, south-west of Grenoble, in July (see *After the Battle* No. 174).

The Vercors experience having painfully shown that it was futile to try to oppose a strong German attack in open warfare, Capitaine Alain Le Ray (nom de guerre 'Bastide'), the commander of the FFI in the Isère department, ordered a general withdrawal of his maquisards to higher up in the valleys and onto the mountain heights.



TRAGEDY AT LAKE POURSOLLET

The FFI in the Isère region was divided up in eight sectors. Sector 1 comprised Grenoble and the Oisans, the mountainous region east of the city, and was commanded by Capitaine André Lespiau ('Lanvin'), the forces under him consisting of five so-called Groupes Mobiles. At the end of July, 'Lanvin' sent his groups a note warning them of the anticipated German attack.

About August 10 'Lanvin' directed his Groupe Mobile 3 to occupy the sector of La Morte, a hamlet 1350 metres high up in the mountains, in order to take control of a mountain road over the south-western tip of the Oisans, and thus be in a position to mount aggressive operations in the valley below.

Groupe Mobile 3 was commanded by Lieutenant Pierre Volait ('Porte') and the elements of the group that reached the La Morte sector by August 10 were the 1ère Section commanded by Aimé Berthollet ('Bison'), the 2ème Section led by Adjudant Louis Greiner ('Marceau'), the machine-gun section, a logistic section (Intendance) and the medical section (Poste de Secours Ambulance).

His group reaching La Morte, Lieutenant 'Porte' did not take up position at the village but moved his force on to Lake Poursollet, some 300 metres higher, directing elements to take up a position halfway up the slope from where they could overlook and observe La Morte. This odd tactical move appears to have been aimed more towards resting the troops at the lake than to comply with 'Lanvin's orders. After the war, this move was the point of a long-running dispute between 'Lanvin' and 'Porte', the former reproaching his ex-subordinate for not following orders and thereby putting the group in a situation that resulted in the tragedy of August 13.

GERMAN ATTACKS

The elimination of the Vercors stronghold in July had not really changed the situation for the Germans in the Alps: the threat presented by the various resistance forces was stronger than ever. Wanting to gain control of at least the key roads leading from the Rhône valley to the Alpine passes along the border with Italy, Generalleutnant Niehoff now planned a new series of operations.

By Jean Paul Pallud

Jointly code-named 'Hochsommer', they aimed at clearing simultaneously the Romanche valley east of Grenoble and the Tarentaise valley from Albertville to the Petit-Saint-Bernard pass further north.

To clear the Romanche valley, the 157. Reserve-Division assembled four battle groups that were to attack from various sides and converge at Bourg d'Oisans. The force committed included some 3,000 men from various units of the division plus Ost-Bataillon 781, an outfit made up of 'Osttruppen' (Eastern troops), i.e. Soviet Red Army soldiers captured on the Eastern Front and coerced into fighting with the German army. Teams of Sipo/SD personnel were assigned to the various battle groups, their task being to interrogate prisoners, gather intelligence and carry out reprisals. The plan was to deport all male members of the population aged between 16 to 55 years to forced labour in Germany, whether they had supported the Maquis or not. All



MRDI

One of the Maquis units that was involved in the battle at Poursollet was Section 'Porte' of Groupe Mobile 3 of Sector 1 of the Isère FFI. *Left:* On August 6, Lieutenant Pierre Volait ('Porte') was pictured reviewing his section in Lavaldens, a village on the mountain road leading to La Mure over the south-western



CÉCILE BOIRAUD

tip of the Oisans. They received their unit flag — red and gold, the colours of Grenoble — at the parade, the ceremony ending with the lieutenant laying a wreath at the war memorial. *Right:* The WW1 memorial still stands unchanged by the side of the church, guarded by the same two shells for nearly a century.

vehicles were to be confiscated and it was also planned to carry off all raw materials that could be found, like aluminium, magnesium and carbide, and special recovery teams from Feld-Wirtschafts-Kommando 9 were to accompany the battle groups to carry out this task.

The operation began on August 8. Generally, the German troops behaved less savagely in the Romanche than they had done in the Vercors, although two companies of Ost-Bataillon 781, advancing from Briançon, behaved with utmost brutality, shooting over a dozen men along the way and ransacking the villages of La Grave and Villar d'Arènes. At Bourg d'Oisans, a Sipo/SD team executed eight hostages on August 14 and 15.

Faced with a Maquis refusing to be engaged in frontal battle, the operation in the Romanche valley was inconclusive and it was called off on August 17. Owing to lack of transport the male population could not be deported as planned, nor could any raw materials be removed.

The second part of Operation 'Hochsommer' started in the Tarentaise valley on August 10, with a smaller force under Major Johann Kolb of around 1,500 to 1,800 men from the 157. Reserve-Division with some artillery in support. It was more successful and, when it ended on the 16th, the Maquis forces there had been largely disrupted and the valley was passable to German convoys.



USNA

On the night of August 21/22, eight days after they had surprised the Maquis in the mountains, the Germans evacuated Grenoble. Resistance fighters took control of the city the following morning and the first American troops — men of Company K of the 143rd Infantry Regiment, 36th Division — arrived in the afternoon. These GIs were pictured in front of the railway station.



USNA



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Early in September 1944, Capitaine André Jullien ('Briançon') led a party of maquisards and German prisoners up into the mountains to look for the bodies of the victims of the fight at the lake. *Left:* Having driven up to La Morte, the group started up the mule track towards Poursollet. *Above:* The track has since been tarmaced all the way up to a parking area near the lake.



USNA



ATB

Accompanying them was Sergeant George Aarons, a staff photographer from the US Army magazine, *Yank*, who took these pictures. *Left*: The POWs at the head of the column were carrying six coffins, four men to a coffin, while those in the rear were carrying picks and shovels for exhuming the bodies from their temporary graves. *Above*: Aarons took the picture some 100 metres from where the vehicles were parked.

SURPRISE AT LAKE POURSOLLET

It was during the operation in the Romanche valley that a tragedy occurred at Lake Poursollet. On August 12, one of the German groups combing the area reached La Morte. That afternoon, a reconnaissance patrol sent by Groupe Mobile 3 to Lac Fourchu, a lake to the east of Poursollet, spotted some Germans on top of a distant ridge and they opened fire, with no visible result for they were well out of range. If it had previously escaped German attention, these shots now revealed the presence of a Resistance force up in the mountains.

That evening, Lieutenant 'Porte' summoned the commanders of all his sections to his command post located in one of the chalets on the banks of the lake. The conference was tense for while some wanted to stay in these positions, others argued that they were unsafe and urged to leave. Finally, it was agreed that 'Bison', the commander of the 1ère Section, would take a ten-man party down to the Romanche valley to scout out a possible escape route northwards to reach the Allemont valley.

At 4 a.m. on August 13, the party started down and soon reached a point overlooking the village of Rioupéroux. They soon observed that contrary to what was thought, the Germans were already in the valley in force so it was no longer safe to cross to the other side. About 10 a.m. 'Bison' cancelled the plan and the party started back to Poursollet.

Exactly how many members of Groupe Mobile 3 were present at the lake that morning is difficult to establish, the best estimate being around 50 men and women. Section 'Marceau' (the 2ème Section) was in the woods, hidden from view, but Section 'Porte' ('Bison's 1ère Section which was still, confusingly, named after its former commander, now group commander, Lieutenant 'Porte'), with the group's HQ staff were positioned near the lake and surrounding chalets — an unsound tactical set-up.

For some reason, the party that Lieutenant 'Porte' had ordered to take up position halfway on the slope to observe La Morte was not in place that morning, and the German attack took the resistance fighters completely by surprise. The fact that the German Kampfgruppe had been able to reach Poursollet Lake without being detected is indicative both of their remarkably swift and silent manoeuvre, and of a dramatic lack of security by the resistance group.

In a later report, 'Marceau', the commander of the 2ème Section, stated that the German party was 600 strong, with 200 pack mules, but this figure can only refer to the German battle group then operating in the whole sector. No document has survived giving the number of men deployed in the Poursollet operation but historians today think their strength was between 100 and 150, including support elements.

Exactly which unit from the 157. Reserve-Division made the attack is unknown but since

the force appears to have had mules, it was most likely a Gebirgsjäger battalion and not an Ost-Bataillon or a unit from a Sicherungs- or Polizei-Regiment. As several battalions of the division — notably Reserve-Gebirgsjäger-Bataillon 100, Reserve-Grenadier-Bataillon 179 and Reserve-Artillerie-Abteilung 79 — were currently engaged in the Tarentaise valley further north, this leaves Reserve-Gebirgsjäger-Bataillon 99, I./98 and II./98 and possibly Reserve-Pionier-Battalion 7 as possible candidates.



USNA

With a climb of over 300 metres from La Morte to the lakeside chalets, one of the participants, Gérard Langlois, recalled that it took an arduous hike of two hours along the mule track to reach the top.



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Left: German prisoners lifting the body of a dead Maquis from his field grave into a coffin. Above: Clouds hid the top of the Taillefer mountain on the afternoon when Jean Paul visited the spot.

What happened at the lake was later described by one of the survivors, André Baroz ('Canard'):

'Charly Vallin's group, the logistic group and the medical staff were enjoying a rest. Some were making their toilet, others were having breakfast. Two of the boys even went to pick up flour, milk and eggs from locals, planning to make pancakes. Around ten o'clock an aircraft flew over the site. This was not the first time and everyone hid from view under the pine trees. Suddenly, men dressed in what looked like the uniform of the Chantiers de la Jeunesse advanced into the open. "How careless they are!" said one of the resistance fighters. [Originally a paramilitary youth organisation set up by the Vichy regime, the Chantiers de la Jeunesse later during the war had many of its members join the Maquis.]

'Jean Gilly suddenly shouted "The Chleuhs!" and the approaching men started

to fire. [Originally the name of a Berber ethnicity in North Africa, the term Chleuh was used during the First World War to indicate French colonial troops. After the war it came to signify people who spoke a foreign language and from the late 1930s it was generally used as a derisive term for the Germans, an alternative for the more-common 'Les Boches'.] Jean set up the light machine gun and returned fire. Charly and Jeannot Duby were near him, also firing back. The machine gun was soon silenced, Jean was killed. Jeannot shouted "Charly, we should fall back!" Jeannot thought he heard an answer, "You go first, I'll follow!", then nothing more. Charly was dead.'

The surprised resistance fighters escaped as best they could but Sergeant Georges Armand was soon killed. Pierre Couprie, his deputy, was wounded but with the help of a comrade succeeded in getting away and reach Ornon. Sous-Lieutenant Émile Pardé,

the doctor, was wounded in his flight, quickly caught by the Germans and shot. The Germans then proceeded to set fire to all chalets near the lake although they let the inhabitants leave unhurt.

The group under 'Bison', returning from their scouting mission, was not far from the lake when they heard the first shots and they soon came across one of the nurses of the medical group who had made her escape. She then told them of a surprise attack by the Germans. 'Bison' then gave the order that had been agreed for such cases, which was to hide the weapons and disperse in small groups. With some difficulty, his party succeeded in evading the German cordon to reach Échirrolles, then Allevard.

Some of the escaped maquisards were later caught by the Germans down in the valley and shot. Among them was Max Robert, arrested at Gavet on August 19 and executed on the banks of the Romanche river.



USNA



USNA

Left: 'POWs arrive at the grave of a maquisard, they stand at attention with hats removed', reads Sergeant Aarons' caption to this photograph. This was the grave of Charly Vallin, killed in combat on August 13. Right: With the six bodies now recovered, all the sealed coffins were positioned in a clearing.

As the POWs and guards stood at attention, a priest then intoned prayers over each coffin. In the left foreground stands André Pardé, the father of Émile Pardé, the Maquis doctor who was grievously wounded and shot out of hand on August 13.



USNA



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Left: The maquisards made the German POWs carry the coffins down the steep path, passing the burnt-out shells of the chalets fired by the Germans. In his caption, Aarons referred to the soldiers as being from the 'Bavarian division', no doubt referring to the 157. Reserve-Division, which originated from Munich in Bavaria. Above: The chalets were rebuilt after the war, though not to the same designs. Looming in the distance is the summit of Grand Galbert, 2561 metres high.

It has been determined that 21 resistance fighters were killed as a result of this German anti-guerrilla operation. Eight were killed on August 13 near the lake itself: three men from Section 'Porte' (Jean Gilly, Georges Armand and Charly Vallin), one from the machine-gun section (Roger Chariglione), one from the medical section (Emile Pardé), one unknown North African, probably also from the machine-gun section, and two civilians whose particular engagement in the resistance is not known (Moïse Koifman and Pierre Rimey-Meille). In the days that followed, 13 other maquisards who had managed to escape were apprehended and shot: three from Section 'Marceau' on the 14th, one from Section 'Marceau' on the 16th and another of the same section on the 17th; and one from Section 'Porte' on the 18th, with six men killed from Section 'Marceau' and one from Section 'Porte' on the 19th. The various plaques commemorating the incident are confused and inaccurate, the main one at the lake listing two men (George Duffaud and Max Robert) as being killed there when they lost their lives on August 19 in the valley below. Also two men from Section 'Porte' commemorated on the plaque in fact survived the tragedy. They both later enrolled in the French Army, Robert Brandemburger being subsequently killed on April 19, 1945, at Willstätt, Germany, and Jean Masse-Navette on December 15, 1946, in Indochina. Centre right: Charly Vallin was killed on August 13 on a hill near the lake; a cross now marks the precise spot where he died — [B] on the sketch map. Far right: Doctor Émile Pardé fell wounded and was shot by the Germans in the meadows of the Pré d'Ornon, some distance above the lake to the south-east; another cross now commemorates the spot — [D] on the sketch map.



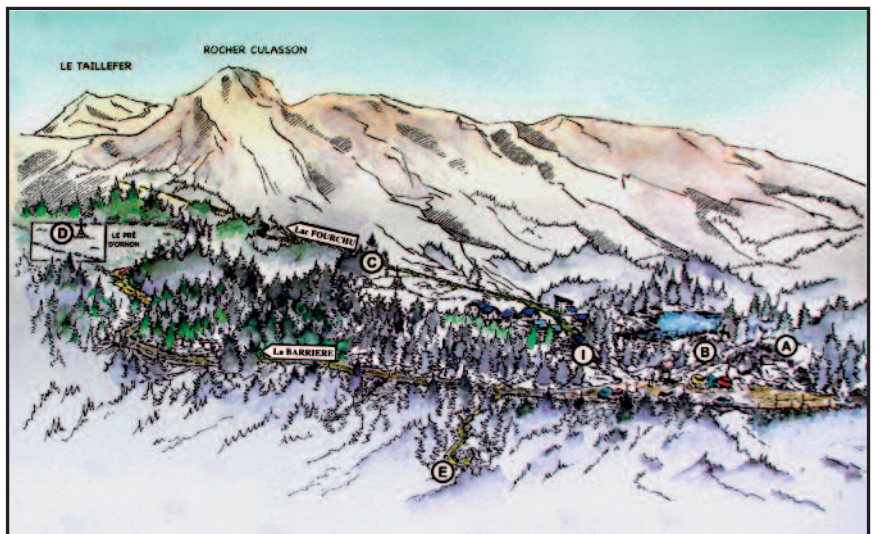
MRDI



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Another was Georges Duffaud who was hiding in the woods near Rioupéroux. On August 19, he went down to try to obtain some bread, was surprised by a German patrol, forced to dig his own grave and then shot.

On August 18, warned of the swift approach of American armoured Task Force Butler from the south (see *After the Battle* No. 110), Generalleutnant Karl Pflaum, the commander of the 157. Reserve-Division, called off Operation 'Hochsommer', recalled



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Inaugurated in 2004, this map was mounted on a rock near the parking place at the top of the road, a few hundred metres from Lake Poursollet. A plaque next to it gives a brief account of the drama of August 1944. The places where maquisards fell are marked: [A] Jean Gilly. [B] Charly Vallin. [C] Georges Armand. [D] Emile Pardé. [E] Roger Chariglione. [I] Pierre Rimey-Meille.

the troops still mopping up in the Oisans and assembled his forces in Grenoble. Some of his units, too isolated in the mountains to be able to join up with the main force in time, were ordered to move eastwards and reach Italy under their own steam. On the 21st, the vanguard of the US 36th Infantry Division — elements of the 143rd Infantry Regiment — reached Vif, 20 kilometres south of Grenoble. That night, the Germans evacuated the town, blowing the bridges over the Drac river before they left. Resistance fighters took control of the city the following morning and Company K of the 143rd Infantry moved in at 1 p.m.

Many of the marquisards soon enrolled in the 1ère Armée, moving northwards to the Alsace and into Germany, or in the French brigades fighting in the Alps (see *After the Battle* No. 97). They would keep on fighting as regular soldiers until the end of the war.

RECOVERING THE BODIES

Before the men left the area, Capitaine André Jullien (nom de guerre 'Briançon'), the chief of intelligence on the Sector 1 staff, led a party from Section 'Porte' to search for the bodies of the victims of the battle at Poursollet Lake, taking a group of German prisoners with them to carry the coffins. Accompanying them was Sergeant George Aarons, a staff photographer of the US Army weekly *Yank*, who had arrived in Grenoble in the wake of the American troops that had landed in the Riviera. Though local sources say the recovery took place on August 26, Aarons dated his photos as being taken on September 8. He wrote that bodies of those killed had already been cared for except for six that were found.

One of the party, Gérard Langlois, later recorded: 'We drove up in lorries as high as the road permitted, up to La Morte, then hiked for about two hours along mule tracks. To recover the bodies, put them into coffins, and then scramble down to the lorries was a really unpleasant task. We realised that the prisoners thought we planned to shoot them where our comrades had fallen, in retaliation. Back at the lorries, before returning to Grenoble, Briançon addressed the prisoners in German, explaining the meaning of our struggle.'

Today, plaques and crosses spread across the forest in the vicinity of Poursollet Lake, at the precise spots where the bodies were found, recall the names of those who were killed.

Right: The junction at La Morte from where the D114E starts downhill. This is the same stretch of road that we saw looking in the opposite direction on page 31. A dirt road in 1944, it has now been tarmaced.



USNA

Though this picture was actually taken at the commencement of the recovery operation, it matches the scene described by Gérard Langlois of the prisoners lining up to be addressed by Capitaine 'Briançon' prior to returning to Grenoble. Aarons noted that the man in right foreground was one of the survivors: possibly Gérard Langlois.



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Left: On the height overlooking the hamlet from the east stands a stone monument topped by a cross, its plaque (right) listing the names of those killed on August 13 'on this mountain which they were holding for France': Georges Armand,



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Roger Chariglione, Jean Gilly, Moïse Koïfman, Émile Pardé, Pierre Rimey-Meille and Charly Vallin. Another plaque mounted on a nearby rock records that this is the exact spot where Georges Armand was killed – [C] on the map.



THE AXIS-HELD ISLAND OF RHODES

By Gail Ramsey

The Greek island of Rhodes — the largest in the ‘Dodecanese’ (meaning the group of 12 islands) — has throughout history been coveted by many empires. It became part of the Ottoman conquest in 1522; then the Kingdom of Italy occupied the Dodecanese following the Balkan Wars of 1912-13. In the Venizelos-Tittoni Agreement at the end of the First World War, Italy promised to give up the overwhelmingly Greek-inhabited islands in the Aegean — except Rhodes — to Greece, but this treaty was never implemented due to the Greek-Turkish war of 1920-22. With the

Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 the Dodecanese including Rhodes was formally annexed by Italy as the *Possedimenti Italiani dell’Egeo*. During the Second World War Rhodes was taken from the Italians by the Germans following the armistice in 1943, and after two years of German occupation the island was liberated by the Allies in 1945 and officially returned to Greece in 1947.

Since 1925 Italy had been governed by a regime under Benito Mussolini and in May 1939 the Nazi-Fascist alliance was extended further with the signing of the Pact of Friend-

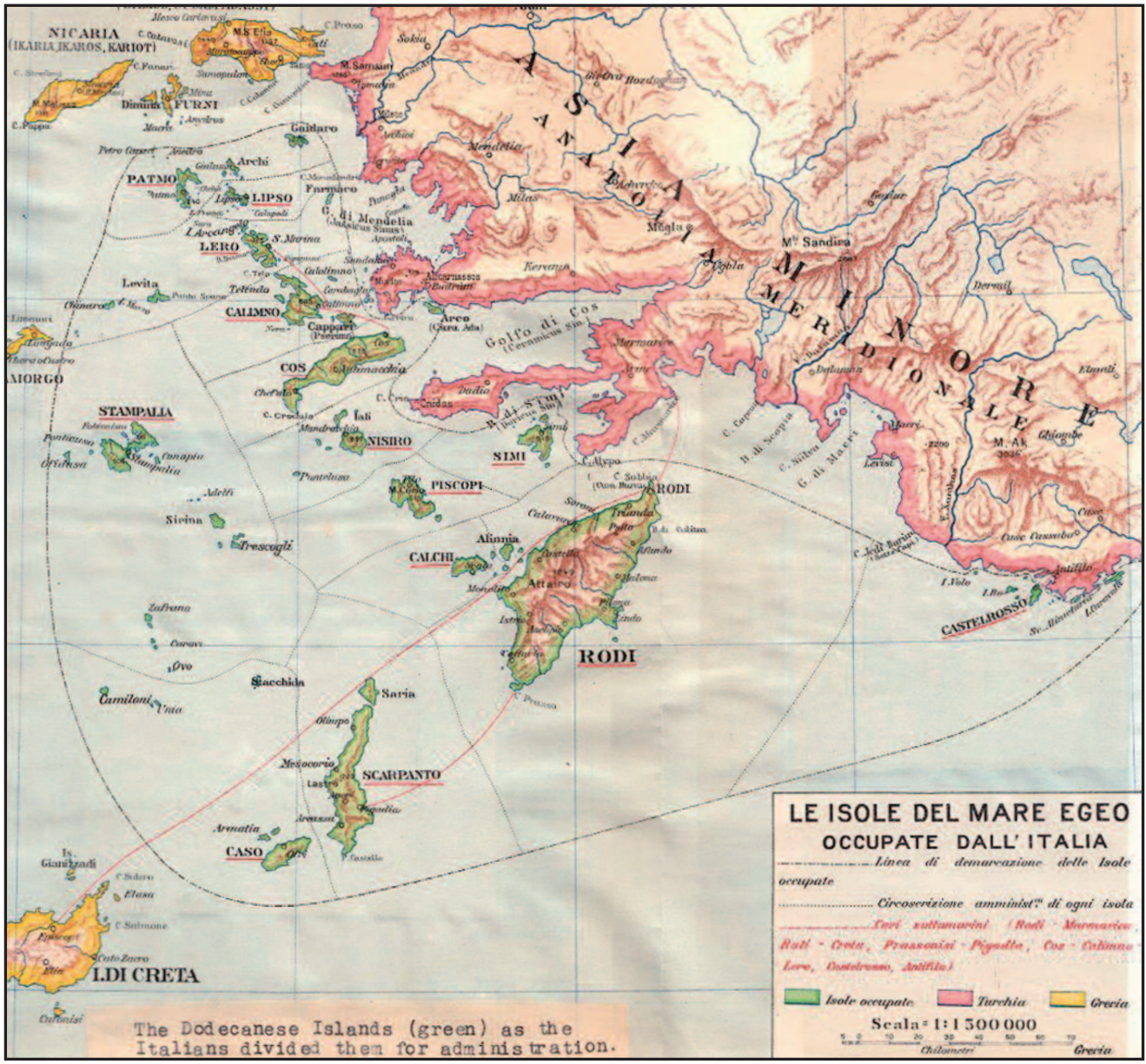
ship and Alliance between Germany and Italy, informally called the ‘Pact of Steel’.

Although Admiral Inigo Campioni was governor of the Dodecanese at that time, and had his headquarters in the Palace of the Grand Master of the Knights on the island of Rhodes, Rear Admiral Carlo Daviso di Charvensod was actually the commander of the Royal Italian forces throughout the island group.

Above: Cesare Maria De Vecchi, commander of the *Milizia* (Blackshirts), is seen here taking the salute on Plateia Eleftherias in the capital of Rhodes in November 1939. He was an early convert to the Italian National Fascist Party, which had its beginnings under Benito Mussolini in 1915. The party ruled Italy following the March on Rome in 1922 with the aim of restoring and expanding Italian territories. The fascists claimed that modern Italy was the heir to ancient Rome and its legacy, and it supported the creation of an Italian Empire to provide ‘living space’ so that its settlers could establish total control over the Mediterranean. During the Italo-Turkish War in 1911, Italian forces had occupied the Dodecanese islands but agreed to return them to the Ottoman Empire under the First Treaty of Lausanne in 1912. However, the vagueness of the wording allowed a provisional Italian administration of the islands to be set up and in 1923 Turkey eventually renounced all claims on the islands, the largest of which was Rhodes. De Vecchi served as the governor of the Aegean Islands from 1936-40.



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Occupied by Italy, the Dodecanese (in green) were nominally the 12 main islands but also included over 150 smaller islands.

On October 28, 1940, with Germany having already successfully invaded Western Europe, Italy launched attacks into Greece from Italian-held Albania. Mussolini not only wanted to prove that Italians could equal the Germans, but he also regarded south-eastern Europe as lying within Italy's sphere of influence.

While fighting to gain control of Greece continued, the movement of the British forces to Greece began in earnest on March 4, 1941 with troops and supplies pouring in to the country. The strategic importance of Rhodes had not gone unnoticed by British Prime Minister Winston Churchill who had already advised General Archibald Wavell,

the Commander-in-Chief Middle East, that 'we should not delay the capture of Rhodes which we regard as most urgent'. The successful seizure of the island was to be the first step in the British plan to help Greece and hopefully draw both Turkey and Yugoslavia into the Allied camp to build up a battlefield in the Balkans.



On August 7, 1941, Mussolini's son Bruno was killed when his Piaggio P.108B prototype crashed at Pisa. This memorial



service for him was held outside the Town Hall of Rhodes, unfortunately an area now constantly used as a car park.

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The last Governor of the islands was Admiral Inigo Campioni, seen here in 1942 inspecting a parade on the other side of the road.

However, Germany strengthened the Italian army's position with Operation 'Marita' — the German invasion of Greece — taking Athens on April 27. Within five weeks, with the capture of Crete (see *After the Battle* No. 47), along with the Aegean islands including Rhodes that were already Italian, all of Greece was now under Axis occupation.

With the British now pushed back, due to its geographical proximity to Crete and having both harbours and airfields, Rhodes became the key to controlling a much larger area. In an attempt to try to reduce Axis air power in the Mediterranean, in September 1942 a British commando raid was carried out against the two airfields on the island. Operation 'Anglo' (see *After the Battle* No. 112) was aimed at Maritsa and Gadurra/Kalathos airfields which were used by German and Italian bombers on Rhodes to attack Royal Navy convoys. A small group made up of eight British Special Boat Section commandos, aided by four Greek resistance fighters, managed to destroy several aircraft although ten of the party were captured.



The building on the right of Plateia Eleftherias is the Prefecture.



ATB



Early in 1943, German troops began arriving on the island of Rhodes. This shot of officers conversing with Italian Blackshirts was taken in June that year in the Old Town. It was here that the Governor used the Palace of the Grand Master for his headquarters.



The walled fortress dated back to the Middle Ages and in 1500 it was the strongest of any Christian bastion in the world, but after having been possessed by the Knights Templar for two centuries, it fell to Ottoman control following a siege in 1522. This is the inside of the Thalassini (Marine) Gate.

Churchill had already referred to Italy as 'the soft underbelly of the Axis', so, following the Allied victory in North Africa in May 1943, Sicily was invaded in July (see *After the Battle* No. 77). The same month Mussolini was deposed and the armistice with Italy signed at Cassibile on September 3 broke up the existing alliance between the country and Germany.

The Germans however were not unprepared for the change of circumstances. German troops had first arrived on Rhodes in January 1943 and since then numbers had steadily increased, several attempts being made to put 'The Italian Armed Forces in

the Aegean' (Egeomi) under German control. A pair of 88mm guns were brought to the island to help strengthen air defences, on the premise that the Germans would leave once the Italians had been trained in their use, but in actual fact they stayed on and three further batteries were brought in. This was then followed by specialist personnel arriving to assess and prepare for constructing further coastal defences.

In April the German position was further strengthened when a German motorised assault battalion arrived on the island for manoeuvres. Three additional German bat-

talions arrived in May and they were followed by inspection visits from German officials including Generalfeldmarschall Albert Kesselring, the Oberbefehlshaber Süd. At the end of June, giving no prior notice to the Italians, Generalmajor Ulrich Kleemann arrived announcing that he was taking command of the German troops on the island which became the Sturmdivision Rhodos. Generalfeldmarschall Maximilian von Weichs, commander of Heeresgruppe F, also visited the island giving Kleemann instructions on the course of action to be taken if the Italians initiated a peace process.



On the waterfront side of the gate, a Sturmgeschütz III prepares to move out from the port where it has just been unloaded.





Another StuG III of Panzer-Abteilung Rhodos drives north along Akti Sachtouri past the twin towers of the imposing Marine Gate.

At the time of the armistice the Sturmdivision Rhodos had grown into a proficient well-armed and mobile division of 7,000 men with about 150 armoured fighting vehicles and, to the annoyance of the Italians, it also included a group of 300 Greeks in German uniform.

By comparison the Italian garrison on the island stood at around 34,000, far outnumbering the Germans although they were poorly equipped, lacked mobility as they only had several dozen old vehicles, and were dispersed across the island. The troops largely comprised elements of the 50th Infantry Division 'Regina' under Generale Michele Scaroina, notably the 9th and 309th Infantry Regiments (the third regiment, the 10th, was stationed on Kos) and the 50th Artillery Regiment, plus the 35th, 36th and 55th Static Artillery groups and the 56th Anti-Aircraft Artillery group.

The Italian Navy — the Regia Marina — in Rhodes was under Commander Adriano Arcangioli who had eight coastal batteries and several anti-aircraft batteries. Although these were spread over the island's large coastline, none of the locations were provided with radio contact. Naval personnel on the island totalled around 2,100.

The Regia Aeronautica under Commodore Alberto Briganti was around 3,000 strong and had 65 aircraft in Rhodes, yet of that fleet, the torpedo bombers previously at the Gadura airfield near Kalathos had returned to Italy, the base having become unusable following earlier bombing by the RAF. This left Maritsa as the only active airfield with 17 bombers and 40 fighters although ten were unserviceable with only 20 pilots. A flying boat was based at Mandraki for the transportation of officials, and a few rescue aircraft.

On September 1 Generale Arnaldo Forgiero arrived on the island to establish the Rhodes Military Command and take charge of the Royal Italian Army forces based there.

As at the time of the armistice the Italian troops on the island far outnumbered the German so the Allies hoped that the Governor, Admiral Campioni, might be willing to seize control of the entire island and create an alliance with the British. If this happened

it would also provide access to the remainder of the Dodecanese island chain, thereby causing serious problems for the Germans in relation to their supply line to Crete. Should Campioni agree, the British planned to fly in troops to assist the Italians with disarming the Sturmdivision Rhodos.

However both the British and the Italians failed to appreciate the speed in which events would unfold and just how prepared the Germans were for the Italian defection. The



ATB



Circumventing the harbour, the panzers rumble past walls that have shielded the Old City and Palace from many invaders. Now, with the Italian armistice, fighting was about to break



out between the two Axis allies. The Italian garrison on the island was in excess of 30,000 men whereas the German strength was only 7,000 although superior in armour.



The Italian Army headquarters was located at Campochiaro, near the centre of the island. This particular ceremony was

held on October 17, 1943 to mark the re-arming of those Italian troops who were willing to remain loyal to the Axis.

request for this alliance was to be delivered to Campioni personally by Major George Jellicoe (the 2nd Earl of Jellicoe and son of the admiral) who was to parachute into Rhodes from a Halifax on September 8. Unfortunately fog delayed his arrival by 24 hours, the same weather conditions also holding up instructions from the Italian Supreme Command to Campioni regarding the armistice which left him totally in the dark.

Unaware of these events, that evening Campioni was entertaining some German officials at his residence. Midway through dinner it is said that Campioni found out about the armistice from the wife of one of the Germans who had apparently heard it on the radio. The admiral chose not to react to the news, allowing his guests to return to their base as normal. However, as soon as General Kleemann became aware, he approached Campioni late the same evening to negotiate terms, both leaders agreeing that each side would remain as they currently were until a solution was reached. Campioni was reluctant to initiate any action as he was fully aware that despite their superior numbers, the Italians would stand little chance against the well-armoured and mobile Germans who already held key positions around Rhodes township. Nevertheless, despite what had just been agreed, the Germans immediately moved to take over the airfield and the port, forcing Campioni to instruct his troops to take action.



After the war, the buildings were used by the Sanatorium St Eleousa to treat patients from all over Greece who were suffering from tuberculosis. The buildings also housed a school and police station. It all closed in 1971 but amazingly the whole complex remains virtually unchanged from when the Germans left, the buildings all abandoned and derelict with doors ajar.



A Panzer IV arrives after a torturous drive of more than 30 kilometres over twisting mountain roads.



ATB



The architecture at Campochiario is all in typical Italian 'Fascist' style — this (below) is the derelict main headquarters building today.

The next day, September 9, fighting between the Germans and the Italians broke out, the Germans having started shelling the Italians with their Flak guns around Maritsa airfield. However many of the Italians were still unaware of the current situation, some giving in while others fought back, destroying the aircraft at Maritsa so they could not be used by the Luftwaffe. Meanwhile the Italians had closed the harbour at Rhodes. The Germans arrived and demanded entry and, in spite of protests by the port commander, they were soon unloading munitions from the German steamer *Taganrog*.

Other attacks that day against the 'Regina' Division resulted in the capture of Generale Scaroina who subsequently ordered his men to surrender. Generale Forgiro was moved to the city of Rhodes in attempt to avoid his capture.

That evening Jellicoe and his group parachuted into the midst of the chaos, some of the group being injured on landing. Jellicoe, initially thinking they had been captured by hostile troops, had eaten the letter he was



ATB



April 20, 1944 and troops march past at the HQ to mark Hitler's 55th birthday.



ATB

carrying which had been specially written by General Henry Wilson, the current Commander-in-Chief in the Middle East, to be given to Campioni. It was not before the early hours of September 10 that they were taken to meet him at the palace. However, although he listened to the proposal, Campioni would not commit himself, explaining to his visitors the superior strength of the Germans on the island and expressing his concern when told that British support could not arrive until September 18 at the earliest due to a shortage of shipping.

That morning a German motorised formation started moving towards the Rhodes township although its advance was slowed in some areas due to Italian artillery fire. At the same time a German aircraft dropped leaflets offering safe passage to Italy for those wishing to surrender. As the day progressed Jellicoe managed to establish radio contact with Cairo to explain the situation. Although Campioni had still not committed to the British plan, arrangements were made — with Campioni's consent — to bring in Brigadier Douglas Turnbull, the OC Raiding Forces Middle East, by boat via the island of Symi. Yet things were getting worse for Campioni by the hour as the Germans captured more Italian positions. A German destroyer and some E-boats had also arrived, strengthening Kleemann's position, and during the night Campioni was informed that Italian troops in Crete had surrendered the day before.



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The Germans having now assumed command, the former Italian Air Command building in Rhodes on Ethnarchou Makariou was taken over, to be used as an assembly point for Rhodian Jews destined to be gassed at Auschwitz. Following registration on July 18-20, 1944, three days later 1,673 were put aboard ships bound for Haidari, the infamous transit camp near Pireaus, from where they were sent by rail to Poland.

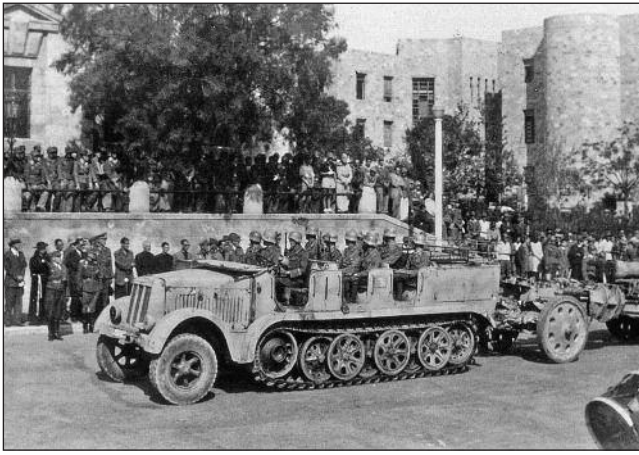
By sunrise on September 11, the Germans had incapacitated the Italian Navy radio station and at 10 a.m. Campioni was presented with an ultimatum: cease all hostilities, release all German prisoners, and unconditionally surrender or the city of Rhodes would be bombed. He was given half an hour to decide. That afternoon Campioni and Kleemann met outside the city and negotiated the surrender. It was agreed that Campioni could retain the position of governor. Italian troops would be disarmed (save for officers), but units would not be disbanded. German troops would remain outside the city and only enter in special circumstances.

The Italian troops did not take the news well, insisting that they had been gaining ground in some areas. Some artillery units continued to fight only to be later captured or wiped out. Between September 8-11, 17 Italian officers and other ranks had been killed and 300 wounded.

By way of a secret radio hidden in a farmhouse the Italian government was informed of the surrender. Jellicoe was also in radio contact and sent an urgent message to warn that circumstances had changed and that the Brigadier and his party must not leave Symi. He and the remainder of his group (one having already gone ahead due to injury) left Rhodes in disguise that day.

Having missed the opportunity to take Rhodes, despite the window that had presented itself with the armistice, the Allies still had hopes of capturing the island by the end of October. Early that month the question of Rhodes was once again on the agenda but Allied commanders decided that 'we are agreed that our resources in the Mediterranean are not large enough to undertake the capture of Rhodes and at the same time secure our immediate objectives in Italy'. Faced with the choice of one or the other they chose to secure Rome, although Churchill still had not given up hopes of capturing Rhodes, even after the fall of Leros in November 1943 (see *After the Battle* No. 90).

The Germans now had to deal with the large number of Italians on the island so began by disarming the navy and air force personnel first as they were judged as the least co-operative, followed by the army. Before long the Germans had installed themselves within the Italian command and proceeded to evacuate Campioni and other



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In a denial of events on the European mainland, yet another parade to mark Hitler's birthday in 1945. The saluting base is the Post Office.

officers as prisoners of war. Campioni, who was initially sent to a POW camp at Schokken in Poland, was later tried and executed by the Italian Social Republic in northern Italy for having defended Rhodes against the Germans. Many of the Italians attempted escape by sea to avoid capture only to be caught by the Germans or drown, a small number going to ground by integrating with the locals.

On September 19, over 1,500 Italian prisoners were loaded onto a captured Italian vessel, the *Donnizetti*, which departed for mainland Greece only to be sunk en route by HMS *Eclipse*. There were no survivors. Then on February 12, 1944, the *Oria* sank in a storm carrying over 4,000 Italian prisoners from Rhodes on board of whom only 21 survived. Of the other Italian prisoners that remained on the island, 90 were executed after the surrender and those held in the camps suffered the same famine conditions imposed on the island's civilian population until the end of the war and many died of starvation.



Right: Shortly after 10 a.m. on May 8, 1945, Generalmajor Dr Otto Wagener was taken by destroyer from Rhodes to the nearby island of Symi where the British commander, Brigadier James Moffat, was waiting in what was then the Town Hall. There Wagener signed the surrender of some 5,500 German and 600 Italian troops in the Aegean Islands.



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On May 15, Archbishop Damaskinos, the archbishop of Athens and also Regent of Greece, arrived on Rhodes where he was greeted by the British C-in-C General Bernard Padgett. Here they drive through jubilant crowds along what is now called Liberty Square. (The archbishop's role was a critical factor in post-war Greece, see *After the Battle* No. 155.)

Despite the harsh conditions, and the oppression of the German occupation, many acts of resistance continued both by the Greeks on Rhodes and those Italians who had managed to evade capture.

When Soviet forces began advancing into south-eastern Europe in late 1944, Germany began withdrawing from mainland Greece fearing that they might be cut off in the Balkans. British forces landed on the mainland in October 1944, having liberated Athens and the port of Piraeus by October 14 (see *After the Battle* No. 155).

German forces surrendered unconditionally on May 7, 1945. Rhodes, like many of the nearby islands, was to a large extent still occupied by Germans, marooned by their army's withdrawal. On May 8, Generalmajor Otto Wagener, the German commander of the Eastern Aegean, signed the instrument of surrender for the Dodecanese islands at Symi. Over 5,000 German and 600 Italian military personnel were still on Rhodes which became a British protectorate but was almost at once permitted to run its own civil affairs.

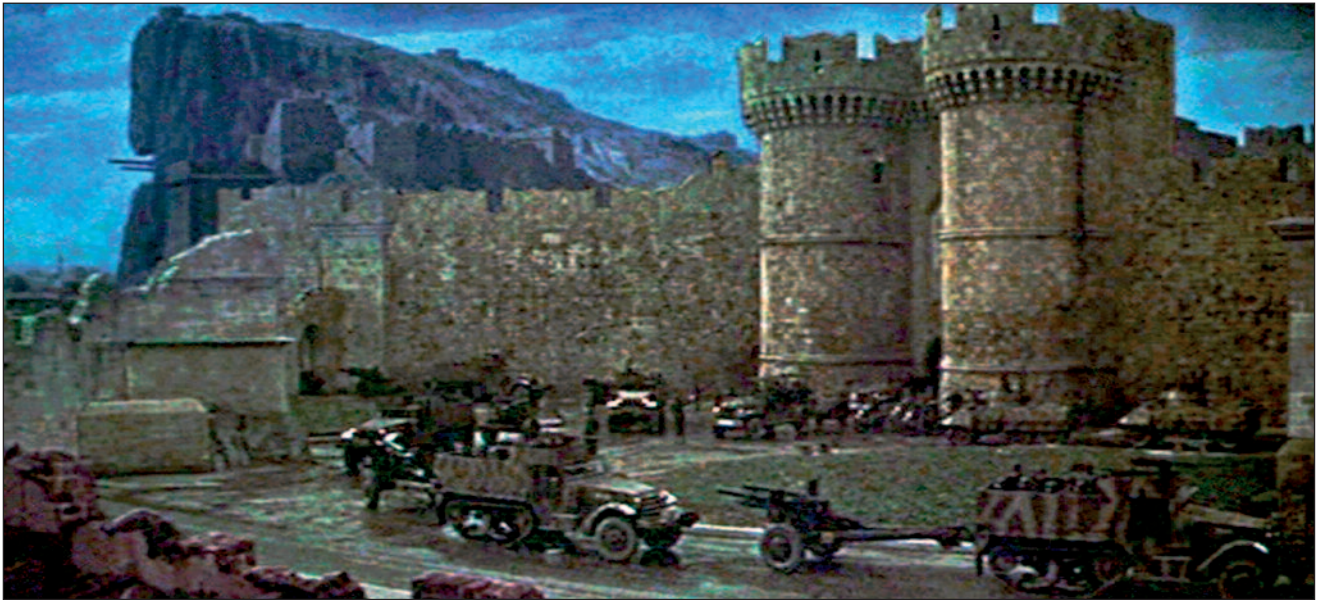
As a result of the peace treaty enacted with Italy on February 10, 1947, the Dodecanese including Rhodes became informally united with Greece despite objections from Turkey, thus ending 740 years of foreign rule.



In June 1946, a Council of Foreign Ministers meeting in Paris agreed the integration of the Dodecanese with Greece and on May 31, 1947 Brigadier A. S. Parker handed over the administration to Vice Admiral Pericles Ioannides. Hundreds of Rhodians line the rooftop of the National Theatre as thanks are given for the islands' liberation.



At the Rhodes Town Hall, 12 Greek maidens hold up the Greek flag symbolising the return of the 12 islands.



Following the transfer of the Dodecanese, including Rhodes, to Greece in 1947, the Treaty assured Turkey and Italy that the islands would be demilitarised. Thus in 1960 it was a diplomatic coup for Carl Foreman — then exiled from America under the anti-Communist clamp-down — to get permission to bring

to Rhodes a large contingent of men and material from the Greek army to make *The Guns of Navarone*. Yet something looks wrong. We saw the Marine Gate on pages 39-40 but now Bob Cuff, the matte artist at Shepperton Studios, has added a rocky outcrop and gun battery in the background.

It is not often that we feature a war film that is not based on a real-life battle or exploit. *The Guns of Navarone* was claimed to be based on the Battle for Leros (see *After the Battle* No. 90), but it is more likely that the catalyst was the Commando operation to knock out the guns of the Enfolia battery on Elba (see issue 173). Thus it would be amiss of us not to cover the epic movie which was largely filmed on the island of Rhodes.

Alistair MacLean's book was published in 1957 and Columbia Pictures were quick to see the potential and purchased the film rights in April with the intention of beginning shooting before the end of the year. Then Hollywood had recently invented a new category for big-budget films called 'Double A', i.e. twice as good as a regular 'A' film. The blockbuster, filmed on exotic locations rather than in the studio, were seen as the salvation of the movie industry, one of Columbia's firsts being *The Bridge On The River Kwai*.

After months of persuasion by studio boss Mike Frankovich, Carl Foreman, still a fugitive from the anti-Communist witch-hunt of the 1950s, came on board for *Guns of Navarone* in the summer of 1958. With Foreman's US passport revoked, he was based in

THE GUNS OF NAVARONE



Yet in the film Lindos, 30 miles to the south, is depicted as the German fortress town! So once again Bob had to add the towering cliffs, all put together on the matte stand at Shepperton by John Mackie and Peter Harman.



The scene in reality in 2016. The ancient ruins on the summit feature in *Scene 501* photographed on March 3, 1960.



The Acropolis at Lindos — a natural citadel built by the Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Knights of St John and the Ottomans — was used for two sequences. Above: Scenes 315-319 as

Captain Keith Mallory (Gregory Peck) goes to the rendezvous with Greek partisan Colonel Andrea Stravrou played by Anthony Quinn. Below: The same sets of Doric columns today.

Britain, where he wrote the script and produced the film which was to become Columbia's largest success. It was blown into epic proportions by the inclusion of a host of Hollywood and European stars including Gregory Peck, David Niven, Anthony Quinn, Stanley Baker, Anthony Quayle, James Darren, James Robertson Justice, Richard Harris and Bryan Forbes.

Foreman commented that 'it seemed to me more than a literary coincidence that MacLean's novel is set on the same stage as the Odyssey and the Iliad and the legends of Jason and the Argonauts, and Theseus and the Minotaur, for, like so many tales of adventure born on the blue waters of the Aegean, this story tells of men who dare even the Gods as they struggle towards their goal. The effort required for the production



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already been incidents and Foreman considered the risk of having to pull the actors and crew out once filming had started as being too great. Instead, the island of Rhodes, 225 miles east of mainland Greece, was selected.

The problem of making a full-scale feature film costing millions, on a secluded, 570-square-mile island, isolated in the Aegean, was not expected to be easy as Rhodes in the late 1950s had few of the amenities required for high-gear movie-making. Also there was a huge diplomatic issue as Rhodes had only been passed into Greece ownership some ten years earlier having been Italian since 1912 (see pages 36-45). The treaty signed by Greece, Italy and Turkey at the end of the Second World War specified the complete demilitarisation of the Dodecanese islands which had been carried out by British troops. Under the Treaty, no arms, ammuni-

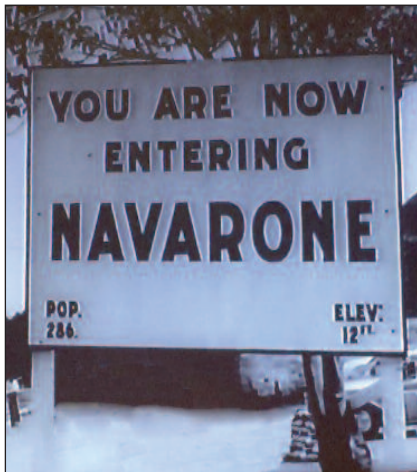
Later we see a troop of German soldiers descend the same steps in the manhunt for the group.

of this film will be more than justified if, in addition to providing entertainment on its own level, it will cause people to wonder when such nobility of purpose, such dedicated courage, will cease to be wasted on the senselessness of war.'

Foreman's first choice for the location shooting was Cyprus. There the countryside was very close to that described in MacLean's book and the British Army garrisoned on the island was happy to supply troops to act as extras. The only problem was that the island was on the brink of civil war between the Cypriot and Turkish populations. Although a transitional government was in place, pending elections due in February 1960, there had



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tion or military equipment could be allowed on Rhodes, and yet the film-makers were now expecting to station an entire army, fully equipped, on the island!

A series of meetings between Carl Foreman and the Prime Minister of Greece, Constantine Karamanlis, resulted in an unprecedented programme of governmental co-operation. At the same time, conferences with the Foreign Ministers of the signatories to the Treaty resulted in the temporary abrogation of its terms by all three countries concerned — quite an amazing achievement in itself.

That having been accomplished, the Greek Department of Defence was now able to arrange for Navy, Army and Air Force personnel and equipment to be sent to Rhodes. Involved was the loan of six Royal Hellenic Navy frigates, several air/sea rescue boats, numerous launches, patrol boats, scout-planes, helicopters, tanks, armoured cars, Jeeps, army trucks, howitzers, mortars and machine guns plus over 1,000 Greek military and naval personnel and a similar number of National Gendarmerie trainees. The Ministry of Education, through the Department of Archeology, helped as well as for the first time in living memory all the scaffolding was removed from the Parthenon in Athens which had been under repair since 1832. So, for the first time since the invention of the camera, the magnificent Doric edifice appeared on film without its face-lifting 'props'. The Ministry of Commerce also gave its whole-hearted assistance by waiving all existing regulations concerning customs, work permits and entry to Greece.



Producer Carl Foreman, centre, and his director, J. Lee Thompson, right, managed a crew of over 100 (not 284 as the sign says) at their headquarters at the Miramare hotel. The British-born American actress Gia Scala, playing Anna who proves to be a German informer, was reluctant to have her hair cut so she would look like a man.



Above: Foreman's impressive armed forces included six ex-US 'Cannon' Class frigates supplied to Greece by the US Navy. One was the USS Slater (DE 766), then a training ship in the Royal Hellenic Navy known as Aetos (D 01); today she is preserved as a museum ship in Albany, New York. He also received a host of military equipment and in this shot (below) we can see M24 Chaffee Light Tanks, a selection of American half-tracks in the distance, most probably M3A1s as they have the pulpit MG rings, and an M8 Greyhound Scout Car. The artillery pieces along the cliff line look to be 105mm M2A1s, possibly with some smaller 75mm M1A1 pack howitzers seen just above the bonnet of the centre half-track. The artillery piece set back from the cliff edge on its own looks suspiciously like a Bofors anti-aircraft gun, though if all the equipment is American it is probably the 37mm anti-aircraft gun M1A2 on the M3A1 carriage.





In 1945, the Hellenic Navy received eight Harbour Defence Motor Launches from the Royal Navy. All told, 480 HDMLs were built, the Greek ones being the *Karea*, *Davlea*, *Destraton*, *Kastrake*, *Klesura*,

Bezane, *Portaria* and *Farsala*. *Bezane*, P274, was mocked up to replicate a German E-Boat which intercepts the commandos' fishing boat. Scenes 79-124 were filmed on April 9-15, 1960.

In February 1960 the Hollywood 'invasion' of Rhodes began, albeit that this was a peaceful one. For the accommodation of the cast and crew Foreman took over the island's newest hotel, the Miramare, as yet uncompleted, in its entirety. At the same time, managers at other hotels threw up their hands in despair at the rush of tourists and journalists to the island.

The first actual production problem was to create the town of Navarone and for this the Old City of Rhodes presented the perfect solution. Built by the Knights of St John and now one of the most faultlessly preserved examples of medieval architecture in the world, the Old City became the scene of Navarone's fortress within which are enclosed the gigantic guns themselves.

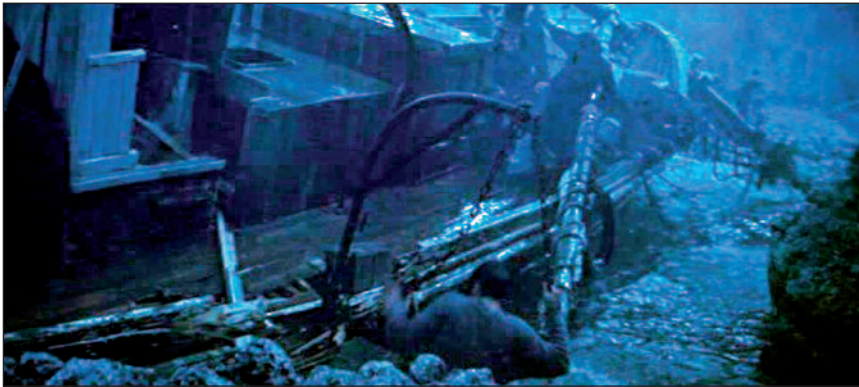
Foreman's first choice of director was Alexander Mackendrick and he was despatched with art director Geoffrey Drake to scout for locations. He had already hired as his technical adviser Brigadier John Turnbull who had been the commanding officer of the raiding forces in the Aegean, and also brought on board General Fritz Bayerlein of Afrikakorps fame. Brigadier General Veros and Admiral Eifas were made available to co-ordinate activities with the Greek military, as well as an expert in explosives, Commander John Theologitis.



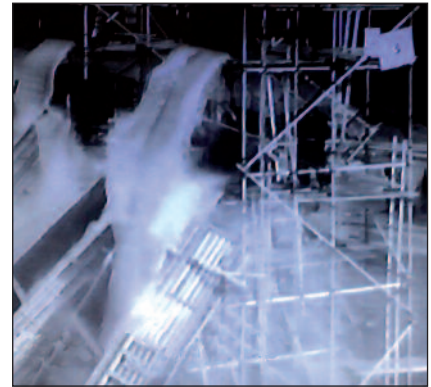
Unfortunately too much explosive was used to simulate the grenades lobbed aboard and *Bezane* ended up on the bottom of the Aegean with her captain facing a court-martial!



The eight HDMLs had only been loaned to the Greeks and the remaining seven were handed back to the Royal Navy in 1962.



The sequence where the fishing boat gets wrecked was filmed at Shepperton over several days. Stage H — then the largest silent stage in Europe — was partly flooded while thousands of gallons were released down chutes from above as two aircraft engines created a gale. The shipwreck sequence (*Scenes 136-174*) was



filmed in March 1960. The cliff-climbing scenes were also filmed on H Stage between February 25-27 with some fill-ins on March 31 with the actors crawling across the floor! The script called for a seagull to suddenly fly out of a crevice but the bird could not hear the trainer's whistle above the maelstrom of noise.



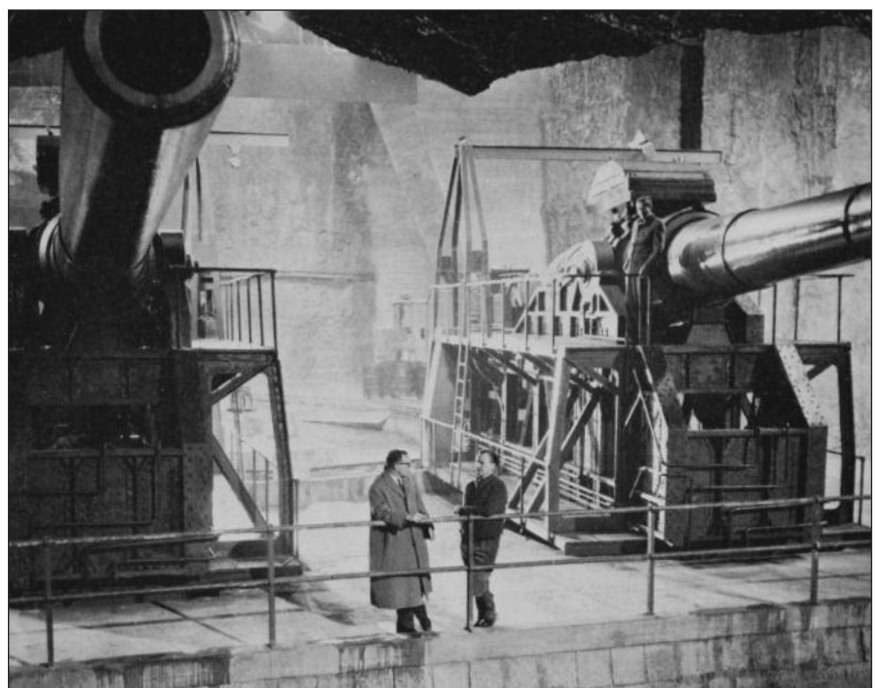
And it was on the back lot at Shepperton that the largest set of all was constructed. The 80ft-long guns weighing 15 tons took five months to build. At the time, the guns were the costliest props ever produced for a film at £100,000 but on August 9 disaster struck. Fifty men working on the construction had just



stopped work on the 100ft-high steel scaffolding, covered with plaster rocks, when the whole lot crashed to the ground under the weight of plaster saturated by a heavy thunderstorm. Fortunately no one was injured but Carl Foreman was naturally furious as the repair bill was estimated to be £20,000.

And so, among a community whose slow-moving pattern of life is founded on many layers of civilisation, filming began. The islanders became accustomed to the sight of a vast film organisation on the move at 5.30 a.m. every morning when a stream of transport left the Miramare for the day's location. Although 21 buses, trucks and motor cars were provided for the unit's daily use, it was the ubiquitous donkey that finally solved the transportation problem. Many of the locations used for the film were inaccessible except by foot so every morning, starting from the ancient harbour of Lindos 30 miles south of Rhodes, a strange cavalcade wound its way up the side of the cliffs. And stars used to travelling in the most expensive limousines accustomed themselves to an hour's journey on donkeys.

Filming began on February 8 using two units, one directed by Mackendrick and the other by Foreman, but the following month Mackendrick had to be invalided out, it was said suffering from back problems. This created a problem as the lead actor in any film usually has the right to approve the director. Fortunately in this case J. Lee Thompson was free and Gregory Peck approved so filming began with the new director on March 21. Thompson did not use storyboards to plan each scene, preferring to rehearse in the morning and film after lunch.



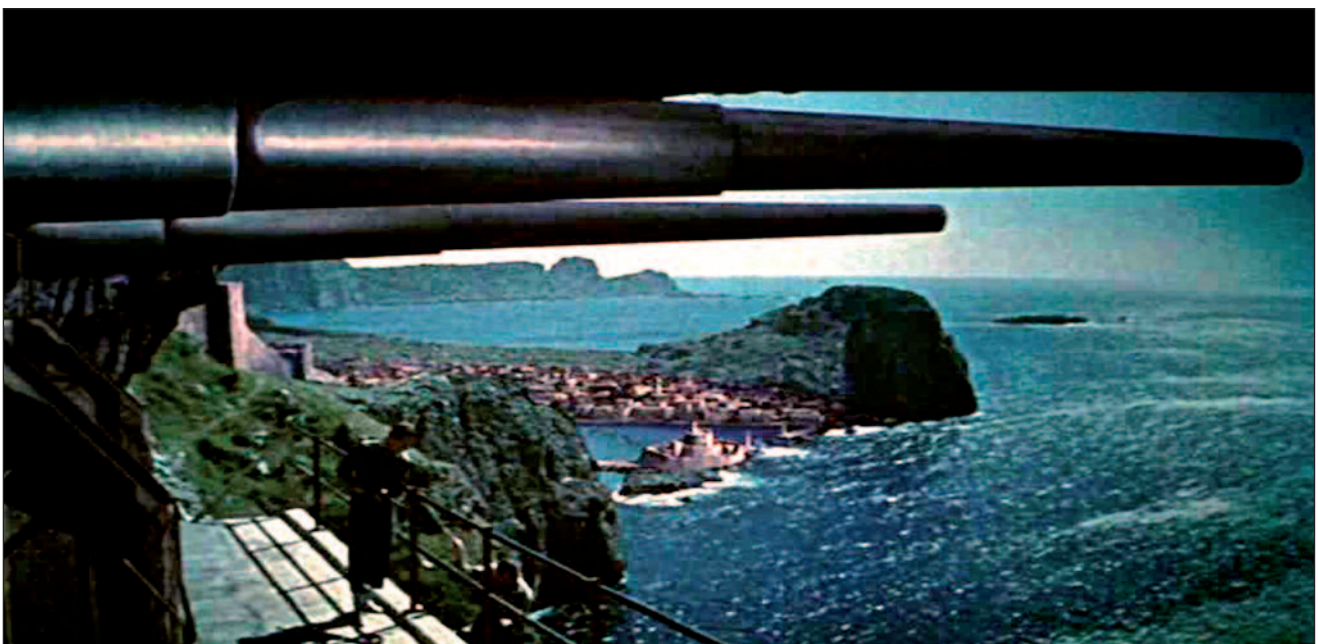


Meanwhile, at Shepperton Studios in England, top-level discussions were in progress with military experts for the re-creation of the Navarone gun cave and the construction of the guns themselves. These monsters took five months to construct, and were then claimed to be the largest movie guns ever built and the costliest 'props' yet provided for a picture. Substantially larger than the guns built at Woolwich arsenal for the coastal defence of Britain during World War II, it is estimated that the money spent for them could possibly provide the entire budget for a full-length corner-cutting movie.

Interiors built at the studios had to be matched perfectly to the exterior film shot in Rhodes. Among the most difficult was the storm sequence in which the Greek fishing boat, *Maria*, is wrecked at the base of the cliffs during the landing on Navarone. For this sequence, a full-size model of the original



Shawcroft Models of Uxbridge were commissioned to produce two different size models to be used to create the necessary scale, coupled with another matte shot painted by Bob Cuff. In an age before CGI, such inventiveness and ingenuity was part and parcel of the movie-making craft during Hollywood's 'Golden Era'.





Scene 356, shot on March 16: 'Ext' outskirts of Mandrakos. A large party of armed soldiers is marching toward and past a church. Its bells ringing. From the road direction and towards the church, a wedding party approaches led by the bride and the groom, and children with flowers and garlands. As the two groups near each other, the wedding party gives way and the soldiers march by.'

Maria, on which the stars had filmed off the coast of Rhodes, was reproduced at Shepperton so that the shipwreck could be filmed under the necessary controlled conditions to match exactly the film shot on the Aegean. Geoffrey Drake (who died in 1995) constructed the biggest, most realistic marine set ever built at that time in a European studio. As the replica of the *Maria* was impaled and shattered on a fringe of rocks, 16 tons of



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Mandrakos is a fictitious town and it was very difficult to trace the right church on an island with dozens of churches. In the end we found an illustration of it in an old book. On visiting Koskinou, four miles south of the capital, we found the Isodia Theotokou Church although the village scene had seen considerable change. Even the church itself had undergone some cosmetic alterations.

Niven became severely ill after shooting in the pool of water beneath the cave lift and almost died. He remained in hospital for some weeks and at one point it looked as if he would be unable to return to finish the film. Re-shooting key scenes throughout the film with another actor was considered but in the end Niven recovered and was able to complete his scenes.

Scene 506 (16.3.60). 'Ext Street. Mandrakos. Groups and families of villagers are being herded along the street. The smoke and flames rise in the background. The armed German patrol in view clears the last of the villagers, then tosses hand-grenades and gasoline bombs into the empty buildings and run for it, the grenades explode.'

water cascaded down four giant chutes to strike the shipwrecked commandos. Over 250,000 gallons of water lashed about in the man-made sea under a downpour of rain beaten with torrential force from six jet-pouts overhead.

Until actual filming began, no one was sure how these combined forces would affect the stars and each received injuries, in some cases painful and enduring ones. David



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Another location which was very difficult to track down was where the wedding celebration was filmed as it turned out to be nowhere near the church. Acted out over three days, the sequence ends with the arrest of the group.

Scene 429 (21.4.60). Ext. Restaurant terrace day. A large terrace with large wooden tables and benches, made very attractive by flowers that grow in profusion along its sides and over its trellised roof. It is crowded now with the wedding party we saw on its way to the church earlier in the day and many of the guests are dancing to the music of half a dozen musicians. It is gay. But in the street outside some half a dozen German soldiers are looking on, in groups of two or three, curiously and perhaps a little nostalgically.

Scene 430 (21.4.60). The bride and groom dancing with the others.

Scene 431 (21.4.60). Another angle on people at tables and the dancing couples and children. Camera pans away to the entrance of the terrace. Anna comes through to the edge of the terrace followed by Mallory, Miller and Pappadimos. Celebrants at nearby tables look up and see them. It is obvious that they know at once something is up, but there is an immediate presence that nothing is amiss. Anna looks around carefully and leads the men towards a vacant table. The men follow her. As they pass people at the tables look at them and then elaborately ignore them. Anna and the men reach the table and sit down.

Scene 432 (21.4.60). The dance floor. Some of the dancers become aware of the newcomers but go on as if they have seen nothing.

Scene 433 (26.4.60). Ext. Restaurant Terrace. On some of the German soldiers watching the dancers unsuspectingly and unaware of any tension.

Scene 434 (26.4.60). The bride and groom dancing as they see Anna and the men exchange glances, and go on without faltering.



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To our amazement the restaurant turned out to be located right opposite the present-day international airport at Paradisi! This had not been built in 1960 so the transformation was unbelievable, especially as the road level had been lowered by several feet facing the terminal building. Sadly the large tree had since been cut down.



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Access to the entrance of the 'Navarone Café' is now up a flight of steps leading up from the new lower road level.



Scene 435 (26.4.60). German soldiers watching.

Scene 436 (21.4.60). Ext. dance floor. As the dance ends there is a moment of hesitation, and the people do not quite know what to do. After a pause they drift back to their tables.

Scene 437 (23.4.60). Full shot Ext. terrace. The dance floor has been cleared and there is an atmosphere of uneasiness and waiting.

Scene 438 (23.4.60). The musicians sit there uneasily, then the leader gives a signal and they strike a popular local song. They rise and move in a body to a nearby table. One of the men at the table by custom picks up the verse and sings it. As he finishes the musicians move to another table, the camera going with them. The people at the tables in and out of the scene pick up the chorus.

Scene 439 (23.4.60 p.m. — 26.4.60). Group shot Anna's table. As the group relaxes Mallory leans to Anna. Mallory: 'These are wonderful people.' She nods with grave pride while off scene another man has taken up the verse.

Scene 440 (23.4.60). The table at which a man is singing.

Scene 441. Anna's table. A waiter has come to the table. His face devoid from expression, he clears the table, sets out bottles and glasses and disappears. Off scene the second man has finished his verse. And the crowd has taken up the chorus. The music grows louder.

Scene 442 (25.4.60). The musicians playing as they move. They pass Anna's table.

Scene 443 (25.4.60). Anna's table. As Pappadimos nonchalantly takes up the verse the others try not to look surprised. He sings it well.

It is reported that members of the Greek Royal Family visited Rhodes on the day the café scenes were being filmed and we are told that they appear in the background as extras.



Scenes 444-446 (26.4.60). Shots of other tables as the crowd has difficulty in concealing its pleasure.

Scene 447 (26.4.60). Anna's table. As Pappadimos finishes and the grinning musicians go out of shot, the crowd picks up the chorus with gusto. Surreptitiously Miller and Mallory applaud. Pappadimos bows with mock modesty.

Scene 448 (26.4.60). A little girl of five goes to Pappadimos with a garland of flowers. Camera goes with her as she toddles determinedly among the tables towards Anna's table. Suddenly the music and singing begins to waver.

Scene 449 (25.4.60). Anna's table. As they become aware of the change the music and singing dies raggedly.

Scene 450 (22.4.60). Full shot Ext. terrace. Armed German soldiers have appeared at every exit. And are moving inexorable towards Anna's table. The crowd goes completely silent.

Scene 451 (25.4.60). Anna's table. As the group see what is happening and that they are trapped.

Scene 452 (25.4.60). An entrance. The Oberleutenant we saw in the doctor's office is entering. His automatic cocked and ready, flanked by two soldiers with raised carbines. They make directly towards Anna's table.

Scene 453 (26.4.60). Anna's table. They sit there frozen as the circle narrows in on them. Dissolve to full shot of barracks at night.



Better known for his recording of *Because They're Young*, teen idol James Darren, playing Spyro Pappadimos, sings a verse of *Yialo, Yialo* (Sunny Seashore).



Checking the dates with the shooting script, there is a break of five days before the scenes were shot of the arrival of the German soldiers.



The final operation to knock out the guns was filmed within the Old Town of Rhodes, mixed in with sets built at Shepperton.



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Scenes 581-586 shot day for night on March 17-19, 1960. Here they enter through the Gate of Saint Athanasios . . .



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. . . and then in through the Argyrokastro Square on March 18 although the sentry was shot on April 18 in *Scene 601*.



Filming carried on throughout 1960 until a 'wrap' was called on September 21. Total cost had now risen to \$6 million, some 20 per cent over budget. The world premiere was held in London on April 27, 1961 and in New York on June 22. Of the cast only two members of the commando group are still with us today: Maria Pappadimos (left), played by Irene Pappas, and James Darren (second left) as Private Spyro Pappadimos, her brother. Antony Quayle (Major Roy Franklin), who was almost reliving his wartime career in the Aegean (see *After the Battle* No. 15), died in 1989, and David Niven (Corporal Miller) who

also served in the war (see issue 4) died in 1983. Gregory Peck (Captain Keith Mallory) died in 2003, and Anthony Quinn (Colonel Andrea Stavrou) in 2001. Stanley Baker (Private 'Butcher' Brown) died in 1976, and Gia Scala (Anna) in 1972. In publicising the film, Carl Foreman visited 30 American cities, appeared on 50 television shows, and gave over 150 radio interviews and Press conferences. His next film was *Human Kind*, released as *The Victors* in 1963 (see issue 160). He said 'I am incapable of making a film which does not make a statement'. Foreman died in 1984.