

Dogface Soldiers

U.S. Infantry Riflemen and the War against Hitler's Wehrmacht in the Mediterranean and Northwestern Europe

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Preface

It is my belief that the history of the dogface soldiers, most often blended nebulously within the pop history of the much-admired Greatest Generation, forms one of the American nation's most significant instruments of cohesion. In addition, it is a key element in the popular origin myth of the American Century. Finally, it also forms the basis of a momentous and serious misjudgment in the critical reception and political analysis of that period, namely that the conduct of wars on the (infantry) battlefield can be bearable for those who are actually involved in it.

Even if, as is increasingly maintained, the American Century is nearing its end, the role of the United States in international cooperation and international conflicts will remain highly significant in the foreseeable future and cannot be ignored by serious observers. American history thus needs to be included on the reading lists of all those who see themselves as observers, analysts, commentators and critics of international relations and of the position of the United States in such relations. This publication will try to contribute to that aim.

A simple reckoning of the availability of, and demand for, a wide range and great number of infotainment and media products on the American market, whether in written text or in audio or video format, will make clear the meaning of the Second World War to the American nation. The history of a depression-plagued, isolationist and essentially anti-militaristic country, ranking 19th in the 1939 list of the most powerful armed forces in the world, behind Portugal and just ahead of Bulgaria, that within six years became by far the richest and most powerful nation in human history is simply too American at its core not to attract an attentive public in this context. Quite in contrast to our Austrian-German history of World War II, it is also an experience that, with respect to the war in Europe and the Mediterranean Theater, is capable of being empathically viewed without ethical twists and turns as crowned with absolute triumph.¹ The most salient milestones on the U.S. path to a global two-front coalition war can be identified as the attack on the Pacific Fleet in Hawaii on

¹ The history of popular anti-Japanese propaganda and racist war sentiment in the United States and the Pacific would have to be considered separately in view of current issues, but this topic lies far beyond the focus of the present study.

December 7, 1941 and the resulting declaration of war on the United States by Hitler on December 11, 1941. The American Century's Big Bang exploded during these five fateful days when the American nation focused for the first time, and by all appearances irreversibly, on a global arena. While troops under the command of Washington were seen prior to this time as a risk to American freedom and to federalism and democracy, after this period they developed into a principal institution of the American nation and a first-order agent of the proverbial American enterprise, at least up until the abolition of compulsory military service in 1973. This history of the dogface soldiers deserves to be treated as a separate study because of its role in correcting the fallacies that being committed to (ground) war can be a reasonable option for the best-equipped and best-trained soldiers and, by implication, that war beyond the clear case of self-defense can be a legitimate instrument of national policy.

After 1945, following years of efficient war censorship and tight and effective propaganda by the Office of War Information, most Americans viewed the Armed Forces as an integral part of their country and of themselves. It is understandable, as a result of the war's outcome and its economic implications for the United States, which maintained its territorial integrity and suffered comparatively minor losses in proportion to the sheer scale of the conflict, that a broad section of the American population saw the World War II as 'the good war' (in the sense of 'just cause' and 'good times'), as the identically named Studs Terkel oral history of the war years in the U.S. has made abundantly clear. Remaining unrepresented in this construct, however, are the individual experiences, the indescribable physical and psychological suffering endured by those who actually had to wage the war on the battlefield. "War is hell. Its glory is all moonshine," observed William Tecumseh Sherman, the prominent Union general in the American Civil War. We would all do well to heed his words in this matter. At the end of World War II, a consensus attitude emerged among the career military that soldiers, regardless of their personal courage, could only serve at the front and in combat operations for a limited time before suffering serious, often irreversible psychological damage. Even Gen. George S. Patton, intellectually rooted without dispute in the 19th Century, increasingly had to tolerate the presence of Army psychologists due to the rising level of mental breakdown in his command, though he always denied the very existence of war trauma and disavowed the phenomenon itself as cowardice.

Since then, the United States has undertaken an alarming series of so-called 'major wars', especially the Korean War, Vietnam War, two Iraq wars from 1991 and 2003, and the U.S. hostilities in Afghanistan, begun in 2001 and still ongoing – which resemble one another to a significant extent. At the start of all these conflicts, the uncomfortable knowledge of the unavoidability of serious psychological war injuries, acquired through the martyrdom of broken individuals in previous wars, had faded away and become forgotten. Then, during and/or after each of these wars, a stream of traumatized war veterans first surprised and then overtaxed the institutions of the Armed Forces and the state, and finally the American nation itself.

One reason among others why this occurs is that the public, media and political establishment in the United States are, even today, susceptible to an emotional and mutual lowering of their threshold for war tolerance the moment any side brings emotive terms like "Pearl Harbor" or "Munich" into the discussion. Similar phenomena are in evidence at times when U.S. freedom is seen to be threatened far from the country's borders and/or the export of democracy to undemocratic regions is perceived as possible and worthwhile.

In addition, a significant feature of all American major wars since 1945 is that they have been conducted, at least in part, against the backdrop of a steadily evolving perspective on World War II and its "Greatest Generation." Neither the U.S. Armed Forces nor large segments of the American nation, but least of all late-20th Century and 21st Century war veterans, could stand up under comparison with the censored version of a pure 'good war' put out by the Office of War Information – not because they fell short of the measure of the greatest of all American generations, nor because the "Greatest Generation" may have been less "great" than it was assumed to be. The reason is, rather, that they all were forced into an impossible comparison with a generation that increasingly became seen in the late 20th and early 21st Centuries as icons and monuments. Dogface Soldiers takes a look behind the curtains of this ongoing and growing deification, revealing the individuals behind the icons and monuments. In this way, the historic role of this generation, its life and death in the greatest of all wars, can at last be properly appreciated.

This study has come a long way since its inception. It was conceived in spring and summer 2009 in Vienna and in the Upper Austrian Salzkammergut area. Most of the present text was written between October 2009 and August 2010 in Prizren, Kosovo, where I occupied a modest position at the headquarters of *NATO/PfP-Multinational Battlegroup South*. The first print version of the text traveled by train in October and November 2010 over the course of a five-month circuit of the Indian subcontinent, passing through the states of Maharashtra, Gujarat and Rajasthan only to be consigned finally to the flames near the India-Pakistan border due to its weight. The text's final version was produced between March 2011 and May 2012 in Vienna in the context of a university dissertation in the field of history. The dogface soldiers portrayed here have accompanied me through the (certainly up to now and in my view) most important period of my life. This is marked and circumscribed by my graduation from the University of Vienna, the courtship of my current wife, the birth of our son and the first years of his life. I want to thank my wife first of all. For six years, she has put up with recurring periods in which the dogface soldiers were very much present in our daily family life. I thank our son for his patience when I was physically or mentally absent. I owe a great debt of thanks as well to Siegfried Mattl, who directed my dissertation and passed away much too soon in 2015. His understatement, his kind friendship and reserve, and his input at critical stages have contributed a great deal to the development, character and publication of this study. I thank Prof. Oliver Rathkolb for his benevolent appraisal as the university's second assessor. I am grateful to the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) and Böhlau Verlag, my publisher, for the financing and support that resulted in this publication. Finally, I wish to extend my deepest gratitude to Todd DePastino, without whose on-point research and friendly support the present study would scarcely have been possible.

1 Introduction

Infantry, he [Eisenhower] realized, would have to bear the ultimate burden, and winning the war by that means would be inescapably bloody.

Paul Fussell²

When the telephone rang just before four A.M. on May 7, 1945 at the Hotel Fürstenhof in Bad Wildungen (halfway between Marburg and Kassel), Omar Bradley of Clark, Missouri had been asleep less than four hours. He had been up until almost midnight the night before, writing a letter to his wife. Only five years before, as an aging Lieutenant Colonel, he had held a position in the Office of the Army Chief of Staff and, wearing civilian clothes, had taken the bus daily across Connecticut Avenue to his desk in the Munitions Building of the War Department. Now, five years later, four silver stars adorned his helmet and he was the commanding general of 12th Army Group, with its troop strength of approximately 1.7 million the largest force ever led into battle by an American commander and the principal American contribution to the Allied Northwestern Europe campaign of 1944/45. After he had awakened and turned on the light, Bradley recognized the voice of Dwight “Ike” Eisenhower from Abilene, Kansas at the other end of the line. World War II had catapulted him into an even steeper trajectory. On his way to the American presidency, the amiable general now held the critical position of Supreme Allied Commander in Europe. Then Bradley heard the words that had been hanging in the air for weeks: *Brad, it's all over*, followed by the bureaucratic adjunct: *A TWX is on the way*.³ At 2:41 a.m. of the same day, Generaloberst Jodl, OKW (Oberkommando der Wehrmacht) Chief Operations Officer, representing Substitute Führer Dönitz at Eisenhower's headquarters in Reims, had signed the unconditional surrender of all Wehrmacht forces in northern and western Europe. Fifteen months prior to this point, on February 12, 1944, Eisenhower had received his formal orders as Supreme Allied Commander.

² Paul Fussell, *The Boys' Crusade. The American Infantry in Northwestern Europe, 1944–1945* (New York 2005), p. x.

³ Omar N. Bradley, *A Soldier's Story* (New York 1999), p. 553 ff.

You are hereby designated as Supreme Allied Commander of the forces placed under your orders for operations for the liberation of Europe from the Germans ... You will enter the continent of Europe and, in conjunction with the other United Nations, undertake operations aimed at the heart of Germany and the destruction of her armed forces.⁴

He could now report mission accomplished. With his typical understatement, Eisenhower cabled the Combined Chiefs: *The mission of this Allied force was fulfilled at 0241 local time, May 7th, 1945.*^{5,6} In addition to Bradley, on this momentous day he also informed General Jacob Devers, who commanded 6th Army Group in the southern reaches of his command, and ordered his operations officer, Major General Harold Bull, to issue an announcement to all Allied forces in the European Theater of Operations that the surrender had been signed and would take effect at one minute past midnight on the night of May 7 to 8, 1945.⁷ At this time, three million American ground troops⁸ were under his command, 2.6 million of which were on the European continent. The opening of a second front in northwestern Europe, demanded by Stalin, and the neutralization of the remains of Hitler's forces in this area between June 6, 1944 and May 8, 1945 carried a total cost of 586,628 American casualties, 135,576 of whom were fatalities.⁹

⁴ Forrest C. Pogue, *United States Army in World War II. The European Theater of Operations. The Supreme Command* (Washington, D.C. 1989), p. 53.

⁵ Harry C. Butcher, *My Three Years with Eisenhower. The Personal Diary of Captain Harry C. Butcher, USNR, Naval Aide to General Eisenhower, 1942–1945* (New York 1946), p. 834.

⁶ It is not necessary to state that Eisenhower could only fulfill his mission because between 1941 and 1944 the Wehrmacht had been hemorrhaging while facing Stalin's Red Army and its maniacal capacity for suffering.

⁷ Butcher, *Three Years*, p. 834.

⁸ In total, 5.4 million Allied troops shipped out for the European Theater of Operations between June 6, 1944 and May 8, 1945. During this time, the British, Canadians, French and other Allies suffered 179,666 casualties, of which around 60,000 were fatal (Russell F. Weigley, *Eisenhower's Lieutenants. The Campaigns of France and Germany, 1944–1945* [Bloomington 1990], p. 727).

⁹ Weigley, *Lieutenants*, p. 727.

But who were these 135,576 dead? If they could answer that question for themselves, the great majority would call themselves *dogface soldiers*. Why that is so, and why their still untold story is a significant piece of the mosaic of American history in the 20th Century, will be addressed in this volume.

Dogface soldiers

Whom do we include under the term 'dogface soldiers'? In order to explain the origin and meaning of this name, it is useful to consider the overriding expression for this subject: the GI. Among German speakers, the term 'GI' is generally understood to describe a member of the American Armed Forces, without much differentiation. The American etymology of the expression is considerably more specific in this case, but it too is insufficient to allow for meaningful distinction. There exist two different and contradictory definitions that are not exclusive of each other but rather should be understood along a timeline. In the Regular Army¹⁰ during the interwar years (and even during World War II), the standard everyday objects in an army barracks included large drums made of metal and galvanized against rust that held ashes, refuse and other materials. The acronym for galvanized iron, GI, was stamped on these drums for identification, leading them to be known in Regular Army parlance as 'GI cans'. Thus to use the adjective 'GI' to refer to a soldier implied disrespectfully that the individual was coarse, crude or rough.¹¹

In the course of the activation of the Army of the United States¹² and the subsequent expansion of American military forces, a shift took place in the way the term is

¹⁰ The Regular Army was the small, standing professional army of the United States in the interwar period. A formidable character study of the Regular Army may be found in James Jones's novel *From Here to Eternity*.

¹¹ Joseph W. Bishop, Jr., American Army Speech in the European Theater, in: American Speech, Vol. 21, No. 4 (1946), p. 247 ff.

¹² 'Army of the United States' in no way refers simply to the army branch in the United States. It is the term describing the organization of U.S. military forces in the event of war according to the National Defense Act of 1920. In this sense, the U.S. wartime army consisted of three components: the Regular Army, by which term is meant the existing professional army; the National Guard, referring to units maintained by individual states for homeland defense in peacetime; and the Organized Reserves. (Richard W. Stewart (Ed.), American Military History. Volume II. The United States Army in a Global Era, 1917–2003 [Washington, D.C. 2005], p. 57 ff). The organization of the Army of the United States

understood. Virtually all everyday objects that members of the Army of the United States touched or had anything to do with were marked as Government Issue. GI socks, GI soap, GI shoes, GI shirts and countless other things made up the equipment issued to the millions of draftees¹³ who streamed into the reception centers beginning in 1941. Over time, it became commonly accepted practice, following a pragmatic and multilayered logic, to refer to the wearers themselves of GI socks, for example, as GIs, as Government Issue, a standardized article in the resource pool of the Army of the United States.¹⁴ Lastly, it should be emphasized that the term 'GI' as it was understood at the time had as well a substantially distinguishing function. First, it referred only to enlisted personnel, including NCOs¹⁵, but not officers. These were called (outside their presence, of course) *the brass*¹⁶ or, in the case of high-ranking officers, *the top brass*.¹⁷ A second criterion for exclusion is that only draftees, meaning those soldiers inducted under the Selective Service Act of 1940, counted as GIs, and not the lifers¹⁸ of the Regular Army. It goes without saying that the term also distinguished GIs from civilians and Tommies, the British soldiers¹⁹. With this general characterization of the GIs, it is timely to turn specifically to the dogface soldiers.

While a GI is defined by his position in the hierarchy of the Army of the United States and the status of his affiliation, that of draftee, without addressing his assignment

is described in greater detail in the section on the interwar era; the more limited description given here is only for the purpose of specifying the terminology.

¹³ The draft – compulsory military service. Accordingly, draftees were conscripts inducted into military service under the Selective Service Act of 1940.

¹⁴ Frederick Elkin, *The Soldier's Language*, in: *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 51, No. 5, *Human Behavior in Military Society* (1946), p. 422.

¹⁵ Non-commissioned officers.

¹⁶ 'Brass' refers to the officers' metal rank badges worn on the shirt collar and shoulders. Rank badges of enlisted personnel or NCOs were cloth patches sewn on the upper arms of the uniform.

¹⁷ Bishop, *Army Speech*, p. 248.

¹⁸ Lifers – Professional soldiers in the Regular Army.

¹⁹ Elkin, *Soldier's Language*, p. 417 ff.

within the Army, the term 'dogface soldier' describes a considerably more tightly delimited group of soldiers, namely the infantry riflemen²⁰. A further difference from GIs is that the status of their affiliation to the Army of the United States was essentially secondary, being more of a company constituted on the basis of a collective experience. An exclusion criterion applying to both dogface soldiers and GIs was status as a commissioned officer. Membership in both groups was limited to enlisted personnel or NCOs.

Contrary to the common assumption that land forces consisted mainly of riflemen, these soldiers made up only a surprisingly small part of the Army of the United States. To illustrate these proportions, we need at this point to take a brief look at the organizational structure of the American forces in World War II. In May 1945, U.S. Army Forces in the European Theater of Operations (ETO) had an assigned troop strength of 3,021,483. Of these, 2,639,377 soldiers were stationed on the European continent, the rest in the United Kingdom. This number is further broken down into Army Air Forces (AAF), Army Ground Forces (AGF) and Army Service Forces (ASF). In the AGF, 1,703,613 were stationed on the continent²¹, where they supplied 61 combat divisions, among other units, with troops.²² Of these 61 combat divisions, 42 were infantry divisions totaling 630,000 men with an average TO&E strength²³ of about 15,000 men. The infantry divisions included, however, a wide range of combat service support and service support units such as the division artillery, an engineer battalion, a medical battalion, four headquarters companies, a reconnaissance troop, a signal company, a quartermaster company, an ordnance company, a military police platoon, three service companies, three anti-tank companies and three cannon

²⁰ Infantry soldiers typically equipped in this period with rifles or semi-automatic rifles who saw themselves as charged with the essential duties of war, *to close with, and destroy, the Enemy*.

²¹ Pogue, United States Army, p. 542.

²² Divisions were the basic tactical elements of the Armies of the Second World War that, due to their composition, were capable of autonomous warfare without substantial external support. Infantry divisions, armored divisions (tanks) and airborne divisions (paratroopers) were deployed in the European Theater of Operations.

²³ Table of Organization and Equipment: War Department documents for all units of the Army of the United States that specified the components, troop strength and armaments that these units should ordinarily have.

companies, to mention only the most important elements in the first two organizational levels.²⁴ The point should be evident, however. When the manpower level of these combat service support and service support units is subtracted from a 15,000-man infantry division, the result is a rifle strength of 2,916 soldiers for every infantry division.²⁵ Extrapolation to the 42 infantry divisions in the ETO results in a total rifle strength of 122,472. The specialized term for this proportion of actual front-line-available to battle-supporting and supply units is the tooth-to-tail ratio. The disproportionality of these two constituent elements, in a relation of 25 to 1, makes manifest the considerable and constant human resources problem faced by the Army of the United States during the Second World War.

This relatively small number of dogface soldiers in comparison to the total size of the Army of the United States had to endure the brunt of the hellish effects of modern warfare, something that, as we will see in later chapters, had severe consequences for the self-image and self-confidence of this military group. The 1st Infantry Division, even today the formation with the richest tradition among American Army formations, was at the front and *in action* from D-Day²⁶ to VE-Day²⁷, almost exactly 11 months or 337 days. In contrast to the U.S. Vietnam War, in which a tour of duty system was practiced and most units or individuals were sent to the front for a year and granted regular rest and recuperation leave, units in World War II could not hope to be relieved prior to the end of the war due to the precarious staffing situation. During these 11 months in the European Theater of Operations, the Big Red One suffered between 2000 and 3000 battle and non-battle casualties per month, most of these

²⁴ Peter R. Mansoor, *The GI Offensive in Europe. The Triumph of American Infantry Divisions, 1941–1945* (Lawrence 1999), p. 38 ff.

²⁵ This rifle strength was spread among the 27 infantry companies of one infantry division. The further breakdown occurred in the following manner: three infantry companies formed one infantry battalion; the battalions, for their part combined in groups of three, formed three infantry regiments along with combat support and combat service units, all of these led by the divisional command post.

²⁶ In principle, D-Day refers to a beginning date that has not yet been determined at the time of planning a major military operation. Due to the enormous importance of the Allied amphibious landing operation in Normandy on June 6, 1944, this date has come to be known as D-Day except when the term is used in an explicit reference to another operation.

²⁷ Victory in Europe Day, May 8, 1945.

inflicted on its infantry regiments. The 9th Infantry Division, another battle-hardened unit that saw action in North Africa, Sicily and on the European continent, suffered a total of 22,858 battle casualties in the course of the war, 96 percent of these in the division's three infantry regiments.²⁸ Of the 42 infantry divisions in the ETO, the 21 that saw the longest service at the front lines lost between 87 and 252 percent of their total 15,000-man troop strength due to casualties suffered in the period between D-Day and VE-Day.²⁹ In each of these divisions, the infantry regiments, with a troop strength not exceeding 20 percent of the full division, bore the brunt of the casualties. Numbers like these illustrate and explain the dogfaces' conviction that they saw themselves challenged to defy the law of averages concerning their survival.

The origin of the expression 'dogface soldier' is unknown. It is not a product of the war, however. It appears in a *Glossary of Army Slang* published by the journal *American Speech* in October 1941.³⁰ In contrast, however, its path to popularity is easy to determine. At the beginning of 1942, two soldiers from the 3rd Infantry Division composed a song called *Dogface Soldier* as a riposte to the highly commercial *war songs* that had been released up to that point. The song did not initially spread beyond these soldiers' immediate environment, and eventually both were transferred to other units respectively in South America and the Pacific. When 3rd Infantry was deployed to North Africa, the song reached the ears of CG³¹ Major General Lucian Truscott, who greatly enjoyed it and named *Dogface Soldier* as the official division battle song. As a result, the song was popularized by word of mouth to the extent that during the Allied campaign in Sicily it became a familiar battle chant.³² The text is as follows:

I wouldn't give a bean
To be a fancy pants Marine

²⁸ Mansoor, *GI Offensive*, p. 251 ff.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 252.

³⁰ Anonymous, *Glossary of Army Slang*, in: *American Speech*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (1941), p. 165.

³¹ CG – Commanding General.

³² <http://www.stewart.army.mil/faq/DogFaceSoldierSong.asp> (most recent access date: October 30, 2009).

I'd rather be a
Dogface soldier like I am

I wouldn't trade my old OD's³³
For all the Navy's dungarees
For I'm the walking pride
Of Uncle Sam

On Army posters that I read
It says "the Army builds men"
So they're tearing me down
To build me over again

I'm just a dogface soldier
With a rifle on my shoulder
And I eat a kraut³⁴
For breakfast EV'RY day

So feed me ammunition
Keep me in Third Division
Your dogface soldier's A-Okay

In a nutshell: The song contains one of the cultural characteristics that we will encounter again as a constituent element in the self-image of the dogface soldiers, namely the determined distinction drawn vis-a-vis the other service branches. Apart from that, it primarily provides information about the image the composers intended to convey regarding their group, and it may also be seen as propaganda. The actual psycho-cultural mindset of the dogfaces was certainly more complex than *feed me ammunition, keep me in Third Division ... and eat a kraut for breakfast EV'RY day*. Philip Leveque, a veteran of 354th Regiment, 89th Infantry Division, who experienced

³³ OD's stands for olive drabs, the U.S. Army field uniform.

³⁴ While soldiers of the German Wehrmacht, in an allusion to the cabbage (Kraut) dishes typical to German cooking, were called 'krauts' by American soldiers, the expression 'Jerry' was commonly employed by the British army.

the final phase of the war in the European Theater of Operations from the end of January 1945 onward, offers a pragmatic etymology of the expression:

He lived in “pup tents” and foxholes. We were treated like dogs in training. We had dog tags for identification. The basic story is that wounded soldiers in the Civil War had tags tied to them with string indicating the nature of their wounds. The tags were like those put on a pet dog or horse, but I can’t imagine anybody living in a horse tent or being called a horseface. Correctly speaking, only infantrymen are called dogfaces. Much of the time, we were filthy, cold and wet as a duck-hunting dog and we were ordered around sternly and loudly like a half-trained dog.³⁵

In order to provide an adequate description of the research subject, its origins and its development, it is necessary to understand the milieu in which it developed. For this reason, we will begin with the sociocultural and mass psychological characteristics of armies in general and American armies specifically. The U.S. Army, the land force of the United States of the 1930s, its position and meaning within American society – all these elements become as much a theme as the origins and traditions of this organization.

A longitudinal analysis of the U.S. Army between the World Wars will be a topic of the next section of this work. It begins with almost total demobilization immediately following the end of the Great War³⁶ in the course of the American retreat into isolationist patterns of behavior, followed by the decades of the 1920s and 1930s, when U.S. forces, separated geographically from the population to the maximum extent possible and both personally and financially reduced to an absolute minimum level, led a shadowy existence. The third development phase of the Army of the United States between the two World Wars began with an emerging awareness that the critical developments on the European continent would lead to military conflict sooner or later. The American political leadership saw itself confronted with the reality that the United States was in no way adequately prepared in the event that it should become (whether of its own accord or not is irrelevant in this context) a party to the

³⁵ <http://www.89infdivww2.org/memories/levequeastp1.htm> (most recent access: April 18, 2010).

³⁶ Before the 1939 War developed into World War II, World War I was commonly referred to in English-speaking countries simply as the Great War or the World War.

conflict. This phase is characterized by the reactivation of the Army of the United States and by various early mobilization and war plans such as the Protective Mobilization Plan or a number of so-called 'rainbow plans'. A critical point in this development that should not be underestimated in its significance was the appointment of George Catlett Marshall as United States Army Chief of Staff on September 1, 1939. Marshall, who would remain Chief of Staff through the end of the war, shaped, as scarcely anyone else could, the development of the Army of the United States as well as the general conduct of the war through his strategic and staffing decisions and his advisory role with Franklin Delano Roosevelt. This is the reason Winston S. Churchill referred to Marshall after the Allied victory and without exaggeration as *the true Organizer of Victory*.

The transformation of the Army of the United States from an internationally insignificant factor in 1939/40 to the war victor of 1944/45 is the central theme of the next section of this volume. At a political level, one of the significant factors in this process is American public opinion. It defined Roosevelt's possibilities and limits as *shopkeeper* and commander in chief of the Arsenal of Democracy. At a technical – one could even say metaphysical-cultural – level, the person and character of George C. Marshall is the factor that dominates nearly everything, as mentioned above. His role as Army Chief of Staff and not least his staffing decisions influenced American Ground and Air Forces like no other factor. To cite only a few of these decisions, Albert C. Wedemeyer, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Omar N. Bradley and Mark W. Clark were, one and all, individuals who had a critical influence on the structure, strategy, tactics and culture of the American Army during World War II. They all owed their positions to George C. Marshall.

In the first section pertaining, as it were, to the central theme of this study, we address how an army of almost nine million so-called 'citizen soldiers' was actually created from scratch. The sheer size and technical process of this undertaking provide evidence as to why the resulting socio-political and cultural effects on the American way of life can safely be described as revolutionary.

Subsequently, we will leave United States soil, following the footsteps of the later dogface soldiers, and proceed territorially to the second section of this work, which in the terminology of those times would be labeled *overseas*. This begins with the so-called 'occupation of Britain' by the Army of the United States. The United Kingdom

served the Western Allies as a way station and logistical base for troops arriving from the U.S. en route to the North African and Mediterranean Theaters of Operations. For the decisive European Theater of Operations, it was used as a jump-off base for the invasion of northwestern Europe that was staged in Normandy. During this time, and particularly after the winter of 1943/44, as troops massed in southern England for the cross-channel invasion at that time still planned for May 1944, the south of Britain became a giant army camp where ultimately two million U.S. troops were concentrated. For the local population, this GI invasion meant a profound culture shock initially, followed by a lively, two-directional cultural transfer that we will trace here.

Following these admittedly extensive preliminary discussions, the content of the second part of this volume will address the actual theme, the dogface soldiers in the Mediterranean and European Theaters of Operations. In this section, we deal first with the various conditions that formed the reality of the dogfaces, both supporting and determining their emergence as a group with a distinctive consciousness. Then the study will take a proverbial *pictorial turn* and consider the research subject through a unique body of work from the perspective of image study: the cartoons of two-time Pulitzer prize winner, American infantry soldier and civil rights activist Bill Mauldin.

Mauldin, who took part in the Allied invasion of Sicily as a member of the 45th Infantry Division, achieved immortal fame among the GIs of World War II with his cartoons published first in the *45th Division News*³⁷ and later in *Stars and Stripes*³⁸, the daily newspaper of the Army of the United States. The two protagonists, Willie and Joe, war-weary, disillusioned dogfaces, saunter through the turmoil and catastrophes of the Second World War. Along their way, they make indirect comments about the events of the war, military leadership, weather, food, operations, practices and absurdities in the Army of the United States, replacements, the German enemy and much more. In short, they describe that which is in some way significant to dogfaces. The value of Mauldin's cartoons for an analysis of this phenomenon can scarcely be overstated. Willie and Joe provided a face and a communications platform for the (to

³⁷ *The 45th Division News* was the newspaper of the soldiers of the 45th Infantry Division.

³⁸ Cf. [Chapter 8.4](#) Journalistic connection: *Stars and Stripes*.

that point) anonymous dogfaces and converted a set of realities and opinions into a quasi-ideology. They are the point of departure for this study and its center of gravity. These snapshots and analyses derive their historical significance from a worm's-eye perspective in which we view them living out the sequence of events and decisions that constitute the history of the American war in the European and Mediterranean Theaters of World War II.

In this sense, it is necessary to deal with World War II campaigns and operations. Only when we have an idea of where the protagonists of our image sources come from, both in terms of their location and experientially, are we capable of reclaiming the source value of an image. The exclusive analysis of tactical and operational maneuvers according to criteria of contemporary and current doctrines would be nothing more than twice-told Prussian general staff history. In this deceptive and sterile (compared to the true essence of war) mode of historiography, Mauldin's works represent a corrective in the form of an individual horizon of knowledge and experience. The combined analysis of these two very dissimilar source materials leads subsequently to the distillation of historically relevant information. In a foreword to *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, Angus Calder sees historiological potential and qualities in Lawrence's text that are transferable to the image materials addressed here:

Whether or not Lawrence is 'accurate' or not in his account of this engagement or that is a relatively unimportant matter. Aldington matching *Seven Pillars* against Official Histories was an innocent writing two decades before John Keegan's masterly *Face of Battle* (1976) brought home to historians the point, which now seems obvious, that tidied-up official reports of warfare, commonly a confused business, especially on modern battlefields, are most unlikely to deliver truth. If Lawrence's descriptions are plausible – and many soldiers have deemed them so – they do represent general 'truths' about conditions of battle.³⁹

In conclusion, just a few words concerning the written sources and literature cited in this volume. For a comprehensive assessment of the so-called 'big picture', a number of recollections and memoirs are accessible. Although these volumes naturally present a subjective picture, they are of course very helpful to the aim of

³⁹ Angus Calder, Introduction, in: Thomas Edward Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (London 1997), p. XV ff.

being able to comprehend decisions reached during the period in question. Above all and in a class by itself is Winston S. Churchill's six-volume work *The Second World War*. By its nature, it is extremely subjective⁴⁰ in its perspective, leaving the impression (probably not unintentionally) that Churchill single-handedly won the war for Great Britain. Nevertheless, two facts make it an exceedingly valuable source. First, it is the only available *first-hand account* by one of the 'Big Three' key Allied political decision-makers of the Second World War⁴¹ and it offers a unique perspective on the functional mechanisms of Grand Alliance. Second, the unabridged edition contains a wide range of telegrams, memoranda and other documents displayed in facsimile form. The extensive appendices of this edition contain another several hundred pages featuring this sort of material. This is why *The Second World War* should be viewed as a genuine source as well as a literary work. The archetypal or possibly obligatory complement to this volumes would be the diaries of Field Marshal Alan Brooke⁴², the British Chief of the Imperial General Staff⁴³, published in 2001. It stands to reason that these diaries are no less subjective than Churchill's work. They offer, nonetheless, a necessary corrective to Churchill's portrayals and make it possible to find a middle path through parallel study.

While Churchill offers insights at the strategic level, a series of memoirs and diaries by highly ranked Allied military leaders like Eisenhower, Bradley⁴⁴ and Patton⁴⁵ gives

⁴⁰ Churchill commented on that matter, *History will be kind to me, for I intend to write it myself.* (<http://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/0301/churchill.html>)

⁴¹ The restricted group that included Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill. Hitler's table talks, written down from memory, are in the first place not genuinely *first-hand*, and in the second place constitute little more than further evidence of the malevolent-destructive delirium in which the frustrated art student from Braunau, his entourage and his entire thousand-year Reich found themselves.

⁴² Later Lord Alanbrooke.

⁴³ CIGS – Chief of the Imperial General Staff, the highest-ranking military officer in the British Empire and the chief military advisor to Prime/Defense Minister Winston S. Churchill.

⁴⁴ Omar N. Bradley commanded U.S. forces in North Africa, Sicily and Europe. The 12th Army Group he commanded in the ETO was, with approximately 1.3 million troops, the largest American military force ever sent into battle.

a glimpse into the operational and tactical strata. As a meticulous record of all U.S.-related aspects of the Second World War, the so-called *Greenbook Series*, *The United States Army in World War II* provides data and detailed information on every imaginable topic from mobilization to the victory over Japan in September 1945.

In addition, for information on the reality of war for the dogface soldiers, various first-hand accounts are available to us. The wartime columns of Ernie Pyle occupy a prominent position in this regard. Pyle had built his reputation as an itinerant columnist in the U.S. during the Great Depression, writing about the simple struggle of U.S. citizens for survival during those times. His reports from the front lines of World War II, which earned him a Pulitzer Prize in 1944, constitute a logical sequence by focusing predominantly on the fate of ordinary soldiers, and they appeared in over 200 daily newspapers in the U.S. Pyle's columns were written as letters in which he recounted to the American public what he observed and felt. His biographer, James Tobin, wrote about the critical role Ernie Pyle played for the American people:

... to Americans the battles could not help but to seem remote. People knew, vaguely but with pangs of guilt, their soldiers were undergoing a sacrificial ordeal on their behalf. To understand that ordeal, and to convince themselves they were sharing in it, they read the war news avidly. And no writer was read more avidly than Ernie Pyle. What Pyle felt, the soldier was presumed to feel, and vice versa. The public possession known as "Ernie Pyle" was the emotional current running between the civilian and the war. He was the interpreter, the medium, the teacher who taught Americans what to think and how to feel about their boys overseas.⁴⁶

No less important in their informative value are the diaries of Forrest C. Pogue. Pogue was an historian working as a sergeant in the Office of the Chief of Military History. In the process of collecting material for the abovementioned *Greenbook Series*, he landed on the Normandy coast in France with his small unit on June 7, 1944 and traveled with the American troops until the end of the war. After the war,

⁴⁵ George S. Patton commanded U.S. forces in North Africa, Sicily and the ETO. He is considered by many to be one of the most talented field commanders of the Second World War. His remarkable personality and serious shortcomings will be discussed in a later section.

⁴⁶ James Tobin, *Ernie Pyle's War. America's Eyewitness to World War II* (New York 2006), p. 117 ff.

Pogue wrote one of the main volumes in this series, *The Supreme Command*, and published among other works a four-volume biography of George C. Marshall. His annotated diaries from the European Theater of Operations have been published and are available.

Doing Battle: The Making of a Skeptic, the memoirs of the literary scholar Paul Fussell, is a revealing volume describing the destructive effect of the war on the human psyche and the suffering and bitter absurdities inherent in infantry warfare.

The Boys' Crusade, by the same author, deals with the various stages of the war in northwestern Europe from the perspective of the infantry.

Finally, the war recollections of Robert Capa, published under the title *Slightly Out of Focus*, constitute another important work. Like Pyle, Capa was mainly interested in life on the front lines. His often laconic prose discloses, in addition to details of soldiers' daily routines, considerable information regarding the numbing and brutalization that result from extensive time spent at the front.

2 The American Way of War: socio-cultural and mass psychological dualisms between the U.S. and its military forces

Political actors are predisposed to learn certain things over others. In the modern global system, realist folklore has provided a guide and cultural inheritance for Western states that has shaped and patterned the behavior of major states in certain situations ... War is an institution within the modern global political system that serves an important political function – the solution of intractable issues. Until there is a functional equivalent to this institution, war will remain a way of handling certain situations. War and the steps and practices that lead to it must be seen as a part of a culture of violence that has given birth to these practices.

John A. Vasquez⁴⁷

War is a cultural process. The manner in which a nation wages war is an expression of its cultural identity. This is why, for the purposes of a history of the dogface soldiers, it is indispensable to devote space to the cultural makeup of the United States of America, its military forces, and the interactions and relations between these two major factors. The production and accumulation of culture is an evolutionary process except for a few revolutionary examples. It is therefore necessary to view the development of the American armies in the context of the history of the American nation and its wars. From the time of George Washington's Continental Army up to the present, wars have been much more than simply violent political events. Rather, they represent an important source of symbols, celebrations and commemorations, art, literature and iconic individuals that had a decisive influence on the country, acting – as they still do today – as a cohesive force on the society.⁴⁸

In the following pages, we will attempt to discuss the cultural essentials of American forces based on three sets of dialectical paradigms that determined the nature and form of American armies from the founding of the nation into the World War II years. While the first two are of an organizational nature and deal with the Army's methods

⁴⁷ John A. Vasquez, *The War Puzzle* (New York 1993), p. 196 ff.

⁴⁸ John Resch / Mark Wetherington / Mark David Sheftall, *Memory and War*, in: Peter Karsten (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of War and American Society* (New York 2005), p. 491.

of composition and personnel assignment, the third involves its operational culture. It starts with the difference between the two armies that is a constant across the history of the United States of America.⁴⁹

2.1 Regulars – citizen soldiers

The myth was born in the American Revolution that would characterize the U.S. military forces well into the 20th Century: that of the citizen soldiers. The inhabitants of the British colonies on the American continent saw in regular armies – in other words, tightly organized and led professional armies – a symbol of the oppressive power of Great Britain from which they sought freedom. The colonists striving for independence harbored great mistrust of the instrument of power of a Regular Army. The colonial revolt had been triggered in the 1760s and 1770s by the imposition of repressive British laws. As the conflict widened in the spring of 1775 into a war for independence, the secessionist side logically perceived an army of citizen soldiers – an irregular militia formed more or less ad hoc – as the proper instrument to free themselves from British rule. The reality of the war soon revealed, however, that these citizen soldiers were no match for the regulars of the British army. As a consequence, the Continental Line came into being, a regular army patterned after the British military in its training and leadership that would ultimately be responsible for victory in the War of Independence. Although the irregular colonial militia of citizen soldiers was in fact deployed only in an auxiliary capacity and had no significant share in the victory over Great Britain, in the popular mythology of the war they became the sole decisive force.⁵⁰ In succeeding years, whenever the American nation prepared for war, it invoked the so-called 'Spirit of '76'. The political and cultural elites used the memory of the War of Independence to create social solidarity out of the nationalistic spirit that had arisen during the war and in the subsequent independence period. Simultaneously, they evoked and exaggerated the legend of the citizens, the power of their love of country and idealism to reach for the heights,

⁴⁹ Edward M. Coffman, *The Duality of the American Military Tradition: A Commentary*, in: *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 64, No. 4 (2000), p. 968.

⁵⁰ Scott N. Hendrix, *The Influence of European Military Culture*, in: Peter Karsten (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of War and American Society* (New York 2005), p. 258.

and they settled one of the great cultural debates that would preoccupy the American Armed Forces until 1973: regulars or citizen soldiers?

The decision to resort to an army of citizen soldiers in the event of war does not mean, of course, that the United States maintained no regular army at all. There was always a Regular Army, although it was a shadow operation at the margin of American society. Up to the 1860s, the size of the Regular Army never exceeded 16,000 men. In the early years of the Republic, a not insignificant number of critics saw the Regular Army as a threat to freedom and criticized the officer corps of the professional army for its aristocratic value system. As a delegate to the Continental Congress, Samuel Adams commented as early as 1776:

A Standing Army, however necessary it may be at some times, is always dangerous to the Liberties of the People. Soldiers are apt to consider themselves as a Body distinct from the rest of the Citizens ... Such a Power should be watched with a jealous Eye.⁵¹

While the enlisted ranks were formed from the least socially influential segments of the population as well as a large number of immigrants, officers were recruited from the middle class. The Regular Army followed the traditions of the standing armies of Europe. Military life revolved around drills, daily routines governed by drums and bugles, a wide variety of military ceremonies, and elaborate rituals of military courtesy. The uniforms were modeled on those of European armies. Officers were expected to be gentlemen and heroic leaders. They wore uniforms that clearly distinguished them from enlisted men, with swords or batons depending on the occasion, each of these a traditional symbol of authority. While every officer was clearly a gentleman in the self-perception of the Regular Army, enlisted men were clearly not. Officers were married to *ladies*, while enlisted men had only *wives*. Soldiers of all ranks were expected to submit to superiors unconditionally, and discipline among the troops was maintained through the threat of the most severe punishment and regulated by a system derived from the British 18th-Century Articles of War. The Regular Army's self-image was as an entity unto itself, detached both socially and culturally from everyday life in the United States. Many officers in the Regular Army had acquired from their European counterparts a deeply rooted disdain

⁵¹ Cited in: Coffman, *Duality*, p. 970.

for all things political. In this state of affairs, members of the military did not participate in elections until the eve of World War II.⁵² This hostile attitude toward the political institutions and traditions of the state sometimes reached a level where the Regular Army called into question the power of a democratic America to fulfill its military needs.⁵³ The isolation of the Regular Army from the culture and society of the United States manifested itself most apparently in its geographic remoteness from the rest of the country. Until the mobilization of the Army of the United States in the lead-up to World War II, the infrastructure of the Army literally consisted of outposts in border regions and uninhabited areas in the middle of the United States, relics from the days of Indian wars and the border conflict with Mexico.⁵⁴

The Regular Army represented only a small part of the U.S. military establishment. By far the larger portion was made up of the various state militias, later known as the National Guard⁵⁵, which were seen as corresponding much more closely in their philosophy to the democratic ideals of the U.S. In the Guard, organization, discipline and leadership tended to be substantially more democratic than in the Regular Army, with the militiamen of the 19th Century electing their own commanders, who in turn cultivated social contacts with their troops. It was not unusual that a career in the state militia or National Guard would form the start of a political career. Above all, however, each National Guard entity fell under the command of its respective state, not the federal government in Washington. This relationship to authority should be understood as the expression of a deeply held mistrust on the part of the American states with respect to a central government endowed with too many instruments of power. While at first the National Guardsmen had to provide their own equipment and materials for their periodic exercises, by the start of the 20th Century, the federal government in Washington had allocated financial resources to them. Linked to this commitment was an arrangement through which they could be placed under federal

⁵² Hendrix, *European Military Culture*, p. 259 ff.

⁵³ David J. Fitzpatrick, Emory Upton and the Citizen Soldier, in: *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 65, No. 2 (2001), p. 358.

⁵⁴ Cf. John Keegan, *Six Armies in Normandy. From D-Day to the Liberation of Paris* (New York 1994), Chapter 1.

⁵⁵ In 1877 the state militias were renamed National Guard.

command in the event of national emergencies to serve as volunteer reserves of the Regular Army.⁵⁶

The relationship between Regular Army and National Guard is even today a tense one. For long stretches of their common history, at least up until the threshold of the Second World War, members of the Regular Army saw the National Guard as an incompetent and undisciplined rabble commanded by politically ambitious charlatans. Conversely, the Regular Army was viewed as an undemocratic, archaic dictatorship, consumed by pointless ritual, made up of individuals who conducted themselves like aristocratic tyrants.⁵⁷

2.2 Conscription – volunteer service

The institution of general compulsory service as a method for the state to raise needed military manpower offers a number of pragmatic advantages. Through the obligation to serve, a potentially large army becomes available at a moderate cost. Where the military service is of sufficient length, it becomes possible to train draftees to a high level in basic and advanced military skills. Lastly, general conscription provides the state with deep reserves of trained soldiers over the long term.⁵⁸

Nevertheless, most U.S. political elites, faced with the question whether the Armed Forces of the United States should be based on volunteers or general military conscription, held the view that a volunteer army reflects the country's liberal political ideals. The power placed in the hands of government by the institution of compulsory military service and the associated rights of access to the civilian labor market were seen as un-American. In the early days of the Republic, large standing armies were considered more a potential danger to civil freedoms than a protection against outside threats. The geographic location of the U.S. between two oceans, far removed from the standing armies of Europe, was viewed as an argument that conscription would bring more risks than advantages. American successes in the

⁵⁶ Jerry Cooper, *The National Guard*, in: Peter Karsten (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of War and American Society* (New York 2005), p. 564.

⁵⁷ Hendrix, *European Military Culture*, p. 260.

⁵⁸ Michael Neiberg, *Conscription and Volunteerism*, in: Peter Karsten (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of War and American Society* (New York 2005), p. 186.

War of 1812 and the Mexican-American War, both fought with volunteer troops, reinforced the majority opinion that an army of volunteers recruited during times of war was fully adequate.⁵⁹

It was in the American Civil War from 1861 to 1865 when the volunteer army system first reached its limits. This domestic American conflict was waged on a European scale with respect to the size of the opposing armies, and in short order, the induction of volunteers for military service became no longer sufficient. The Southern Confederacy finally instituted a military draft in April 1862, the Northern Union a year later. In both cases, the implementation of this experiment did not constitute a recommendation that future armies should use compulsory service to build up their forces. The majority of Southerners were of the opinion that conscription represented exactly the sort of centralized power that had led them to secede from the Union. In the North, an unfair system of deferments and the hiring of substitutes produced social tensions that resulted in the 1862 draft riots in New York with over 100 deaths. In both regions, those affected were better off volunteering for local formations than being inducted into unfamiliar units. The 1898 Spanish-American War victory by volunteer-led forces did its part in continuing to build the argument against conscription.⁶⁰

World War I forced the U.S. to reconsider its antipathy to compulsory military service. The need to wage this war with powerful armies led once again to a turning away from a pro-volunteer culture with respect to the policies of the country's armed forces. In the highly industrialized world of the early 20th Century, however, the planners found themselves confronted with still other new challenges. At the beginning of the war, Great Britain faced the problem that a flood of volunteer signups left the country with a critical shortage of skilled workers. Consequently, the Wilson Administration created a so-called Selective Service System that awarded exemptions from conscription to key workers in the war industry. In addition, it launched a veritable public relations campaign dedicated to the spirit of American volunteerism, enjoining the male population to enlist rather than be drafted under the threat of punishment. In this way, an impression could be created that no general conscription policy was

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 187.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 187.

being implemented, but rather that the Selective Service System was recruiting from a male population that voluntarily and enthusiastically answered the call. The Selective Service System brought in 2.8 million of the 3.5 million American soldiers who fought in the First World War. It was eliminated following the armistice of November 11, 1918 but served as a forerunner for Franklin D. Roosevelt's Selective Service Act, designed to raise manpower for the Army of the United States in World War II.⁶¹

2.3 Mobility – power

At the level of operational culture, the development of the armies of the United States can be described under the concepts of mobility and firepower. Following victory in the War of Independence, the U.S. went many years without facing an enemy that fielded a mass army. The 1812 War, the so-called Second War of Independence, was conducted by Great Britain with limited resources because that country was involved in Napoleon's European wars, at least at the beginning.⁶² After the War of 1812, the duties of the Regular Army were reduced all the way down to carrying out expeditions in the territories of the indigenous inhabitants of the U.S. and patrolling the borders, especially the Mexican border. With respect to these duties as well as the Army's composition, the American military historian Russell F. Weigley comments:

Historically, the American army was not an army in the European fashion, but a border constabulary for policing unruly Indians and Mexicans.⁶³

Applying the premise *form follows function* to the design and architecture of armies, the primary demand on the U.S. Armed Forces was for mobility. In order to patrol the vast border areas with limited manpower and to be able to prevail against the mounted irregular forces of American Indians, the Army rebuilt itself around a lightly armed, highly mobile cavalry.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 189.

⁶² Robert P. Wettemann, Jr., The War of 1812, in: Peter Karsten (Ed.), Encyclopedia of War and American Society (New York 2005), p. 904 ff.

⁶³ Weigley, Lieutenants, p. 2.

This mobility doctrine reached its limits in the 1861-65 Civil War. The war was fought by both sides with mass armies arrayed in line formation on a European model. The Union owed its victory over the Confederacy of the Southern states, in the last analysis, to the strategy and application of sheer force and firepower. Ulysses S. Grant, a Union Army commander, after 1864 its commanding general and later President of the United States, took advantage of the superior industrial capacity of the Union states to create an army of immense size and firepower. Russell F. Weigley explains:

Both the trading of casualty for casualty to bleed the enemy white and the simultaneous offensives on every part of the front were applications of the superior raw power of the United States. General Grant and his lieutenants defeated the Confederacy by drowning its armies in a flood of overwhelming power.⁶⁴

Against an operationally superior opponent like General Robert E. Lee, General-in-Chief of the Confederate forces, Grant's overwhelming force strategy proved correct. Thereafter, American strategists were prone to view the concept of *overwhelming power* as a suitable way to approach every major American conflict.

U.S. involvement in World War I was of too short a duration to produce a significant change in strategic thinking. While Grant's concept of overwhelming force was implemented in 1917/18, the Regular Army returned to the tried-and-true mobility approach following demobilization in 1918 in viewing its traditional border security role. When the German Wehrmacht rolled across France in 1940 with close to 100 infantry and 10 tank divisions, two active Regular Army divisions were listed in the roster of land forces in the continental United States: the 1st Cavalry Division on horse patrol along the Mexican border and the 2nd Infantry Division, likewise based in Texas.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 3.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 2.

3 Between the wars: demobilization, isolationism and reactions to the crisis in Europe

To us there has come a time, in the midst of swift happenings, to pause for a moment and take stock – to recall what our place in history has been, and to rediscover what we are and what we may be. If we do not, we risk the real peril of isolation, the real peril of inaction.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt, January 20, 1941⁶⁶

Shortly after the ceasefire in Europe in November 1918, the War Department approached the U.S. Congress to request authorization for a regular peacetime army of approximately 500,000 men and a three-month general military service requirement. Unsupported by public opinion, this proposal was consequently rejected by the legislature.⁶⁷ Europe had emerged from the Great War so weakened that no one could imagine the country being pulled into another armed conflict. A coming war with Japan was, to be sure, conceivable for the political and military elites, but it would have maritime characteristics. As a result, for the next two decades the focal point of American military policy would be the U.S. Navy. The tasks of the land forces included defending the continental United States, should the need arise, performing occupation duties in Germany, and training volunteer reserve elements.⁶⁸

It was the War Department's responsibility to demobilize the 3.5 million-man wartime army as rapidly and harmoniously as possible without creating turbulence for the American economy. For this purpose, 30 demobilization centers were set up across the United States, deactivating approximately 650,000 officers and enlisted men in the first full month of their existence. After nine months, 3.25 million soldiers had been demobilized without causing serious difficulties for the national economy. By the

⁶⁶ Franklin D. Roosevelt, Third Inaugural Address (January 20, 1941), <http://millercenter.org/president/fdroosevelt/speeches/speech-3321> (most recent access: June 10, 2015).

⁶⁷ Erik Riker-Coleman, Selective Service System, in: Peter Karsten (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of War and American Society* (New York 2005), p. 774.

⁶⁸ Stewart, *American Military History II*, p. 53.

end of 1919, the active army had been reduced to around 220,000 men and had once again become a Regular Army made up of volunteers.⁶⁹

The National Defense Act of 1920 and the measures to reorganize the structure and organization of the Army of the United States shaped the image of the organization that went into action in World War II. Contrary to the classic requirement of a professional military, it was determined that the United States would not maintain a large professional army equipped to address a major conflict. Instead, the law created an army for wartime made up of three subsidiary organizations: the Regular Army, the National Guard and the so-called Organized Reserves. The Regular Army, authorized for a maximum peacetime size of 280,000, was charged with fulfilling the traditional duties of border security and was responsible as well for training the reserve components in peacetime. Other tasks included developing mobilization plans and keeping them up to date in case a major new war might require the formation of an army of citizen soldiers. In the 1920s decade, the U.S. Army founded the Command and General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth and the Army War College in Washington, where officers were trained to command large troop contingents and to perform general staff functions. However, the largest impact on the American reaction to the imminent crisis in Europe would arise from the creation of the Army Industrial College in Washington, which was made accountable for the supremely important issues of industrial mobilization and logistics in a coming major war.⁷⁰

The National Guard, the first of the two reserve components, was fixed at a maximum strength of 436,000 men. In reality, its numbers during the interwar period leveled off at 180,000 men, at which strength it was still the largest of the three subsidiary organizations of the Army of the United States.⁷¹ Guardsmen received their equipment and training partially paid for by the War Department, although in peacetime such funding was granted to the individual states, amounting to a tenth of

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 54 ff.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 57.

⁷¹ Although the Regular Army had a maximum authorized strength of 230,000 men, it stabilized after a couple years of steadily shrinking budgets at around 160,000, placing it in 1933 as the seventeenth-largest army in the world, behind Romania.

the departmental budget, on average. In return, they had to complete 15 days of maneuvers per year as well as participate in various training activities, and they were subject to call-up under national command in the event of a crisis. The third component of the Army of the United States was formed by combining the Enlisted Reserve Corps and the Officers Reserve Corps. Both organizations had been designed for veterans of the First World War whose training in that context qualified them to remain in readiness as Army Reserve personnel. While the Enlisted Reserve Corps generated practically no interest, the Officers Reserve Corps yielded a pool of almost 100,000 reservists. In addition, the Army provided a variety of paramilitary training programs for high schools and colleges and also for civilians during the 1920s and 1930s, further expanding the personnel pool available for possible mobilization.⁷²

In the course of the decade of the 1930s, the War Department commissioned the War Plans Division's Joint Planning Committee to elaborate a number of theoretical conflict scenarios in the context of military action plans⁷³. Although, from 1933 onward, there was at least a partial awareness of European instability stemming from Hitler's accession to power, the staff of the War Plans Division nevertheless prioritized plans focused on the Pacific Ocean. The reason for this action, incomprehensible only at first glance, was by no means pure ignorance. It was instead due firstly to Washington's conviction that, in the event of a European war, France – at that time Europe's largest army – and Great Britain would be in a position over the long term to act as a buffer between Germany and the United States. Secondly – and here it is important to reiterate that American war planning was exclusively defensive until the late 1930s and was focused on the defense of the American continent and the Western Hemisphere⁷⁴ – it was assumed, in a lack of awareness of the coming two-front war, that the U.S Navy would provide an Atlantic shield against aggressors.⁷⁵

⁷² Stewart, *American Military History II*, p. 61.

⁷³ These were known as 'rainbow plans'.

⁷⁴ Stewart, *American Military History II*, p. 67.

⁷⁵ Stetson Conn / Byron Fairchild, *United States Army in World War II. The Western Hemisphere. The Framework of Hemisphere Defense* (Washington, D.C. 1958), p. 7 ff.

Although the American public's strongly isolationist tenor precluded any sudden political changes, U.S. Armed Forces obtained additional resources after 1935. Respecting the overwhelmingly isolationist tendencies of the U.S. populace, President Roosevelt limited himself to criticizing the military actions taken in Italy's Ethiopian invasion in 1935 and the Japanese invasion of China in 1937, but took no further political steps. During the Spanish Civil War, he initiated several neutralist laws that made it impossible for the Spanish Republic to purchase arms in the United States. During the Sudeten crisis of 1938, Roosevelt called for a negotiated solution.⁷⁶ At the same time, however, from the mid-1930s onward, he ordered the formulation of continuously updated Protective Mobilization Plans to prepare the Army's role in an eventual war as well as Industrial Mobilization Plans for the wartime mobilization of the American economy,⁷⁷ and he gradually boosted the maximum authorized strength of the Regular Army and the National Guard.⁷⁸

The German attack on Poland on September 1, 1939 marked not only the end of a period of European 'peace' that had been no such thing. Across the Atlantic, this event signified the end of a period in which at least optimists believed in the possibility of American domestic unity surrounding the goals of U.S. foreign policy. On one side was the isolationist majority of the American population, who saw in the United States a regional power that, as such, should protect only regional interests. European affairs and especially European wars were viewed as something from which America should stay as far away as possible. Confronting this majority pragmatic-isolationist attitude was President Roosevelt, whose views could be characterized as moral internationalism. Roosevelt was convinced that the United States was a world power due to its size and economic-industrial potential and that, as a logical consequence, it needed to assume global responsibility. Moral premises, not just the dictum of its own interests, should shape the direction of the United

⁷⁶ Kurt Piehler, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, in: Peter Karsten (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of War and American Society* (New York 2005) p. 745.

⁷⁷ *The U.S. Army in World War II. The 50th Anniversary, Mobilization* (Center of Military History Publication 72-32), p. 6 ff.

⁷⁸ Cf. Stetson Conn, *Highlights of Mobilization, World War II, 1938–1942* (Office of the Chief of Military History 1959).

States foreign policy.⁷⁹ Roosevelt thus introduced a reinforcement of American garrisons outside the U.S. and lobbied for a review of the country's neutrality legislation. After spirited debate, laws were amended under pressure from the President to allow France and Great Britain to buy weapons on a cash-and-carry basis. Specifically, this provision meant that the purchase of armaments did not run counter to the neutrality laws if such weaponry was paid for in cash and transported aboard British and French ships.⁸⁰

With France's unexpectedly rapid collapse in May and June 1940, the final spiraling into war began to pick up speed prior to the ultimately unlimited mobilization of the American society and economy in the aftermath of the Japanese attack on the naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.⁸¹ Although 80 percent of the American population believed at this time that the U.S. would, sooner or later, become involved in the European war, a similar proportion was opposed to an immediate entry into combat operations.⁸² Roosevelt finally abandoned the path of feigned neutrality and positioned the United States ever more openly on the side of Great Britain.⁸³ With the Selective Service and Training Act of September 18, 1940, a draft was imposed for the first time in American peacetime history⁸⁴; the President agreed to an exchange arrangement with Great Britain in which 50 American destroyers were traded for use of a number of British naval bases in the Western Hemisphere; and lastly, he staked his entire authority on launching the so-called 'Lend-Lease Program' that provided first Great Britain and then, after the end of June 1941, the Soviet Union⁸⁵ with armaments at no cost. In August 1941, having become commander in chief of the

⁷⁹ Charles E. Kirkpatrick, *An Unknown Future and a Doubtful Present. Writing the Victory Plan of 1941* (Washington, D.C. 1992), p. 38.

⁸⁰ Conn, *Framework*, p. 21 f.

⁸¹ Kirkpatrick, *Victory Plan*, p. 40.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁸³ Piehler, *Roosevelt*, p. 745.

⁸⁴ Conn, *Highlights*, p. 2.

⁸⁵ On June 22, 1941, Nazi Germany began Operation Barbarossa, the war of aggression and annihilation against the Soviet Union.

Arsenal of Democracy through this law, Roosevelt formalized the Grand Alliance by signing the Atlantic Charter⁸⁶ with British Prime Minister Winston S. Churchill on a bay in Newfoundland.

⁸⁶ The Atlantic Charter is a joint statement by the President of the United States and the Prime Minister of Great Britain that may be seen as a basic document for world order following World War II. The United Nations, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the post-war independence of British and French colonies and many other cornerstones of Western post-war policy are derived from these documents.

4 From defensive to offensive planning

The people of Europe who are defending themselves do not ask us to do their fighting. They ask us for the implements of war, the planes[,] the tanks, the guns, the freighters which will enable them to fight for their liberty and for our security. Emphatically we must get these weapons to them in sufficient volume and quickly enough; so that we and our children will be saved the agony and suffering of war which others have had to endure. There is no demand for sending an American Expeditionary Force outside our own borders. There is no intention by any member of your Government to send such a force. You can, therefore, nail any talk about sending armies to Europe as deliberate untruth. Our national policy is not directed toward war. Its sole purpose is to keep war away from our country and our people. We must be the great arsenal of democracy.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt, December 29, 1940⁸⁷

Between mid-1940 and the end of 1941, a change occurred in U.S. foreign and military policy from an isolationist strategy of defending the American continent and the Western Hemisphere to one of planning an offensive multiple-front coalition war against the Axis powers. The main actors in this strategic change were President Franklin D. Roosevelt, the chief of staff of U.S. land and air forces, General George Catlett Marshall and a U.S. Army major who had been completely unknown up to that time, Albert C. Wedemeyer⁸⁸. We will now examine the roles of these three players in the prelude and genesis of the Victory Program.

4.1 Political will: Franklin Delano Roosevelt

I doubt whether we shall ever be able to hold him [Roosevelt] to any very systematic relations because that is rather entirely antipathetic to his nature.

⁸⁷ Cited in: Events Leading up to World War II. Chronological History. 1931–1944 (78th Congress / 2nd Session / House Document No. 541), p. 266.

⁸⁸ Although it is possible to assign authorship of one of the most important and successful documents of World War II to Wedemeyer, he could not consolidate his position of influence, and War Department reorganization at the start of the war had consigned him to a joint planning board (Keegan, *Six Armies*, p 34). In the post-war period, he made a name for himself primarily as a paranoid anti-Communist and in his memoirs, *Wedemeyer Reports!*, accused Roosevelt, Marshall and Eisenhower of actually being subversive Communist elements.

It must be borne in mind that President Franklin D. Roosevelt was the real and not merely nominal Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces. Every President has possessed the constitutional authority which that title indicates, but few Presidents have shared Mr. Roosevelt's readiness to exercise it in fact and in detail with such determination.

Mark Skinner Watson⁹⁰

To state that the President of the United States holds a position of central importance to his country in matters of war and/or peace would seem at first glance to sound like a redundant statement. In the case of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, however, it must be stressed that his role in the history of the United States during the run-up to and conduct of the war can scarcely be overstated. We have seen how a difference existed between Roosevelt and the American people in their views of the role of the United States in the world. While the U.S. saw itself as a regional power with regional interests, the President believed it to be a global power that consequently needed to defend global interests. A further serious difference, not yet mentioned, between FDR and his electorate was that the majority of Americans held the pragmatic view that the country should remain far removed from the turbulence of Europe in order not to have to deal with the amoral power politics of the Old World. The President, in contrast, reflected the morally grounded perspective to do the right thing above and beyond the nation's own interests, which was to fight the evil of fascism. He was therefore prepared to expand the limits of his constitutional powers to the maximum⁹¹.

⁸⁹ Cited in: William Emerson, Franklin D. Roosevelt as Commander-in-Chief in World War II, in: *Military Affairs*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (1958–1959), p. 190.

⁹⁰ Mark Skinner Watson, *United States Army in World War II. The War Department. Chief of Staff: Prewar Plans and Preparations* (Washington, D.C. 1993), p. 5.

⁹¹ The Lend-Lease Program could not actually be reconciled with U.S. neutrality legislation and could only be accomplished under a very loose interpretation of the text and through the exploitation of loopholes in the law. Shortly after the U.S. Navy had begun to penetrate the North Atlantic war zone while escorting convoys carrying armaments to Great Britain under the so-called 'neutrality patrols', an undeclared maritime war began between Nazi Germany and the U.S. in which American ships were fired upon and sunk, and American sailors killed (Kirkpatrick, *Victory Plan*, p. 43). Hitler was

Roosevelt's military policy in the immediate lead-up to the war involved three major phases. From the 1938 international negotiations surrounding the fate of Czechoslovakia in Munich up to the German assault on Poland, he primarily carried out a strategy aimed at deterrence, based more on the appearance of military might and declarations of solidarity with the not yet formalized Allies in Europe than on military realities. From the beginning of the war in Europe to the completely unexpected collapse of French military resistance in June 1940, Roosevelt's forcible rearmament policy was still more of a symbolic signal than an actual and balanced rearmament.⁹² Regarding this policy, William Emerson writes:

... rightly or wrongly, military strength was not Roosevelt's sole – or even his major – aim at the time. From the beginning of the rearmament program, Roosevelt sought, not rearmament, but the appearance of rearmament. He was concerned with the “show window,” not the “stock room.”⁹³

Still, after the German attack on Poland, the War Department was allocated a modest increase in financial resources under which it became possible to carry out a moderate arms expansion.

The shock of the unexpected defeat of France represents a dramatic turning point in the policies of the Roosevelt administration. The domestic political discussion surrounding the need to expand defensive forces came to an abrupt end and Congress approved this expansion almost unanimously. The President successfully passed the first American peacetime draft and welcomed Republican interventionists into his Cabinet. In order not to jeopardize his reelection in the fall of 1940, he

reluctant to declare war against the United States at this time, and Roosevelt was aware that it would take more than the approximately 100 dead American sailors to convince people of the need to enter the war. For this reason, neither the U.S. nor Nazi Germany used these incidents to escalate the situation.

⁹² While Marshall and the other chiefs wanted to plan for a well-balanced expansion of American forces, Roosevelt publicly announced a yearly count of 50,000 aircraft produced. At the same time, the Air Corps, under the framework of realistic planning, increased the number of its combat-ready planes from 1900 to 2700. Roosevelt's announcement may be seen as a threatening gesture to the Axis powers that did not in fact correspond to the real military situation (Emerson, Roosevelt, p. 186).

⁹³ Emerson, Roosevelt, p. 187.

proclaimed right up to election day his firm intention to use all means to keep America out of the war in Europe. Only after his reelection did Roosevelt employ the slogan *all aid short of war* for Great Britain, broadcast his important Arsenal of Democracy speech on December 29, 1940, and push through the Lend-Lease Act two months later after heated public debate and against heavy Congressional opposition, legislation characterized by Secretary of War Henry Stimson as a *declaration of economic war*.⁹⁴ During this time, the President faced the dual problem of convincing a skeptical electorate of the need for intervention in Europe while simultaneously – and covertly – initiating at least the planning for intervention-ready military forces.⁹⁵ Up to the late fall of 1941, for obvious political reasons, he balked at charging his chiefs with preparing their forces for the global war he foresaw.⁹⁶ Finally, on July 9, 1941, he confidentially addressed the issue of the demands the Army of the United States had to meet in order to be able to defeat all its potential enemies in the event of American entry into the war.⁹⁷ For Chief of Staff George C. Marshall, that was the conclusive indication that he should, in actual fact, prepare the Army of the United States for renewed war in Europe.

4.2 Grand design: George Catlett Marshall

I'm not always able to approve his recommendations and history may prove me wrong. But when I disapprove them, I don't have to look over my shoulder to see ... whether he's going to the Capitol, to lobby against me, or whether he's going back to the War Department. I know he's going back to the War Department, to give me the most loyal support as chief of staff that any President could wish.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt⁹⁸

He would tell the truth even if it hurt his cause. Of every man who ever testified before any committee on which I served, there is no one of them who has the

⁹⁴ Kirkpatrick, Victory Plan, p. 41.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 38 ff.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 36.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 51 ff.

⁹⁸ Cited in: Thomas Parrish, Roosevelt and Marshall. Partners in Politics and War (New York 1989), p. 137.

influence with a committee of the House that General Marshall has. The reason was simple. It is because when he takes the witness stand, we forget whether we are Republicans or Democrats. We remember that we are in the presence of a man who is telling the truth, as he sees it, about the problems he is discussing.

Speaker of the House Samuel Rayburn⁹⁹

A builder of armies and statesman ... the true organizer of victory

Winston Spencer Churchill

Puritanism, sense of duty and responsibility, character, integrity, competence, incorruptibility and tolerance. These Victorian virtues paint a background in the literature on George C. Marshall, acknowledged even today as one of the most important U.S. military leaders and statesmen. The later Chief of Staff of the Army of the United States and Secretary of Defense and State was born December 31, 1880 in Uniontown, Pennsylvania. After graduating from Virginia Military Institute in 1901, Marshall rapidly earned a reputation in the Regular Army as an extraordinary officer and teacher. In World War I, he served as G-3¹⁰⁰ with the 1st Infantry Division and, after 1918, as Assistant Chief of Planning for the American Expeditionary Forces. Apart from his war service, Marshall worked both before and after the First World War as an instructor at the Army School¹⁰¹ at Fort Leavenworth and, from 1907 to 1912 and again from 1933 to 1936, as instructor of various National Guard units. Between 1919 and 1924, he served General John J. Pershing¹⁰² as his adjutant,

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 137.

¹⁰⁰ G-3 – Chief of Operations and Training. In this capacity, Marshall attracted the attention of General John J. Pershing, Commander of the American Expeditionary Forces (see footnote 102). Pershing had criticized the 1st Infantry Division during a visit to the front, and Marshall had rejected the criticism of his senior commander as uninformed. As a result, his fellow staff officers in the 1st Infantry bade their farewells to Marshall, expecting him to be relieved of his duties. However, Pershing was better able to take criticism than they supposed, allowed himself to be convinced of his incorrect evaluation of the division's performance, and from then on, asked for Marshall's informal advice on matters involving the 1st Infantry. (Charles F. Brower, George C. Marshall: A Study in Character, <http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/brower99.htm> [most recent access: August 9, 2009].)

¹⁰¹ Now called the Command and General Staff College.

¹⁰² John J. *Black Jack* Pershing is one of the most prominent figures in the mythology of the U.S. military. In 1917, he was assigned to organize and build up the American Expeditionary Forces, the

supervised three districts of the Civilian Conservation Corps¹⁰³ in the 1930s and, as Chief of Instruction, directed the academic division of the Infantry School at Fort Benning, Georgia.

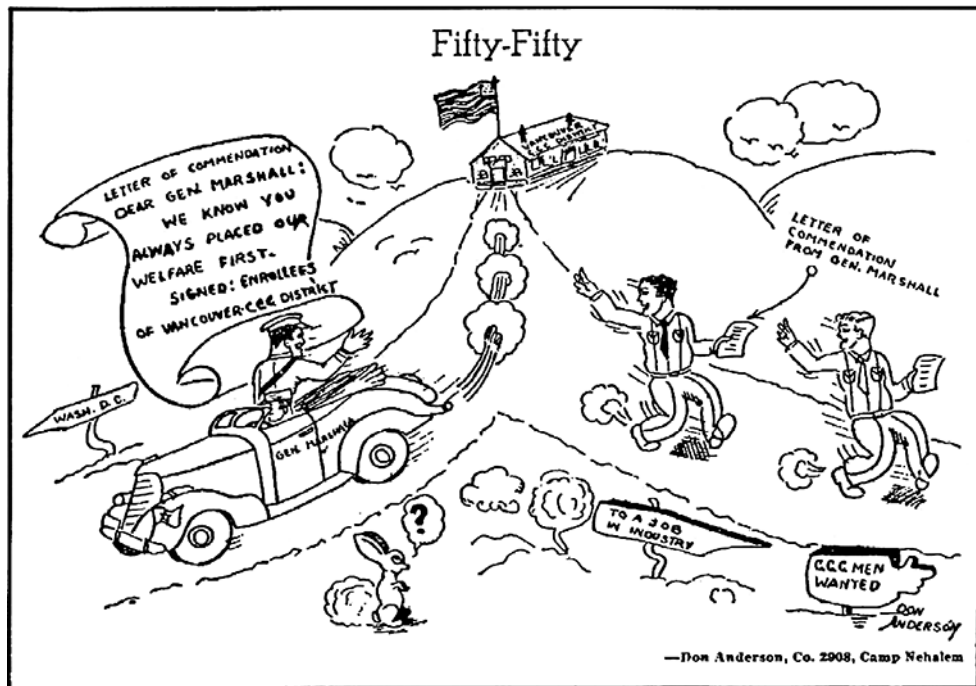


Fig. 1 Fifty Fifty¹⁰⁴

body of over two million men that in 1917/18 was deployed to the western front of the First World War. After the war, he served as Chief of Staff between 1921 and 1924.

¹⁰³ The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) was created by President Roosevelt only two days after his inauguration in 1933. At that time, the nadir of the Great Depression, over 13 million Americans were without work. The CCC hired over three million of them to work on public infrastructure projects. No independent bureaucracy was created to organize and operate the CCC, which was subdivided into camps. Instead, the Army was assigned this function. Although Army leadership only accepted the task unwillingly – they believed that it distracted the military from its central mission – many officers profited from their assignments with the CCC because they never would have had the opportunity in the Regular Army in the interwar period to gain experience in coordinating and supervising large organizational units. (Stewart, *American Military History II*, p. 64.)

¹⁰⁴ As District Director of the Civilian Conservation Corps, Marshall adopted the practice of writing reference letters for deserving staff in order to assist them in finding positions in the civilian sector. When he was posted to the War Department in 1938, the staff of the Vancouver Barracks CCC District reciprocated by publishing a commendation for Marshall in the form of a cartoon in their newspaper. As two CCC staff members at the right of the image hurry in the direction of an industrial job with a recommendation letter from Marshall, the text over Marshall's car, heading for Washington, reads:

Aside from the fact that Marshall distinguished himself in all his assignments and displayed the capacity for larger tasks, a specific skill set resulted from the mix of his assignments through the end of the 1930s that, along with his personality, made him the obvious choice to become Chief of Staff. Through his posting to the staff of the American Expeditionary Forces as well as his assignment as the right-hand man of General Pershing, the Army Chief of Staff, he was familiar with the handling of large formations, had deployment experience, and knew first-hand the political and military functions of the Chief of Staff. In his experience as instructor of National Guard units, he developed a reputation as a friend of the guardsmen, a quality that was – as we have mentioned – rarely seen in the Regular Army and that led, more smoothly than expected, to the National Guard's placement under federal command and its integration into the Army of the United States. Lastly, through his assignments at the Army School and Infantry School, Marshall knew a great many of the most promising young officers in the Regular Army. Dwight D. Eisenhower, Omar N. Bradley, Courtney Hodges, Mark W. Clark, Walter B. Smith, William H. Simpson, J. Lawton Collins, Lucian Truscott and Matthew B. Ridgeway¹⁰⁵ were, without exception, officers who owed their careers in large measure to Marshall's support, proved their value as commanders of key formations in the ETO, and, apart from that, distinguished themselves through the human qualities they displayed to their subordinates.¹⁰⁶

While Marshall had already made a name for himself in Army circles by the end of the 1930s decade as a competent, moral and farsighted officer, he became a

LETTER OF COMMENDATION / DEAR GEN. MARSHALL: WE KNOW YOU ALWAYS PLACED OUR WELFARE FIRST. / SIGNED: ENROLLERS OF VANCOUVER CCC DISTRICT (Vancouver District CCC Newspaper, June 1, 1938, depicted in: Brower, Marshall).

¹⁰⁵ Eisenhower was Supreme Commander, Allied Expeditionary Forces Europe, and W. B. Smith his Chief of Staff. Bradley commanded 12th Army Group in northwestern Europe, with approximately 1.3 million men the largest American force ever commanded by a single individual. Hodges, Clark and Simpson were, respectively, the commanders of the 1st, 5th and 9th U.S. Armies in the ETO. Collins, Truscott and Ridgeway each ended their wartime service as Corps Commanders.

¹⁰⁶ Forrest C. Pogue, George C. Marshall. Organizer of Victory. 1943–1945 (New York 1993), p. xii ff.

national and international institution between 1939 and 1945.¹⁰⁷ Roosevelt considered him his closest advisor next to Harry Hopkins, without whose presence in Washington he could not sleep.¹⁰⁸ In the Combined Chiefs of Staff Committee,¹⁰⁹ he was accepted as *primus inter pares*. Of the many American and international accolades that were offered him throughout World War II, he declined them all because he believed that he deserved no honors as long as Allied soldiers still had to die. He regularly showed his Commander in Chief photographs of the American dead with the intent of keeping the war from completely degenerating into abstract statistics. His aim was to make the human price of the war *quite clear to him* (Roosevelt) *because you get hardened to these things*.¹¹⁰ The Republican Party importuned him to be their candidate against Roosevelt in the 1944 presidential election; Marshall declined in principle, and this action earned him the singular respect of the President, the Congress and the American public.¹¹¹

By no later than the spring of 1941, the internationalists among Washington's political and military elites had come to the conclusion that an American entry into the European war could be possibly delayed but by no means prevented. With no statement coming from the President on this issue, however, Marshall could not predict with any specificity what the future would bring for the American forces,

¹⁰⁷ Larry I. Bland, *George C. Marshall and the Education of Army Leaders* (Fort Leavenworth 1988).

¹⁰⁸ "I could not sleep with you out of the country." Cited in: Larry I. Bland, *George Catlett Marshall*, in: Peter Karsten (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of War and American Society* (New York 2005), p. 451.

¹⁰⁹ The Combined Chiefs of Staff Committee was the Western Allies' senior military planning and executive group and the top military advisory body to Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill. The American members were Marshall, Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Ernest J. King, Commander of Army Air Forces General Henry H. Arnold and the Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief (Roosevelt), Admiral William D. Leahy. The British members were Chief of the Imperial General Staff Field Marshal Alan Brooke, First Sea Lord Admiral Sir Dudley Pound (after his death in 1943 Admiral Sir Andrew Cunningham), Chief of the Air Staff – Air Chief Marshal Sir Charles Portal, and the senior British representatives stationed permanently in Washington, Sir John Dill (replaced after his death in 1944 by General Sir Henry Maitland Wilson) and Admiral Sir James Somerville.

¹¹⁰ Cited in: George H. Roeder, Jr., *The Censored War. American Visual Experience during World War Two* (New Haven / London 1993), p. 99.

¹¹¹ Pogue, *Organizer*, p. xi.

although he was sure that all the Army's mobilization and expansion plans to that point were insufficient. The 1939 version of the Protective Mobilization Plan still focused exclusively on defending the American continent and the Western Hemisphere, and the strategies of the Armed Forces for industrial procurement and mobilization had been completely disrupted and made obsolete by the unexpected demands of the Lend-Lease Program.¹¹² Instead of continuing to expand the forces on an ad hoc basis, he charged his staff with developing a strategic analysis of the country's situation on which to base a plan for expansion. Shortly after Marshall's order, Undersecretary of War Robert Patterson, who held responsibility for Army procurement and lend-lease, inquired as to the extent to which the American economy would have to be mobilized in order to satisfy the demands of lend-lease and a superior army. This tasking of the War Plans Division would shortly receive reinforcement from the highest level when FDR's own request of July 9, 1941 arrived. The President called for a response by September 10, and insiders asked themselves whom Marshall would entrust with this scarcely achievable task. In the end, the Chief of Staff announced his surprising choice of a completely unknown middle-ranking infantry officer, Major Albert C. Wedemeyer.

4.3 Strategic conception: Albert Wedemeyer

... strategy, properly conceived, thus seemed to me to require a transcendence of the narrowly military perspectives that the term traditionally implied. Strategy required a systematic consideration and use of all the so-called instruments of policy – political, economic, psychological, et cetera, as well as military – in pursuing national objectives. Indeed the nonmilitary factors deserved unequivocal priority over the military, the latter to be employed only as the last resort.

Albert C. Wedemeyer¹¹³

Albert Wedemeyer's career up to the mid-1930s was typical of the Regular Army in the interwar period. Promotions in this army were rare and generally the result of personal connection rather than individual performance. Only in 1940, after over 21 years of service, was Wedemeyer promoted to major, a rank that only a few years later, during the war, would commonly be held by soldiers in their late 20s or early

¹¹² Kirkpatrick, Victory Plan, p. 50.

¹¹³ Cited in: *ibid.*, p. 18.

30s. The only occasion on which Wedemeyer had achieved notice was a court-martial for being drunk on duty. He spent an inordinate amount of his military career as adjutant to different generals, eventually marrying the daughter of one of them, but by 1940 had not commanded so much as a battalion, the customary command function for his rank. Wedemeyer's father-in-law sparked his interest in the economic aspects of warfare and military theoreticians of the past.¹¹⁴

After Wedemeyer graduated with distinction from Command and General Staff College in 1936, he took advantage of an opportunity through a bilateral exchange program to study for two years at the Kriegsakademie, the German general staff school. For several months between the end of his studies at Command and General Staff College and the start of the semester at the Kriegsakademie, he was posted to the G-2 division¹¹⁵ of the General Staff in Washington. During this time, he became acquainted with Oberst Friedrich von Boettcher, the German military attaché in Washington. Boettcher befriended the young American and sent a number of recommendation letters to Germany that opened doors for Wedemeyer at the highest levels of German military society.

Like few other factors, the two years at the Kriegsakademie in Berlin shaped Wedemeyer's strategic thinking and eventually the American history of the Second World War. The Kriegsakademie's elaborate curriculum provided a comprehensive and academic approach to war that went far beyond anything taught at general staff schools in other countries. It viewed war as something to be waged with not only military forces but all resources available to the nation. The triangular paradigm of flexibility, technology and mobility that would transform the armies of Nazi Germany into apparently invincible foes in the first years of the war was internalized by a generation of young commanding officers at the Kriegsakademie. Instead of focusing on tactical and operational problems, students at the Kriegsakademie were encouraged to view these problems from a broader perspective and to weave them into a comprehensive national strategy.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 5 ff.

¹¹⁵ General Staff Division 2 – Military Intelligence. The organizational structure still in use today by Western military staffs includes the following staff divisions: G-1 – Personnel, G-2 – Military Intelligence, G-3 – Operations and Training and G-4 – Support and Logistics.

After the frozen trenchlines of World War I, developers of military doctrine concluded that the revolutionary technologies that would drive wars of the industrialized 20th Century would continue to favor defense, and they evolved their concepts along those lines. At the Kriegsakademie, however, investigations were exploring how to increase battle tempo again by employing mobile tank formations combined with tactical air support, thus avoiding the heavy losses and fruitless trench warfare of the First World War.

Classmates who became friendly with Wedemeyer included, among others, Claus Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg, who later became one of the plotters in the attempt to assassinate Hitler on July 20, 1944, and Ferdinand Jodl, younger brother of Alfred Jodl, the eventual Chief Operations Officer of the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (OKW). A recommendation letter from Boettcher led to an acquaintance with Ludwig Beck, Chief of Staff of the German army, likewise a July 20 co-conspirator. Beck astounded Wedemeyer by the comprehensive understanding of economic and social conditions inherent in his military thinking and his extensive knowledge of the political, economic and social nature and military doctrines of the countries neighboring Germany as well as others in the region.¹¹⁶

Following his return to the U.S. in 1938, Wedemeyer was ordered to provide Chief of Staff Malin Craig with a written report of his experiences in Germany. Craig circulated the report to the heads of his staff divisions for review. The only one to demonstrate profound interest in Wedemeyer's report was the then-chief of the War Plans Division, Brigadier General George C. Marshall.¹¹⁷

4.4 Victory Program

I wish that you or appropriate representatives designated by you would join with the Secretary of the Navy [or War] and his representatives in exploring at once the overall production requirements required to defeat our potential enemies.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt, July 9, 1941¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ Kirkpatrick, Victory Plan, p. 12 ff.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 10 ff.

¹¹⁸ In a letter to the Secretary of War and the Secretary of the Navy. Cited in: Watson, Prewar Plans, p. 338.

We must prepare to fight Germany by actually coming to grips with and defeating her ground forces and definitely breaking her will to combat ... Air and sea forces will make important contributions, but effective and adequate ground forces must be available to close with and destroy the enemy in his citadel.

Albert C. Wedemeyer¹¹⁹

A detailed description of the expansion and mobilization of American forces in preparation for World War II would far exceed the scope of this study, as would Wedemeyer's Victory Program, the strategic policy paper upon which this program is based, and it is not essential for a further understanding. Some basic information and data are needed, however, in order to demonstrate the sheer size of this project that would come to have such serious consequences, not least on American civilian society.

The Victory Program was not merely a war plan like the previously mentioned rainbow plans. It was, rather, a comparative strategic study of the industrial, manpower and military capacities of the Axis powers and the United States. Its merit lay in explaining to its readership, the country's military and political elites, the monumental nature of the task ahead of them. Lacking, for political reasons, any precise direction from FDR to indicate what the principal lines of national strategy should be and exactly what preparations needed to be accomplished by the Armed Forces,¹²⁰ Marshall directed his staff to create a list of anticipated national policy elements in the event of the country's entry into the war. Based on these, they were to develop principles for American action in terms of the time factor and the objectives to be accomplished. Wedemeyer and the War Plans Division received from Chief of Staff Marshall the following guidelines on which the Victory Program was to be constructed:

... assumptions of national policy:

- Monroe Doctrine: Resist with all means Axis penetration in Western Hemisphere

¹¹⁹ Cited in: Keegan, *Six Armies*, p. 32.

¹²⁰ Cf. [Chapter 4.1](#) Political will: Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

- Aid to Britain: Limited only by U.S. needs and abilities of the British to utilize; insure delivery of this aid
- Aid to other Axis-opposed nations: Limited by U.S. and British requirements
- Far Eastern Policy: To disapprove strongly Japanese aggression and to convey to Japan determination of U.S. to take positive action. To avoid major military and naval commitments in the Far East at this time.
- Freedom of the Seas: The U.S. would permit no abridgement.
- Eventually the U.S. will employ all armed forces necessary to accomplish national objectives.
- The principal theater of operations is Europe, but other possible theaters may later appear desirable.
- The defeat of our potential enemies is primarily dependent on the defeat of Germany.
- Field forces (air and/or ground) will not be prepared for ultimate decisive modern combat before July 1, 1943 due to shortage of essential equipment.

... phases of American activity:

- 1st Phase (Until M Day¹²¹ or when hostilities begin). Objective: Insure delivery of supplies to the British Isles and provide munitions for other nations fighting the Axis, in order to preclude a diminution of their war effort, and concurrently to prepare U.S. forces for active participation in the war.
- 2nd Phase (M Day until prepared for final offensive action). Objective: Prepare the way for the eventual defeat of Germany by active participation as Associate of Great Britain and other nations fighting the Axis powers.

¹²¹ M Day stands for Mobilization Day: Prior to World War I, elaborate mobilization plans were already in the desk drawers of the Great Powers, ready to guide the processes of deployment and the start of fighting from M Day forward. World War II unfolded in a more muddled fashion, but at the outset, reference was sometimes made to M Days.

- Final Phase. Objective: Total defeat of Germany.¹²²

This assessment by Marshall of the core components of American national strategy proved correct in every instance. All key elements of the eventual Allied strategy, including prioritizing the defeat of Nazi Germany over Japan, lending support to Allied powers and keeping the North Atlantic sea routes open for pragmatic reasons, are already to be found in this report. Military intelligence services calculated that in the summer of 1941, Nazi Germany and its satellites had approximately 11 million men in 300 equipped and trained divisions in the field and that this number could increase to 400 by the projected start of American offensive operations. Conventional operational thinking was based on the basic principle that for offensive operations a 3:1 ratio in favor of the attacker was necessary.¹²³ In the summer and fall of 1941, as the newspapers reported daily on the latest German victories in Russia, one could only assume that the Soviet Union would quickly collapse and that Great Britain and the United States would be left to win the war on their own. For the Anglo-American Alliance, it was unthinkable to build an army of over 20 million. In modern industrial societies, no more than 10 percent of the total population can be removed from the economy without completely wrecking the country's economic foundation. Wedemeyer therefore discarded the 3:1 concept and began to plan on the basis of maximum deployable force. Subtracting the number needed by the Navy, there remained available, according to Wedemeyer's calculations, approximately 8.8 million men for the Army of the United States. This numerically inferior force plus the Western Allies, Wedemeyer proposed, should surround the European Axis powers, which should then be steadily driven toward defeat by superior local task forces at critical points before the Allies would take up the decisive battle for the Reich itself.¹²⁴ While at the Kriegsakademie, Wedemeyer had become familiar with the geopolitical theories of Karl Haushofer and Halford Mackinder. In essence, they maintained that a state's power is ultimately dependent on its geographic situation. According to Mackinder, Europe, Asia and Africa make up the so-called 'World-Island.' Its 'Heartland', the region that must be conquered in any quest for global dominance, is

¹²² Cited in: Watson, *Prewar Plans*, p. 353 ff.

¹²³ Keegan, *Six Armies*, p. 32.

¹²⁴ Watson, *Prewar Plans*, p. 355.

European Russia. This is where the tank armies of the German Wehrmacht conquered deep corridors of territory in the summer and fall of 1941. In the past, seafaring nations like Great Britain or the Netherlands were able to exercise strategic influence on the World-Island that far exceeded the size of their population by moving armies and supplies by sea along the periphery faster than the continental powers could manage by land. The technological developments of the late 19th and early 20th Centuries – primarily railroads, aircraft and motor vehicles – had begun to tip the balance in favor of the continental powers.¹²⁵ This theory was impressively confirmed by the armies of Nazi Germany in the years from 1939 to 1942. In a stroke of supreme irony, as John Keegan characterizes it, the Kriegsakademie had, in Wedemeyer's case, unintentionally conveyed a strategic concept to someone within the nerve center of his future enemy that complemented his own. Wedemeyer's time studying in Berlin had developed him into a *land-minded* strategist who harbored little doubt about how to deal with the Wehrmacht. The United States needed to confront the Wehrmacht with a mirror image of itself that would challenge it to a decisive battle on the land mass of western Europe.¹²⁶

Details of the Victory Program planning, such as the precise composition of the three branches of the Army of the United States, are not important in this context and are therefore not under consideration here. The composition plans underwent many subsequent revisions, especially because Soviet resistance, contrary to all expectations, did not break. Wedemeyer's calculations regarding the final size of the land forces turned out, however, to be exactly correct. While the Victory Program as a task still constituted theoretical planning, soon enough the course of events provided its practical application. Following the Japanese assault on the Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii and Hitler's war declaration immediately thereafter, the U.S. found itself at war against the Axis powers. For the U.S. electorate and its political representatives, all opposition to military buildup was at an end. America was unanimously determined to win this war on both sides of the world as quickly as possible and with all the resources it could muster.

¹²⁵ Keegan, *Six Armies*, p. 31.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 33 ff.

After key civilian agencies for the mobilization of the American economy had been created in spring and summer 1941, namely the Office of Production Management, the Office of Price Administration, the Office of Scientific Research and Development and the Supply Priorities and Allocations Board, the First War Powers Act of December 18 of that year empowered the President to assign new legal responsibilities to cabinet departments and administration agencies. With the establishment of the War Production Board, the War Shipping Administration and the War Manpower Commission in the spring of 1942, the legal and administrative foundations were laid for the American nation to commit all available resources toward an all-embracing conduct of the war.¹²⁷

As a result, 45 new Army communities were created for the land forces alone, each with a capacity of between 10,000 and 63,000 residents. A total of 29 reception centers for the intake and classification of draftees and 21 replacement training centers were constructed. In total, costs for Army construction programs amounted to 9.2 billion dollars by the end of March 1943. Land occupied by the Army rose from 2,117,000 to 45,871,000 acres between the summer of 1940 and the end of the war. At the apex of building construction in summer 1942, nearly one million civilian workers were active in Army construction projects.¹²⁸ Expenses for the entire Armed Forces accounted for 9 billion dollars between 1940 and 1941, more than in the whole period between 1920 and 1940.¹²⁹ Department of the Army expenses alone rose from around 900 million dollars in 1940 to over 42.5 billion dollars in 1943. To transport the expeditionary force of 5 million men projected by Wedemeyer to Europe and to provide for them there required the new construction of 7 million gross register tons of shipping space – or 1000 ships.¹³⁰ Apart from that, it became necessary to create out of nothing an arms and war materiel industry able to equip this force with all essential articles, from soap and clothing to tanks and ordnance. Most importantly, however, it was necessary to create this army in the first place from a staffing

¹²⁷ Conn, Highlights, p. 3 ff.

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 5.

¹²⁹ Thomas Childers, World War II: A Military and Social History (TTC Audio Lectures), Lecture No. 26, "The Man's Army."

¹³⁰ Watson, Prewar Plans, p. 355.

perspective. Apart from the utterly unbelievable demands on American industry, the 8.8 million-man American land force projected by Wedemeyer had to be recruited and trained before anyone could think about the practical implementation of its strategic training. This equally audacious enterprise is the subject of the next chapter.

5 The right way, the wrong way, the Army way

... the American Soldier is a much more complicated character than he is given credit for being. He cannot be written into a script as though he were a civilian wearing a brown suit with metal buttons, nor can he be regarded as a 'soldier', a being whose reactions are completely divorced from civilian emotions.

Arthur Miller¹³¹

The G.I. was in a very real sense suspended between two ways of life and held in that state of suspension as long as he wore a uniform. Physically he left civilian life, yet mentally he never joined the Army; he was in the service but not of it. He spent part of his time thinking about what was for him the present – that is, his Army existence – and fully as much time thinking about his past – and what he hoped to be his future – in the civilian world. So if we are to understand the G.I., his attitudes toward these two worlds are the places to start.

Lee Kennett¹³²

On September 5, 1940, legislators and gallery visitors at the U.S. Capitol witnessed a fierce fist-fight between two representatives, the most violent episode that the longtime doorkeeper of the U.S. House of Representatives could ever remember. The cause of this ferocious outbreak was the heated discussion regarding the introduction of compulsory military service, the so-called Selective Service System. There is nothing more to find out regarding the winner of this specific argument, however, since both the House of Representatives and the Senate accepted the legitimacy of Roosevelt's policy and, on September 16, 1940, passed the first draft in nominal peacetime in the United States into law. In its wake, over 7 million of the 8.8 million members of the Army of the United States became available for military duty through the Selective Service System. In the first two years, while the Regular Army and National Guard components brought much needed know-how to the Army of the United States. However, the draftees were, as Lee Kennett points out,

... the basic metal in the alloy, the one that determined its characteristics and above all its temper.¹³³

¹³¹ Cited in: David Reynolds, *Rich Relations. The American Occupation of Britain 1942–1945* (London 1996), p. 71.

¹³² Lee Kennett, *G.I. The American Soldier in World War II* (New York 1997), p. 72.

In this chapter, we will concern ourselves with who the future dogface soldiers were, where they came from and how the methods of industrial mass production were brought to bear to create the army of citizen soldiers that entered the battlefield against the German Wehrmacht in the fall of 1942 and dealt it a crushing defeat in 1944/45 in northwestern Europe.

5.1 The draft

...I noticed that the crooner Sinatra has been deferred because of a punctured ear drum. The ears are vital to a musician, vocal or instrumental; therefore if we judge by the salaries paid, Sinatra's ears are reasonably effective. Please have this looked into right away. If an Army doctor deferred him I want to know just why.

George C. Marshall, Memorandum to General McNarney, December 27, 1943¹³⁴

It is apparent from the fist-fight episode that the original implementation of the system of compulsory service was in no way uncontroversial. The cultural leanings already discussed at length in [Chapters 2 and 3](#), grounded in federalism, liberalism, and isolationism, led a large portion of the American public – and thus also their political representatives in Washington – to be extremely skeptical, if not openly hostile, to the idea of putting such an instrument of power as a conscript army into the hands of the administration during peacetime. For this reason, Congress limited the terms of the original Selective Service and Training Act to a recruitment of 900,000 men between 21 and 31 years of age for a maximum of 12 months. With the end of the 12-month service period of the first conscripts coming into sight in the summer of 1941, just as the worsening international political situation suggested that they should in fact be remaining longer than 12 months in service, signs of disintegration and hints of an imminent mutiny among the draftees were in evidence. The acronym OHIO, standing for *Over the Hill In October*, began to appear on countless barracks walls as advance notice of a mass desertion that the Army, in view of public opinion, could not afford. An article in *LIFE* Magazine about the army grievances went to the heart of one of the fundamental problems of the Army of the United States:

The Army does not know whether it is going to fight, or when or where.¹³⁵

¹³³ Kennett, G.I., p. 3 ff.

¹³⁴ Cited in: *ibid.*, p. 16.

Everything changed with the Japanese attack on the Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor. Congress adapted the Selective Service and Training Act to require draftees to remain in service for the length of the war plus six months. All public reservations about the system itself dissipated and the American nation became unified around the common goal of defeating its enemies. Army life was not particularly smooth, however. A kind of generational problem beset the Army of the United States, as *New York Times* reporter Hilton H. Riley wrote in an ultimately unpublished review of all that was wrong with the Army. Riley, who had served as an officer in World War I, described the innate difficulty as follows:

Command, vintage of 1917 (pretty general), appears naively and disconcertingly unaware that its men, vintage of 1940, are a different breed of cat ... The present breed (mark well) is questioning everything from God Almighty to themselves.¹³⁶

Two features of this generation gap are especially striking: education and media. While only 9 percent of World War I troops had a high school diploma, that proportion rose to 41 percent for the 1940/41 draftee generation. Marshall's army could be trained and instructed for more complex tasks than could Pershing's 20 years earlier. It was, however, also more critical about what it was required to do. The second factor to bring about a revolutionary change within a generation involved media and exposure to it. Riley found in his study that 95 percent of the draftees he interviewed had read the *LIFE* Magazine article mentioned earlier. The generation of 1940/41 had grown up in the breakthrough period of classic magazine journalism, it was interested in the events of the day, and it was informed about these events. Even more significant than the influence of print media were, for this generation of regular moviegoers, the newsreels that were shown as a prelude to the feature film.¹³⁷ The combination of these influences provided Army leadership with troops who were informed about relevant issues, raised critical questions about their role in relation to the Army, and often expressed displeasure when they felt the need to do so. George C. Marshall was aware of the changes that had taken place since the last war. His task was to adapt the institution of the Army of the United States before sending it to

¹³⁵ Reynolds, *Rich Relations*, p. 76.

¹³⁶ Cited in: *ibid.*, p. 76.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

fight against the Axis powers so that its success on the battlefield would not be threatened by inner tensions.

Exactly how did the Selective Service System operate? From which institutions and in what manner were the Armed Forces ultimately supplied with manpower? Following the establishment of the Selective Service System under the law, the first of what would become seven draft registrations – universally known for short as *the draft* – was announced on October 16, 1940, requiring all male U.S. citizens between the ages of 21 and 31 to register for compulsory military service. The conscription of inductees took the form of a lottery in which the registrants were required to report to their local Selective Service (draft) boards in the order of the number drawn. All fears that the first draft would fail to bring in a sufficient number of registrants proved unfounded, however, and by the evening over 16 million men had registered. On October 29, 1940, Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson, in the presence of President Roosevelt, drew the first number: 158. Across the country, 6175 young men who had received this number at registration were now required to report to their local draft boards. Later draft registration campaigns targeted either older age cohorts or males who had reached draft age in the interim. In the run-up to the first registration, the individual state governors and the President himself launched a massive information campaign to ensure that the draftees would respond to the call.¹³⁸

The central administration of the program and the determination of the monthly recruitment quotas were provided by the Selective Service System in Arlington, Virginia. The implementation of these requirements, however – further evidence of America's mistrust of any kind of central authority – was carried out by over 6500 local draft boards. Each draft board was responsible for a pool of approximately 3000 registrants. Boards were made up of locally prominent honorary members such as businessmen, attorneys, World War I veterans and others. It was assumed that registrants would be more compliant if the decisions regarding induction were made at the local level. Under certain conditions, the draft boards were subject to requirements governing which registrants would be available for conscription. In this way, those employed in agriculture or in other jobs seen as important to the war effort were nearly always exempted from military. Objection on grounds of conscience was

¹³⁸ Kennett, G.I., p. 4 ff.

recognized in the system but only in very specific cases accepted as a reason for exemption. A total of 37,000 men were granted exemptions as *conscientious objectors* and allowed to perform alternate service in medical facilities or fire protection.¹³⁹ Especially at the beginning of the war, an attempt was made to assign those with an objection to the use of arms at least to perform alternate service outside combat units. Consideration was also given in the early days of the Selective Service System to married men and fathers, although, as the need for manpower grew, such sensitivities eventually could no longer be indulged. Apart from such stipulations, however, the draft boards were free to make their own decisions and were responsible to no one. In this way, they had a not insignificant influence on the social and cultural composition of the U.S. Armed Forces.¹⁴⁰ Over the duration of the war, the Selective Service System, from its turbulent and difficult birth, managed to achieve resounding success. By the time the guns fell silent in 1945, a total of 45 million Americans between the ages of 18 and 64 had registered for the Selective Service System. Of the almost 16 million people who served in all branches of the American military, over 10 million were provided through the Selective Service System. Individuals who wanted to avoid the Selective Service System in one way or another were in the minority. All told, the Department of Justice processed 300,000 cases of *draft evasion*, resulting in only 16,000 convictions for violations of the Selective Service and Training Act.¹⁴¹

5.2 Mobilization of the Army of the United States within the framework of the Mobilization Training Program

Six days a week, from reveille around 6:00 A.M. in most camps, through training from 8:00 in the morning to 5:30 P.M., right through to the officially regulated “free time” before lights out at 9:45 P.M. – the soldier’s time belonged to Uncle Sam. When to eat, when to wash, when to sleep – everything was prescribed. Like his clothing and provisions, a man was simply “Government Issue” – G.I.

¹³⁹ John R. Maass / Michael S. Foley, *Draft Evasion and Resistance*, in: Peter Karsten (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of War and American Society* (New York 2005), p. 229 ff.

¹⁴⁰ Kennett, G.I., p. 6 ff.

¹⁴¹ Maass / Foley, *Draft Evasion*, p. 230.

For all future dogface soldiers as well as all other registrants in the Selective Service System, each day's trip to the mailbox was filled with tension. If it contained the induction order in the name of the President of the United States, colloquially known as the *Greetings*, they were to report to one of the induction centers scattered across the U.S., where their fitness for army service would be determined.

Induction

GREETING:

Having submitted yourself to a Local Board composed of your neighbors for the purpose of determining your availability for training and service in the armed forces of the United States, you are hereby notified that you have now been selected for training and service in the Army.¹⁴³

Following a one-day physical examination in the induction centers, draftees were given two weeks to put their personal affairs in order before they were required to report to one of the reception centers, where their life in the Army truly began. The process started with a medical examination, conducted in the fashion of an assembly line. The draftees were brought to a large room and instructed to remove all their clothes, after which they proceeded through various stations, undergoing a different examination at each of these. For most of the men, who had grown up during the meager times of the Great Depression, these exams represented by far the most extensive assessment of their physical health that they had ever received. The draftees' minimum height and weight to join the Army were, respectively, five feet and 105 pounds. In view of the fact that, when the soldiers landed on the North African coast in November 1942, they were forced to carry packs with an average weight of 132 pounds, it cannot be said that these requirements were too stringent.¹⁴⁴

Inductees who intentionally failed the examinations by giving false information or through other deceptive means were the exception. Most draftees were anxious to

¹⁴² Reynolds, Rich Relations, p. 76.

¹⁴³ Facsimile available at <http://www.808th.com/documents/drafted.htm> (most recent access: March 8, 2012).

¹⁴⁴ Kennett, G.I., p. 25 ff.

pass the test, whether for the sake of wanting to do their duty out of patriotic pride or simply because they did not wish to be shown up as less fit than the others. After the physical examination, a second test was conducted by the Army psychiatric service to evaluate the inductee's psychological makeup. By today's standards, this examination was simple. It consisted entirely of a short interview in which the psychiatrist asked a few questions, probing whenever the inductee's answer was seen as suspect. In the early 1940s, however, the existence of a psychological examination for military service was a novelty, and the testing methods innovative. Of the 15 million men who underwent examination in the induction centers, the psychiatric service failed 1,846,000 on psychological grounds, while another 250,000 men were later relieved of duty for the same reasons.¹⁴⁵

The experience revealed that draftees frequently went straight from the induction examination to a Navy or Marine Corps recruiting center to enlist there, due to the relatively low prestige of the land forces. As a consequence, the Army initiated the practice of conducting the swearing-in process immediately following the inductees' examination. As a last step, they were informed of the Articles of War, specifically Articles 58 and 61 dealing with desertion and absence without leave, and were then given two weeks' leave as sworn soldiers in the Army of the United States.

Reporting for duty

The Sergeant asked if everyone had a lovely fit. Those who did not were to take three steps forward. Then the Sergeant said if something could be buttoned it was not too tight. If it stayed when you stepped forward it was not too loose.¹⁴⁶

After the two weeks had elapsed, the recruits were to report to one of the many reception centers located throughout the U.S. Here they left their life as civilians behind them and entered the alien world of the Army. In the reception centers, the future soldiers were administratively conveyed into the enormous, steadily expanding system of the Army of the United States, issued their personal equipment, classified and assigned their future duties. The experience lasted from a few days to several weeks and was ultimately dependent on how long the military bureaucracy needed in

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 28 ff.

¹⁴⁶ Cited in: *ibid.*, p. 33.

order to determine how it planned to make further use of the recruit. The average time spent in the reception centers amounted to nine days.¹⁴⁷

Here as well, a short initial medical examination of the recruits was conducted, including testing for venereal disease. The rectal examination that, incidentally, was repeated at each new duty station was infamously known among recruits as *the short arm*. With the confirmation of their good health, the recruits were allowed to don their uniforms. At the beginning of the expansion, as American war production was ramping up, military uniforms were a scarce commodity and frequently in short supply. It was not uncommon for recruits to be issued so-called 'World War I-vintage' heavy, impractical uniforms and leggings along with the characteristic steel helmets known in the First World War as 'tin hats'. Special attention was given to footwear. Because of a lack of adequate transport in the interwar years, the Regular Army of that period was literally on the march much of the time. For example, when the 20th Infantry Regiment took part in the Louisiana Maneuvers in 1941, it marched from Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri to Louisiana and back, a round-trip distance totaling 1000 miles.¹⁴⁸ Recruits tested their boots by using both hands to hold a pail filled with sand representing the weight of their gear. Then a futuristic x-ray machine would assess whether the boots passed muster. In general, the Army of the United States invested a great deal of energy at both the induction and reception centers to give recruits a sense that they were joining a highly professional and technologically sophisticated organization. To this end, much attention was paid to seeing that the reception centers operated in an organized and expeditious manner.

Once outfitted, the soldiers sat through lectures on various subjects including, among others, the Articles of War and military courtesy. Lastly, they had to complete the Army General Classification Test (AGCT) and the PULHES evaluation. The AGCT was a comprehensive 150-question machine-scored multiple-choice test to assess the recruit's general intelligence and ability to concentrate. Test results were classified according to their total score into five categories that would be of use in determining the further utilization of the recruits. Those scoring highest on the test

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 32.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 34.

were then pulled out to be sent into the Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP)¹⁴⁹, Officer Candidate School (OCS) or the Army Air Forces (AAF).¹⁵⁰

The PULHES evaluation¹⁵¹ was a modified Canadian army testing process that gauged the subjects' physical and mental capabilities. The purpose of the evaluation was to separate out combat soldiers, in other words, the basic pool that would include the future dogface soldiers. Each of six components in the PULHES evaluation had a value between 1 and 4, yielding a factor that the military hoped would quickly determine a recruit's placement possibilities.¹⁵² For the duration of the war, the offices responsible for classification deliberated over the question of what, apart from good physical conditioning, constitutes a combat soldier, never reaching agreement on universally recognized parameters. Apart from the obvious assumption that a good physical constitution was advantageous, they were not especially proficient in identifying the personal or psychological qualities one should watch for in selecting a combat soldier. In the end, the Army psychiatric service made a somewhat general recommendation to look for individuals with a spirit of adventure, affinity for competition and *love for blood sports*.¹⁵³

Lastly, recruits had to pass an interview with a classification specialist that would determine their future assignment in the Army of the United States. After receiving this assignment, the recruit would await transport to one of the training centers.

Training

I cannot picture everything clearly to you for I cannot send you a box of Texas dust to pour liberally over your whole body. I cannot send you a long hot road and a fine

¹⁴⁹ The Army Specialized Training Program made it possible for students to continue their studies subject to call-up. This was, of course, not unselfish on the Army's part, since they wanted to be sure not to overlook available intellectual potential.

¹⁵⁰ Kennett, G.I., p. 34 ff.

¹⁵¹ The acronym PULHES refers to the factors being examined: P – general physical stamina, U – upper extremities, L – lower extremities, H – hearing, E – eyesight, S – psychiatric evaluation.

¹⁵² Gertrude G. Johnson, *Manpower Selection and the Preventative Medicine Program* (Washington, D.C. 1993), p. 8 ff.

¹⁵³ Kennett, G.I., p. 39.

set of blisters or a pair of heavy G.I. shoes to be broken in. I cannot send you an overcoat which you will not be allowed to wear at reveille when it is freezing, but which you will be required to wear during the sweltering afternoon.

Letters from Fighting Hoosiers¹⁵⁴

In the spring of 1945, a total of 242 training camps and replacement training camps of the Army Ground Forces and Army Service Forces were active, including immense facilities like Fort Jackson, South Carolina, with a 65,000-man capacity, Fort Bragg, North Carolina, with 76,000 men, Fort Knox, Kentucky, with 53,000 men, Camp Blanding, Florida, with 54,000 men, Camp Claiborne, Louisiana, with 55,000 men, Camp Hood, Texas, with 68,000 men or Camp Shelby, Mississippi, with a capacity of 86,000 men. It should be mentioned in passing that the designation of 'fort' versus 'camp' depended on whether the location was in permanent use by U.S. land forces or whether it was either a temporary facility or one used by the National Guard.

During the mobilization years, however, most of these camps did not yet exist, and considerable efforts were expended to find appropriate locations and to build facilities there. The southeast of the United States was suited to that purpose for two reasons: first, the region's moderate climate meant that training operations could take place throughout the year; and second, the cost of land was lower than in most other U.S. regions. In terms of topography and infrastructure, potential site locations needed to offer reliable water supply, good connections to road and rail networks, over 40,000 acres of varied terrain and a stream where troops could train in bridge construction techniques.

Like the Army Construction Program, the Mobilization Training Program suffered from a hasty and therefore error-prone expansion following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. This meant, over the course of 1942, that it was not unusual to assign draftees to a facility before construction work had concluded, obliging them to go without such elementary infrastructure as latrines, running water or electricity.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁴ Cited in: *ibid.*, p. 54.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 42 ff.

As the program reached full stride in summer 1942, as many as 14,000 men per day streamed into training centers across the U.S. Training curricula of the Army Ground Forces and Army Service Forces naturally differed from each other, as was the case within the various AGF branches. In view of the focus of the present volume, the dogface soldiers, we will furnish somewhat more detail in the forthcoming descriptions of the training routine for infantry units.

First, though, it is important to stress that training in the Army of the United States was carried out at the divisional level, in other words, within the framework of those formations that would eventually make up the tactical building blocks of the Allied armies. In their implementation, these methods were not as efficient as training the different divisional components in facilities specially designed for their particular preparation. Considering the critical time factor in this case, however, training at the level of the division offered the advantage of providing the different units with an opportunity to get to know one another during the training period. In this way, commanders hoped to achieve better results from the soldiers later in their crucially important teamwork as a division.

The standard training program for all military branches prescribed a total duration of 52 weeks in order for a division to become *combat ready*. The first 17 weeks were devoted to so-called 'basic and advanced individual training'. The next 13 weeks consisted of unit training activities from the company to regimental levels. In the succeeding 14 weeks, which concluded actual training, the entire division practiced combined arms training involving all its combat, combat service support and service support elements. The year and training cycle concluded with a final eight weeks of maneuvers within the scope of formations above division level.¹⁵⁶

In basic and advanced individual training, recruits absorbed the fundamentals of life as a soldier. The main priorities were daily conditioning, exercise, weapons use, learning how to conduct themselves as soldiers, and military courtesies as well as seemingly endless marching. The most difficult physical challenge for recruits, and the only part of training that was more despised than marching, was posed by the obstacle courses. While the form of the courses varied, one example from Camp Gruber, Oklahoma offers a good picture of what recruits had to cope with. That

¹⁵⁶ Mansoor, G.I. Offensive, p. 24.

course's challenge was to complete the 1500-foot-long distance in three and a half minutes, a task that called for recruits to overcome the following obstacles:

... [to] mount an eight foot wall, slide down a ten foot pole, leap a flaming trench, weave through a series of pickets, crawl through a water main, climb a ten foot rope, clamber over a five foot fence, swing by a rope over a seven foot ditch, mount a twelve foot ladder and descend on the other side, charge over a four foot breastwork, walk a twenty foot catwalk some twelve inches wide and seven feet over the ground, swing hand over hand along a five foot horizontal ladder, slither under a fence, climb another, and cross the finish line at a sprint.¹⁵⁷

After recruits had spent 17 weeks mastering the fundamental verities of the soldier's life, the next 13 weeks were spent applying this knowledge within the framework of the infantry units of a division: the squad, platoon, company, battalion and lastly, the regiment.¹⁵⁸ From squad to regiment, the respective infantry tactics, basically 'fire and maneuver'¹⁵⁹, were taught and practiced, as well as the interaction between subordinate units and their respective superior formations. The conclusion and high point of the training cycle, strictly speaking, was provided by the remaining 14 training weeks, which were devoted to combined arms activities. The divisional units were expected to have mastered their respective roles by that point. The goal of this segment of the Mobilization Training Program was to coalesce the division's combat, combat service support and service support elements into an organically functioning formation. After the 44-week training cycle had been completed by the respective

¹⁵⁷ Cited in: Kennett, G.I., p. 55.

¹⁵⁸ For the composition of infantry units starting at the company level, see footnote 25. Up to company level, the composition is as follows: 12 soldiers make up one rifle squad, three rifle squads one rifle platoon, and three rifle platoons and a weapons platoon (equipped with grenade launchers, machine guns, and portable antitank rocket launchers) one rifle company.

¹⁵⁹ 'Fire and maneuver' signifies dividing one's own forces. While one part (fire) opens fire on an enemy position (ideally from behind cover), forcing it to take cover and thus depriving it of sight and mobility, the other attacking part (maneuver) moves into a position from which an attack against the enemy flank is possible, and executes that attack. Reduced to a level of detail appropriate for our context, it can be stated that tactical variations of fire and maneuver can be employed at all divisional levels, from the squad all the way to the entire division.

divisions, the final 8 weeks of maneuver exercises concluded the Mobilization Training Program, at which point the force was declared *combat ready*.

Field maneuvers

The maneuvers, at my level, were a huge uncomfortable, motorized camping trip. The antitank platoon, now equipped with inadequate 50-caliber machine guns, shifted from place to place, ostensibly protecting the 2nd Battalion from trucks bearing signs designating them as “tanks”, which never appeared. The top commanders and staffs that supplied and ordered us about may have received useful training, but I learned nothing I did not already know breathing dust and sleeping on the ground.¹⁶⁰

In 1940, in Louisiana, the Army of the United States conducted the first corps- and army-level¹⁶¹ maneuvers in U.S. Armed Forces history as a preparation for the coming conflict with the armies of the Axis powers and to learn something about its own *combat readiness*. For all participants, the result could be euphemistically described as sobering. A generation of staff officers with absolutely no experience in leading formations of that size, if one does not count theoretical war games and map exercises, commanded two opposing field armies made up of citizen soldiers who had just finished basic training and who were forced to fight with completely inadequate and simulated weaponry.

The participating staffs reaped from the Louisiana maneuvers the limited benefit of being able, for the first time, to practice handling actual large formations. Apart from that, the only useful result was that the maneuvers had cast a spotlight on the many weaknesses of the Army of the United States in the areas of manpower, organization and training. During the mobilization phase, the dual task of training existing formations while simultaneously activating and building a steadily increasing number

¹⁶⁰ Charles R. Cawthon, *Other Clay. A Remembrance of the World War II Infantry* (Boulder, CO 1990), p. 8 ff.

¹⁶¹ In the organizational hierarchy of land forces, a corps is the unit that is superior to a division. Thus a corps headquarters leads at least two divisions and a variety of corps-level pooled combat, combat service support and service support elements that can be situationally attached to the subordinate divisions. One level above the corps is the army or field army level, at which – analogous to the corps organization – an army headquarters leads at least two corps and pooled army-level combat, combat service support and service support elements.

of new ones had overextended the Army's personnel resources. Many officers and NCOs from the interwar-era Regular Army and National Guard were behind the times and not equal to the physical and intellectual challenges of modern *combined arms warfare*.¹⁶²

Chief of Staff Marshall and General Leslie McNair, Commander of Army Ground Forces, concluded from the unacceptable staff performance that only a rational personnel reorganization without regard for rank and privilege could solve the leadership problem of the Army of the United States. The Louisiana maneuvers thus became, as John Keegan put it, the *graveyard and seedbed of many careers*.¹⁶³ A large number of general officers were sent into retirement or transferred into positions where they would be unable to cause serious damage. Conversely, a generation of relatively middle-ranking officers – the list mostly reads like a Who's Who of Marshall's students, colleagues and subordinates from his various deployments in the U.S. Army's training system – experienced meteoric advancements that would bring them, within a short time, into key positions in the Army of the United States. Eisenhower, Bradley, Patton, Clark and many others who had first attracted Marshall's attention during the interwar period laid the foundations for their careers through their performance in the Louisiana maneuvers.

For the troops who took part in the maneuvers, the experience of the field exercises was less valuable. The great bulk of new weapons produced up to that point had been shipped to Europe and the Soviet Union under lend-lease.¹⁶⁴ As a result, substitutes for actual equipment – a grotesque display in hindsight – were used for the Louisiana maneuvers.

Sacks of flour served as hand grenades, while handcarts with angle-mounted stovepipes took the place of artillery that did not yet exist. Because of a shortage of small arms, these were replaced by replicas made of painted wood, similar to the toys children used in playing cowboys and Indians. Fully obsolete World War I biplanes recreated the horror of modern air power. Even the bulk of the modern

¹⁶² Mansoor, G.I. Offensive, p. 19.

¹⁶³ Keegan, Six Armies, p. 35.

¹⁶⁴ Mansoor, G.I. Offensive, p. 26.

equipment that could be utilized in the Louisiana maneuvers soon proved to be already obsolete and ineffective against the Enemy when it reached the battlefields of North Africa. The War Department forbade the use of real ammunition, in the first place because it was in such short supply, and in the second because of the fear that the inexperienced troops might slaughter one another with it.¹⁶⁵

The leaders of the maneuvers, completely without actual wartime leadership experience, tended to employ textbook solutions in making their battlefield decisions, failed to consider important factors, and were most accurately characterized in a report that General Bradley sent to Chief of Staff Marshall following the Allied campaign in Tunisia:

It seems to me that our large-scale maneuvers [in the States] are partially responsible for one frame of mind which must be corrected by special methods. In maneuvers, when two forces meet, the umpires invariably decide that the smaller force must withdraw, or if greatly outnumbered, it must surrender. And while the umpires deliberate, the men simply stand or sit about idly. No means are provided for giving proportionate weight to the many intangibles of warfare, such as morale, training, leadership, conditioning.¹⁶⁶

The most striking example of the ignorance and naïveté that could sometimes be displayed by the bureaucracy of the Army of the United States in approaching the tasks it faced was this: while the tank armies of the German Wehrmacht in Russia were demonstrating textbook examples of mechanized maneuver warfare, the U.S. Army was buying 20,000 horses for the cavalry, the largest purchase since the 1861-65 Civil War.¹⁶⁷

The only real benefit that the troops derived from the Louisiana maneuvers was to achieve a certain level of experience in tactical movements and some familiarity with the hardships of living under field conditions. Marshall and McNair were aware of the obvious shortcomings of the Louisiana exercises, and they subsequently introduced measures to improve the quality and realism of maneuvers. In the years to come,

¹⁶⁵ Todd DePastino, Bill Mauldin. *A Life Up Front* (New York 2008), p. 69.

¹⁶⁶ Cited in: Omar N. Bradley / Clay Blair, *A General's Life* (New York 1983), p. 172.

¹⁶⁷ DePastino, *A Life Up Front*, p. 69.

large-scale maneuvers held in various states profited greatly from these steps. As the American war materiel industry began to achieve higher production levels, it became possible to utilize realistic equipment and real ammunition in the exercises. Still, the crucial difference would come only after the Allied invasion of North Africa in the fall of 1942, when experience regarding the actualities of war could be gathered and brought back to the U.S. For this reason, General McNair dispatched AGF advisers to the various American fronts who then adapted back-home training based on their observations, in this way bringing a higher level of realism to maneuver operations.¹⁶⁸

5.3 Army of the United States: vintage 1941/42

In this army of democracy, you had to feel that all of your soldiers were readers of Time magazine.

George C. Marshall¹⁶⁹

The army never reflected American society, unless a centralized, stratified, cohesive, authoritarian institution that has stressed obedience and sacrifice can reflect a decentralized, heterogeneous, individualistic, democratic, capitalist society.

Richard H. Kohn¹⁷⁰

Now that we are on the way to having an image of the distance covered by the future dogface soldiers in the course of their recruitment and training in the U.S., it is time to ask the question: what was the resulting mix? What were the elements that produced this *different breed of cat* that Hilton Riley perceived?

Two factors that shaped the character of the Army of the United States and conveyed it beyond earlier American armies have already been mentioned at the start of this chapter: education and media. On average, U.S. soldiers were better educated than were their fathers, who fought in the trenches of France in 1917/18. As a result, they were on the one hand more self-critical but above all more critical of the institutions,

¹⁶⁸ Mansoor, G.I. Offensive, p. 26 ff.

¹⁶⁹ Cited in: Reynolds, Rich Relations, p. 80.

¹⁷⁰ Richard H. Kohn, The Social History of the American Soldier: A Review and Prospectus for Research, in: The American Historical Review, Vol. 86, No. 3 (1981), p. 563.

legitimacy and rituals of their army than their precursors in the uniform of the United States had ever been.

An additional factor determining the consciousness of many prospective dogface soldiers was that in the Army, they came face to face for the first time with the sheer size and cultural diversity of the U.S. Geographical mobility was severely limited for the American populace in the 1930s. Many young men had never left their home county until they made the trip to the reception center. It was often the case that they had to pass through a large expanse of territory on the way, becoming aware for the first time of the size of their country. Arriving at the reception center, many of them were overwhelmed by the cultural diversity they discovered. The first encounter with white Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASPs) from New England, Californian Hispanics, rednecks and sons of plantation owners from the South, hayshakers from rural regions, Irish Catholics from Boston or Chicago and the inevitable Italian-Americans from New York or New Jersey shocked them into an awareness of all that the term 'America' could mean.¹⁷¹

In the next section, we will review more of the external and internal factors that can be used to portray the Army of the United States, vintage 1941/42.

Demography of the Army of the United States

The following demographic breakdown of the Army of the United States is limited to two enlisted rank groups. The data refer only to the Army's junior enlisted soldiers and NCOs. As was stated at the outset, the dogface phenomenon developed exclusively within these two levels; as a result, any inclusion of officers would distort the picture. Data on the situation of African Americans as a group within the Army of the United States will be separately examined later, and these soldiers are therefore not given specific consideration here.

Viewed by ethnicity, the Army quite closely reflects the overall breakdown of American society in the relevant age group of 18 to 44. Puerto Ricans made up 0.5 percent of the ranks, Native Americans 0.3 percent, Japanese Americans and Chinese Americans each 0.2 percent, and Filipinos 0.1 percent. All other nonwhite

¹⁷¹ Reynolds, Rich Relations, p. 84 ff.

groups, predominantly Hawaiians and Mexican Americans, made up 0.3 percent of Army forces.¹⁷²

It will come as little surprise that the average serviceman in the Army of the United States was young. While 29 percent of the overall male population was under 26 years old in 1940, this age group made up nearly 50 percent of the Army of the United States. In total, 38.2 percent of males in the broader society were between 26 and 37 years old, yet this age group contributed 42.6 percent of the Army ranks. For males aged 38 and older, the difference was similarly wide, with 32.8 percent in the country at large and 7.5 percent in the military.¹⁷³

In relation to their civilian occupations, urban manual workers were overrepresented in the Army of the United States, professional and managerial workers underrepresented. Because of the importance of their work to the war effort, farmers were greatly underrepresented, while those workers employed in industrial production were slightly overrepresented. Self-employed individuals and members of the service sector were underrepresented, while those not self-employed were overrepresented.¹⁷⁴

For obvious reasons, U.S. armies have always given preference to unmarried men. During World War II, this attitude also formed the basic principle of Selective Service policy. As conscription began in 1940 following the Selective Service Act, married men were exempted to the greatest possible extent. Even so, because of the enormous demand for manpower, it became impossible to maintain this policy for the duration of the war, and it was gradually abandoned. The effects of this earlier preferential treatment of married men are clearly quantifiable in the total picture, however. The three million married men in the Army of the United States made up 25 percent of its overall troop strength. In the comparable age bracket in the population at large, 56.3 percent were married. Besides married soldiers, the Army consisted of 69.6 percent single men, 2.5 percent separated, 2.4 percent divorced

¹⁷² Mapheus Smith, *Populational Characteristics of American Servicemen in World War II*, in: *The Scientific Monthly*, Vol. 56, No. 3 (1947), p. 247.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 247.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 247 ff.

and 0.5 percent widowed, in comparison to 38.9 percent singles, 2.9 percent separated, 1.1 percent divorced and 0.8 percent widowers within the relevant age range of the broader population.¹⁷⁵

With respect to the geographic distribution of the servicemen by place of residence, the Selective Service System was structured such that each state's proportional contribution of manpower to the Army of the United States substantially matched its share of the relevant age groups in the overall male population. A few highly populated industrial states like New York, Pennsylvania, California, Massachusetts and New Jersey contributed a disproportionately large number of conscripts in comparison to the figures mandated by the Selective Service System. On the other hand, Alabama, Georgia, the Carolinas and Virginia were underrepresented. This is explained in part by a migration to industrial states and as well by the large proportion of farm workers in agrarian states and their higher likelihood to be classified as physically unfit – an effect of the Great Depression, which had a more severe impact on Southern states than it did in the North.¹⁷⁶

A final factor of interest is that members of the Army of the United States had, on average, a higher level of education than did males of the same age level in the general population. This schooling gap is seen across all levels, but it becomes more pronounced as older age groups are reviewed.¹⁷⁷ A possible explanation of this phenomenon lies in the increasingly advanced utilization of technological warfare techniques in the 1930s and 1940s. Simply put, one could argue that it takes less education for industrial workers to build a tank on a modern mass production line than for soldiers to operate it on the battlefield.

The Great Depression

I like the Army so far. They let you sleep till 5:30.

My shoes hurt my feet because I haven't been used to wearing shoes.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 249 ff.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 251 ff.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 250 ff.

One hayshaker from Maine was delighted with his new outfit and babbled his delight to anyone who would listen to him. He was even delighted with his overcoat, the bottom of which was almost dragging the ground.

Extracts from letters by draftees at reception centers¹⁷⁸

In spite of all the challenges, hard work and difficulties of adaptation, the integration of the new recruits into the alien world of the Army was not an entirely negative development. The common bond among most of the new soldiers was their experience as children of the Great Depression of the 1930s. For them, entry into the Armed Forces also signified material and social certainty, something that many in this generation had never known.

In 1930, roughly 60 percent of American families, over 70 thousand people, lived on less than 2000 dollars per year, placing them distinctly below the poverty level at that time. Since this mass poverty was concentrated in the rural areas of the United States, it could be ignored with relative ease in the cities, where American attention was focused. One quarter of the U.S. population lived on farms where income sources dissolved into nothingness as prices of agricultural products went into freefall. Grain and cotton, two of the most widely planted crops, respectively lost one half and two thirds of their value in a short time, and 54 percent of farm families, amounting to 17 million people, earned less than 1000 dollars in 1930. In contrast to Germany, Great Britain or Sweden, the United States had no social security system at all to mitigate the effects of the crisis.¹⁷⁹ Caught in spiraling debt, many farmers saw no option other than to abandon their land and wander through the country as homeless itinerant workers. The Joad family in John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* and Dorothea Lange's stunning photographs for the Farm Security Administration provide unsurpassed literary and photographic images of this period.

For most soldiers serving in World War II, the Depression was the key experience of their lives to that point. Approximately 60 percent of U.S. troops in the war had been born between 1918 and 1927. Those born during this period – those who reached their adulthood in spite of the dreadful circumstances of the times, we should add –

¹⁷⁸ Cited in: Kennett, G.I., p. 40.

¹⁷⁹ Reynolds, Rich Relations, p. 28.

constituted two thirds of American forces in the war. Put another way, a twenty-year-old inducted in 1941 had been eight years old when the Great Depression began. His entire conscious life had been marked by this experience, with no relief in sight for years on end.

In many ways, the Army of the United States was the first stable institution in the life of a typical draftee. Secure accommodation, clothing, regular meals and medical care were in no way taken for granted in 1930s America. In the Army, at least in these respects, the generation of dogface soldiers no longer needed to worry. The spartan infrastructure in camps that had been built under time pressure offered draftees amenities that most of them had not previously experienced. Running water, buildings with central heating, and indoor toilets offer just a few examples.

The Selective Service physicians who conducted the fitness examinations detected in most conscripts the effects of child labor and the signs of chronic malnutrition. The poor diet of the Depression years had left its mark particularly on draftees' teeth. As a result, the Army of the United States increased the number of its dentists from 250 in 1939 to 25,000 in 1945; during this same period, these dentists extracted 15 million teeth and made 2.5 million dentures. The Army's optometry service had fitted 2.25 million pairs of eyeglasses by the end of the war.¹⁸⁰

Another problem, caused in part by the Great Depression, was illiteracy. Basic reading and writing ability was a fitness requirement for the Army of the United States. Many inductees who had spent their adolescence in the Depression years, as well as those from immigrant families, were illiterate. In the initial phase of the Selective Service System, this condition resulted in their classification as unfit. Starting in summer 1942, the Army of the United States began to set up 'special training units' to teach these basic skills. Through textbooks like *Meet Private Pete* or *Private Pete Eats His Dinner*, 800,000 illiterates ultimately achieved basic competence in reading and writing the English language.¹⁸¹

¹⁸⁰ Kennett, G.I., p. 17.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., p. 18.

Chickenshit

This graphic description, used both as noun and adjective, signifies what is mean, petty and annoying, especially as applied to regulations. Thus, when an infantryman in a rest area finds himself restricted because his dogtags are not worn around his neck, or his shoes are unshined, or he has been detected in the act of robbing the village bank, he complains that there is too damned much chickenshit around. If he puts the gripe in a letter to the B-Bag, or otherwise feels it advisable to watch his language, the word is contracted to chicken. As an adjective it sometimes connotes cowardice, perhaps by confusion with chicken-livered or chicken-hearted I have recently seen a quotation from a soldier newspaper published in 1919 by the then Army of Occupation which employed the word in its modern sense, but this seems to have been exceptional.

Joseph W. Bishop, Jr.¹⁸²

An important step toward achieving a deeper understanding of the Army of the United States is not only to look at the common traits possibly shared by its individual members but also to perceive the Army itself in light of its constitution as a profoundly diverse entity. A glance at the divisive factors, tensions and conflicts reveals much about its nature that would remain hidden if one focused exclusively on its homogeneity.

The primary source of tension in the Army of the United States during its development phase is to be found in the contrast among its individual components. The tension-filled and mutually mistrustful relationship between the Regular Army and the National Guard has already been discussed in [Chapter 2.1](#). As hordes of draftees began to swarm into the Army's branches in 1940/41, a *clash of civilizations* occurred that made the problems between regulars and guardsmen seem like friendly squabbling. While draftees and guardsmen sprang from essentially comparable socio-cultural backgrounds, the regulars were from another world in this respect.

Prior to the great expansion that took place in 1940/41, the Regular Army faced a serious image problem. Composed of offenders¹⁸³ and elements of America's most

¹⁸² Bishop, Army Speech, p. 248 ff.

socially disadvantaged classes, underfinanced and widely disregarded by the civilian populace, leading a shadowy existence at the proverbial and geographical fringes of the country, it had developed into a cloistered parallel community, disconnected from the broader society, that visibly turned inward and magnified its own cultural traditions into an obsession. The Army offered its members a solid roof over their heads, three meals a day, clothing and a meager but regular income – benefits that were no small matter during the Great Depression, as we have seen. The price of all this was absolute loyalty, conformity and slavish observance of the elaborate regulations and practices of military courtesy, especially toward the officer class. Many regulars were bachelors, either out of conviction or due to unfortunate external circumstances, and in addition, they were often by no means averse to alcohol, a trait that rightly contributed to their reputation as *hard-drinking womanizers*.

When mobilization of the Army of the United States began, this close-knit society was flooded with draftees who came from another universe in every respect and who called into question the cornerstones of the regular's world, when not dismissing them altogether as *chickenshit*. A sergeant named Henry Giles, who had joined the Regular Army in 1939 after a poverty-stricken adolescence, summed up what many regulars felt:

Nobody knows what the Army meant to me – security and pride and something good ... Putting on that uniform not only meant that for the first time in my life I had clothes I wasn't ashamed of, but also for the first time in my life I was somebody. [Then] ...they [the draftees] came in bitching about this and that, regulations, the food, a cot instead of an innerspring mattress, barracks instead of private rooms.¹⁸⁴

The draftees, for their part, held a specific opinion about the regulars from the 'old army', as they called it. A draftee named Robert Welker observed the following:

¹⁸³ It was a not uncommon practice in the period prior to the war to give first offenders (unless they were guilty of capital crimes) the choice between a prison sentence and a tour of duty in the Regular Army.

¹⁸⁴ Cited in: Kennett, G.I., p. 80.

[The regulars] seemed to take a truculent pride out of their own submission to the officer class and the system, and in their minor competences and little claims to caste among their fellow plebeians.¹⁸⁵

Yank, the weekly magazine of the Army of the United States, about which we will learn more shortly, defined 'old army' in the following way in September 2, 1942:

...a large group of first-three-graders who spent the pre-war years thinking up sentences beginning with 'By God, it wasn't like this in the _____'.¹⁸⁶

In the pre-war Army, a veritable uniform cult was maintained that was so pronounced that many regulars spent a not insignificant portion of their meager salary to buy specially produced uniform accouterments such as buttons, belts or insignia that were qualitatively or optically superior to those that came with the uniform itself. It was not an uncommon occurrence that company commanders would determine which brand of shoe polish was to be used by their subordinates in order to achieve a uniformly perfect result. The citizen soldiers, on the other hand, appeared to feel most comfortable when dressing their shabbiest. In a 1943 letter to General Marshall, Dwight Eisenhower declared that the manifestly natural tendencies of American soldiers with respect to their uniforms made any group of his troops look like an armed mob.

Obedying a pragmatic and humiliating logic, enlisted men and NCOs in the Regular Army could only marry with permission of their commanding officer.¹⁸⁷ Similar severities and injustices inherent in the Regular Army system, such as the unequal division of amenities and privileges between enlisted soldiers and officers, were silently if grudgingly accepted by the regulars of the old army. The number boys, as the draftees were known to the regulars, were unwilling to subordinate themselves without objection to this system, and vented their anger at every opportunity. In the

¹⁸⁵ Cited in: *ibid.*, p. 80.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

¹⁸⁷ In order not to become another Depression-era welfare institution, the Regular Army required married applicants to certify that they would be able to support their family on their Army salary and any possible supplementary income. For the same reasons, enlisted men and NCOs wishing to marry were required to obtain advance approval from their commanding officers. (Cf. Reynolds, *Rich Relations*, p. 209.)

expanding army of 1940/41, the generally less educated enlisted men of the Regular Army¹⁸⁸ now saw themselves promoted to NCOs and instructors of often better educated draftees, a situation that left them in a position to react to this attack on their world with still more chickenshit.

This vicious circle only came to a gradual and partial end at the point when the murderous reality of war forced regulars and draftees to share in a common and traumatizing experience. Like the adage that there are no atheists in foxholes, the killing fields of World War II similarly blurred the lines separating regulars, guardsmen and draftees.

5.4 Overseas deployment

We'll win this damn war but I can't face that trip back.

Extract from a letter to the Army's *Yank* Magazine¹⁸⁹

After the soldiers had completed their training cycle, sooner or later they underwent a process that the acronym-loving Army of the United States called POM – Preparations for Overseas Movement. They were normally granted ten days of *pre-embarkation furlough* prior to departure. This leave substantially delayed the units' travel. The Army had learned, however, that a short period of pre-departure home leave was so important to the soldiers that many of them simply went absent without leave (AWOL) if they failed to receive official permission to go home. Following another medical examination, the GIs were transferred to so-called 'embarkation camps' where they remained for two weeks on average prior to shipping out from one of the POEs – Ports of Embarkation.¹⁹⁰ If they were lucky, the soldiers made the transatlantic voyage aboard one of the two huge British ocean liners, the *Queen Mary* or the *Queen Elizabeth*. These two ships could complete the passage in six days. If they were not so lucky and shipped out in a convoy of liberty ships, the

¹⁸⁸ While 40 percent of draftees possessed a high school diploma, the proportion of high school graduates among pre-war regulars was only 25 percent (Reynolds, *Rich Relations*, S. 74).

¹⁸⁹ Cite in: Kennett, G.I., p. 116.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 111 ff.

voyage took several weeks. For the troops, the difference in travel time was one of the significant differences between the two transport options. The other was that because of their size, the two *Queens* were considerably more stable in the water than, for example, the liberty ships or other freighters that had been converted into troop transports. Seasickness was, consequently, a less pronounced problem aboard the two liners. Due to their design, designated troop ships and converted freighters offered nothing that even a well-intentioned observer might confuse with luxury. Likewise, the two *Queens* had been reconfigured to allow maximum transport capacity, leaving no room for comfort. While they had been designed to carry 2000 passengers under normal operation, between 1942 and 1945 they transported 15 thousand at a stretch across the Atlantic. Every possible space was freed up to accommodate more soldiers. For this purpose, sailcloth-and-piping bunks measuring 6 by 2 feet were stacked up to six high, with two feet of vertical space between them.¹⁹¹ These berths were then used in two or three shifts. While one shift was sleeping, the other(s) remained on deck or elsewhere. The ventilation systems of all utilized ships had not been designed for such a capacity, and after a short time the air below decks was barely tolerable, mixed with the smell of the vomit that, according to several descriptions, sloshed knuckle-deep across the surface of the lower deck.¹⁹² Under such miserable external conditions during the entire crossing, the troops had time to reflect on their destination and to consider the likelihood of their being attacked by a wolfpack¹⁹³. In addition, they engaged in the universal and timeless favorite pastime of military forces: starting, distorting and passing on rumors. For most GIs, after these days or weeks at sea, marked by boredom, uncomfortable

¹⁹¹ Ibid., p. 115.

¹⁹² Reynolds, Rich Relations, p. 242 ff.

¹⁹³ The commandant of the German submarine fleet in World War II, Karl Dönitz, had developed the so-called wolfpack tactic originally for fast patrol boats during the period between the wars, since the German Navy was forbidden under the terms of the Versailles Treaty to maintain a seagoing fleet or a submarine fleet. Modified for submarines during the war, it was based on the following principles: if a U-boat discovered a convoy or troopship, whether accidentally, by means of a variety of information-gathering techniques or through communication from intelligence services, it was to shadow its target (due to their low visibility, submarines were able to maintain visual contact with their targets without being detected by them). It would then notify other submarines that would join in the pursuit. Once a group – or pack – had formed, the target would be attacked by night.

conditions, seasickness and the latent threat of U-boat attacks, their arrival in Great Britain became an unforgettable moment. *The experience was both profoundly exciting and deeply alienating. It marked the end of the familiar, and established Britain, for all its similarities, as irrevocably foreign.*¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁴ Reynolds, Rich Relations, p. 242.

6 Digression: African Americans in the Army of the United States

I was drafted in 1943, right after the Chicago and Detroit riots. We had this influx of war workers, both white and black, from the South, especially in Detroit. The tensions continued to mount until they exploded ... My father said, "What the hell are you goin' to fight in Europe for. The fight is here. You should be goin' up to Detroit."

Timuel Black¹⁹⁵

Of course, the Negroes whooped because here was a white man tellin' the Negroes to shoot white people. Well, that really tore us up.

Charles A. Gates¹⁹⁶

The history of the dogface soldiers is almost entirely a white one, as we will see in the pages to follow. In spite of the fact that African Americans, therefore, have only marginal significance for the central theme of this work, any treatment of the formation and history of the Army of the United States in World War II would be incomplete if it did not contain at least a brief reference to the history of those Americans of African origin.

Although African Americans served in most of the American wars prior to 1941, they were, in the Army, exactly what they were in civilian life: second-class citizens. In June 1940, approximately 10 percent of the U.S. population was of African origin; in the Regular Army, however, they made up only a 1.5 percent share. Just five black officers served in the Army; three of those were military chaplains. The two black officers who held combat commands came from the same family. In the Regular Army, the racist view was widely held that African Americans, having naturally lower intelligence and lacking mental and moral qualities, constituted only second-class soldier material.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁵ Studs Terkel, "The Good War". An Oral History of World War Two (New York / London 1984), p. 278.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 266.

¹⁹⁷ Cited in: Reynolds, Rich Relations, p. 82.

In the era between the wars, the 92nd Infantry Division's performance in World War I was intended as supposed confirmation of this thesis. The 92nd was one of two black divisions in the American Expeditionary Force that, according to a custom still being followed in the Second World War, were commanded primarily by white officers.¹⁹⁸ Service in the 92nd was unpopular with white officers and, consequently, most of the officers in this division were transfers who had been judged undesirable in other units for a variety of reasons. The resulting unimpressive performance of the division was exclusively attributed to the African Americans' poor aptitude as soldiers rather than to any factors related to command.

The Army General Classification Test to which World War II draftees were subjected further served to confirm this judgment. Designed to measure formal schooling and *social acquired skills*, it regularly placed African Americans at clearly inferior performance levels compared to white draftees. The reason for this certainly lies in the fact that most black draftees came from the South, where discrimination against the black population was most pronounced and good formal education for African Americans was virtually unknown. In spite of these factors, (white) officers felt justified in reaching the conclusion that they had always believed, namely that dark-skinned GIs were intrinsically inferior to whites as soldier material.¹⁹⁹

In 1940 as before in 1917, as the United States began to mobilize for war, a social movement developed in favor of granting equal opportunity for blacks within the Armed Forces. Well-known New Dealers, the most prominent of whom was Eleanor Roosevelt, supported the campaign. Franklin Roosevelt found himself in a political dilemma, caught between not wanting to offend his Democratic Party allies in the South and needing to accommodate the African Americans on whose votes he would be relying in the fall presidential election.

As a result, Roosevelt made a number of cautious concessions to the black community while leaving other fundamental injustices unaddressed. Benjamin O. Davis, Sr., one of the two black army commanders of the interwar period, was

¹⁹⁸ Robert W. Kesting, Conspiracy to discredit the Black Buffaloes: The 92nd Infantry in World War II, in: The Journal of Negro History, Vol. 72, No. 1/2 (1987), p. 4.

¹⁹⁹ John H. Morrow, Jr., African Americans in the Military, in: Peter Karsten (Ed.), Encyclopedia of War and American Society (New York 2005), p. 16 ff.

promoted to become the first African American to reach the rank of general. The War Department created a position of Special Adviser on Race Relations. Lastly, in October 1940, the official War Department policy was released in the form of a directive. African Americans should be represented in the Armed Forces according to their proportion in the overall population and should serve in all its branches in both combat and non-combat functions. Unprepared to move on the matter of segregation, the War Department continued to follow a *separate but equal* course on this matter. African Americans were provided with the same equipment, accommodations and supplies as white soldiers, but allowing them to serve together with whites in the same regimental units went beyond the imagination of the elites in the War Department, who instead asserted the fig leaf of equal treatment – rarely provided in practice – in order to conceal the injustice of segregation.²⁰⁰

The War Department's argument for this policy, advanced at every opportunity and not entirely without substance, was that it was fundamentally responsible for planning and conducting a global two front coalition war, not advancing societal reform. This position obviously changed little about the reality of discrimination, although it must be acknowledged that such a function is fundamentally one for civilian society and a task that would overextend the Armed Forces, particularly during times of war. Chief of Staff Marshall, pragmatic to the core, supported the department's position and stated in a memorandum:

[A policy of Integration] ... would be tantamount to solving a social problem which has perplexed the American people throughout the history of this nation. The Army cannot accomplish such a solution, and should not be charged with the undertaking ... [To do so would] complicate the tremendous task of the War Department and thereby jeopardize discipline and morale.²⁰¹

Over time, the concession made to admit African Americans into the Armed Forces in proportion to their representation in the U.S. population was actually achieved.²⁰² In

²⁰⁰ George Q. Flynn, Selective Service and American Blacks in World War II, in: The Journal of Negro History, Vol. 69, No. 1 (1984), p. 14.

²⁰¹ Cited in: Reynolds, Rich Relations, p. 83 ff.

²⁰² Although it must seem to today's student of history like a stroke of luck not to be drafted into wartime service, in 1940/41 a large part of the black community considered that serving in the Army in

1945, of 9,840,216 servicemen who had been recruited under the auspices of the Selective Service System, 1,058,006 were African Americans, roughly corresponding to their proportions within the population (12.8 million out of 132 million).²⁰³

Within the Army of the United States, however, the African Americans' distribution was as marked as ever by racial prejudices. Under the alleged fact that they were not suitable for work as soldiers, they were significantly overrepresented in the Army Service Forces, underrepresented in the Army Ground Forces and, for a lengthy time, as good as nonexistent in the Army Air Forces. In the European Theater of Operations, the Army Ground Forces at the corps level deployed various black combat support units such as tank and tank destroyer battalions along with nine artillery battalions.²⁰⁴ African American infantrymen were engaged in only two circumstances: in Italy in the reactivated 92nd Infantry Division and in the European Theater of Operations as improvised replacement platoons during the manpower crisis that occurred in winter 1944/45.²⁰⁵

proportion to their relative numbers in the overall population was an important -- even if controversial -- sign of equal treatment. (Cf. Flynn, *Selective Service*, p. 17 ff.)

²⁰³ Flynn, *Selective Service*, p. 18.

²⁰⁴ Cf. Ulysses Lee, *United States Army in World War II. Special Studies. The Employment of Negro Troops* (Washington, D.C. 2000), Chapter XXI: Artillery and Armored Units in the ETO, pp. 644–687.

²⁰⁵ The manpower crisis of 1944/45: As Allied invasion forces broke out of their beachhead along the Normandy coast at the end of July and beginning of August 1944, their front lines became more extended with every mile of their success in pushing the Wehrmacht back toward the German borders, and their consequent need for infantrymen increased. As summer turned to fall, two factors accelerated this development. First, German resistance became increasingly hardened as fighting approached the frontiers of the homeland, transforming fall 1944 into one large and extremely costly battle of attrition. Second, the bitterly cold northern European weather took its toll particularly on the ranks of the infantry, whose troops were most exposed to the elements. On December 8, 1944, the European Theater of Operations forecast a shortage of 29,000 infantry riflemen by the end of the month. (Lee, *Employment*, p. 688.)

6.1 Case study: Black Buffaloes – 92nd Infantry Division²⁰⁶

They cannot be expected to do as well in any Army function as white troops unless they have absolutely first-class leadership from their officers ... After all, when a man knows that the color of his skin will automatically disqualify him for reaping the fruits of attainment it is no wonder that he sees little point in trying very hard to excel anybody else. To me, the most extraordinary thing is that such people continue trying at all ... We cannot expect to make first-class soldiers out of second or third or fourth class citizens.

Walter L. Wright, Jr., Chief Army Historian, Summer 1945²⁰⁷

On October 15, 1942 – significantly, in Fort McClellan, Alabama – the 92nd Infantry Division was reactivated as the only black formation of its kind in the Army of the United States. With respect to the division's organization, the Army Ground Forces drew its conclusions from the disappointing experience with the 92nd Infantry during World War I ... although these were fundamentally wrong.

In the First World War, command positions up through company level had been filled by African Americans and, above that point, with white officers. After looking for the reasons for the poor performance of the forerunner division naturally among the ranks of the African Americans, the Army revised these command positions to include even rifle companies among the units to be led by white officers.²⁰⁸ Using a perverse logic that defies any comprehension, it then made the assumption that white Southern officers, because of their experience in close contact with African Americans and their special understanding of their ways, were therefore the ideal candidates to command black units.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁶ The Black Buffaloes' name originated with Native Americans. Following the Civil War, black army units were, for the first time on a regular basis, trained primarily to carry out protective duties. During the winter months, the black troopers hunted buffalo in order to produce cold-weather clothing from their hides, causing the Indians to refer to them as 'black buffaloes'. (Kesting, Conspiracy, p. 2.)

²⁰⁷ Cited in: Lee, Employment, p. 704 ff.

²⁰⁸ Kesting, Conspiracy, p. 4.

²⁰⁹ Lee, Employment, p. 180.

The division spent the time between its activation and the summer of 1944 in the United States, where it completed the Army Ground Forces training program. Besides the technical and organizational difficulties with which all units had to contend in the frenetic mobilization period, the 92nd Division also had to endure the latent or open racism of many of its Southern white officers. Command assignments were determined, as already mentioned, by skin color rather than qualification, and a bias-inspired climate of mutual mistrust permeated the formation. Although the division's training results were anything but auspicious, after June 26, 1944 it was deployed to the Mediterranean Theater of Operations not as a single formation, but dismembered into its component parts.²¹⁰

From June to October 1944, the 370th Regimental Combat Team (RCT)²¹¹ served as spearhead of the 92nd Division in many Fifth Army operations in northern Italy. The 370th Infantry Regiment, the core element around which the RCT was formed, had distinguished itself through its outstanding performance in the division's training phase and, for this reason, it was the first unit to be deployed at the Apennine front. Between August 24 and October 5, 1944, the RCT took part in VI Corps offensive operations around the Arno River and the northern Italian city of Lucca. The RCT accomplished its missions in these operations, although it must be noted that it encountered almost no serious German resistance.²¹²

When the remaining elements of the Black Buffaloes arrived at the Apennine front at the start of October 1944, the 92nd Infantry was deployed in its planned configuration and, in an influential series of calamities and missteps, it confirmed all the biases that had been advanced regarding black infantry units. In all parameters used to measure the *combat effectiveness* of military forces, the division turned in an appalling performance. The entire deployment history of the 92nd Infantry Division was –

²¹⁰ Kesting, *Conspiracy*, p. 5 ff.

²¹¹ A Regimental Combat Team was a mixed formation consisting of one regiment from one division along with a number of service support and combat service support units that allowed the regiment to conduct autonomous operations. In the case of the 370th RCT, this referred to the eponymous 370th Infantry Regiment along with the 598th Field Artillery Battalion and elements of all organizational units of the superordinate division (cf. Lee, *Employment*, p. 536).

²¹² Kesting, *Conspiracy*, p. 8.

without entering into operational details that have no relevance here – marked by desertions, signs of rapid disintegration under fire, uncoordinated and unauthorized retreats and military courts-martial for violations of the Articles of War.²¹³ Instead of conducting a detailed probe to understand the reasons behind the disastrous performance of the 92nd Infantry Division, most of the responsible commanders once again saw themselves persuaded by the racist assumption that African Americans had neither the aggressiveness nor the intellectual or mental capacity required to conduct modern warfare.

If African Americans in the European Theater of Operations had not simultaneously offered a diametrically opposite picture of their soldierly abilities, these prejudices and racially motivated misperceptions might have been fixed in place for decades to come.

6.2 Case study: manpower crisis 1944/45

Morale: Excellent. Manner of performance: Superior. Men are very eager to close with the enemy and to destroy him. Strict attention to duty, aggressiveness, common sense and judgment under fire has won the admiration of all the men in the company ... The Company Commander, officers, and men of Company "F" all agree that the colored platoon has a calibre of men equal to any veteran platoon. Several decorations for bravery are in the process of being awarded to the members of colored platoons.

G1, 104th Infantry Division²¹⁴

While the 92nd Infantry Division in Italy provided high quantities of grist for the mill of white supremacists in the Army of the United States, a crisis culminated at the start of December 1944 in the European Theater of Operations that had been a latent concern for Dwight Eisenhower and the Army Ground Forces leadership since the summer. The Allied armies were facing a critical shortage of infantry riflemen. When the German Wehrmacht began its final major western offensive on December 16, the critical situation became a desperate one. After combing through all possible white service units in the ETO for infantry replacements, Lieutenant General John C. H.

²¹³ Ibid., p. 9 ff.

²¹⁴ In a report on the performance of African American replacement platoons. Cited in: Lee, Employment, p. 697.

Lee, Commander of the European Theater's Communications Zone²¹⁵ (COMZ), approached Supreme Commander Eisenhower and suggested looking among the COMZ black service units for volunteers meeting the physical requirements for the infantry who could be retrained as infantrymen.²¹⁶

After Eisenhower accepted the suggestion, Brigadier General Benjamin O. Davis, Ike's Special Advisor and Coordinator to the Theater Commander on Negro Troops, developed a system along with Ground Forces Replacement Command to train these volunteers to become infantrymen and to integrate into white companies as black platoons. Shortly thereafter, SHAEF²¹⁷ sent the following notice to the COMZ units:

1. The Supreme Commander desires to destroy the enemy forces and end hostilities in this theater without delay. Every available weapon at our disposal must be brought to bear upon the enemy. To this end the Theater Commander has directed the Communications Zone Commander to make the greatest possible use of limited service men within service units and to survey our entire organization in an effort to produce able bodied men for the front lines. This process of selection has been going on for some time but it is entirely possible that many men themselves, desiring to volunteer for front line service, may be able to point out methods in which they can be replaced in their present jobs. Consequently, Commanders of all grades will receive voluntary applications for transfer to the Infantry and forward them to higher authority with recommendations for appropriate type of replacement. This opportunity to volunteer will be extended to all soldiers without regard to color or race, but preference will normally be given to individuals who have had some basic training in Infantry. Normally, also, transfers will be limited to the grade of Private and Private First Class unless a noncommissioned officer requests a reduction.

2. In the event that the number of suitable Negro volunteers exceeds the replacement needs of Negro combat units, these men will be suitably

²¹⁵ In their organization, theaters of operations were split into a combat zone in which combat forces operated and a communications zone (COMZ) where all supply and administrative services necessary for the support of the combat forces were located. (John D. Millett, *The War Department in World War II*, in: *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 40, No. 5 [1946], p. 894 ff.)

²¹⁶ Lee, *Employment*, p. 688.

²¹⁷ Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces: Dwight D. Eisenhower's headquarters.

incorporated in other organizations so that their service and their fighting spirit may be efficiently utilized.

3. This letter may be read confidentially to the troops and made available in Orderly Rooms. Every assistance must be promptly given qualified men who volunteer for this service.²¹⁸

By February 1945, more than 4500 African Americans had volunteered, many of them non-commissioned officers who took a loss in rank. After these troops had been trained at the 16th Reinforcement Depot in Compiègne, on March 1, 1945 they were among the first 37 platoons to be assigned to their new units in First and Seventh Army.²¹⁹ The two armies utilized their black replacement platoons in different ways and, in doing so, achieved slightly different results.

The First Army assigned its replacement platoons respectively as an extra fourth platoon with white rifle companies. Although these units had received only very abbreviated infantry training, they made an extremely good impression on their white brothers in arms. Most First Army divisions that were assigned black replacement platoons were veteran units that had been in action since the Normandy landings. Nonetheless, all of them were impressed by the commitment and achievements of the black replacement platoons. In the course of their ultimately short deployment as combat infantrymen, the African Americans selected for this assignment earned countless military decorations, promotions and the respect of the white soldiers and commanders with whom they served. The greatest recognition of their accomplishments was that many white platoons greatly appreciated the deployment of black replacements alongside them, since they had come to appreciate their qualities independently of their skin color.²²⁰ They were often presented with the respective division arm patch to be sewed onto the left sleeve of their uniform. That act signified official acceptance into the brotherhood of a division, and its importance as an expression of the highest recognition cannot be overestimated. A white

²¹⁸ Lee, *Employment*, p. 690 ff.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 693 ff.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 695 ff.

commander who had incorporated a black platoon into his battalion ended the report of his experiences with the African Americans with the following words:

I know I did not receive a superior representation of the colored race as the average AGCT²²¹ was Class IV. I do know, however, that in courage, coolness, dependability and pride, they are on a par with any white troops I have ever had occasion to work with. In addition, they were, during combat, possessed with a fierce desire to meet with and kill the enemy, the equal of which I have never witnessed in white troops.²²²

The Seventh Army went in a different direction in this respect, combining its replacement platoons to form black companies. Given the time pressure of the operation, the training of the black replacements had been rudimentary at best. Because of this, they were not sufficiently prepared to cope with the additional logistical and administrative demands of maintaining a company. This fact, in turn, diminished the enthusiasm and zeal that had characterized the First Army replacements and led to somewhat more moderate results within Seventh Army although, even in this case, they left a more positive impression on the white units than had been expected.²²³

In both field armies, practical experience showed that the principle of segregation, having been eroded by the admission of the black platoons and companies, would not survive for long. Combat losses that could not be fully recouped by individual replacements soon created an ad hoc need to form mixed units, a practice that would have been rejected in normal times as absolute sacrilege. Even here, however, it turned out that the racist fears and prejudices regarding the incompatibility between the two skin shades were essentially unfounded in most cases. The deathly reality of the battlefields presented the (mostly white) soldiers with other concerns and problems, leaving little room for feverish fantasies of *white supremacy* and similar nonsense. Few tensions were in evidence in most of these mixed companies, and both black and white dogfaces fought for the same towns, waited in the same chow

²²¹ Cf. Chapter 5.2 Induction as well as fn. 717, p. 61.

²²² Ibid., p. 702.

²²³ Ibid., p. 699 ff.

lines and joined in the same prohibited games of chance. As a white company commander commented:

The premise that no soldier will hold black skin against a man if he can shoot his rifle and does not run away proved to be substantially true. Most of the white men of the company soon became highly appreciative of the Negroes' help and warmly applauded their more colorful individual and combat exploits.²²⁴

Even though such situations represented the rule for the black replacement platoons to a very great extent, they were viewed as exceptions in the Army at large. Unless measures of this sort were deemed necessary under emergency conditions, the principle of segregation was maintained, and African Americans remained what they had always been in the United States and the American Army: second-, third- or fourth-class citizens. In spite of this, a precedent had been created and the seed planted for the integration of U.S. Armed Forces within a few years.

²²⁴ Ibid., p. 702 ff.

7 The American occupation of Great Britain

YOU are going to Great Britain as part of an Allied offensive – to meet Hitler and beat him on his own ground. For the time being you will be Britain's guest. The purpose of this guide is to get you acquainted with the British, their country, and their ways. America and Britain are allies. Hitler knows that they are both powerful countries, tough and resourceful. He knows that they, with the other United Nations, mean his crushing defeat in the end.

So it is only common sense that the first and major duty Hitler has given his propaganda chiefs is to separate Britain and America and spread distrust between them. If he can do that, his chance of winning might return.

A Short Guide to Great Britain, 1943²²⁵

Yankee Doodle came to Europe just to whip the Germans,
Stopped a while in England, before he took on Hermann,
Yankee Doodle keep it up, Yankee Doodle Dandy,
Mind the music and the step, and with the girls be handy.

GI marching song, 1944

It is difficult to go anywhere in London without having the feeling that Britain is now Occupied Territory.

George Orwell, *Tribune*, December 3, 1943

Numerically, the U.S. troop presence in Great Britain was – to repeat – made up of Army Air Forces, Army Service Forces and Army Ground Forces. It began with Air Force units that set up their bases in the eastern part of the country starting in the spring of 1942. Here was the center of the strategic air operations against Nazi Germany, carried out by the Eighth Army Air Force (8th USAAF) together with the British Bomber Command. Except for a brief drop in numbers between October and November 1942²²⁶, 8th USAAF troop strength rose from an initial 12,000 to over 420,000 in May 1944. Starting in June 1944 after the launch of ground operations in northwestern Europe, units were successively deployed to the continent and the

²²⁵ Eric Knight, *A Short Guide to Great Britain* (Washington, D.C. 1943), p. 1.

²²⁶ November 1942 marked the launch of Operation TORCH, the Allied landings in North Africa. In the course of the operation, U.S. troops were withdrawn from Great Britain to be deployed to the North African Theater of War.

number of AAF soldiers stationed in Great Britain dropped to approximately 220,000 by the end of the war. The personnel strength of Army Service Forces essentially followed the same cycle, reaching a maximum of around 460,000 in May 1944, falling thereafter to approximately 110,000 by war's end.^{227, 228}

Except for the already mentioned wrinkle caused by the lead-up to TORCH, AAF and ASF presence in Great Britain essentially underwent a steady progression from initial buildup through subsequent cutback. The experience of Army Ground Forces, the institutional home of the dogface soldiers, portrays a different scene. U.S. ground troops amassed in Britain in two phases. Between May and October 1942, a little more than 90,000 ground troops in total were sent to the United Kingdom. During this period, the policy decision was made to pursue Churchill's Mediterranean strategy and land Allied troops in North Africa. As a result, most AGF units had to redeploy away from Great Britain in preparation for Operation TORCH. From November 1942 to September 1943, the AGF presence rose again gradually from 5,000 to 60,000 troops. The actual invasion and occupation of Great Britain that constitutes the focus of our interest took place in the eight months between September 1943 and May 1944, when nearly 600,000 AGF troops gathered in the southwestern portion of Great Britain. In total, almost 1.7 million American servicemen were barracked in the United Kingdom in May 1944.^{229, 230} They were spread throughout England, Wales and the six counties of Ulster Province in Northern Ireland. The vast majority, however, were to be found in the counties of Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex along Great Britain's east coast, where the bases of the 8th USAAF were located, and in an area of the southwest coast delimited by the counties of Devon and Hampshire from west to east and Gloucester and Dorset from north to south. The bulk of the AGF troops

²²⁷ Roland G. Ruppenthal, *United States Army in World War II. The European Theater of Operations. Logistical Support of the Armies. Volume I: May 1941–September 1944* (Washington, D.C. 1995), pp. 100, 129, 232.

²²⁸ Roland G. Ruppenthal, *United States Army in World War II. The European Theater of Operations. Logistical Support of the Armies. Volume II: September 1944–May 1945* (Washington, D.C. 1995), p. 288.

²²⁹ Ruppenthal, *Logistical Support I*, pp. 100, 129, 232.

²³⁰ Ruppenthal, *Logistical Support II*, p. 288.

that concern the present study were concentrated in this region in preparation for the invasion of northwestern France.²³¹

Although U.S. troops had also been in Great Britain during the American participation in World War I in 1917/18, the presence of the Army of the United States in the Second World War, especially up to the summer of 1944, had a distinctively new quantity and quality. During World War I, Britain had been a rear area in support of Allied operations in France. For American soldiers, the United Kingdom was a way station on their journey to the front. They landed at the port cities of the western approaches and were transported by train to the south coast, from where they crossed over to France. Few of them remained in Britain for long, and even fewer were permanently stationed there. Between 1940 and 1944, as the armies of Nazi Germany dominated the European continent, the front line traced the English Channel, with the belligerents facing off against each other from the channel's respective coasts. Beginning in 1942, as the American troop buildup commenced, GIs in the south and east of England became a permanent fixture of daily life.²³² They spent substantially more time there than had their predecessors in 1917/18. As a result, the U.S. presence in World War II required more detailed official planning and had serious socio-cultural consequences for the affected sectors of both military and civilian populations. The following sections do not claim to represent a thorough recounting of the organizational and cultural history of the Army of the United States in Great Britain. Their focus lies on those aspects of this history that relate to the theme of the future dogface soldiers.

7.1 Planning ...

Inside every army is a crowd struggling to get out ...

John Keegan, *The Face of Battle*

... three crimes a member of the Air Force [in Great Britain] can commit: murder, rape and interference with Anglo-American relations. The first two might conceivably be pardoned, but the third one, never.

Carl Spaatz, Commanding General, 8th USAAF, September 1943

²³¹ Reynolds, *Rich Relations*, p. 111.

²³² *Ibid.*, p. 89 ff.

As the forces of Napoleon's elite Garde Impériale retreated from the front under heavy fire on the eve of the Battle of Waterloo, their action provoked the panicked outcry "*La Garde recule!*" ("The Guard retreats!") along the French line and led to its complete disintegration. John Keegan concludes from this incident that every army conceals an anarchic crowd trying to get out. David Reynolds expands on Keegan's notion to add that in every soldier there is a civilian similarly attempting to emerge. As a result, he maintains:

This schizophrenic duality of army-crowd and soldier-civilian has been a central problem for every military commander throughout history. Yet it is particularly pressing for modern mass-conscript armies, in which soldiers are not professionals but civilians temporarily denied their civilian status and rights. And countries where there is no peacetime conscription find it even harder to habituate the civilian to the shocks of military life.²³³

With respect to its central function, an active army can mitigate this tendency through a combination of propaganda, training and discipline. The U.S. Army Ground Forces in Great Britain amounted to an inactive army completely lacking the option to occupy its citizen soldiers in a rigorous training program. Besides the internal tensions that could result from such idleness, the Army feared that such a huge mass of underutilized soldiers could provoke dangerous animosity among the civilian population. While it would be a rather easy task for an inactive army in enemy territory to isolate its troops from the civilian populace, the Army of the United States found itself among culturally related allies who spoke the same language.²³⁴ Against this backdrop, it is important to understand the only partially successful pattern of political and institutional planning for these Anglo-American contacts as well as their actual on-the-ground results.

The military planners of the U.S. presence in Great Britain in 1942/43 were aware of the risks posed by mobs like those suggested by Keegan, and thus they attempted to keep their troops as far away as possible from the civilian population. If there were to be contacts between GIs and Britons, these should occur under controlled and controllable conditions in order to prevent possible incidents that could damage Allied

²³³ Ibid., p. 61.

²³⁴ Ibid., p. 143 ff.

relations. This restrictive and negative approach is one of three broad patterns that can be detected in the planning and organization of the American military presence in Great Britain. In contrast, the British and American diplomatic services along with the British Ministry of Information (MOI) and the American Office of War Information (OWI) offered a positive approach to the topic, one that was oriented toward Winston Churchill's goal of establishing a *long-term special relationship* between the two English-speaking nations. Lastly, a shift in political focus over time is apparent that should be understood as closely tied to the two phases in the buildup of American AGF troops that has already been mentioned. In 1942/43, the principle aim was to achieve a legislative and organizational framework for the presence of U.S. troops in Great Britain. In the twelve months leading up to OVERLORD²³⁵, the focus became one of fostering positive relations between Britons and GIs. The cause of this change is, on the one hand, a joint directive by Roosevelt and Churchill.²³⁶ On the other hand, Eisenhower, who had been charged with local implementation of the policy, was an enthusiastic champion of Anglo-American friendship who took literally the assignment from the heads of the two governments.

The implementation of the negative military approach to Anglo-American relations represented an attempt to keep American soldiers at arms' length from British civilians by means of a combination of strict discipline and generous military benefits. Furloughs to leave the base were only issued on a very limited basis, and violators incurred draconian punishment. On the other hand, the Army went to considerable expense to provide soldiers an extensive selection of on-base leisure activities that were as American as possible, minimizing the desire for outings into the civilian world. Army post exchanges (PXs)²³⁷ offered a variety of American goods that left nothing to be desired and, in comparison to the rationed and reduced range of local goods available since 1939 under the British war economy, must have seemed like something out of a dream. Every base had a movie theater where soldiers could see

²³⁵ Operation OVERLORD: Code name for the Allied landing operation on the Normandy coast on June 6, 1944.

²³⁶ Reynolds, Rich Relations, p. 144.

²³⁷ Even today, PXs are stores located on military bases where soldiers are able to purchase everyday necessities.

the latest Hollywood films at no cost, as well as many other leisure establishments such as bars, recreational areas, libraries and athletic facilities. Most American army bases featured regular concerts and theater evenings in order to give soldiers as little reason as possible to want to spend their free time away from the base.²³⁸

In February 1942, representatives of the Army of the United States in Great Britain and responsible authorities of the American Red Cross in London and Washington agreed that the Army and Red Cross would jointly take over support for American soldiers in the United Kingdom. While the Army would be in charge of soldiers *on base*, the Red Cross held responsibility for off-base or *on-leave* support. As a result, Red Cross clubs were opened throughout Great Britain where soldiers in transit or on furlough could spend their time. All such clubs were furnished with lounges, a restaurant and a tourist information office, and most of these also featured sleeping accommodations. The clubs' interior decor and menu selections were designed to be as American as possible, in order to offer the troops a little bit of home in their overseas environment. American donations covered most of the costs of operating these facilities.²³⁹ After it emerged that most donors preferred to see their money spent only on U.S. troops, it was decided that the Red Cross clubs would be open solely to American soldiers and their guests.²⁴⁰ GIs had to submit a reservation confirmation from one of these hotels as a part of their request for leave. The first Red Cross club was opened in Londonderry in May 1942, and by the end of that year, the number of clubs had grown to over 50 with a total bed capacity of almost 10,000, leading the Red Cross to characterize the operation as *the largest hotel chain in the world*.²⁴¹

In retrospect, one of the most important and successful American Red Cross initiatives in achieving mutual understanding was the Home Hospitality Program. In November 1943, the so-called Home Hospitality Division was created at American

²³⁸ Reynolds, Rich Relations, p. 222.

²³⁹ Mitchell Yockelson, American Red Cross, in: Peter Karsten (Ed.), Encyclopedia of War and American Society (New York 2005), p. 39.

²⁴⁰ Reynolds, Rich Relations, p. 190.

²⁴¹ Ibid., p. 154 ff.

Red Cross headquarters in London as the program's main coordinating body. It oriented local hospitality supervisors in keeping lists of families in their district who were interested in "adopting" American soldiers. These files contained a personal profile of the applicant in order to foster the most harmonious pairing; thus, for example, an American devotee of Thomas Hardy novels could spend a weekend with a family who lived in the author's former house. The British hosts were encouraged to become foster parents to the GI and to provide him with a second home that he could regularly visit. The soldiers, who were housed in old British army barracks or tent cities, apparently had need of some cozy normality, and the program proved to be a success. In this way, more than one million visits to British families had been organized by the summer of 1945.²⁴²

Another form of home hospitality was to billet soldiers in privately rented rooms. During the initial years of the U.S. military presence in Great Britain, this homestay option was avoided as far as possible, since the Army was sure that it could only lead to a serious crisis for the popularity of the Army of the United States. Such accommodations were reserved exclusively for senior officers who, it was felt, knew how to behave themselves. As the mass of AGF troops began to stream into the United Kingdom starting in fall 1943 in preparation for the invasion of France, the principle of barracking soldiers solely in military facilities reached its limits. Beginning in the winter of 1943/44, the uncertain experiment to provide approximately 100,000 soldiers with lodging in private homes was finally attempted, and it proved to carry no risk at all. A War Office internal report in April 1944 stated:

... these misgivings had proved completely unfounded. Excellent relations had prevailed throughout between hosts and guests, and the system had evidently led to a much friendlier attitude on both sides than had previously existed. A census showed that complaints had been received in the case of only one out of every thousand men billeted.²⁴³

In addition to these measures to support U.S. soldiers in Great Britain, which could be broadly characterized as internal, there were also a number of official and semi-official British initiatives that were dedicated to similar goals. These included so-

²⁴² Ibid., p. 197.

²⁴³ Ibid., p. 197.

called 'welcome clubs' to which young local women could apply for membership. If they fit the official concept of a presentable *British girl*, they were allowed to share snacks or play games with American soldiers under the watchful eye of a chaperone, or to engage them in supervised dancing.²⁴⁴ The Joint Anglo American (Army) Relations Committee, created at the end of 1943, operated an exchange program that allowed British and American soldiers to spend a couple days in a unit of each other's army in order to bring about improved mutual understanding.²⁴⁵

Lastly, 329 regional hospitality committees were set up by the summer of 1944 that carried out a wide range of projects and events to promote Anglo-American relations under the sponsorship of local politicians and representatives of various volunteer organizations and with the financial support of the Ministry of Information.²⁴⁶

Naturally the many relationships between Britons and GIs were not always marked by mutual harmony and not always as innocent as those described to this point. The following section concerns those effects of the American occupation of Great Britain that largely eluded the elaborate planning and grasp of the two governments and armies. To a significant extent, they are linked to the fact that the Army of the United States brought nearly two million young men in their late teens and early 20s into a country where almost all males of comparable age were stationed abroad.

7.2 Realities

The problem with you Yanks is you're oversexed, overpaid, overfed and over here.

Contemporary British saying²⁴⁷

Have you heard about the new utility knickers? One Yank and they're off!

ETO joke²⁴⁸

²⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 207.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 188.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 192.

²⁴⁷ Cited in: *ibid.*, p. xxiii.

²⁴⁸ Cited in: Fussell, *Crusade*, p. 17.

How different they [the American enlisted men] looked from our own jumble-sale champions, beautifully clothed in smooth khaki, as fine in cut and quality as a British officer's – an American private, we confided to each other at school, was paid as much as a British captain, major, colonel – and armed with glistening, modern, automatic weapons ... More striking still were the number, size and elegance of the vehicles in which they paraded about the countryside in stately convoy. The British army's transport was a sad collection of underpowered makeshifts, whose dun paint flaked from their tin-pot bodywork. The Americans travelled in magnificent, gleaming, olive-green, pressed steel, four-wheel-drive juggernauts, decked with what car salesmen would call optional extras of a sort never seen on their domestic equivalents ... Standing one day at the roadside, dismounted from my bicycle to let one such convoy by, I was assaulted from the back of each truck as it passed by a volley of small missiles ... when I burrowed in the dead leaves to discover the cause I unearthed not walnuts but a little treasure of Hershey bars, Chelsea candy and Jack Frost sugar-cubes, a week's, perhaps a month's ration, of sweet things casually disbursed in a few seconds. There was, I reflected as I crammed the spoil into my pockets, something going on in the west of England about which Hitler should be very worried indeed.

John Keegan²⁴⁹

There is of course no single experience shared by all members of the Army of the United States following their arrival in the United Kingdom. The nearly two million U.S. soldiers stationed in Great Britain during World War II were individuals, each with his (or her) own sociocultural background. A student of English literature from Maine will perceive Great Britain differently than will a Kentucky farmer or an Italian-American from the Bronx. In spite of these differences, and setting aside individual characteristics and combinations, a number of almost universal patterns emerge that describe the nature and course of the American occupation of Great Britain and its cultural connotations for local inhabitants who interacted with the GIs.

Their first view of bombed houses in the ports where they landed on the west coast of Britain made many GIs aware for the first time that they were about to become involved in a deadly business in a very short time. Disembarking from the troop ship, they entered a world that was clearly different from the one they had known up until that moment, in spite of all its linguistic and cultural affinity. Cars were tiny in comparison to the American road cruisers and, besides that, they drove on the wrong

²⁴⁹ Keegan, *Six Armies*, p. 11 ff.

side of the road. Like the motor vehicles, Great Britain itself appeared surprisingly small and crowded, with 47 million inhabitants, more than a third the U.S. population, squeezed into one-thirtieth the territory of the United States, with 85 percent of them living in England.²⁵⁰ English cuisine was too strange and boring for the average American taste. The beer was comparatively weak because, as a product not essential to the war effort, it was diluted with water. In addition, it was served at room temperature. GIs who drank the watered-down beer anyway then encountered, when they answered the call of their physical necessities, rather archaic sanitary facilities. Especially in the countryside where the bulk of the troops were stationed, bathtubs were not particularly common, and showers were virtually unknown.²⁵¹ The harsh North Sea climate with its almost continual rains was all the more uncomfortable for the GIs, since central heating was an exception and rooms were normally warmed by small, inefficient gas stoves.

In practice, British speech usage presented itself as much more complicated for speakers of American English than the facts of what is basically a common language might suggest. While words like *tobacconist*, *hairdresser* – a place where, for incomprehensible reasons, condoms were sold – or *chemist's shop* provided clues for the observant GI as to their meanings, terms such as *tram*, *rubbish*, *mackintosh* or *minerals* represented the limits of linguistic interpolation.²⁵² As if the language they found to be extremely odd were not already confusing for them, the young future conquerors found themselves confronted by British understatement and irony, neither of these traits an inherent part of American speech patterns.²⁵³ In a way, this paragraph could be summed up by the well-known saying attributed (without verification) to George Bernard Shaw: *England and America are two countries divided by a common language.*²⁵⁴ British coinage was another case to which the GIs

²⁵⁰ Education Manual 41, G.I. Roundtable: Our British Ally (Washington, D.C. 1944).

²⁵¹ Fussell, *Crusade*, p. 15 ff.

²⁵² Knight, *Short Guide*, p. 24 ff.

²⁵³ Fussell, *Crusade*, p. 16.

²⁵⁴ A confirmed variant on this concept, from the pen of Oscar Wilde, is “We really have everything in common with America nowadays except, of course, language” from “The Canterville Ghost,” published in 1887.

needed to give their full concentration in order not to be cheated – or not to cheat themselves. The *penny-pence-shilling-pound* system itself, with its unique calculation demands, would have sufficed to create confusion. Added to this, however, the GIs' new temporary home offered an impressive collection of cryptically named coins, including the *farthing*, *ha'penny*, *thruppence*, *thrupenny bit*, *florin* and *crown*, serving only to increase American bafflement.²⁵⁵

Gals

A completely different surprise that was much easier to accept was the fact that the GIs were very sympathetically welcomed by a not insignificant proportion of the female population of Great Britain. In order to understand the proper significance of this phenomenon, we must give some attention initially to the circumstances of the players concerned. As already mentioned, the average age within the Army of the United States was a young one; the Armed Forces were largely comprised of single young men. From any point of view that was at all realistic, these soldiers in their late teens and early twenties could not assume they would long survive in the oncoming battles in the Mediterranean and northwestern Europe. They had, therefore, a marked interest in worldly pleasures during their time in Great Britain. Paul Fussell, literary scholar and GI in the European Theater of Operations, describes the situation as follows:

Almost two and a half years passed between the arrival of the first American troops and their nervous, serious departure for Normandy. Although their main business in the United Kingdom was training and toughening, their recreation (drinking aside) was largely women, both innocents and prostitutes. And for British women, the Yanks were nothing short of a gift.²⁵⁶

How did it happen that these GIs were looked on as a gift? First, as already described earlier, young British men in the age group comparable to the GIs were a disappearing act. They were serving in the British forces in Burma, Malaya, North Africa, on the Italian Peninsula or in the North Atlantic, and they were not available to the females of this bracket. Another key reason is that the Yanks were, in the eyes of many Britons (including the young women), *the lads from the movie theater*. The

²⁵⁵ Knight, *Short Guide*, p. 27.

²⁵⁶ Fussell, *Crusade*, p. 16.

period of the 1920s to the 1940s represented the golden years of Hollywood cinema, a time in which the United States was routinely portrayed as the rich and progressive land of the future. British filmgoers, who numbered around 20 million per week during the 1930s, most of these young, urban, working-class and female, were socialized by this image of America and drawn to it, leading the *Daily Express* to publish the following lament as early as 1927:

... the bulk of our picture-goers are Americanised ... They talk America, think America, and dream America. We have several million people, mostly women, who, to all intent and purpose, are temporary American citizens.²⁵⁷

During the war, the number of movie theater visits in Great Britain jumped again, rising from one billion tickets sold in 1940 to 1.6 billion in 1944. Approximately 95 percent of these tickets were for American films. Besides Hollywood, the other fascination of British young people with America was for the exciting, exuberant, romantic and modern big band sounds of Artie Shaw, Tommy Dorsey and, above all, Glenn Miller, as well as for new dance steps like the jitterbug or the jive that expressed a wild *joie de vivre* and sometimes involved downright indecent contact between the two partners.²⁵⁸ Starting in 1942, this blissful, romanticized and idealized *land of hopes and dreams* began to arrive in the United Kingdom in the person of the GIs. Up until that moment, Yanks were something that young British women knew only from the cinema, stereotypes surrounded by an extraordinary and magical aura. Suddenly, they were standing at the proverbial door, speaking the same daring and thrilling slang heard in the movies. The GIs were eager for dates, and what was more, they turned out to be well off, generous and often good-looking.²⁵⁹ It goes without saying, of course, that the soldiers made a powerful impression.

²⁵⁷ Reynolds, *Rich Relations*, p. 38 ff.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 263 ff.

²⁵⁹ While service in the U.S. Regular Army between the wars had been notoriously underpaid, Congress hurried to raise military pay when millions of eligible voters were drafted in 1940/41. As a result, the Army of the United States was by far the best paid army in combat in World War II, while British soldiers lagged far behind. American privates earned nearly five times as much as their British equivalents in service grade, while second lieutenants made 2.5 times the British rate. (Cf. Reynolds, *Rich Relations*, p. 80 ff., 152 ff.; Fussell, *Crusade*, p. 17; Keegan, *Six Armies*, p. 11.) As occurred in all other Allied armies stationed in Great Britain, the British army equipped its soldiers with a battle dress

In essence, the effect of this specific set of personal qualities that the GIs brought with them into the United Kingdom can be assessed in four areas: sexually transmitted disease, prostitution, out-of-wedlock pregnancies and Anglo-American marriages.

Piccadilly Commandos

Prostitution thrives in proximity to large concentrations of troops, and the U.S. occupation of Great Britain is no exception to this rule. In the United Kingdom, this phenomenon was more urban than rural. It focused on locations that were favorite leisure destinations for the GIs. The cultural epicenter could be found at Piccadilly Circus in London, where nonstop activity involving prostitutes, thieves and drunken GIs was a concern for Anglo-American authorities right up to the end of the war.²⁶⁰ British officials held an ambivalent position regarding prostitution: they prohibited bordellos – although in practice, this ban was unevenly carried out, depending on both the region and the time – while, on the other hand, giving freer rein to the flourishing streetwalking business. The accepted statistic for measuring the extent to which GIs engaged the services of the Piccadilly Commandos²⁶¹ was the yearly incidence of venereal disease. The Army of the United States considered a rate of 25 cases of VD per 1000 men as satisfactory and anything beyond 30 per 1000 as excessive behavior. No data are available regarding this matter for 1942 and 1943. Figures for 1944 show an average incidence of only 20 prior to OVERLORD. This rate can be explained by the fact that permission to leave base was highly restricted in the lead-up to D-Day and that the troops were filling their time with exercises and other preparations for the Normandy invasion. Beginning in June 1944, the VD rate

uniform with heavy hobnail boots. The uniform, as the name implies, was used both in combat and for dress purposes. U.S. soldiers had a kind of work uniform, field service dress, and a service uniform for appropriate occasions. On a date, the spruced-up American privates decked out in their crisply cut khaki uniforms and rubber-soled shoes looked to feminine British eyes like officers and gentlemen, while their British counterparts were forced to wear a less impressive all-purpose uniform. (Cf. Reynolds, *Rich Relations*, pp. 266, 326; Fussell, *Crusade*, p. 16 ff.; Keegan, *Six Armies*, p. 11.)

²⁶⁰ Reynolds, *Rich Relations*, p. 403.

²⁶¹ Because Piccadilly Circus was Great Britain's prostitution center, GIs referred to the sex workers, in allusion to the popular term for members of the British elite units of the Special Operations Executive, as 'Piccadilly Commandos'.

once again rose until it reached a high mark of 53. Due to the manpower crisis²⁶² in the winter of 1944/45, all available troops were involved in intensive training, already at the front or on their way there, and the VD rate dropped back to 40. When the war ended in Europe in the early summer of 1945, incidence of venereal disease spiked to *all-time highs* of 62 in May and 66 in June.²⁶³

Illegitimates

With respect to children born out of wedlock who were not subsequently legitimized – as the practice was then called – through the marriage of their parents, no comparative data are available. The extent to which the fathers of such children bore British, American or some other nationality can no longer be determined. Nevertheless, it can be concluded that the absolute number of children born to unmarried mothers and not later legitimized was dramatically higher than it had been in the 1930s. While approximately 70 percent of children born outside marriage prior to the war were ultimately legitimized when their parents were wed, this percentage hit a low mark of 37 percent by 1945. In England and Wales alone, 65,000 children were born out of wedlock in 1945, 22,000 of these presumably to American fathers.²⁶⁴

There are three reasons that provide the primary explanation for such statistics. The first is the obvious one: that the child's father was not interested in marriage and left the expectant mother. The second is no less tragic: the possibility that the child's father was in fact willing to marry the woman but died in the war before the wedding ceremony could be arranged. The third reason reveals the greatest duplicity, since it is linked to the official position of the Army of the United States regarding the marriage of its soldiers to local women.

Wives

It was mentioned in an earlier chapter that, during the period before the war, the Regular Army required its enlisted soldiers and NCOs to obtain their commanding

²⁶² Cf. [Chapter 6.2](#) Case study: manpower crisis 1944/45.

²⁶³ Reynolds, *Rich Relations*, p. 403.

²⁶⁴ As estimated by *LIFE* Magazine in its issue of August 2, 1948 (cited in: Reynolds, *Rich Relations*, p. 404).

officer's permission in order to marry.²⁶⁵ Such harsh measures were possible in the small, underfinanced volunteer army of those times. In the Army of the United States, which was made up of millions of draftees, such a system could not be maintained, and the corresponding regulations were lifted. When the first U.S. troops arrived on British soil in 1942 by landing in Northern Ireland, it was only a matter of weeks before the first American-Northern Irish weddings took place. Shortly thereafter, in a reference to a similar situation at the American marine base in Trinidad, the principle of requiring the CO's permission for such solemnities was reinstated for all U.S. overseas troops through War Department Circular 179 (WD-C 179):

No military personnel on duty in any foreign country may marry without the approval of the commanding officer of the United States Army forces stationed in such foreign country or possession.²⁶⁶

A U.S. officer in the ETO explained the background of War Department Circular 179

... [as to be] designed to protect soldiers from hasty marriages in countries where the bulk of the population was negro and socially and mentally inferior to the average American soldier.²⁶⁷

A less racist and more universally applicable explanation was that the GIs needed to be protected from deliberately provoked marriages with *overseas prostitutes*. Whatever the intentions that lay behind the War Department's Circular 179, it became the cornerstone of a widespread policy implemented in the European Theater of Operations by many commanders to use all means to obstruct marriages between GIs and British women. Two valid justifications were that soldiers would be too easily distracted from their mission by wives who lived near the bases, and that marriages to British women were considered unfair in comparison to soldiers who had married in the United States, since the latter were not allowed to bring their spouses into the United Kingdom.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁵ Cf. [Chapter 5.3](#) Chickenshit.

²⁶⁶ Cited in: Reynolds, Rich Relations, p. 210.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 210.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 213.

Interestingly, it was the otherwise liberal and kind Ike Eisenhower who was an enthusiastic proponent of this policy. His ETO Circular 20 (ETO-C 20) expanded on WD-C 179 by adding a condition that the intent to marry had to be declared three months in advance and was required to be, curiously, *in the interest of these [ETO] forces in particular and the military service in general*²⁶⁹. Violators were subject to proceedings under the 96th Article of War, *conduct of a nature to bring discredit upon the military service*. GIs seeking to wed were instructed that they could expect no preferential treatment from the Army of the United States as a result of their marriage. Their future spouses had no claim of any kind to benefits under the Army's welfare system, did not automatically become American citizens by marriage, and would have to go through the regular U.S. immigration process in order to become citizens.

In the end, however, it was up to each commander to determine how to apply WD-C 179 and ETO-C 20. General J. C. H. Lee²⁷⁰, commander of Services of Supply in the ETO, instructed his subordinate commanders to approve marriages only if the woman was pregnant. When Eisenhower was appointed commander of the new North African Theater of Operations in the lead-up to TORCH, his replacement in the ETO, General Frank Andrews, introduced a more liberal policy. Andrews died in an accident in May 1943, and his successor, General Russel P. Hartle, updated the reforms yet again.²⁷¹

Ultimately, however, it must be acknowledged that neither strict interpretation of the relevant War Department requirements nor recurrent individual discrimination could keep lovers from finding each other and advancing their interests. Records of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service show that 627 women from Great Britain were naturalized as American citizens between 1941 and 1945. It may be assumed that these incidents were due at least in part to such marriages. Between December

²⁶⁹ Cited in: *ibid.*, p. 210.

²⁷⁰ Lee, in his command one of the few constant factors in the ETO, was as known for his ostentatious lifestyle and his obsession for *spit and polish* as for his Biblical faith. Based in the initials of his name, John Clifford Hodges, GIs referred to him as Jesus Christ Himself. (Reynolds, *Rich Relations*, p. 105.)

²⁷¹ Reynolds, *Rich Relations*, p. 211 ff.

28, 1945 and June 30, 1950, another 334,528 British females and 42 British males immigrated to the United States under the War Brides Act.²⁷²

Allies

The same combination of social advantages, personal qualities and cultural stereotypes conveyed via mass media that had proven so attractive for British women also created extremely tense relations between the ranks (especially the lower ranks) of the Anglo-American armies. In addition to their significantly higher pay levels, American soldiers benefited from the comprehensive Army welfare system, something that was unknown in the British army. In comparison to the British NAAFI shops, American PXs offered a far more extensive range of wares at much lower prices. American cigarettes, qualitatively superior to those sold in Britain, cost a tenth of what British soldiers paid at NAAFI. While Tommies had to pay *thruppence* for a cup of tea and two scones as a second breakfast, the GIs normally received coffee and doughnuts free at Red Cross clubs, mobile club canteens and donut dugouts.²⁷³ Related to the observation made earlier that understatement was a characteristic rarely observed in the U.S., many GIs were simply lacking in humility regarding their privileged situation when in the company of their British counterparts. A British War Office Censorship Report of 1942 cited the following from a letter by a British soldier:

One of them turned to one of our Lance Corporals and said: "Say, Tommy, what do they pay you a day?" Fred replied: "Three and six." At this he laughs loud and calls to all his gang ... says that British soldiers would work for a dime if the big shots paid it to 'em. When we came outside after the place had closed there was an army lorry waiting for the Yanks. We stood there and watched them piled in. Then the one who had been doing all the shouting put his hand in his pocket and as the lorry pulled away, threw out a bob's worth of coppers at us and shouted above the others' laughter "Get y'self a cup of tea each of you poor little

²⁷² Ibid., p. 420 ff.

²⁷³ Reynolds, Rich Relations, p. 326.

_____.”²⁷⁴ If I could have laid my hands on him, I, like many more, would have busted his pan. I think they stink.²⁷⁵

Tommies resented the Americans, who had delayed by 27 months their entry into the war on the side of the British, becoming actively involved only after Hitler had declared war on the United States. GIs, in turn, were little impressed by the British army’s military performance to that point²⁷⁶, nor were they prone to keeping such feelings to themselves. *Gimme a beer as quick as you guys got out of Dunkirk*²⁷⁷ was a common GI method of ordering a beer.²⁷⁸ Many GIs were of the opinion that Great Britain would display too little collective will to win the war compared to the U.S.²⁷⁹ As a result, they often publicly expressed the sentiment that America was now obligated to come to Europe for the second time in a generation to put British (and French) affairs in order. Because of their longer participation in the war, Tommies claimed senior partner status over the other Allies, a position that went unacknowledged by the Americans. Until events occurred in 1943 to prove the contrary, the British troops did not hold a high opinion of the soldierly qualities of the GIs, an attitude that was reflected in a number of ways, including popular witticisms:

²⁷⁴ The censorship office deleted obscenities as a matter of course. In this instance, it may be assumed with some degree of probability that the cited phrase ended with *poor little fucks*.

²⁷⁵ Cited in: Reynolds, *Rich Relations*, p. 325.

²⁷⁶ Up to the end of 1942, the Second World War had represented a virtually unbroken series of semi-catastrophic setbacks and defeats, including the hasty evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force from France, the defeat by the German Afrika Korps in Libya and Egypt, the capitulation of the strongholds of Tobruk (Libya) and Singapore and the steady retreat of British armies in East Asia until they reached the Indian frontier.

²⁷⁷ Dunkerque – the French channel port from which the British Expeditionary Force was evacuated in June 1940.

²⁷⁸ Cited in: Reynolds, *Rich Relations*, p. 327.

²⁷⁹ In a survey in the U.S. in 1942 regarding whether Great Britain would do everything in its power to win the war, only around 50 percent of respondents answered affirmatively. The same question, when asked in the Soviet Union, yielded a ‘yes’ response rate of 90 percent. (Cf. Reynolds, *Rich Relations*, p. 34.)

Have you heard about the three Yanks who went to a war film? Well, one immediately fainted and the other two got a medal for carrying him out.²⁸⁰

The topic of perceived British seniority over the American allies also resulted in ongoing tension at higher levels, particularly in the selection of Dwight D. Eisenhower as Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Forces for the all-important invasion of northwestern Europe. Viewed pragmatically, the political decision to name a U.S. general as Supreme Commander clearly reflected the reality that the Army of the United States would be supplying by far the largest share of troops for OVERLORD. In spite of this situation, the opinion held by all sectors of British civilian and military society was that this position should go to one of their own generals. Eisenhower enjoyed great personal popularity among the British as well as Americans, and he was respected for his successful unification efforts within the Grand Alliance. Nevertheless, Great Britain tended toward the view that Eisenhower's position was virtually a diplomatic command and that his British subordinate, General Bernard Montgomery, was actually in command of OVERLORD.²⁸¹ As the invasion of northwestern Europe – and with it the embarking of most GIs on an uncertain future – loomed in spring 1944, the focus of Anglo-American perceptions in turn shifted, from what divided each group from the other to what united them all.

Despite general relief that the Americans were gone, there was now an unavoidable understanding of what these alien boys were there for and what was going to happen to a great many of them.²⁸²

In sum, it can be stated that many of the tensions that were present during the occupation of the United Kingdom may be ultimately traced, in this case, to an encounter between two empires, one of them in decline, the other on its way to achieving unprecedented power. In spite of all its unpleasantness, the occupation of Great Britain was a culturally fruitful experience for Yanks and Brits alike. It was far from being the harmonious operation portrayed by the contemporary Anglo-American

²⁸⁰ Cited in: Reynolds, *Rich Relations*, p. 327.

²⁸¹ Weigley, *Lieutenants*, p. 36 ff.

²⁸² Fussell, *Crusade*, p. 22.

propaganda machines, but at many levels, it initiated a stimulating exchange between the two sides. GIs who had been overwhelmed at the AGF training centers by America's diversity developed, during their stay in Great Britain, a strong sense of their identity as Americans. At the training camps, it had been of prime importance whether a draftee came from the North or the South, whether he was Jewish, Polish, Italian, Irish or of German background. Regional, religious and ethnic differences tended to lose their meaning overseas, and the soldiers began to view themselves as Yanks – the same way that the British viewed them. Regarding the influence of the Army of the United States in Great Britain, the declaration of former GI Sandy Conti – *I like to say the Victorian era in England ended when we arrived*²⁸³ – is certainly an exaggeration. It can be said, however, that the presence of the Army of the United States had a significant and ultimately modernizing influence, if not on British society in general, then at least on a large proportion of young Britons, both male and female. Without intending to suggest any of the negative connotations inherent in today's understanding of American cultural imperialism, it may be concluded that the occupation of Great Britain was its first campaign.

²⁸³ Cited in: Reynolds, Rich Relations, p. xxiii.

8 Dogface soldiers

If I had time and anything like your ability to study war, I think I should concentrate almost entirely on the “actualities of war” – the effects of tiredness, hunger, fear, lack of sleep, weather. The principles of strategy and tactics, and the logistics of war are really absurdly simple: it is the actualities that make war so complicated and so difficult, and are usually so neglected by historians.

Field Marshal Lord Wavell to Sir Basil Liddell Hart.²⁸⁴

To this point, we have concerned ourselves in some detail with the various factors that determined the external appearance and internal composition of the Army of the United States between 1943 and 1945. In the course of this examination, we have ascertained that the defining conditions took multiple forms. On one hand, they were derivatives and consequences of American tradition and history such as the three dialectical pairs presented in [Chapter 2](#)²⁸⁵ that controlled the organizational and cultural development of the U.S. Armed Forces. In part, these resulted from political, strategic and personal decisions made by key players. Roosevelt’s determination to intervene in the European crisis can be cited here as a primary example; likewise, his selection of Marshall as Chief of Staff, a choice that, for its part, had multiple cultural, personal and organizational implications for the Army of the United States. In addition, they were partly due to pure historical good fortune, like installing Albert Wedemeyer, a former student of the German Kriegsakademie, at the nerve center of strategic U.S. planning, a typical example of the unpredictability with which history continually unfolds. Lastly, they could take the form of technical and logistical imperatives like the Wedemeyer-conceived mobilization of the Army of the United States by means of the conveyor-belt techniques of industrial mass production. Closely linked to this point are the influences of the GIs’ way stations on the road to their theaters of operations, from passing through the induction, reception and training centers, continuing through parade grounds, ports of embarkation and days or weeks at sea, to eventually taking up residence in the United Kingdom, in some cases for many months.

²⁸⁴ Cited in: Dave Grossman, *On Killing. The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society* (New York 1996), p. 40.

²⁸⁵ Regulars – citizen soldiers, conscription – volunteerism, mobility – power.

In what reality did the infantry riflemen of the Army of the United States find themselves when they finally reached the war proper, the endpoint of their journey? What were the conditions that turned citizen soldiers into dogface soldiers? In order to answer such questions, we need to shift from the general to the specific and examine three distinct types of basic conditions.

The first type can be subsumed under man-made conditions in the broadest sense. These include social standing, the nature of military duties and the living conditions of the infantry riflemen within the Army of the United States, as well as their perception of themselves in relation to the millions of non-infantry servicemen. The second type includes, of course, conditions that are beyond human influence. For these, we must devote a separate section to geography/topography, the key factor in the origin of the dogfaces. The more self-explanatory effects of climate will enter the analysis at the end of the chapter. Finally, two highly important catalytic factors related to this question make up the third type. First, we reflect on the person and the work of Bill Mauldin. Without Willie and Joe, the two prototypical dogfaces, and their integrative effect, this phenomenon would be unrecognizable as such, and this study would not be viable. Then we take up *Stars and Stripes*, the publication that in a literal sense coupled Mauldin's cultural-creative energy with the soldiers who were simultaneously his audience and the source of his inspiration.

In the final section of this chapter, we analyze the origin of the dogfaces in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations based on the information dealt with here. We will see how the various basic conditions under our review combined to create the foundations of a self-perception that in the end gave the dogface soldiers their final form.

8.1 On the front lines

... no women to be heroes in front of, damn little wine to drink, precious little song, cold and fairly dirty, just toiling from day to day in a world full of insecurity, discomfort, homesickness and a dulled sense of danger.

Ernie Pyle²⁸⁶

We were the Willie [*sic*] Lomans of the war.

²⁸⁶ Cited in: Tobin, Pyle's War, p. 84.

We were the Willie [sic] Lomans of the war. Harold Leinbaugh's allusion to the protagonist of Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* contains much that is true about the self-conception of the dogface soldiers. Like Miller's sales representative, who broke down under the demands of the American dream, they discovered themselves in a reality where death and the often mentioned but rarely occurring *million-dollar wound*²⁸⁸ constituted the only exits from a world bereft of humanity, dignity and civilization.

Within the Armed Forces, the dogfaces occupied the low end of the food chain. Among the combat elements of the Army of the United States, for example, airborne troopers and rangers could draw on their self-awareness as elites. The prestige of flying, much greater in the 1940s than it is today, accrued to aviators of the Army Air Forces. Armored Corps²⁸⁹ members personified the horror but also the fascination of mechanized warfare that had astonished the world when it was introduced into the vocabulary of military history by the German Wehrmacht between 1939 and 1941 under the name 'blitzkrieg'. Non-combat elements of the Army of the United States had to be content with less prestigious roles, of course, but these assignments allowed them to live under the comparatively greater security and relative comfort of the rear echelon.

Service in the infantry involved none of these attributes. The infantry was not high-tech, nor did its soldiers constitute an elite force. It was made up, for the most part, of (often reluctant) draftees, and it – or service in it – ran little risk of being perceived as something glamorous. Each branch of the Armed Forces had specific battlefield tasks. The Air Forces, tank formations and artillery were charged with preparation and support. Their tasks were directed against their exact enemy counterparts or were of a specific nature, such as tank operations deep within enemy territory. The central mission of any army at war, *to close with and destroy the [main] Enemy*, was

²⁸⁷ Cited in: Fussell, *Crusade*, p. 10.

²⁸⁸ The term *million-dollar wound* described an injury that was serious enough to require immediate evacuation from the front but that, on the other hand, caused no permanent damage.

²⁸⁹ Tank forces.

reserved to the infantry, known in an astonishing euphemism as the Queen of Battle. If there was an organization designed to live (and indeed to die) under inhuman conditions, this was the infantry. Its riflemen were the war's *expendables*, the wear parts in a giant death machine.

Naturally, the war was also a dangerous and ultimately deadly affair for the other combat services and the non-infantry components of the Army Ground Forces. Air or ship crews, for example, were as much in danger of losing their lives. In fact, over much of the war, it was the bomber crews of the 8th and 15th USAAF that experienced the comparatively highest losses; this was the problem confronting Yossarian, Joseph Heller's hero in *Catch-22*. In spite of this, service in the Army Air Forces, the Navy and the other fighting elements of the Army Ground Forces was distinctively different from infantry service. At the conclusion of their missions, air crews and sailors returned to a structured environment where they regularly received hot meals, showered and slept in beds. Warfare for them, while still deadly, was a *nine-to-five job*, one that featured breaks and the recuperation that goes with them, and at least a bit of separation from the battle. For most dogfaces, the only way to withdraw from the front lines was in a body bag or on a stretcher. They endured long stretches unprotected from the elements, slept – when sleep was at all possible – in foxholes under the stars at all seasons of the year, and rarely had an opportunity to change their uniform or even take their shoes off for a short time; in sum, they rarely had the possibility to lead a life worthy of a human being.

Author and literary scholar Paul Fussell served as a young infantry officer in southeastern France in 1944. His memoir *Doing Battle: The Making of a Skeptic* is an outstanding source for those interested in learning about the absurdity, suffering and humiliation intrinsic to the infantry experience. Among his descriptions is an account of a situation in the winter of 1944 that took on increasingly epidemic proportions due to poor hygienic conditions, circumstances that, in various forms, were known to virtually every dogface:

One night I was marching with my platoon toward a town where we were to be billeted. Suddenly, with no warning at all, my stomach churned and terrible cramps forced out a cascade of liquid shit before I could scuttle to the side of the road and drop my trousers ... I spent fifteen minutes in a rutabaga patch trying to clean myself up. I first used my trench knife to cut off my soaking, stinking long

underwear. I then tried to wipe off my legs, not with toilet paper, which I'd not yet learned never to be without, but with the only paper I had, some fancy stationary I'd bought in a town we'd passed through ... This cleanup was only barely successful: socks and shoes were still wet, brown, and offensive ... In the next few days, I somehow found some washing water and a few clean articles of uniform.²⁹⁰

It should come as a surprise to few that Fussell describes war as a *theater of terror, mortality, humiliation [and] the absurd*²⁹¹. The most absurd external circumstances, no realistic chance of improvement within sight, and the constantly present danger of losing one's life were the cornerstones of the dogface's existence. Finally, Bill Mauldin's short instruction to readers back home on how to approximate the infantry experience is, in equal measure, impressive in its simplicity and revealing:

Dig a hole in your back yard while it is raining. Sit in the hole until the water climbs up around your ankles. Pour cold mud down your shirt collar. Sit there for forty-eight hours, and, so there is no danger of your dozing off, imagine that a guy is sneaking around waiting for a chance to club you on the head or set your house on fire.

Get out of the hole, fill a suitcase full of rocks, pick it up, put a shotgun in your other hand, and walk on the muddiest road you can find. Fall flat on your face every few minutes as you imagine big meteors streaking down to sock you. After ten or twelve miles (remember – you are still carrying the shotgun and suitcase) start sneaking through the wet bush. Imagine that someone has booby-trapped your route with rattlesnakes which will bite you if you step on them. Give some friend a rifle and have him blast in your direction once in awhile.

Snoop around until you find a bull. Try to figure out a way to sneak around him without letting him see you. When he does see you, run like hell all the way back to your hole in the back yard, drop the suitcase and shotgun, and get in. If you repeat this performance every three days for several months, you may begin to

²⁹⁰ Paul Fussell, *Doing Battle. The Making of a Skeptic* (New York 1998), p. 113 ff.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 112.

understand why an infantryman sometimes gets out of breath. But you still won't understand how he feels when things get tough.²⁹²

When things got tough

The state of exhaustion, latent fear of death, hunger, lack of sleep and weather conditions to which the dogfaces were exposed on an almost continual basis represented, in a way, the hazy background of their existence as they periodically engaged in battles and skirmishes. To paraphrase John Keegan, I am in the fortunate situation to be able to say that I was never in a battle or even near one, never heard one in the distance or saw its direct impact.²⁹³ I have read about battles, seen and read interviews with participants, and studied photographs and films of battles. Nevertheless, the attempt to construct a picture from a distance, as it were, using available sources and reflective processes in order to describe the reality of a battle to an acceptable degree can only end in euphemism.

The arsenal of weapons systems that confronted the infantry in World War II had an applicable range and volume of destructive power against the human physique that would have been inconceivable in the 19th Century. In *The Face of Battle*, his reference work on the nature and character of battles, Keegan examines the effects of anti-infantry weaponry during World War I. Apart from the fact that precision and destructive power had become even greater in World War II, the dogfaces essentially faced the same risks.

Shell wounds were the most to be feared, because of the multiple effects shell explosion could produce in the human body. At its worst it could disintegrate a human being, so that nothing recognizable – sometimes apparently nothing at all – remained of him ... shell blast could create over-pressures or vacuums in the body's organs, rupturing the lungs and producing hemorrhages in the brain and spinal cord ... Much the most common wounding by shell fire, however, was by splinter or shrapnel ball ... they often travelled in clusters, which would inflict several large or many small wounds on the same person. The splinters were irregular in shape, so producing a very rough wound with a great deal of tissue

²⁹² Bill Mauldin, *Up Front* (New York 1949), p. 140 ff.

²⁹³ John Keegan, *The Face of Battle. A Study of Agincourt, Waterloo and the Somme* (London 1996), p. 15.

damage, and they frequently carried fragments of clothing or other foreign matter into the body, which made infection almost inevitable. Very large fragments could ... amputate limbs, decapitate, bisect or otherwise grossly mutilate the human frame ... As a killing agent over long as well as short ranges, however, the bullet was champion ... the high-velocity conical bullet, spinning quickly about his long axis, could produce inside the human body a variety of extremely unpleasant results ... Should it be caused to 'tumble' inside the body, however, either hitting bone or for some ballistic reason, its path beyond the point of tumble became very much enlarged and the exit wound ... 'explosive' in appearance. The effects of a tumble produced by striking bone were enhanced by the bone's splintering under the impact, its own fragments the becoming secondary projectiles which produced massive damage to tissue round about. Some bullets also set up hydraulic effects, their passage driving body fluids away from the wound track at pressures which the surrounding tissues could not withstand.²⁹⁴

It is possible to describe in detail the catastrophic casualties that World War II weaponry inflicted on the human body, or to discuss the physical implications of this experience for troops on the battlefield. I am convinced, however, that it is impossible to conceive the reality of a battle. Even if one stresses how specific actions, whether proper or not, are immaterial to a person's own survival, how brutally arbitrary death can be in claiming one victim but not the next, or how terror, mortal fear, exhaustion, aggression, hatred and panic dominate the physical and psychological landscape, these observations remain merely an anemic description of a battle's isolated effects on individuals. Their concentrated effects must be felt, not merely read in a book. In this regard, the outstanding opening sequence of Steven Spielberg's otherwise mediocre *Saving Private Ryan*²⁹⁵ is highly recommendable. Its portrayal of the infernal slaughter on Omaha Beach on June 6, 1944 expands the limits of audiovisual reproducibility of battles and shows how closely one can approximate such an experience without actually being present.

Another way to achieve at least an idea of the hell humans can create on the modern battlefield is to focus on the image of a battle's aftermath. In *Crusade in Europe*, Dwight D. Eisenhower's memoir of his performance as Supreme Commander Allied

²⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 264 ff.

²⁹⁵ *Saving Private Ryan*, Director: Steven Spielberg (USA / Dreamworks 1998).

Expeditionary Forces, describes what he saw in summer 1944 near Falaise, the site of the Western Allies' decisive maneuver in the fight for France:

Roads, highways, and fields were so choked with destroyed equipment and with dead men that passage through that area was extremely difficult ... I was conducted through it on foot, to encounter scenes that could only be described by Dante. It was literally possible to walk for hundreds of yards, stepping on nothing but dead and decaying flesh.²⁹⁶

What Eisenhower leaves out of his account of this scene, possibly out of consideration for his readers, is the stench of (summer) battlefields. The author Kingsley Amis, who, as a soldier of the British army, took part in the same battle at Falaise, allows his readers the following description:

I saw a lot of people whom that [being killed] happened to around Falaise, so recently that there had been no time to bulldoze some to the roadside. Like life-sized dolls, everyone said, as everyone always has. The horses ... seemed almost more pitiful, rigid in the shafts with their upper lips drawn above their teeth as if in continuing pain. The dead cows smelled even worse. The stench of rotting human and animal bodies was so overpowering that the pilots of the spotter planes flying above the scene to direct more and more artillery damage vomited.²⁹⁷

In 1945, *Stars and Stripes*, the daily newspaper of the Army of the United States, published a compilation of poetry sent to it by soldiers during the war. In this volume, *Pupent Poets of the "Stars and Stripes Mediterranean"*, two poems in particular stand out that describe the heavy fighting in Italy that was a key element in the origin of the dogface soldiers. They give witness to the devastating yet non-scarring effects of the war, thus concluding our attempted excursion into the realities of battle:

BATTLE (Sergeant S. Colker)²⁹⁸

The blackness was in me,

²⁹⁶ Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe* (New York 1952).

²⁹⁷ Cited in: Fussell, *Crusade*, p. 63.

²⁹⁸ Charles A. Hogan / John Welsh, *Pupent Poets of the "Stars and Stripes Mediterranean"* (Naples 1945), p. 18.

*Such fate and fury as I had never known:
Complete amnesia from love and spring,
And tenderness of home.
Surging through me, I could feel it rise
And lift me with it.
I was free, to lust for blood,
And I could use my hands
To tear and smash.
My eyes to sight for killing!
The noises, whistling, wooming
In the blackness
Became a part of me,
Spurred my passion, lashed me on,
Became fused with my mind's unwholesomeness:
I would caress, with savagery,
And put them all in hell forever.
I willed to butcher as they had butchered,
Destroy as they had destroyed.
I sobbed aloud as no man has ever cried:
Someone screamed, maybe me. I could smell
Powder, burnt flesh, maybe mine.
I think I died then.
I don't want to remember any more.
God knows – I wish I could forget.*

HOME FROM WAR (Corporal Anthony Carlin)²⁹⁹

*Who can say at war's end
"We are lucky living men?"
After so much of us has died
How can we be satisfied
That we, the so-called living men,
Will find a way to live again?
For when a man has daily faced
The brute within him, low, debased,
Can he look forward to the light,*

²⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 109.

*Wipe out the memories of the fight
Forget the strange erotic bliss
That comes with some cheap purchased kiss?
Ah, no! And it will be his fateful lot
To live on and find that he lives not
Though like the living we'll behave
We'll be the dead without a grave.*

8.2 Critical factor: topography

This mountain country varies from low hills covered with olive orchards and terraced fields to barren rocky peaks about six thousand feet high. Villages of tightly crowded gray stone houses cling to the steep slopes, and crumbling ruins of ancient castles here and there look down on the green valleys below. The rugged mountains are a formidable obstacle to the movement of troops, and the Volturno and Calore rivers reinforce the barrier. The Volturno, rising in the high mountains north of Venafro, follows an erratic course southeast to Amorosi, where it is joined by the Calore. Then, turning west, it cuts through a narrow gap in the mountains at Triflisco and flows out into the coastal plain. The Calore rises in the mountains southeast of Benevento and flows generally westward to its junction with the Volturno. The lower reaches of the Volturno and Calore form a continuous obstacle, almost sixty miles long, lying directly in the path of any advance on Rome from the south.

From the Volturno to the Winter Line³⁰⁰

In addition to the factors described in the previous sections, geographical space and its topographical properties form part of the general conditions affecting the genesis of the dogface soldiers. In order to find our way around this space in coming sections, but above all to understand its significance, we first have to go back briefly to the early 20th Century to review how the war evolved operationally and to consider the events of World War II against the backdrop of the first global conflict, from 1914 to 1918.

As Europe's Great Powers began to mobilize in summer 1914, their military planning bodies were unaware of how profoundly the Industrial Revolution had influenced the conduct of war. The techniques of mass production made it possible to equip and

³⁰⁰ From the Volturno to the Winter Line. 6 October–15 November 1943. World War II. 50th Anniversary Commemorative Edition (Center of Military History Publication 100-8), p. 5 ff.

field armies of unprecedented size. In addition, the development of the machine gun and enhancements in the area of artillery had altered the strategic balance between military offense and defense decidedly in favor of the latter. The military doctrines of the warring nations did not take such advancements into consideration, however, and this failure caused the fronts of World War I to solidify into trenches.

In the process, gigantic armies on both sides hemorrhaged from frontal attacks on fortified defensive lines, sustaining preposterous losses. On July 1, 1916, for example, the first day of its Somme offensive, the British army suffered 60,000 casualties without gaining any significant ground. When the offensive concluded in November, British forces had advanced just over two miles at a cost of 420,000 casualties.³⁰¹ World War I history is rife with comparable examples.

Most of the participating nations accepted this defensive advantage as unalterable, adapting their respective doctrines accordingly. In contrast, Germany developed tactical and operational concepts to enable itself to break the deadlock and regain pace and vigor in battles. These considerations resulted in mechanized, motorized formations and the operational concepts of combined arms warfare, concentration³⁰² and deep penetrating maneuvers. This type of combat, subsumed under the term 'blitzkrieg', typically focused on the opponent's supply infrastructure, means of communications and leadership structures as initial targets. In this way, it was possible to strip the Enemy of the ability to mount organized resistance right at the beginning of the battle, thus minimizing one's own losses and hastening the successful conclusion of operations. Airplanes as well as state-of-the-art tank models and trucks became the iconic embodiments of this revolutionary development. They gave military forces the necessary mobility and firepower to carry out the blitzkrieg concept. After the world had witnessed (in 1939 in Poland, 1940 in France and 1941 in the Soviet Union) the superiority of these innovations on the battlefield, however, the Allies began to modify their own doctrines and adapt a form of blitzkrieg for their armies.

³⁰¹ Keegan, *Face of Battle*, p. 280.

³⁰² In German: *Schwerpunkt*bildung.

With respect to the development of the dogfaces, the determining fact is the absence of these operational icons of World War II – and, as a result, the absence of movement. They came into being in spaces characterized by geographical or topographical conditions that rendered the doctrinaire deployment of maneuver warfare weapons systems difficult or impossible.³⁰³ Robbed of these assets, the dogfaces found themselves once again in the bloody operational reality of the First World War, with static lines, frontal attacks on fortified positions and surroundings that conferred great advantages on the defender.

8.3 Catalyst: Bill Mauldin

Some day a Thucydides will arise among us, one who will be a historian and a philosophical moralist, an appraiser of essential values and a spokesman of the spiritual ideal; one with a discerning mind and in love with eternal things, and he will give us the measure of the struggle (which we call the Second World War) in prose whose majesty will match the majesty of his theme and its fateful import for mankind. There is something of this majesty in Churchill's monumental work – the dramatic sweep of the world-shaking events he is depicting is almost audible in the rhythms of his language and is awe-inspiring in the stark directness of his statement, and it is almost as if the events themselves were speaking. Both Mauldin and Churchill are, in a sense, historians; Mauldin's is the still small voice that Elijah heard on the mountain, and Churchill's is the thunder that pealed forth from Sinai. And the historian, yet to come, who will also be a philosopher and a moralist, will turn to Mauldin as well as to Churchill when he searches out and sums up for us the imperishable meaning of the conflict and the opposing conceptions of man's status and worth that were pitted against each other.

Israel Knox³⁰⁴

In April 2002, 57 years after the former GI had read *Up Front*³⁰⁵ as he lay severely wounded in a sick bay, he felt a desire to express the attachment and esteem he felt

³⁰³ For example, mountainous or hilly regions; thickly forested regions; countryside crisscrossed by riverbeds; swampy areas; spaces where, due to topography or geography, flanking maneuvers were impractical; spaces where use of motorized and mechanical (tank) formations was limited or impossible.

³⁰⁴ Israel Knox, Bill Mauldin as a Moral Philosopher, in: *Ethics*, Vol. 63, No. 2 (1953), p. 121.

³⁰⁵ A compilation volume featuring selected cartoons as well as Mauldin's observations on the war.

for the cartoonist. From the son, he learned that his father, who suffered from Alzheimer's, was near death. Following a day-long visit with the cartoonist, the old soldier wrote letters to newspapers and veterans organizations to encourage other World War II GIs to visit him in order to show him how important his work had been for them and to assure him that they had not forgotten him. In July and August of the same year, two journalists from the *Orange County Register* and the *Chicago Tribune*, upon becoming aware of the by now steadily growing grass-roots movement, wrote about it in their respective newspaper columns. Shortly afterward, sacks of letters, postcards and packages addressed to the cartoonist began to arrive at his nursing home. By the start of the fall, he had received over 10,000 pieces of correspondence. Large numbers of former GIs traveled from all over the United States to be at the cartoonist's bedside. The nursing home had to turn most of them away, as it was feared he would not live long enough to receive them all.³⁰⁶

Life

"My first recollection of this world," I said, "is of sitting on the bank of a little river in Parral, Chihuahua, Mexico, in 1924, at the age of three, finishing the last of a pack of Chesterfields which, according to three witnesses, I'd smoked in a little more than an hour."

Bill Mauldin, *A Sort of a Saga*³⁰⁷

William Henry "Bill" Mauldin was born in 1921, the second son of day laborer Sidney Mauldin and his wife Katrina, on a farm in New Mexico. Due to illness and the poor diet of depression-plagued rural America, he grew into a fragile teenager. Unable to participate in most of the cowboy activities that were the usual pastimes for boys in his area, he soon discovered his talent and passion for drawing, a skill that his mother both recognized and encouraged.³⁰⁸

In 1936, following the separation of his parents, Bill and his brother Sid left home. Like many other youths during the Great Depression, they sought their fortune in distant places; for the Mauldin brothers, the location was Phoenix, Arizona. While Sid

³⁰⁶ DePastino, *A Life Up Front*, p. 2 f.

³⁰⁷ Bill Mauldin, *A Sort of a Saga* (New York 1949), p. 11 ff.

³⁰⁸ DePastino, *A Life Up Front*, p. 7 ff.

found work using the auto mechanic skills he had learned from his father, Bill attended (very occasionally) Phoenix Union High School, earning a bit of money designing posters and as a school cartoonist. Already convinced by this time of his artistic future, he focused exclusively on art-related subjects. The only exception to this was the Reserve Officers Training Course (ROTC), in which he was an enthusiastic participant. In addition to satisfying a youthful fascination for military *pomp and circumstance*, his participation also carried a financial advantage. As an ROTC student, he was issued a complete dress uniform, thereby easing the strain on Bill's limited wardrobe budget.³⁰⁹

Without graduating from high school, Bill moved to Chicago in June 1939. There he gained acceptance into a year of study at the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts, a school that had already produced several well-known cartoonists. His studies that year nurtured his skills in academic drawing, a proficiency that, for all his talent, had previously been lacking. After failing to achieve his hoped-for aspiration to become a successful freelance cartoonist in Chicago, however, he returned to Phoenix in June 1940. There he managed to be hired by both of the candidates for governor as a poster artist for their respective electoral campaigns. Neither politician, in fact, knew that Mauldin was also working for his opponent. He took advantage of this lack of awareness to produce very bold caricatures of each of the rival candidates, but made the mistake of signing his work. When this double-dealing came to light, he was strongly advised by various parties to leave town.³¹⁰

After this latest setback in Bill Mauldin's budding artistic career, he turned to the second subject that had long fascinated him and, on September 12, 1940, he enlisted in the 120th Quartermaster Regiment of the Arizona National Guard (ANG). Only four days later, the ANG was *federalized*, which meant that it became subordinated to the War Department in Washington. Together with national guardsmen from Colorado, New Mexico and Oklahoma, the ANG was organized as the 45th Infantry Division, one of the poorly equipped and scarcely trained units of the

³⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 31 ff.

³¹⁰ Ibid., p. 45 ff.

National Guard that were activated in the course of the mobilization of the Army of the United States.³¹¹

To Bill's disappointment, the 120th Quartermaster Regiment was an assemblage of failed civilians and petty criminals, described by Todd DePastino as *a corrupt corner of the United States Army, a fetid backwater of a second-class national guard division*.³¹² In this environment, Mauldin's provocative and direct personality forced him to spend most of his time assigned to kitchen police, guard duty or latrine cleaning. By the beginning of October, however, he achieved prominence with the only division-level newspaper project up to that date, the *45th Division News*. The weekly was published by Lieutenant Colonel W. M. Harrison, the division's Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence. Harrison, an editor at the *Daily Oklahoman* who had been called up for active duty and who did battle on many fronts against organizational stumbling blocks and in support of his newspaper's editorial independence, allowed Mauldin to talk him into a part-time cartoonist job. On October 25, 1940, his first army cartoon appeared in the *45th Division News*.³¹³

A textbook example of chickenshit³¹⁴ provoked Mauldin's next move, one that would prove to be crucial to his future as a dogface cartoonist. In spring 1940, every member of the Army from general to private was administered an IQ test that was to be used in assisting the Army to assign each testee according to his abilities. Mauldin achieved a score of 140, the highest in the 120th Quartermasters and second-highest in the almost 13,000-man 45th Infantry. Within his immediate surroundings, this extraordinary performance was recognized by his being assigned to permanent KP duty by the first sergeant³¹⁵ of his company,³¹⁶. Following this incident, Mauldin tried

³¹¹ Ibid., p. 46 ff.

³¹² Ibid., p. 54.

³¹³ Ibid., p. 54 ff.

³¹⁴ Cf. [Chapter 5.3](#) Chickenshit.

³¹⁵ First sergeant: the highest ranking non-commissioned officer of a company, charged with executing day-to-day business.

³¹⁶ Along with latrine duty, KP – or Kitchen Police – was the classic punishment, involving all menial tasks in the military kitchen.

to convince Harrison to transfer him into his intelligence section, threatening that he would otherwise sign up with the infantry. For administrative reasons, Harrison was unable to grant his request for transfer. Mauldin had, in the meantime, become fiercely determined to leave the Quartermasters. He made good his threat and filed a request for transfer. This is how, shortly thereafter, he found himself again in a completely different world, namely in K Company, 180th Infantry Regiment, 45th Infantry Division.³¹⁷

Mauldin finally found there what had been so sorely lacking with the Quartermasters: comradeship, cohesion, a sense of military tradition, and pride in one's own profession. K Company corresponded to his expectation of what military units should be:

When K Company fell out for reveille, we found our officers dressed, shaven, and waiting for us, instead of a red-eyed first sergeant wearing bedroom slippers and tucking in his shirttail beside a can of foaming quartermaster piss.³¹⁸

Although the well-known reputation of the 120th Quartermasters had preceded his arrival and most of the skills and techniques of the infantry were a mystery to him, he rapidly integrated himself into his new surroundings. He continued to work as a part-time division cartoonist and still had the physique of a delicate 15-year-old. In spite of this, he requested no special status in his unit, something that quickly assured him the respect of his fellow soldiers in K Company.³¹⁹

In the months that followed, Mauldin led a double life as cartoonist/infantryman until the 45th Infantry Division took part in the Louisiana Maneuvers³²⁰ in August 1941 and he was assigned to the division's press staff for the duration. When the United States itself became a belligerent following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the spiral of events began to turn more rapidly for the 45th as well as for Bill Mauldin. In early 1942, he met an 18-year-old student named Norma Jean Humphries. *Nature always*

³¹⁷ DePastino, *A Life Up Front*, p. 58 ff.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 62 ff.

³²⁰ Cf. [Chapter 5.2](#) Field maneuvers.

*seems to step up the mating instinct when killing is afoot*³²¹, was his explanation for asking for Jean's hand only a few weeks later, and the two were married on February 28, 1942. Shortly thereafter, the 45th Infantry received the order to deploy to Fort Devens, Massachusetts, where it was to receive its final pre-combat training. Less than two months after their wedding, the two newlyweds were separated by war.

Contrary to widespread expectation, Mauldin's division was to spend the next 13 months in the United States. It had originally been designated for Operation TORCH, the November 8, 1942 invasion of North Africa, but was temporarily held back for later deployment. During this period, Mauldin lived through eventful times. The *45th Division News* was suspended for reasons of secrecy, since it was anticipated that the division would soon be deployed to a Theater of Operations. At the same time, a demand for army cartoons developed in the civilian newspaper market from which Mauldin could profit, if only modestly.

In early 1942, Chief of Staff Marshall ordered the Army's Information and Education Division to develop a news and entertainment magazine *by and for the enlisted men*. The attention of social scientists in the War Department, concerned over emotional stability and cohesion as a result of the explosive expansion of the citizen army, was drawn to the *45th Division News*, and they proposed to Marshall a comparable but army-wide project. This led to the launch of *Yank*, the Army's weekly magazine. Mauldin saw a chance to move up from part-time to full-time cartoonist, and he sent *Yank* a portfolio of work samples and an application. His style, however, at that time still comparatively realistic, held little appeal for those responsible for the project.³²² In total, *Yank* accepted and published only six of his cartoons, which were seen as rather childish, probably due to the artist's hasty submission. In view of the authentic quality of his later work, it should be regarded as a stroke of fortune that Mauldin ceased his attempts to succeed at *Yank*.

The 45th Infantry bounced around various army camps in the succeeding months as it completed a number of training programs specific to climate and deployment. The

³²¹ Cited in: DePastino, *A Life Up Front*, p. 73.

³²² *Ibid.*, p. 77 ff.

45th Division News was reborn³²³ during this period, and this time Mauldin succeeded in becoming a permanent staff member of the newspaper. At the Casablanca Conference in January 1943, Roosevelt and Churchill reached a final agreement that Sicily was to be the next objective of Allied forces once the North African campaign had been concluded, and the 45th Infantry Division was slotted to participate in the operation. After a brief stopover on the coast of North Africa, the 45th Division landed near Scoglitti on the south coast of Sicily on July 10, 1943 as part of Operation HUSKY. For Bill Mauldin, this day was the actual start to his career as a cartoonist, one that would last for several decades and earn him two Pulitzer Prizes.³²⁴

He accompanied the 45th Infantry Division as a member of its press staff throughout the entire Sicilian campaign. Mauldin had relatively free movement around the island and could, at his own discretion, visit the force's various units, where he gathered impressions and ideas that he later translated into cartoons. His medium, the *45th Division News*, was published on a highly improvisational basis. The press staff accompanied the division across the island and, lacking its own infrastructure, was always on the lookout for working printing presses. Whenever the staff could put together infrastructure and materials, a new issue of the newspaper was published. This is how, on the night of July 11/12, 1943, the first Allied newspaper to be printed on Axis soil – 3000 hand-printed copies of the *45th Division News* – came into being. The letters K and Y do not exist in the Italian language. When local printers were unable to typeset these letters, the staff avoided words containing them as far as possible. In the case of the letter W, likewise unknown in Italy, an inverted M was used.³²⁵

Mauldin's cartoons, which accompanied the advance of the Allied campaign, quickly became enormously popular among the GIs of the Seventh Army in Sicily. As the campaign drew to a close, he therefore decided on his own – and notably, on credit –

³²³ As it turned out, the renaissance was sustained, as the periodical did not again cease publication.

³²⁴ Mauldin remained true to his profession after the war's end, ran unsuccessfully for a U.S. congressional seat, and used his cartoons to lend significant support to the civil rights movement of the 1960s. For more information, see Todd DePastino's excellent biography of Mauldin (DePastino, *A Life Up Front*).

³²⁵ DePastino, *A Life Up Front*, p. 77 ff.

to publish a *Sicily Sketchbook* featuring a selection of his best cartoons. On September 8, 1943, the day the Allies landed on the Italian mainland, Mauldin sold out two editions totaling 17,000 copies, earning him fame among U.S. soldiers throughout the Mediterranean Theater. His work in Sicily attracted not only the admiration of the ordinary soldiers but also the attention of *Stars and Stripes*³²⁶ and Lieutenant General George S. Patton, Jr., Commander of Seventh Army.³²⁷ Colonel Egbert White, editor-in-chief of *Stars and Stripes*, an enthusiastic admirer of Mauldin's work, engaged him as a collaborator for the daily newspaper, which had a circulation across several theaters of operations. Patton's interest, on the other hand, was based much less on his esteem, and it marked the beginning of a remarkable period of hostility at the end of which the *three-star general* was bested by the *three-stripe sergeant*.³²⁸

After Allied forces, with Fifth Army as its American contingent, landed on Italy's Amalfi coast, Bill Mauldin continued his work for the *45th Division News*, using Sicily as a model. At the beginning of December, however, he was given his release in order to work thenceforth for *Stars and Stripes*, appearing under the banner *Up Front ... with Mauldin*³²⁹. He joined the *Stars and Stripes* staff permanently in February 1944. This change meant that Mauldin's drawings were published throughout Europe. His celebrity among the GIs, up to that point largely of a regional nature,

³²⁶ Cf. [Chapter 8.4](#) Journalistic connection: *Stars and Stripes*.

³²⁷ DePastino, *A Life Up Front*, p. 106 ff.

³²⁸ Cf. The opening of [Chapter 9](#) *Up Front ... with Mauldin*.

³²⁹ The title of his *Stars and Stripes* column later underwent modification. In a letter to the editor, a soldier at the front had doubted that Mauldin would ever see the front lines and had recommended that he not lead readers to believe this. *Stars and Stripes* could truthfully respond that, in the previous week, Mauldin had been wounded while visiting the letter writer's own front-line regiment and had, as a consequence, received the Purple Heart, the U.S. military's medal for soldiers wounded or killed in action. Mauldin's honor was thus saved. In addition, the controversy came to the attention of two of the most influential American war correspondents, Will Lang of Time Life and Ernie Pyle of Scripps Howard. Both subsequently wrote columns in praise of Mauldin that served to spread his fame in the United States as well. Mauldin himself felt, however, that the soldier at the front had made a good point, and he changed the column's title to *Up Front ... by Mauldin*. (Cf. DePastino, *A Life Up Front*, p. 124 ff.)

spread to all American troops on and beyond the European continent. In March 1944, one of his supporters, Fifth Army Commanding General Mark W. Clark, put a personal jeep at Mauldin's disposal in order to facilitate his search for new inspiration. After converting the vehicle into a mobile studio with electric lights and a built-in drawing board, Bill Mauldin accompanied the American armies throughout all of Italy and France and finally into Germany ... along the way, he made the acquaintance of Willie and Joe.³³⁰

Cartooning

I've seen too much of the Army to be funny about first sergeants and corporals, and I've seen too much of the war to be cute and fill it with funny characters.

Bill Mauldin, *Up Front*³³¹

He was one of us. He supported the enlisted man. He was our champion, Mauldin was.

You would have to be part of a combat infantry unit to appreciate what moments of relief Bill gave us. You had to be reading a soaking wet *Stars and Stripes* in a water-filled foxhole and then see one of his cartoons.

WWII combat infantry veterans³³²

... the cartoons of Bill Mauldin [are] among the most accurate impressions of the war ...

Joseph W. Bishop, Jr.³³³

One must ask, however, what makes Mauldin's cartoons at all recommendable as specific source materials on the American combat infantry in World War II. *Up Front ... by Mauldin* was not the only graphic arts series found in American Army publications. *Yank*, for example, had two regular features, *G.I. Joe* by Dave Breger

³³⁰ David Michaelis, He Drew Great Mud, in: The New York Times (March 2, 2008), <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/02/books/review/Michaelis-t.html? r=1> (most recent access: April 19, 2010).

³³¹ Mauldin, *Up Front*, p. 40 ff.

³³² Cited in: DePastino, *A Life Up Front*, p. 3.

³³³ Bishop, *Army Speech*, p. 242.

and *Sad Sack*³³⁴ by George Baker, both of which gained wide recognition. Neither, however, came even close to the popularity and reception of the Bill Mauldin cartoons. What distinguishes his graphic work from that of his journalistic colleagues? What special quality manifests itself in Mauldin's cartoons that is not apparent in the drawings of rival artists?

From a technical, art-historical perspective, one apparent difference at least between the oeuvres of Baker and Mauldin is that Baker's works represent classic comic strips, while *Up Front ... by Mauldin* fits the classic definition of a cartoon series. The *Sad Sack* series consists of sequential works that develop their action and message over several individual frames using methods largely borrowed from cinematography. It employs photographic techniques such as *establishing shots* that are well known from film, categories for camera settings such as total, mid shot, American and close up, as well as techniques like the 'shot reverse shot' method, in order to infuse its storytelling with dramatic composition and dynamism. This kinship between cinematography and comic strips has its most obvious expression in the so-called storyboards, de facto comic strips that serve as graphic notations to break down the sequence, settings and action of a scene, often used by the director to develop action-oriented scenes.

In contrast to these techniques, cartoons like *Up Front* or *G.I. Joe* are commonly displayed in a single frame. As a master of his craft, Mauldin repeatedly performs the artistry of conveying the essence of his message by reducing graphic and/or verbal expression to its barest minimum. The following example, included in the present volume as an introduction to Mauldin's work, shows how this compression ideally functions as a stylistic device. While the cartoon falls thematically outside our intended focus on the infantry, it nonetheless depicts U.S. Army cavalry forces, an object of fundamental change at the time when the cartoon was drawn.

³³⁴ "Sad sack. (A polite contraction of 'sad sack of shit,' sometimes contracted still further to 'sack.')

An inept, luckless or stupid person. (Sgt. George Baker did not invent the term – he simply appropriated an established piece of slang as a name for his forlorn little private.)" (Bishop, Army Speech, p. 251)



Fig. 2 Cavalry sergeant shooting his jeep (1944). Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1944)
Courtesy of the Bill Mauldin Estate LLC.

Mauldin equated a cartoon requiring no subtitling to a home run in a baseball game.³³⁵ Without intending to offer a full exploration of the content's deeper meaning, the following can be said:

At the start of the American involvement in the Second World War, U.S. Cavalry forces found themselves in the midst of a profound shift with respect to their outward appearance and importance within the Armed Forces. On the one hand, their forces were gradually becoming mechanized, and it was increasingly necessary to bid farewell to the horses that had given them their identity up to that time. On the other hand, the beginning of the war represented the final, lowest point in a downward

³³⁵ DePastino, *A Life Up Front*, p. 316.

spiral in the importance of the U.S. Cavalry. After the end of the Civil War, the highly mobile mounted forces of the border regions embodied United States military power. In the era of total industrialized warfare emanating from the thinking of the German General Staff, horse-mounted forces had become obsolete, while motorized-mechanized cavalry had been essentially reduced to a reconnaissance role that, in most cases, could be better performed from the air. For the knowledgeable observer, any commentary to the present illustration is superfluous. The jeep lying immobile with a broken axle and the well-fed first sergeant unable to cope with putting his vehicle out of its misery speak volumes about the precarious situation of the U.S. Cavalry in World War II and about the information-transfer potential of graphic methods.

In terms of their content, three fundamental features can be established that differentiate the three series under discussion: the perspective and position of their protagonists, the type of comedy on which each respective series is based, and lastly, their claim to having a genuine authenticity. *Sad Sack* and *G.I. Joe* might be described as draftee cartoons. Their protagonists are *in the army but not of it*³³⁶, as were their spiritual fathers, Baker and Breger. The driving force of their action and the source of their humor lie in the mutual tension between naive draftees and the realities and traditions of army life. In both cases, youthfully portrayed, largely incompetent and stubborn privates struggle against the Army's strictly regulated and intellectually immovable environment. The classic personification of the obstacles encountered by *G.I. Joe* and *Sad Sack* is the prototypical drill sergeant. Both series are based on exaggerated stereotypes, civilian preconceptions and slapstick methods. One can look in vain for actual authenticity or indications of past (if subjectively perceived) reality.

Mauldin's drawings, in contrast, represent the perspective of an experienced insider. His protagonists are old hands in the soldiering business. His cartoons assume a familiarity with the operating principles, rules and particularities of the sociocultural microcosm that is the Army of the United States. Mauldin's type of comedy (if it is even appropriate to classify his works in that genre) derives from the absurdities,

³³⁶ Ibid., p. 78.

tensions and conflicts within a world taken for granted.³³⁷ Yet it has an aftertaste. Sometimes tragic, mostly absurd, often arousing compassion, and over and over, simply deadly. Mauldin's mission was to give voice to the dogfaces. He saw himself as their advocate and representative, there to broach the issue of the miserable conditions of their existence. The actions on the surface of his cartoons may induce a smile. Their deeper truth rarely does.³³⁸

The narrative intensity of Mauldin's cartoons is stylistically exaggerated through his application of chiaroscuro technique. Originating in the baroque period, this style achieves form and texture primarily through rough strokes that produce contrasts between light and dark. It furthers economical working methods and achieves a visual effect that is realistic, hard in appearance and high in contrast. In this sense, and with very few exceptions, the connecting element of his drawings lies in his deep rootedness in the reality of the war at *ground level*. In their artistic presentation and in their subjects, they are authentic above all else. As David Michaelis, the biographer of Charles Schulz, described them:

These were not the square-jawed soldiers of enlistment posters. Pale, densely bearded, forested by their own rifles and packs, their huge dirt-caked boots and filthy uniforms delineated in heavily shaded brush strokes, Willie and Joe looked not just disheveled but mummified by mud. One G.I., a machine-gunner named Charles Schulz who went on to do some cartooning of his own, spoke for many when he later had Snoopy remark, "He drew great mud."

³³⁷ Ibid., p. 67.

³³⁸ Admittedly, this volume deals exclusively with Mauldin's war cartoons in the narrow sense, meaning those that appeared starting with his arrival in Sicily on July 8, 1943. Even his earlier drawings were distinguishable in their realism from comparable cartoons. They had, however, a lightness and playfulness, a humor based on simple principles that was gradually lost with the war cartoons. The cartoons from his time with the 120th Quartermasters were based on a continuous narrative and reflected the multiple failings of that unit. With his transfer to the 180th Infantry Regiment, Mauldin shifted to individual drawings without continuous action, touching on issues like infantry customs and traditions or day-to-day political events. It is little surprising that Mauldin's entry into the *shooting war* had serious repercussions on his perceptions. Both stylistically and with respect to his subjects, this new awareness led to a significant development of his work, from which this study seeks to benefit. (Cf. DePastino, *A Life Up Front*, p. 63 ff.)

Real combat soldiers loved Mauldin. His cartoons were well drawn and funny, and, as the famed correspondent Ernie Pyle reported to the civilian press, “They are also terribly grim and real.” Mauldin won admiration because he worked hard to get every detail right; in Willie and Joe he mirrored the American combat soldier’s deep respect for professionalism. Mauldin’s foot-slogging pair did not Sergeant York³³⁹ the enemy’s machine gun nests, nor did they sit on Sad Sack haunches, looking helpless and beaten. They dug in and hung on. They put up with war. They hated it, but they fought and killed when they had to, as professionals do.³⁴⁰

Mauldin’s realism did not just meet with approval, however. It ran counter to the clean-cut all-American boy image of the GI abroad that was portrayed in most American media. In a letter to the editor of the *Daily Oklahoman*³⁴¹, a woman objected: *Our boys don’t look like the way you draw them. They’re not bearded and horrible looking. They’re clean fine Americans.*³⁴² Another reader saw in Mauldin’s

³³⁹ Sergeant Alvin C. York was the American hero of World War I. As a member of a pacifist church, he had originally requested exemption from military service as a conscientious objector. His objections were denied, however, and his superiors eventually convinced him that the United States was carrying out a holy campaign in France. Transformed into a model soldier from that point onward, York found himself in October 1918 on patrol with his fellow soldiers behind the German lines, where they came under heavy fire. With most of his patrol dead or wounded, York went on the offensive completely on his own. In the space of a few hours, he killed two dozen German soldiers, captured four officers and 128 enlisted men, and silenced 35 German machine-gun nests. York was awarded the American Medal of Honor and the French Croix de Guerre for his one-man offensive. (David W. Lee, Alvin Cullum York, in: Peter Karsten [Ed.], *Encyclopedia of War and American Society* [New York 2005], p. 959.)

³⁴⁰ Michaelis, *He Drew Great Mud*.

³⁴¹ Ernie Pyle became aware of Mauldin’s cartoons while in Italy. In his column of January 15, 1944, *Personalities and Asides*, he included the comment that “Sgt. Bill Mauldin appears to us over there as the finest cartoonist the war had produced. And that’s not merely because his cartoons are funny, but because they are so terribly grim and real ... They are about the men in the line – the tiny percentage of our vast Army who are actually up there doing the dying. His cartoons are about the war.” (Ernie Pyle, *Brave Men* [London 2001], p. 137 ff.) After this acclaim from America’s best-loved correspondent, demand in the U.S. for Mauldin’s cartoons began to grow. By the end of the war in Europe, they were appearing in over 200 publications. (Cf. DePastino, *A Life Up Front*, p. 126 ff.)

³⁴² Cited in: DePastino, *A Life Up Front*, p. 171.

dogfaces ... *prehistoric monsters who had just come out of a cave to see what it was all about.*³⁴³ His cartoons earned an extremely bad reputation among some of the *top brass*³⁴⁴, since they addressed conditions that distorted the clinically clean official image of the Army of the United States. Corruption, criminal behavior, incompetence, alcoholism, injustice, post-traumatic stress syndrome³⁴⁵ ... *you name it.* Despite all this, they appeared with regularity because of individuals within the elites of the Army of the United States who recognized their quality and psycho-hygienic effect and were ready to protect them against opponents. We have already discussed elsewhere Marshall's willingness to cultivate a relatively open relationship with the media. Eisenhower, who was equipped with an instinctive talent for public relations, developed extraordinarily good connections to both the civilian and military press in his command.³⁴⁶ ... *almost without exception,* declared the Supreme Allied Commander 1944 in a letter to his brother Milton, *the 500 newspaper and radio men accredited [to my command] are my friends.*³⁴⁷ In his immediate command, Ike was of the opinion that the common soldiers in his forces did not receive the attention they deserved. In this regard, there were several notable personal intercessions by Eisenhower to shield *Stars and Stripes* from interference by the Army hierarchy.³⁴⁸ We will now take a look at this soldier-run daily newspaper of the American army.

8.4 Journalistic connectionrelay: *Stars and Stripes*

[The Stars and Stripes] not only carries baseball box scores but has a daily photo of some glamour queen, usually a Hollywood star ... presumably for the purpose of providing 'pin ups' to enliven the bare walls of the barracks ... he [the American Soldier] lacks help in finding the spiritual and moral significance of the titanic struggle in which he is engaged.

³⁴³ Ibid., p. 171.

³⁴⁴ To refresh the reader's memory: high-ranking officers and generals.

³⁴⁵ Of course, this term only entered the vocabulary at a much later time. If the condition was not simply dismissed as cowardice, it was referred to as *shell shock* or *combat exhaustion*.

³⁴⁶ Roeder, Censored War, p. 99.

³⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 12.

³⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 99.

Theologian Reinhold Niebuhr in *The Nation*, August 21, 1942³⁴⁹

Dear Adolf, we know your stooges will get this paper into your hands at an early date. Suggest you read at once:

“One-man Army on Bataan” ... Page 3

“Baseball Season Opens” ... Page 6

“Pearson and Allen” ... Page 2

Coming up in the next issue will be a story by Cecil Brown on “Heroes in Far East War”. You won’t get any more comfort out of it than you get from the story of United States Production from Time Magazine on Page 1 of this issue.

The Staff

P.S. – Joe Palooka, Superman and Popeye are coming to our comic page soon.

Stars and Stripes, inaugural issue, April 18, 1942

Although during the American Civil War no fewer than four newspapers circulated under the name *The Stars and Stripes*, the origins of Mauldin’s future employer date to World War I. In spring 1918, Second Lieutenant Guy T. Viskniskki convinced the Commander of the American Expeditionary Force, General John J. Pershing, that a newspaper for AEF soldiers would have a positive impact on their morale. Pershing authorized the project and, between February 8, 1918 and July 13, 1919, 71 weekly editions of the original *Stars and Stripes* appeared. As a publication for the lower ranks, it was mainly staffed by enlisted soldiers. In addition to news reports and opinion pieces, it also featured sports results, letters to the editor, cartoons and poetry. Pershing had ordered that the editorial staff be permitted to work without interference from senior officers, thus establishing an important precedent for its successor publication.³⁵⁰

On April 18, 1942, the first issue of the resuscitated *Stars and Stripes* was published in London, and it ran for a short while as a weekly.³⁵¹ The officer in charge, (Colonel)

³⁴⁹ Cited in: Reynolds, Rich Relations, p. 172.

³⁵⁰ Bernard Hagerty, *The Stars and Stripes*, in: Peter Karsten (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of War and American Society* (New York 2005), p. 806.

³⁵¹ Reynolds, Rich Relations, p. 165.

Egbert White, who had been a staff member as a private in World War I, guided it in the traditions of its forerunner. Like Harrison, Mauldin's editor at the *45th Division News*, White defended the journalistic independence of *Stars and Stripes* by all available means, and he tolerated no meddling. The editors and staff of the newspaper took maximum advantage of this freedom. They published a mélange of news, jokes, interviews, commentary and sports reports. There was a section for letters to the editor (titled *The B-Bag – Blow it out here* in later continental editions) that sometimes reflected bitter criticism by ordinary soldiers. The daily highlight for the readership was of course the *cheesecake photo*, the scantily clad pinup girl.³⁵² When the armies of the West began offensive operations in fall 1942, *Stars and Stripes* decentralized its organization. Wherever American troops came ashore, teams of *Stars and Stripes* journalists followed closely behind, ready to put out local editions. In Sicily, staff artist Stanley Metzloff, an art and art history professor from New York, encountered Mauldin's work in the *45th Division News*. Sure that he was seeing the most important illustrations of the war, Metzloff urged the responsible authorities of *Stars and Stripes* to hire Mauldin.³⁵³

Without the reach of *Stars and Stripes* and its consequent benefit to Mauldin, his cartoons would not have achieved the cultural feedback effect that resulted in the consolidation of the dogface soldiers as a distinctive group. The professional attitudes and liberal approach of those responsible for *Stars and Stripes* enabled him to enjoy all necessary support and substantial independence in his work. His practice, possibly calculated, of cultivating key friendships with high-ranking officers and correspondents kept this freedom from ever being challenged right up to the end of the war. Only under these conditions, combined with his extraordinary powers of observation and a talent to adapt to any surroundings in his search for creative input, could Mauldin's war cartoons emerge,³⁵⁴ a body of work whose importance to the history of the dogfaces is unmatched.

³⁵² Hagerty, *Stars and Stripes*, p. 806.

³⁵³ DePastino, *A Life Up Front*, p. 106 ff.

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 171 ff.

8.5 Origin

Our troops were living in almost inconceivable misery. The fertile black valleys were knee-deep in mud. Thousands of men had not been dry for weeks. Other thousands lay at night in the high mountains with the temperature below freezing and the thin snow sifting over them. They dug into the stones and slept in little chasms and behind rocks and in half caves ... How they survived the dreadful winter at all was beyond us who had the opportunity of drier beds in the warmer valleys.

Ernie Pyle, *Mountain Fighting*³⁵⁵

The mountains in Italy are horrible; to attack always against heights held by well-entrenched and well-trained enemy troops is surely the worst sort of war. Nothing can help the infantry much in the mountains: Germans dug into the stone sides of the cliffs can survive the heaviest shelling. Tanks cannot operate.

Martha Gellhorn, *Visit Italy!*³⁵⁶

With the exception of the Pacific, which does not concern us in this volume, the Army of the United States was active in three geographical areas between 1942 and 1945: the North African, Mediterranean and European Theaters of Operations. What role was played by the prevailing conditions specific to these operational areas in determining the origin of the dogface soldiers? Why – as has already been mentioned – did this history play out exclusively in the Mediterranean and European Theaters of Operations?

North African Theater of Operations

In this regard, the American campaign in North Africa that started with Operation TORCH must be considered in two successive phases. The first of these began with the simultaneous amphibious assaults in Casablanca, Oran and Algiers on November 8, 1942 and concluded on February 14, 1943. The landings carried out under TORCH in Morocco and Algeria met with only token resistance (if any at all) by Vichy France's coastal garrisons. After a brief period involving a few skirmishes, the Allies reached a truce with the mostly colonial troops of Vichy.³⁵⁷ From that point to

³⁵⁵ Pyle, *Brave Men*, p. 151 ff.

³⁵⁶ Martha Gellhorn, *The Face of War* (London 1993), p. 115.

³⁵⁷ Mansoor, *G.I. Offensive*, p. 85.

the end of the first phase of our observations, U.S. infantry divisions performed training and occupation functions that made this period irrelevant with respect to dogface soldiers. On February 14, 1943, Germany's attack on U.S. forces in Tunisia's Kasserine Pass marked the second phase of active operations in North Africa, a period that would last until the surrender of the German Africa Korps on May 9, 1943.

With reference to the subject of this study, too few conditions were present in the three months of active operations in North Africa to develop a dogface consciousness in the American infantry. Topographical features prevented German forces from mounting a prolonged resistance except in a few locations. While American infantrymen were of course involved in heavy combat in several areas, this experience was not widespread enough to bring about the response we are looking for in the infantry's self-perception, due to its short duration and the limited number of participating troops. Last and certainly not least, there was not yet a Bill Mauldin to catalyze this reaction.

Mediterranean Theater of Operations

The conditions necessary for the emergence of the dogface soldiers as a distinctive group were almost sufficient in Sicily and fully present in Italy. In these locations, the infantry of the Army of the United States struggled against all the topographical, climatic, psychological, physical and operational adversities that we have recounted earlier in the present chapter. Moreover, Bill Mauldin, who had not seen combat in North Africa, was now on the ground in this theater of operations to play his part in the genesis of the dogfaces.

Following the landings on July 8, 1943, the German Wehrmacht discovered the perfect conditions in the mountains and hills of Sicily to make the Allied armies pay dearly for every foot of territory they captured. Trucks, the key to American mobility in World War II, were of very limited utility in numerous parts of Sicily, and mules often replaced them as a means of transport. The deployment of tanks, the basic element of mobile firepower, was similarly restricted by the terrain. Over a large expanse of Sicilian territory, it fell to the infantry to slog, step by step, across the island in a seemingly endless chain of attacks against ideal defensive positions. Sicily's midsummer heat, malaria and other febrile diseases took an additional toll. Nevertheless, after suffering heavy casualties in a series of battles and maneuvers,

the German occupation troops found themselves backed into the northeast corner of the island, and they withdrew across the Straits of Messina to the mainland of Italy. When American troops entered Messina on August 17, fighting ended in Sicily after 38 days.³⁵⁸ Because of the campaign's relatively short duration, Sicily represents only the pre-labor stage in the gestation of the dogfaces. Their birth occurred following September 9 in Italy.

The landings at Salerno marked the return of Allied forces to the European mainland after an absence of more than three years and the beginning of the campaign to drive the German Wehrmacht northward. The Apennine Mountains, running from north to south along the middle of the peninsula, dictated that the multinational invasion forces could only advance by means of two coastal corridors. Such routes made flanking maneuvers, the centerpiece and basic requirement for mobile operations, extremely difficult if not impossible. Frontal operations were transformed into almost suicidal undertakings by the hilly landscapes and numerous rivers. Operating on the defensive, the German Wehrmacht found ideal conditions, as they had in Sicily, and their experienced forces skillfully exploited the situation. Shortly after the landings along the Amalfi coast, first fall and then winter set in, leaving the American infantry to contend with rain, wind, mud, cold and snow in addition to the Enemy. In *Slightly Out of Focus*, Robert Capa describes the role the harsh conditions played in the Italian campaign:

Between Naples and Rome Mr. Winston Churchill's "soft underbelly of Europe" was pregnant with hard mountains and well-placed machine guns. The valleys between the mountains were soon filled with hospitals and cemeteries. The rains started. The mud got deeper and deeper. Our shoes, designed for walking in garrison towns, thirstily drank in the water, and we slid two steps backward for each step forward. Our light shirts and trousers gave no protection against the wind and the rain. Our Army, the best equipped in the world, was stuck in those mountains, and it seemed we were not moving at all ... Here Bill Mauldin gave birth to his Willie and Joe, those two survivors of the fighting dogfaces of Italy ... I dragged myself from mountain to mountain, from foxhole to foxhole, taking pictures of mud, misery and death.³⁵⁹

³⁵⁸ Cf. Bradley, *Soldier's Story*, Chapters 9 and 10.

³⁵⁹ Robert Capa, *Slightly Out of Focus* (New York 2001), p. 111.

In addition to topographical considerations, it is important to highlight the time factor in connection with the genesis of the dogfaces in Italy. There were various flashpoints in North Africa where German forces concentrated their resistance. The key element in Sicily was the topography and its consequences for Allied operations. Still, although the campaign was waged under difficult conditions in the midsummer heat, it was over in a relatively short time. On the Italian peninsula, the dogfaces had to endure the same ordeals for many months during the coldest part of the year, and these travails were decisive for their self-perception.

Throughout the spring of 1944, the focus of Allied awareness gradually shifted to northwestern Europe. Troop strength in Italy was successively reduced and forces were redeployed to Great Britain, having been designated for the campaign that would be launched in France to decide the war's outcome. The landing operations of OVERLORD in Normandy on June 6 and DRAGOON on the Riviera on August 15 resulted in the relocation of most dogfaces to the European Theater of Operations, where their story continued.

We have now established why the emergence of the dogfaces was a phenomenon of the Mediterranean Theater of Operations. Here, over an extended period, all the above mentioned conditions were present for these soldiers to crystallize as a distinct group. Bill Mauldin's cartoons should be highlighted as probably the most important individual factor in this process. His *Up Front* contributions integrated and consolidated the dogface ideology while at the same time representing a cultural platform for communication among the individual members of this group.

9 Up Front ... with Mauldin

Some say the American soldier is the same clean-cut young man who left his home; others say morale is sky-high at the front because everybody's face is shining for the great cause.

They are wrong. The combat man isn't the same clean cut lad because you don't fight a kraut by Marquis of Queensberry rules. You shoot him in the back, you blow him apart with mines, you kill him or maim him the quickest and most effective way you can with the least danger to yourself. He does the same to you. He tricks you and cheats you, and if you don't beat him at his own game you don't live to appreciate your own nobleness.

I haven't tried to describe the activities of the infantry and its weapons because everybody has learned how a BAR man covers a light machine gunner. I don't describe dead guys buried in bloody bed sacks because I can't imagine anyone who has not seen it so often that his mind has become adjusted to it. I've simply described some of the feelings which the dogfaces have about different things, and to describe these things I have drawn cartoons about Willie and Joe.

Bill Mauldin³⁶⁰

Up Front ... by Mauldin represents a unique source of information on the realities of war for the dogfaces. While there exists a wide range of contemporary and retrospective treatments of World War II's political, diplomatic, strategic, operational and tactical aspects, good sources and literature dealing with the *ground-level* reality of the conflict are much harder to find. A number of memoirs and accounts by ordinary soldiers bear impressive witness to life and death in the infantry. Standing out among these are Paul Fussell's *Doing Battle*, *The Boys' Crusade* and *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War*, as well as *Before Their Time* by Robert Kotlowitz. For all their indisputable value, recollections of this type suffer from two deficiencies from the perspective of the present study. Firstly, they are – simply – remembrances. They necessarily describe and assess the subject of their interests by viewing it long afterward through the lens of one life – in the case of each example cited here, a life lasting for decades. The fundamental messages are thus not open to question although, to a certain degree, a retrospective interpretation cannot be excluded. Their second, somewhat limiting disadvantage consists of the

³⁶⁰ Mauldin, *Up Front*, pp. 14 ff., 41 ff.

fact that their description of the big picture is based on their worm's-eye view from that period. Such a perspective obviously reflects that which remains in their memory after several decades. It neglects details and minor occurrences that may then have been, but now no longer are, significant.

The great value of Mauldin's cartoons may be found precisely here. They are based on the information of the day. They are also reflective, if over a considerably shorter timeframe. They focus on those matters that concerned Mauldin and the dogfaces in their own place and time, which means Sicily, Italy and northwestern Europe between 1943 and 1945. They in no way depict the reflections of an old soldier who recounts with omniscience his position and role in the greatest conflict in human history. Paradoxically, their value as source material lies in their shadowy nature, in their representation of an extremely restricted field of vision. The historian is usually able, willing and, as a rule, required to embed factual description within the context of a broader picture. The main evidentiary value of Mauldin's cartoons consists firstly in the incredibly high-resolution picture they (literally) draw at a micro level, but also in how they reveal at a macro level those phenomena that are generally subsumed under the 'fog of war' label. This term, coined by Clausewitz like so many standard terms in the history of warfare³⁶¹, appears in various forms at all levels of analysis.³⁶² It refers to the fact that participants in military operations are never in possession of all the relevant information they need for an adequate assessment of their own situation or that of the Enemy. While the upper echelons of the military hierarchy strive fiercely to keep this area of uncertainty as small as possible, such efforts diminish proportionally as one descends the ranks. The infantry's lived experience in World War II was largely limited to whatever individual soldiers could see or hear as well as what others told them. Large-scale operations that could only be appreciated from a bird's-eye perspective were often revealed only to a narrow circle, frequently involving a few dozen individuals at the most. In World War I, attack commands were commonly signaled simultaneously to tens or even hundreds of thousands of soldiers deployed across many miles of trench systems. Many of the large and important

³⁶¹ Carl von Clausewitz, On War. Book I, Chapter 3: Military Genius, <http://gutenberg.spiegel.de/buch/vom-kriege-4072/3> (most recent access: March 7, 2012).

³⁶² In descending order: grand strategy (political), strategy (military), operational and tactical levels, and finally the individual's lived experience discussed here.

World War II battlefields were experienced at the individual level as simply depopulated and deserted.³⁶³

In the following pictorial section, this study seeks to explore the potential of the Mauldin cartoons as visual-historical source material by examining a selection of 13 prime examples of these drawings. Arranged in chronological order according to their date of publication, they are intended to cover a range of subjects that were of importance to their protagonists, and in this way they offer insight into the different aspects of the reality of war for the U.S. infantry in the European theater. To derive a claim of comprehensiveness from this limited set would be absurd in view of the scale of Mauldin's wartime oeuvre, and the author has no such intention. The more than 600 Mauldin pieces from North Africa, Sicily, Italy and France very rarely deal with trivialities, normally offering the reader a virtually limitless wealth of thematic approaches.

Willie and Joe, his iconic and prototypical dogface protagonists, are the focus of many but by no means all of Mauldin's cartoons. It is possible, in many of these, to discern Willie or Joe as a featured dogface even where Mauldin does not confirm or disconfirm this in the caption. A commonality among all his dogfaces, however, are the various characteristics of their outward appearance. The hands of Mauldin's dogfaces, when not forcibly engaged in some unavoidable task, are thrust deep in their pants pockets. Even if it may not appear significant to the inexperienced reader, in military organizations this behavior represents an infringement of regulations that, by all appearances, ranks only slightly below desertion.³⁶⁴ Two other visual features of his figures that cannot be considered less outrageous are the unshaven faces that fall far short of military standards and a body posture that David Michaelis of the *New York Times* memorably dubbed *melted candle features*.³⁶⁵

General George S. Patton, the dominant American champion and practitioner of maneuver warfare, saw Willie and Joe's outward characteristics and inward

³⁶³ Cf. Keegan, *Face of Battle*, p. 322 ff.

³⁶⁴ The author of this appraisal can confirm from his own personal experience that in the Austrian armed forces of the 21st Century, little has changed in this regard.

³⁶⁵ Michaelis, *He Drew Great Mud*.

disposition as a clear subversion of the war effort and resolved to put his personal authority on the line in order to ban the rebellious cartoonist from further publication. The campaign that followed ended with Patton's only strategic defeat of the Second World War. Eisenhower, whose most distinctive feature – in contrast to Patton – was a pragmatism uncolored by ideology or hubris, recognized Mauldin's status within the military machine and was not prepared to lose him as an asset. He therefore adopted a position in support of the little sergeant of the Arizona National Guard and blocked his most talented field commander from banning Mauldin's cartoons.

There are two accounts of the only personal encounter between the two antagonists: one by Mauldin himself and the other from Captain Harry C. Butcher, a close confidant of Eisenhower.³⁶⁶ In a subsequent letter to the editor-in-chief of *Stars and Stripes*, Eisenhower assured the editor that the newspaper could count on his support, should anyone question its journalistic integrity. In his journal entry for April 11, 1945, entitled *Three Stripes Lick Three Stars*³⁶⁷, Butcher cites another of Eisenhower's letters, this one to his Deputy Theater Commander, General Ben Lear, in which Ike reiterates his position:

A great deal of pressure has been brought on me in the past to abolish such things as Mauldin's cartoons, the "B" Bag, etc. You will make sure that the responsible officer [Patton] knows he is not to interfere in matters of this kind. If he believes that any specific violation of good sense or good judgement has occurred, he may bring it to my personal attention.³⁶⁸

Eisenhower's behavior in this particular matter has to be seen in light of his overall policy of promoting as much candor as possible in his relations with the press. This practice was grounded in Eisenhower's personal conviction that military success in a

³⁶⁶ Cf. Bill Mauldin, *The Brass Ring. A Sort of a Memoir* (New York 1971), p. 253 ff.; Butcher, *Three Years*, pp. 773 ff., 793 ff.

³⁶⁷ The caption refers to the respective military ranks of the two adversaries: Patton's insignia as a lieutenant general was three silvery metal stars, indicating his power, while Mauldin's insignia, three stripes sewn on his sleeve, signalled his much lower rank.

³⁶⁸ Cited in: Butcher, *Three Years*, p. 801.

wartime democracy can only be achieved with the greatest possible support from an informed public.³⁶⁹

Let us devote particular attention now to the 13 representative cartoons by Bill Mauldin, the disrespectful sergeant who stirred Patton's concerns over a crisis in military morale...

9.1 Sicily: Bloody Ridge (October 17, 1943)

However, there were some things which the ancient [Norman] knights [who conquered Sicily between 900 and 970 AD] and their ill-smelling companions would have understood and have laughed at – that was our improvised mule cavalry. In order to move over the terrific country through which we had to fight, we had to improvise mounted units. These men rode whatever they could find – mules, burros, and occasionally bullocks. The saddles were either of local construction, captured Italian equipment, or simply mattresses ... we could not have won the war without it.



Fig. 3 Bloody Ridge (1943)
Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1943). Courtesy of the Bill Mauldin Estate LLC.

We see a mountain slope ending in a sheer wall. The ground is rocky and without vegetation. A little to the left of the picture's center, a large exposed rock divides the scene. In the foreground to the left of the rock stands a soldier, while a second soldier in the background can be seen with a mule. In the right half of the picture,

³⁶⁹ Roeder, Censored War, p. 99.

three soldiers and two mules are visible. We are apparently dealing with an improvised train of pack mules, a not uncommon sight in the Mediterranean region, as it carries supplies into the mountains. We reflect on the details of the image.



Fig. 4 Detail 1 from Bloody Ridge (1943)
Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1943). Courtesy of the Bill Mauldin Estate LLC.

The soldier in the left foreground takes shelter under the center rock. Like the other GIs in the image, he wears a helmet and the Army's summer field uniform of wool shirt and pants. A full ammo belt encircles his waist. His weapon is different from those of his comrades-in-arms: while they (as far as we can tell from the foreground) carry the standard U.S. infantry firearm, the semi-automatic M1 Garand rifle, he is holding – in the ready position – an M1903 Springfield rifle, recognizable from its manual loading mechanism near his right hand. Mounted at the mouth of the barrel is an M9A1 rifle grenade. We see another soldier in the background, leading a mule loaded with three large baskets up the slope.

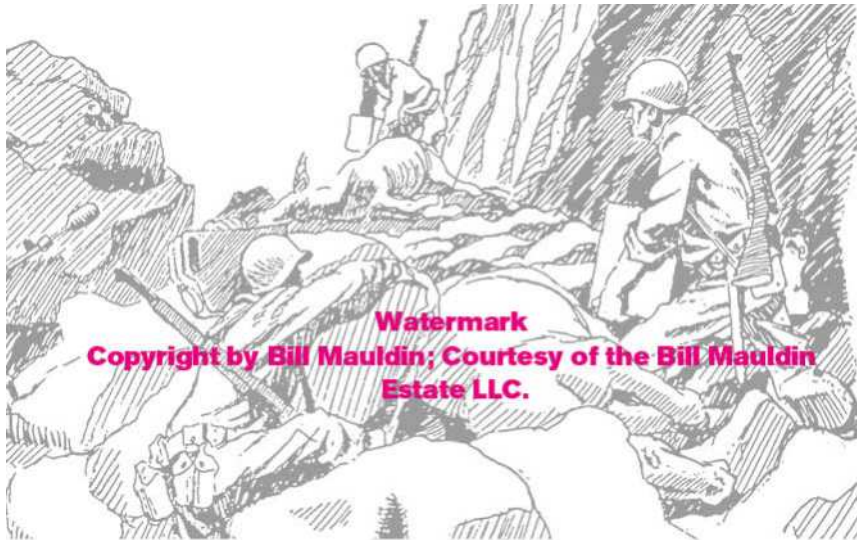


Fig. 5 Detail 2 from *Bloody Ridge* (1943). Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1943)
Courtesy of the Bill Mauldin Estate LLC.

In the right foreground, we see two GIs. They carry their M1 rifles slung over their shoulders. Each of them has two canteens attached to his ammo belt, which is also equipped with cartridges in the manner just mentioned. The GI at the left climbs up a rock onto a flat and narrow space. A jerry can³⁷⁰ is propped on his shoulder while he clings to the rock with his right hand. The GI at the right of the image has his hands on a case. He looks as if he is about to lift it off the (apparently dead) mule that is

³⁷⁰ Germans were referred to by British and American soldiers as Jerry or Jerries, among other sobriquets (Cf. Pyle, *Brave Men*, p. 256.). The *five-gallon blitz can*, as it was officially known by the Motor Transport Division of the Quartermaster Corps, was a modified American copy of a German metal container design that had fallen into British hands in 1940 as war booty. The *blitz* in the official designation is an allusion to the 'Blitzkrieg' (lightning war), a strategy developed by the German Wehrmacht in 1939/40. Because its design was greatly superior to the original American model, the container was simply copied in order to save development time and costs. While the original German version consisted of two hand-soldered pieces, the U.S. model was designed in three parts so that it could be mass-produced on conveyor-belt systems. Further modifications included an American-designed neck to which filler hoses for various vehicle types could be connected and an automatic venting device to allow the container to be emptied as rapidly as possible. Although the Quartermaster Corps' Fuels and Lubricants Division carried out several other minor modifications to the jerry can over the course of the war, the basic 1940 design remained. The GI-provided nickname recalled its originator. (Erna Risch, *United States Army in World War II. The Technical Services. The Quartermaster Corps: Organization, Supply, and Services. Volume I* [Washington, D.C. 1995], p. 145 ff.)

lying on the ground between the two soldiers. This scene repeats in the right background, where a third GI is clearly removing another case from a second dead mule. From his weapon, it is clear that the soldier belongs to one of the (12-man) rifle squads that deliver supplies into the mountains. The rifleman's Springfield, held at the ready, indicates to us that he is the squad's marksman. He is providing cover for his fellow squad members as they make their way up the slope. His presence provides a clue that these are dogfaces of a rifle squad and not a dedicated transport unit, which would not have included a marksman.³⁷¹ The two dead mules are the collateral damage of the supply transport, whether from enemy fire or simple exhaustion.

We know from Bill Mauldin's biography that Bloody Ridge refers to a series of mountain combat actions of his previous unit, the 180th Infantry Regiment, around Santo Stefano on the Sicilian north coast. In order to understand the context of this Bloody Ridge (and, as we shall see, other Bloody Ridges), it is necessary for us to review briefly the main features of the Allied campaign in Sicily.

Strategic setting

With the successful conclusion of Allied operations in North Africa in sight, Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt met in Casablanca in January 1943 along with their military advisors. The aim of the conference was to define a military strategy for the coming year. The participants broke along predictable fault lines. U.S. Army Chief of Staff Marshall argued for a total concentration of effort on an invasion in northern France once the North African campaign was wrapped up. He suggested that the Mediterranean Theater of Operations go on the defensive in order to free up men and materiel for what would be, in his view, the decisive campaign. The rejoinder by Winston Churchill and the British Chiefs of Staff, unsurprisingly, followed the lines of their Mediterranean strategy: of course, they recognized, the invasion across the English Channel should deal a death-blow to Hitler's domination of Europe ... but in due time. Their argument for the delay was that the Allied armies were still too inexperienced in 1943, and the German Wehrmacht still too strong, for a decisive battle for Europe to be successful. Continued implementation of more limited operations in the Mediterranean would serve primarily to give the young Army of the

³⁷¹ Mansoor, G.I. Offensive, p. 38.

United States time to gather experience. Over time, America's steadily increasing war production would gradually alter the material relationship in favor of the Allies. Eventually, should it become possible to open the Mediterranean Sea to Allied shipping, they could free up shipping capacity that was urgently needed for OVERLORD.³⁷²

Unlike his Chief of Staff, Roosevelt was open to these arguments. He also considered that it would be useful to take advantage of the favorable state of affairs that would follow the expected victory in North Africa, and as a result, he took Churchill's side in the discussions. In return for continued operations in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations, the British negotiation team again offered reassurance that they fundamentally supported OVERLORD – as soon as conditions permitted such an undertaking. Several months later, they agreed on May 1944 for the invasion. After reaching a decision in principle in favor of the Mediterranean Theater of Operations, the Allies directed their staffs to plan various offensive options in the region, including Greece, the Balkans, Crete, Sicily and Sardinia. When the selection boiled down to Sicily, the Combined Chiefs of Staff named Dwight Eisenhower as Supreme Allied Commander and charged him with planning and carrying out Operation HUSKY, the Sicilian invasion.³⁷³

Planning

The port of Messina in the northeast corner of Sicily was the obvious objective of an Allied invasion of the island. Axis forces were supplied through Messina, which was situated only a few miles across from the Italian mainland. If these supply lines could be cut, they would not be able to hold Sicily for long. There were two reasons, however, why an amphibious landing in or around Messina was not feasible. In the first place, the beaches around the city were too narrow and the terrain behind the

³⁷² Since the Mediterranean Sea was under Axis control, British convoys bound for the Middle East and Asia were required to sail around the Cape of Good Hope at the southern tip of Africa rather than through the Mediterranean and the Suez Canal. According to British calculations made at that time, the reduction in shipping time by using the Suez route would result in a yearly savings of one million gross registered tons of shipping space. (Alex Danchev / Daniel Todman (Eds.), *Field Marshal Lord Alanbrooke. War Diaries 1939–1945*. [Berkeley / Los Angeles 2001], p. 406.)

³⁷³ Maurice Matloff, *United States Army in World War II. The War Department. Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare. 1943–1944* (Washington, D.C. 1959), p. 18 ff.

beaches too rugged. It would have been an impossible task to land large formations there and keep them supplied. In addition, Messina lay outside the range of Allied air forces based on the North African coast. Since the success of an amphibious landing would be dependent upon effective air support, Messina was discarded as a landing objective.

Sicily's northwest and southeast coasts offered the desired combination of favorable topographical features and nearby ports and airfields that could be quickly reached by Allied forces. At the insistence of General Sir Bernard Law Montgomery, one of HUSKY's two field army commanders, a British-conceived plan was ultimately accepted. It provided for both field armies, the Seventh U.S. and Eighth British, to land along a 100-mile stretch of coastline in the southeast. The Eighth British Army would come ashore between Syracuse and Pachino in the Gulf of Noto and advance along the east coast toward Messina. The Seventh Army, led by Lieutenant General George S. Patton, Jr., would make its landing further to the west, between Licata and Scoglitti in the Gulf of Gela, proceeding to occupy two predetermined lines in the north. From there, it could protect the flank of the British advance.

General Sir Harold Alexander, whose 15th Army Group commanded both armies, did not prepare a detailed plan for post-landing operations, since he would not want to see his day-to-day direction of operations limited by predetermined planning. The (British) plan assigned American forces a clearly secondary supporting role.³⁷⁴ Referring to this plan, Martin Blumenson called *Patton's army ... the shield in Alexander's left hand. ... Montgomery's army the sword in his right.*³⁷⁵ The disproportionate division of responsibility reflected British skepticism regarding the quality of the Army of the United States, an attitude that had its origins in the U.S. debacle at Kasserine Pass in Tunisia.³⁷⁶ This skepticism, along with Alexander's

³⁷⁴ Albert N. Garland / Howard McGaw Smyth / Martin Blumenson, *United States Army in World War II. The Mediterranean Theater of Operations. Sicily and the Surrender of Italy* (Washington, D.C. 1993), p. 89 ff.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

³⁷⁶ In the first months after TORCH, the U.S. Army had to contend with Vichy troops in Morocco and Algeria that offered only as much resistance as their French national pride demanded. In Tunisia in the spring of 1943, they faced the German Wehrmacht, which was superior to the young American troops individually, tactically and with respect to its leadership. As a consequence, the first American

diffuse command situation, ultimately resulted in the first duel between the two great prima donnas among the Allied generals: Montgomery and Patton.

In the summer of 1943, there were approximately 200,000 Italian troops on Sicily, along with two German divisions totaling 30,000 men. The Italian VI Army was of questionable value, since it consisted mainly of immobile formations that were poorly trained and equipped. Apart from that, Mussolini's soldiers no longer believed in the Duce's imperial vision, and they were inclined to surrender at the first opportunity, as their North African experience had shown.³⁷⁷ Axis strategists quickly concluded, therefore, that they could not successfully defend the island once the Anglo-American Alliance had established a bridgehead on the Sicilian coast. The Axis plan, accordingly, was to launch immediate countermeasures to push the invaders back into the sea. Should this strategy – as they expected – not be met with success, their forces would stage a fighting withdrawal back to the so-called Aetna Line. This defensive line ran from Catania on Sicily's east coast along Mount Aetna's southern slope, past Troina in the interior of the island to San Fratello on the north coast. There, in the mountainous northeast, they would find ideal conditions allowing them to provide cover for a slow fallback of their forces and an evacuation from Messina.

Operations

Allied troops under Operation HUSKY began to come ashore in the early morning hours of July 10, 1943. While the Eighth Army initially met with very little resistance in the east, Seventh Army, landing in the west, had to defend against intermittent stiff counterattacks in the center of their bridgehead. Within a few days, however, the bridgehead was established and the two field armies began to advance as planned. Patton, for whom a purely defensive role was simply unthinkable, interpreted Alexander's somewhat vague instructions as permitting Seventh Army to make its own advance on Messina as soon as the Eighth Army's flank had been secured. He

encounter with the German Wehrmacht ended in a string of humbling defeats for the U.S. troops. These debacles came to an end only when the German troops, sustaining a British attack at their rear, had to refocus and let up on their near defenseless victims. These clashes became known collectively as the Kasserine Pass Battles, after the region where they took place. (The U.S. Army Campaigns of World War II, Tunisia. 17 November 1942–13 May 1943 [Center of Military History Publication 72-12], p. 27 ff.)

³⁷⁷ Garland, Sicily, p. 80.

was taught a lesson on July 13. There were very few roads in the interior of the island that could accommodate the movement of large military formations. The administrative boundaries between the two field armies that had been stipulated by Alexander left the American Army with only one possible way to reach Messina: Highway 124, the route between Vizzini in the southeast and Enna, the junction at the center of the island that connected to a road to the northeast. Several days after the landing, Montgomery's Eighth Army encountered strong resistance along the Catania–Gerbini line. When the General found himself unable to break through this position, he convinced Alexander to shift the boundaries between the field armies to allow him to detour via Highway 124 and Enna. When Patton received these instructions shortly before midnight on July 13, he could recognize that his implicit role, as originally laid out in the plans for HUSKY, was now explicit: he and Seventh Army were to serve as Montgomery's stirrup holder in the conquest of Sicily, being assigned a clearly secondary objective.

Patton, however, who had been convinced since his youth that he was destined someday to become a great general, was not a man for secondary objectives. On July 15 he importuned Alexander to allow him to send a reconnaissance mission toward Agrigent, a few miles to the northwest of his position. With Alexander's authorization in his pocket, he ordered Major General Lucian Truscott's 3rd Infantry Division to capture the city immediately. From that location, Agrigent's road links put Seventh Army in a position first to maneuver in the direction of Palermo and then to split the island by advancing northward. After the fall of Agrigent, Alexander agreed to Patton's request to carry out such a move, albeit unwillingly. Shortly afterward, when he again changed his mind and sent Patton a revised set of instructions, Patton ignored the order. His headquarters claimed that the telexed order was illegible, having become garbled in transmission, and it requested that the order be resent. By the time these "communications problems" were resolved, Patton's units were standing at the gates of Palermo. On July 23, 1943, eight days after initiating its reconnaissance mission toward Palermo, Seventh Army held Marsala, Trapani and Palermo in northwest Sicily as well as various communities along the north coast. In the meantime, the Eighth Army was still pinned down outside Catania. It now appeared likely that Montgomery would not be able to take Messina on his own. On July 18, he failed in a final, all-out effort to break through the German positions. Alexander reacted to the situation on the ground by clearing the way for Patton to

enter Messina.³⁷⁸ He assigned each field army two of the four passable roads into port city, thus starting what Patton characterized to Major General Troy Middleton, commander of Mauldin's 45th Infantry Division, as *a horserace in which the prestige of the U.S. Army is at stake*.³⁷⁹

Eighth Army was assigned roads on both flanks of Mount Aetna, while Patton's Seventh was authorized to advance along an interior route via Enna, Nicosia and Troina as well as Highway 113 on the north coast. Two factors made Seventh Army's march to Messina incomparably more difficult than its advance on Palermo and the north coast had been. The road to Palermo and the north coast had been guarded primarily by Italian forces who, as has been mentioned, were relatively open to the idea of surrender. The routes to Messina, on the other hand, were defended by German troops of the newly strengthened Sicily garrison, which was better trained and equipped. Above all, the Germans were determined to exact a heavy price before giving up their positions. The second factor involves the topography of northeast Sicily. While the island's southern and western areas range from flat to hilly, the routes toward the northeast cross a mountain range dominated by Mount Aetna, the volcano on the east coast. In such rugged terrain, Seventh Army, far from being able to launch a cavalry-style attack like the one it staged at Palermo, could not take advantage of its superior mobility. Flanking maneuvers were impossible in the mountains. In the narrow valleys, tanks made easy targets for the German artillery that controlled all the access routes from their mountaintop observation posts. The only option left to the dogfaces was to fight, step by step, through a series of mountain fortifications where all participating formations went through their own Bloody Ridges. The 1st Infantry Division had such an experience in the island's interior near Troina, one of the main anchor points of the Aetna Line, where it engaged in heavy fighting with the German 15th Panzer Grenadier Division (motorized or mechanized infantry) lasting over a week. Third Infantry and Bill Mauldin's 45th Infantry Division, advancing toward Messina along the coast on

³⁷⁸ Bradley, *Soldier's Story*, p. 144 ff.

³⁷⁹ Cited in: *The U.S. Army Campaigns of World War II, Sicily. 9 July–17 August 1943* (Center of Military History Publication 72-16), p. 21.

Highway 113, fought their Bloody Ridges in San Fratello and Brolo, with Mauldin's 180th Infantry Regiment specifically engaged at Santo Stefano.

In addition to battling the Wehrmacht and the pitfalls of the terrain, the dogfaces also had to contend with the heat of the Sicilian summer. While average temperatures hovered around 40 degrees Celsius, water supply in the mountains was difficult and thus sporadic. Besides the many cases of dehydration and heat-related exhaustion that resulted from these conditions, the troops experienced more than 10,000 cases of malaria and other febrile diseases.³⁸⁰ In view of the tactical situation in the mountains, it was impossible to feed the troops by means of mobile kitchens. Days and weeks of eating field rations produced harmless but extremely unpleasant gastrointestinal illnesses that caused nausea, diarrhea and vomiting.³⁸¹ When dogfaces obtained food locally in order to vary their monotonous diet, the epidemics of diarrhea recurred. Ernie Pyle, who accompanied Seventh Army through Sicily, provided a vivid description of the travails of the midsummer campaign:

... [besides the actual horrors of combat] I believe the outstanding trait in any campaign is the terrible weariness that gradually comes over everybody. Soldiers become exhausted in mind and in soul as well as physically. They acquire a weariness that is mixed up with boredom and lack of all gaiety. To sum it all up: A man just gets damned sick of it all.

The infantry reaches a stage of exhaustion that is incomprehensible to folks back home. The men in the First Division, for instance, were in the lines twenty-eight days – walking and fighting all the time, day and night ... They keep going largely because the other fellow does and because they can't really do anything else ... it's the ceaselessness, the endlessness of everything that finally worms its way through us and starts to devour us.

... It's the perpetual, choking dust, the muscle-racking hard ground, the snatched food sitting ill on the stomach, the heat and the flies and dirty feet and the constant roar of engines and the perpetual moving and never settling down and the go, go, go, night and day, and on through the night again. Eventually it works

³⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 21.

³⁸¹ Cf. [Chapter 9.2](#) 5-in-1s (December 11, 1943).

itself into an emotional tapestry of one dull, dead pattern – yesterday is tomorrow and Troina is Randazzo and when will we ever stop and, God, I'm so tired.³⁸²

General Hube, the German commander on the island, ordered his units to carry out a fighting withdrawal from the Aetna Line. The island's shape had the effect of shortening the German lines as they came closer to Messina. This allowed an increasing number of forces to be pulled out of the front lines and evacuated across the Straits of Messina to the mainland of Italy until eventually the entire garrison was out of harm's way.³⁸³ Because of the difficult terrain and the skillful tactical implementation of the German retreat, neither the Seventh nor Eighth Army was able to penetrate the German lines. On August 17, shortly after the last German troops had been evacuated, units of Seventh Army reached Messina. Patton had won his *horserace* against Montgomery. Since neither field army had been able to cut off the German retreat route, however, the defenders of Sicily were now in position in Italy to renew their combat against the Allies, whose Sicilian victory had a bitter aftertaste.

Mule cavalry

In contrast to the German Wehrmacht³⁸⁴, the American Army was designed to be 100 percent motorized. As laid out in the Tables of Organization and Equipment, each respective formation in its forces was sufficiently equipped with its own means of motorized transport to ensure its mobility. While thousands of horses and mules had been in use prior to the start of World War II as riding, pack and draft animals, these numbers underwent a dramatic reduction at the time the Army of the United States was mobilized.³⁸⁵ While this proved to be a permanent development with respect to

³⁸² Pyle, *Brave Men*, p. 89 ff.

³⁸³ CMH, *Sicily*, p. 20.

³⁸⁴ Contrary to the impression given by the mechanized blitzkrieg armies, the mobility of German land forces was largely based on rail links, horses and boot leather. German industry would not have been in a position to motorize or mechanize all army formations. As a result, only those formations that were specifically designated for blitzkrieg operations – such as panzer and panzer grenadier divisions – were equipped with motor vehicles. Most German ground force elements followed their spearheads into battle no differently than armies had done in World War I: by train, on foot, and using horses as draft animals.

³⁸⁵ The number of horses the Army procured in the United States fell from 23,546 in 1941 to four in 1943; in 1944/45, no horses were procured for the Army of the United States. (Cf. Erna Risch /

horses, the history of mules in the American Army had not yet been fully written. In winter 1942/43, once U.S. forces had commenced active operations against the Axis powers as a part of Operation TORCH, the need to acquire mules for supply purposes quickly made itself felt. Initial encounters with the Enemy had shown that there was still a need for draft animals to supply fighting units in impassable terrains, particularly mountain country. Trucks carried out regular road transport duties and were used in simple off-road situations, and jeeps could negotiate the narrow, twisting paths in more remote mountainous regions. In still more difficult areas, however, where most fighting took place, the Army was dependent on pack animals or bearers in order to ferry supplies to the mountain deployments that were used as a base from which the troops were sent out to do battle with the Enemy. Mules were preferable to horses for such tasks, since they were more surefooted, needed less feed and were generally more resistant.³⁸⁶

In North Africa, the need for mules as a means of transport had been limited. In northeast Sicily, on the other hand, where the German Wehrmacht had erected the Aetna Line high in the mountains, demand for mules became many times greater. Utilization of mules also took place, however, under somewhat improvised conditions, where spontaneously formed units were supplied by locally procured animals.³⁸⁷ This explains how infantry soldiers at Bloody Ridge came to be guiding mules. In Italy, the use of mules for supply purposes was ultimately systematized to an extent. The animals were imported from North Africa and Sicily or procured on-site. It was suggested that every division, corps and army headquarters should have between 300 and 500 mules available to guarantee that its supply needs could be met.³⁸⁸

In total, over 15,000 pack animals – most of them mules – were employed in the Italian campaign, 11,000 of which were utilized by units of Army Ground Forces and

Chester L. Kieffer, *United States Army in World War II. The Technical Services. The Quartermaster Corps: Organization, Supply, and Services. Volume II* [Washington, D.C. 1995], p. 322.)

³⁸⁶ Risch, *Quartermaster II*, p. 322.

³⁸⁷ Cf. Garland, *Sicily*, p. 348.

³⁸⁸ Martin Blumenson, *United States Army in World War II. The Mediterranean Theater of Operations. Salerno to Cassino* (Washington, D.C. 1993), p. 160.

the rest by the Quartermaster Corps. Fifth Army standardized so-called *pack units* consisting of 260 mules, twelve horses, eleven officers and 320 enlisted soldiers. These units eventually took over the lion's share of mountain supply duties.³⁸⁹ Mule trains predominantly carried ammunition, water and food into the mountains. To a lesser extent, they were also used to transport heavy weapons and the wounded. After Italy had come over to the Allied side, Italian soldiers were preferentially used in the pack mule units. On one hand, this frequently allowed the use of men with knowledge of the local area, a particular advantage in the mountains. On the other hand, however, Italian troops were, in principle, put to use behind the front lines since, if captured by their former German brothers-in-arms, they were more likely to be treated as deserters than as prisoners of war.³⁹⁰ Initially, American enlisted personnel frequently overloaded the animals, since they did not take into consideration that Italian mules were smaller and weaker, on average, than those in the U.S.³⁹¹

Except in emergencies, ascent into the mountains was normally made under the protection of darkness. In daylight, the mule trains were, in most cases, detectable by German observation posts (and thus susceptible to artillery fire). For the same reason, use of white mules by pack units was soon discontinued. They were too easily seen by moonlight, thus provoking shelling from German artillery. In general, trucks moved supplies by day to depots located near the front, at the end of the passable roads, and stored them there. With the onset of darkness, the mules were loaded and the pack trains dispatched. Each animal in the caravan was assigned a driver. Proceeding behind the animals were soldiers whose task was to assist fallen animals, as well as to take over their load in the event that they were killed by enemy fire or simply died from exhaustion. In extreme cases, when even mules were unable to negotiate the trails, the soldiers had to bear the entire burden themselves.³⁹² If they were lucky, they were equipped with carrying frames for this purpose ...

³⁸⁹ Risch, Quartermaster II, p. 323.

³⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 323.

³⁹¹ Pyle, Brave Men, p. 155.

³⁹² Ibid., p. 153 ff.

Bloody Ridge

Bloody Ridge is a key image in two distinctive ways. Seen in a narrower context, it represents a turning point in Mauldin's artistic – and probably his personal – development. The battles that Mauldin experienced at Santo Stefano were among the first in an endless series of ferocious battles for mountain positions all over the Mediterranean Theater of Operations. What intensified his impressions was that he was witnessing his own unit, the 180th Infantry Regiment, as it was being worn down by the attacks on German defensive positions around Santo Stefano. The specific result is a work of art that has little to do with the ordinary, with what one would normally perceive to be a cartoon. In general, Bloody Ridge constituted a milestone in Mauldin's transformation into a chronicler of dogfaces. Seen from a wider angle, it is an image symbolic of the entire Mediterranean Theater of Operations. It negotiates murderous mountain fighting as well as the travails of sustaining these operations that gave the Mediterranean campaign its distinctive character. Dogfaces battled along countless Bloody Ridges throughout the entire Theater of Operations, the next one already looming ahead. Nicosia, Troina, San Fratello, Monte Pantano, Monte Camino, San Pietro Infine and Monte Sammucro among many other places in Sicily and Italy still haunt the memories of survivors of these struggles as their own personal Bloody Ridges.

9.2 5-in-1s (December 11, 1943)

Food must be adequate in quantity, varied enough to provide all the ingredients of a properly balanced diet, and acceptable to the soldier. To furnish energy his diet must contain fats and carbohydrates; to build and repair his body it must provide proteins and minerals. At the same time his food must have sufficient vitamins and bulk to foster health. The regular serving of palatable food is the greatest single factor in building and maintaining high spirit and morale.

Erna Risch, *The Development of Subsistence*³⁹³

³⁹³ Risch, *Quartermaster I*, p. 174.



Fig. 6 “Honest, fellers ... next trip I’ll bring 5-in-1’s.” (1943)
Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1943). Courtesy of the Bill Mauldin Estate LLC.

Four GIs stand around a mule. While one holds the reins, the other three appear to be busy with the mule. The one farthest to the right, leaning slightly forward, is touching the mule’s left haunch with his right hand. In his left, he holds a bayonet. The soldier kneeling at the right side of the mule is interested in its belly. He is pointing to a spot between the forelegs. With his right hand, which holds a bayonet, he supports himself on the ground. A third soldier with a bayonet stands at the mule’s forelegs. He is bent forward as if to speak with the kneeling GI; he strokes his chin quizzically with his right hand while his left holds the bayonet. Eyes wide open, the mule stares over its shoulder at the GI with his hand on his chin. On its back is a pack frame loaded with three cases. The two cases seen along the mule’s left side read *KS* in capital letters. On the third, the words *US ARMY “C” RATION* can be seen. The GI holding the reins stands a bit aloof from this scene. He holds a cigarette in his right hand, has a somewhat hapless expression on his face, and assures his companions: *Honest, fellers ... next trip I’ll bring 5-in-1’s.*

The key to understanding this picture is evidently what has been packed in the cases on the mule’s back. It contains rations – food packs for soldiers at the front. So what are the specific contents of these cases? Why do the three soldiers with their bayonets apparently have a culinary interest in the mule? What is there about the 5-in-1s the mule driver is willing to sacrifice for the life of his pack animal? To find the answers to

such questions, we need to concern ourselves with the field rations system of the Army of the United States.

Rations

The Army Quartermaster Corps defines a ration as ... *the allowance of food for subsistence of one person for one day*.³⁹⁴ Obviously, different situations called for different kinds of *rations*. The most basic distinction was between *garrison rations* and *field rations*. The garrison rationing system regulated meal provision for the peacetime army within the territory of the United States and is therefore irrelevant to our purposes here. For the sake of completeness, however: this system allocated a specific budget to those responsible for provisioning the troops of a particular organization. With these funds, they could obtain perishable foods from local sources. Non-perishable foods were made available through the Army's central infrastructure. Responsible officials were required to provide each individual with a balanced diet of a specified composition. The system included a so-called *ration savings privilege* that permitted each organization to retain any budgetary savings to be used for special expenses – to provide holiday meals, for example.³⁹⁵ While feeding the tiny Regular Army in the period between the wars was a relatively simple task, the situation became much more difficult with the mobilization and global dislocation of the Army of the United States beginning in 1942. In pre-modern wars, it was not uncommon that an army would live off the land where it fought. Most modern armies, however, including the Army of the United States, found it necessary, for logistical reasons, to provision their soldiers with field rations, in part because the amount of destruction involved in modern warfare had become so large that the output of foodstuffs in areas where the war was being waged was scarcely sufficient for the local population, let alone foreign armies.

Even in the period between the wars, the Quartermaster Corps was already involved in developing field and combat rations. Lacking the means to conduct serious research and development, however, the corps found it almost impossible to achieve any applicable results. By the end of the 1930s decade, in light of the worsening international situation, it was finally granted the necessary resources. In 1941, the

³⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 174.

³⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 174.

QMC Subsistence Research Laboratory in Chicago commenced work on developing field and combat rations for the Army of the United States. In this task, it had to take a multiplicity of requirements into account. Obviously, nutritional content had to meet minimum standards. At the same time, however, the rations would need to be acceptable to the troops and would have to be able to endure long periods of storage under a variety of climatic conditions without losing their nutritional value. Packaging would need to be compact yet resistant, allowing the rations to be transported via transatlantic freighters and ultimately carried in the field by individual soldiers.³⁹⁶ The maxim governing the work of the Subsistence Research Laboratory staff called for:

... acceptability, nutritional adequacy, stability, and military utility ... economy of space and weight in transportation and storage, of facilities and labor in unloading, carrying, issue, preparation, and consumption.³⁹⁷

Field rations – combat rations

As it commenced offensive operations with TORCH, the Army of the United States had five different field rations at its disposal, labeled A, B, D, C and K, in addition to a number of special rations for a variety of emergencies at sea or in the air. At the end of 1942, the so-called *U(nit) ration* or *5-in-1 ration* was added and eventually broadened to become a *10-in-1*. A and B rations were designated for troops in relatively stable surroundings. Freshly prepared in mobile kitchens behind the front lines, they were the most comparable to garrison rations in their composition and variety. A and B rations differed from each other solely in that A rations were made with fresh ingredients, while B rations consisted of foods that were preserved and dehydrated in various ways.³⁹⁸ Combat or operational rations D, C and K had been developed for consumption under unstable circumstances. Troops in this situation included soldiers engaged with the Enemy and those who had become separated from their regular source of supply, as well as units that were moving so rapidly that their mobile kitchens could not keep up with them.³⁹⁹

³⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 175.

³⁹⁷ Cited in: *ibid.*, p. 178.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 192.

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 177 ff.

D

The D ration was the first modern survival or emergency ration. In order to ensure that it would only be consumed in emergency situations, early D ration recipes were originally designed to be decidedly unappetizing. These guidelines were later revised under a plan to use D bars to supplement other rations. Eventually, a ration composed of three bars weighing four ounces each was developed. It consisted of a mixture of chocolate, sugar, oatmeal, skimmed milk powder and artificial flavoring. With a total calorie content of 1800, it was intended to meet a day's energy requirement under emergency conditions. Experiences showed that D rations provoked nausea in some soldiers and made many of them thirsty. Nevertheless, even in non-emergency settings, they were welcomed as a more concentrated, quicker and more flavorful energy dispenser and often added as an enhancement to improvised cocoa drinks and cakes.⁴⁰⁰

C

Though they met the requirements for emergency use, D rations were not designed to provide soldiers in unsettled situations with three balanced meals or to relieve their dependence on external sources of nutrition. The so-called C ration was developed to accomplish these functions. The ration consisted of six 12-ounce cylindrical tin cans, three of which (*beef stew*, *pork and beans* and *meat hash*) made up the M(eat) unit. The remaining three cans formed the B(read) unit, which included instant coffee, sugar and a variety of sweet snacks. The C ration's average nutritional value amounted to around 4500 calories. The B unit was expanded several times, eventually coming to include items like cocoa powder, powdered vitamin C drink, chewing gum, cigarettes, matches and toilet paper. In summer 1944, the contents of the M unit were augmented to incorporate *ground meat*, *spaghetti*, *chicken and vegetables*, *ham*, *egg and potato*, *frankfurters and beans*, and *ham and lima beans*.

In spite of these efforts to improve the C rations, they enjoyed a justifiably poor reputation among the dogfaces. As a packet, they were so large and bulky that it was almost impossible for GIs to carry an entire daily ration into the field. For the same reasons, they were specifically unsuitable as combat rations. The three initial M unit varieties had been considered sufficient because planners assumed that it would be

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 178 ff.

possible to feed troops on A and B rations most of the time. They envisioned that C rations would be used only rarely, and even then, not for more than three days in a row. Operational and logistical conditions soon indicated, however, that some troops would have to be fed on C rations for months at a time. Only part of the projected expansion of the various menus in the Tables of Organization and Equipment could be actually achieved. Due to delivery problems on the part of producers of some ingredients, only certain menus could be provided in the theaters of operation, and the greater menu selections that had been theorized remained exactly that: theoretical. Cold C rations were universally judged to be inedible and, even when heated, they had a taste that thrilled very few soldiers.⁴⁰¹ Their most negative feature, by far, was the result that most dogfaces, after eating C rations for three to four days, had to cope with nausea, vomiting and problems of digestion.⁴⁰²

K

The C ration can be called a combat ration, although conditions at the front needed to be fairly static and stable if it was to be used there. The K ration was developed for utilization in truly precarious circumstances – for example, in a battle's attack phase. In order for it to be more easily transportable, the K ration was distributed in three rectangular packages that could each fit into the pocket of a uniform, corresponding respectively to the day's three main meals. Its precise composition (with a caloric value between 3100 and 3400) was repeatedly revised, but in essence, all versions had the following common features: three main dishes such as meat, meat and egg, and processed cheese; biscuits, crackers, dextrose tablets, instant coffee, one fruit bar, one chocolate bar, powdered soup, lemon juice crystals, sugar tablets, cigarettes, matches, chewing gum and toilet paper.⁴⁰³

The K ration represented a quantum leap in packaging technology and battlefield suitability, but its appeal to the taste buds of the dogfaces and its tolerability were little changed from other rations. Quite to the contrary, the later versions of the C

⁴⁰¹ Ibid., p. 180 ff.

⁴⁰² William F. Ross / Charles F. Romanus, *United States Army in World War II. The Technical Services. The Quartermaster Corps: Operations in the War against Germany* (Washington, D.C. 1991), p. 131.

⁴⁰³ Kennett, G.I., p. 100.

ration were preferred over the Ks.⁴⁰⁴ However, the object of culinary desire for all dogfaces was a ration developed during the North African campaign that food service planners had never intended for them: the 5-in-1s, along with their later version, the 10-in-1s.

5-in-1 (U)

Towards the end of 1942, the Subsistence Research Laboratory introduced a ration that was designed for small, isolated units. This U(nit) ration – normally referred to as a 5-in-1 (later 10-in-1), unlike the D, C and K rations that were known by their letter designations – was intended to be used by tank crews, artillery teams or members of comparable units who could carry a daily group ration with them. The term ‘5-in-1’ referred to their capacity to serve five men for one day.⁴⁰⁵ The 5-in-1s involved a somewhat greater preparatory effort than did C and K rations, and, in addition, their weight of almost 14 kilograms meant that they were extremely impractical for infantrymen to carry. The simply unimaginable variety of delicacies they contained, however, left the dogfaces totally willing to put up with any inconvenience in order to have access to them. They schemed and organized to find ways to savor these delights – no effort was too great. The 5-in-1s provided basically the same menu as the B rations in the rear echelons. Their ingredients were modified only as far as necessary to allow them to be prepared without the infrastructure of a field kitchen.⁴⁰⁶ The following listing of a sample 5-in-1 daily ration for one man demonstrates the extent of this ration’s enticement:

... a breakfast of dehydrated tomato juice cocktail, whole wheat cereal, canned bacon, soluble coffee, sugar and canned milk; a dinner of dehydrated bean soup, canned roast beef, dehydrated potatoes, canned peas, evaporated pears, hard candy, lemon juice crystals, and sugar; and a supper which included meat and vegetable stew, vanilla pudding powder, soluble coffee, sugar and canned milk. A supply of salt, biscuits, dehydrated fruit spread, and a processed substitute for butter accompanied all cased rations.⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰⁴ Risch, *Quartermaster I*, p. 186.

⁴⁰⁵ Ross, *Operations*, p. 130 ff.

⁴⁰⁶ Risch, *Quartermaster I*, p. 188.

⁴⁰⁷ Ross, *Operations*, p. 130.

... the accessory kit, containing cigarettes, halazone tablets [for drinking water purification], matches, can opener, soap, paper towels, and toilet paper ... [and] a sponge for cleaning mess gear used in cooking.⁴⁰⁸

With this information about the field provisioning system of the Army of the United States, the meaning of the 5-in-1 cartoon becomes clear with respect to the contents of the cases and the behavior of the dogfaces. In light of the delivery of two cases of K rations and a case of C rations, they are weighing the alternative of eating the means of transport instead of the contents of the cases. The mule driver seeks to prevent them from doing this by holding out the prospect of a delivery of 5-in-1s, the object of the dogfaces' culinary desire. The cartoon's publication data – December 11, 1943 in the *45th Division News* – provides an indication of its operational reference, namely Fifth Army's slow and bloody advance from Naples to the Gustav Line, the German defensive position at Monte Cassino in the late fall of 1943.⁴⁰⁹ This advance through the mountains precluded provisioning with A or B rations over long stretches of their march.

To illustrate the intensity of the emotions the dogfaces harbored with respect to rations, let us examine another cartoon dealing with this subject. Published on August 29, 1944 in *Stars and Stripes*, it similarly deals with the unloved C Rations.

⁴⁰⁸ Risch, Quartermaster I, p. 191.

⁴⁰⁹ Cf. [Chapter 9.6](#) Italy: SHINGLE – a stranded whale (June 5, 1944): strategic setting. The U.S. Army Campaigns of World War II, Naples-Foggia. September 9, 1943 to January 21, 1944 (Center of Military History Publication 72-17), p. 25 ff.



Fig. 7 “We gotta blast ‘em out. They found out we feed prisoners C rations.” (1944)
Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1944). Courtesy of the Bill Mauldin Estate LLC.

In the foreground, we see three dogfaces wearing the summer field uniform of the Army of the United States as they take cover behind the ruins of a house. The soldier at the left, on hands and knees, has a canteen and a first aid kit attached to his belt. In his right hand, he holds an M1 Garand rifle. He is the speaker of the words in the caption below: *We gotta blast ‘em out. They found out we feed prisoners C rations.* Joe and Willie are crouching at his right. Joe has a canteen and ammo pouch attached to his own belt, and he is carrying an M1 bazooka.⁴¹⁰ Willie crouches behind Joe, and both of them focus their attention on their companion on all fours. Behind

⁴¹⁰ The bazooka was a recoilless rocket launcher. Developed to provide the infantry with sufficient firepower to attack armored or fortified targets, it could deliver 60mm rockets with a high explosive or shaped charge. (Cf. Green, *Planning Munitions*, p. 355 ff.)

Joe and Willie lie four cylindrical objects, carrying tubes for the bazooka's M6A1 rockets⁴¹¹. Beyond the house's collapsed stone wall that serves as cover for the dogfaces can be seen a three-story house with a partially exposed roof.

The cartoon's (clearly exaggerated) message may be understood from its setup and the pronouncement by the dogface kneeling at the left in the picture. German soldiers are holed up in the house at the background, and they were apparently preparing to surrender or at least negotiate. Unfortunately, the information that the Army of the United States is feeding its prisoners of war with C rations has provoked a radical change in their intent. They are now resolved to fight, and the three dogfaces have no choice other than to use bazooka fire to force a surrender.

9.3 An excuse for cowardice (January 19, 1944)

Look at an infantryman's eyes and you can tell how much war he has seen.

Bill Mauldin⁴¹²

⁴¹¹ Green, *Planning Munitions*, p. 359.

⁴¹² Mauldin, *Up Front*, p. 43



Fig. 8 “We just landed. Do you know any good war stories?” (1944)
Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1944). Courtesy of the Bill Mauldin Estate LLC.

To describe Joe as ‘sitting’ on a chair would be a euphemism. More accurately, he is slouched across the chair, wearing a tanker jacket⁴¹³, barefoot and with the pantlegs

⁴¹³ In 1940, the Army of the United States commissioned the development of special uniforms for the troops of the Armored Corps. They were required to provide warmth while also permitting the necessary freedom of movement in the cramped confinements of a tank. The infantry’s multilayered winter uniform was judged unsuitable, since its relative bulk would serve to hamper any exit from the tank in the event of an emergency. In 1941, a series of prototypes was extensively tested by the Armored Winter Board Detachment in Camp Pine, New York. The jacket shown in the cartoon above was part of the uniform that was selected in early 1942. Of the same cut as the classic American football jacket, it gained wide popularity in the Army beyond the Armored Corps. The waist-cut jacket was comprised of an outer shell of heavy twill and a wool liner. It featured two side slant pockets, knit waistband and cuffs, and a short knit stand-up collar. Although tanker jackets were intended to be

of his uniform rolled up. His left elbow rests on the table next to the chair, and he is holding a cigarette in his left hand. With his right, which hangs over the chair's backrest, he holds a bottle displaying three stars on its label. In the foreground next to the chair are a second, identically labeled bottle, an M1 helmet and a pair of lace-up boots. A Garand rifle is leaning against the wall behind the chair. Joe's face is expressionless, and his eyes are either closed or downcast.

At the other end of the table, on which two *shot glasses* can be seen, are two GIs. In contrast to Joe, both are cleanly shaven. They are likewise wearing tanker jackets and M1 helmets. The one at the left stands, leaning slightly forward, with a rifle slung over his shoulder and his right hand on its sling. He is gazing at Joe, his smile and raised eyebrows implying interest. The two *chevrons* on the left sleeve of the GI seated at the table identify him as a corporal. Unlike his companion, he correctly wears his helmet with its chinstrap fastened.⁴¹⁴ He has his hands folded to support his chin, while he bends forward toward Joe, and he has a smile on his face. His attention is likewise concentrated on our dogface soldier. We see a door at the right and a window at the left in the background. The shadows cast on the wall by Joe and the standing soldier indicate that the artificially lit scene is playing out at night.

One presumes that it is the seated GI who speaks in the cartoon's caption: *We just landed. Do you know any good war stories?* The theme and importance of the cartoon may be deduced from the statement, the image's overall setup, and above all the characters' differences in gesture, facial expression and appearance. The two GIs are apparently replacements, soldiers freshly arrived from training camp to fill voids in the ranks caused by losses on the battlefield. We devote space to such soldiers in [Chapter 9.3](#). From the two *shot glasses* on the table, we can conclude

issued solely to Armored Corps personnel, many dogfaces also contrived to acquire them. They were preferred over the actual winter infantry uniform for their sporty appearance and comfort. (Shelby Stanton, U.S. Army Uniforms of World War II [Mechanicsburg, PA 1991], p. 193 ff.)

⁴¹⁴ In spite of all official assurances to the contrary, a number of more or less absurd rumors constantly ran through the ranks of infantry soldiers right up to the end of the war. One of the most persistent involved the regulation use of the chinstrap on a soldier's helmet. If he were to fasten it under his chin as required, so the story goes, an exploding bomb or hand grenade would snap his head and helmet backward and break his neck. If the strap remained unfastened, it was naively assumed, the helmet would simply fly off the soldier's head, which would remain otherwise unharmed.

that the substance in the bottles has a high alcohol content and that Joe is either already drunk or on his way to such a condition. Our attention is in no way drawn to the call for *good war stories*, but instead to Joe's implicit psychological state. In the early 20th Century, this condition was either simply called cowardice or otherwise referred to by various euphemisms such as shell shock, war neurosis, combat neurosis, combat exhaustion, nervous exhaustion, battle fatigue, operational fatigue or combat fatigue.⁴¹⁵ The section to follow addresses this phenomenon and its history.

NERVOUSHELLCOMBATEXHAUSTIONFATIGUESHOCK

It may be assumed with virtual certainty (of course impossible to verify) that there have been prototypical forms of psychological damage ever since humans began to kill each other in a fairly organized way. In retrospect, evidence for its existence can be traced back to the wars of the 19th Century. The first time it was contemporarily recognized and documented was during World War I, essentially because of two simple facts. First, it was only at the time of this conflict that psychiatry became accepted to some degree as a scientific discipline. Additionally, this first industrialized war confronted its victims with a measure of physical and psychological stress, death, destruction and devastation that was beyond human coping capacity, leading to an initial epidemic of psychological injuries. We would be well advised, however, to place the emphasis in the penultimate sentence on the words *to some degree*. At the turn of the 20th Century, psychiatry was practiced discreetly for the most part, often in out-of-the-way sanatoriums and psychiatric institutions. Psychiatrists were not uncommonly judged as only a little less strange than their patients. Somewhat disdainfully, many physicians considered psychiatry and its rarely scientific methodologies as pseudo-science.⁴¹⁶

World War I

Not surprisingly, military organizations were no more progressive in this regard, and thus the first efforts to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon were

⁴¹⁵ S. Kirson Weinberg, The Combat Neuroses, in: American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 51, No. 5, Human Behavior in Military Society (1946), p. 466.

⁴¹⁶ Paul Wanke, American Military Psychiatry and Its Role among Ground Forces in World War II, in: The Journal of Military History, Vol. 63, No. 1 (1999), p. 128.

grounded in neurological analysis. When the British army registered an increasing number of psychologically induced casualties in the trenches of France, pathologist Colonel Frederick Mott coined the expression 'shell shock' to describe the condition. He maintained that the shock waves of exploding artillery grenades were producing traumas and microscopic bleeding in the brain. He saw such wounds as causing the symptoms of shell shock – uncontrolled trembling, panic attacks, temporary loss of sight or hearing, and paralysis. His neurological theory was refuted even before the end of the war, however, and prior to the entry of the U.S. into combat, military medicine came to the unanimous view that this was in fact a purely psychiatric problem, known rather vaguely as war neurosis, combat neurosis or traumatic neurosis.⁴¹⁷

Under the leadership of psychologist Colonel Thomas Salmon, the military psychiatric service of the American Expeditionary Forces achieved good results in the treatment of neuro-psychiatric cases. Even prior to the AEF deployment to France, Salmon had studied methods of treatment in British and French field hospitals. He adapted this experience to create a three-stage treatment model for the AEF. The premise of this concept was that patients should be treated in the closest possible proximity to the front. This idea was based on providing traumatized students with protracted rest, a healthy diet and psychiatric care. At the same time, however, military discipline was to be maintained and the patient's daily routines strictly governed according to military formality, in order to minimize the patient's mental separation from military service. In the event that treatment at the frontline facility should prove unsuccessful, the patient would be taken to another institution further to the rear. There a similar routine of rest, food and treatment would be prescribed, giving a larger role to the psychiatric component. If none of the three treatment stages resulted in progress, the patient could possibly be excused from military service.⁴¹⁸

Combat neuroses were very far from gaining general acceptance as the inevitable consequences of the war, however. While progressive scholars conjectured that every human being has a stress limit that is regularly exceeded in industrialized war,

⁴¹⁷ Weinberg, *Combat Neuroses*, p. 466.

⁴¹⁸ Wanke, *American Military Psychiatry*, p. 128 ff.

others exclusively saw behind it personal weaknesses and character flaws, and harbored suspicions about patients' intentions to dodge service.⁴¹⁹

World War II

Unfortunately, the theoretical findings by World War I-era American military psychologists were forgotten in the two decades of peace that followed. As we learned at the beginning of this volume, the Regular Army of the period between the wars was largely ignored by society and kept under tight financial control, resulting in serious consequences for military psychology. The necessity of studying the psychological causes of war casualties and developing options for treating victims was considered of little importance. During this period, *The Military Surgeon*, the specialized medical magazine of the Armed Forces, published more articles on veterinary medicine than military psychiatry. In the *Handbook for the Medical Soldier*, published in 1927, medical staff members were primarily trained to be alert to *malingers and so-called cases of shell shock*. In the manual's second edition, published a decade later, only one of the volume's 685 pages was devoted to the topic of psychological health.⁴²⁰ While Salmon strove to highlight potential synergies between civilian and military psychiatry in order to keep his profession alive, he achieved few results from this effort. Outside the Army, researchers like Adolf Meyer, whose psychological theories had a decisive influence on the field of psychology during this period, developed a simple psychological equation according to which the individual plus the situation equals the personal performance. The Army applied this finding to its World War I experiences – namely, that combat neuroses did not occur in all soldiers who went through similar situations – and came to the conclusion that the causes of psychological damage were to be found in individual psychological deficiencies.⁴²¹

When Army of the United States began to mobilize in 1940, the intended role of military psychiatry was largely preventative. Psychiatrists were to work in the induction centers to segregate those individuals in whom neuropsychiatric disorders

⁴¹⁹ Simon Wessely, Twentieth-Century Theories on Combat Motivation and Breakdown, in: *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 41, No. 2 (2006), p. 271 ff.

⁴²⁰ Wanke, *American Military Psychiatry*, p. 130.

⁴²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 129 ff.

could be observed, thus preventing combat neuroses before they could become a problem. In this way, they flagged 12 percent of the 15 million inductees into the American World War II Armed Forces as *unfit for service*.⁴²² By 1943, when the Army of the United States commenced offensive operations in North Africa, Sicily and Italy, these methods had proven to be ineffective. Field doctors noted that even soldiers who, up to that point, had been unremarkable (as well as those who had indeed distinguished themselves with their bravery) were increasingly displaying symptoms of combat neurosis. The result was a gradual recognition that external forces were present in wartime surroundings that sapped soldiers' ability to resist physical and psychological stresses. As a consequence, the official terminology was revised to be consistent with the new findings. From mid-1943 onward, the diagnosis of combat neurosis was replaced by either combat (battle) fatigue or battle (combat) exhaustion in order to take account of a diminishing capability to cope with the war.⁴²³ The point had finally been reached where at least official schools of thought could now recognize that the causes of combat fatigue lay in the exposure of normal individuals to a fundamentally abnormal situation.⁴²⁴

It is common to the literature on the subject that it somewhat indiscriminately intermixes the various terms referring to psychological war wounds. A chronology of the phenomenon from its earliest appearance up to the period that concerns this study reveals, however, three terminologically and etiologically distinct phases. In the shell shock phase, due to a lack of trust in psychological models, an attempt had been made to find a neurological basis to explain the phenomenon. During the war or combat neurosis phase, researchers established the psychological nature of the phenomenon and sought its origins in the afflicted individual's personal deficiencies. The transition to the exhaustion or fatigue phase (whether battle, combat, operational or nervous is a distinction of little importance) marked the moment when the horror of war was recognized as a causal element of neuro-psychiatric casualties. A U.S. study of combat exhaustion concluded that

⁴²² Ibid., p. 131 ff.

⁴²³ Peter S. Kindsvatter, *Combat Related Psychiatric Disorders*, in: Peter Karsten (Hrsg.), *Encyclopedia of War and American Society* (New York 2005), p. 670.

⁴²⁴ Wanke, *American Military Psychiatry*, p. 131.

... there is no such thing as “getting used to combat” ... Each moment of combat imposes a strain so great that men will break down in direct relation to the intensity and duration of their exposure ... psychiatric casualties are as inevitable as gunshot and shrapnel wounds in warfare.⁴²⁵

Old sergeants ...

During World War II, combat fatigue in the Army Ground Forces normally took one of three different forms. In its mild version, combat fatigue was a routine occurrence in most infantry units. Its symptoms included increased emotionality, sleep disturbances, jittery reactions to nearby or sudden movements or sounds, and moderate physical ailments. Dramatic but temporary combat fatigue – often on the eve of the first combat mission – expressed itself in strong tremors and quivering, crying fits and panic attacks, blindness and paralysis, as well as serious stomach ailments. Joe’s implied condition in the present chapter’s cartoon was the curse of long-serving veterans, a dramatic and permanent type of combat fatigue that appeared after long, uninterrupted stretches on the front lines. The phenomenon known to dogfaces as ‘old sergeant syndrome’ was a severe form of physical and psychological burnout. Its symptoms included apathy, slowed reactions, mild tremors, weak survival instinct, fixation on detail, increased aggression, extreme exhaustion, chronic diarrhea and vomiting, acute insomnia, states of anxiety, phobias, fatalistic views, social withdrawal and depression.⁴²⁶

Joe’s old sergeant syndrome – also known as the *thousand-yard stare* or *ETO happiness* – was a fate that became unavoidable for most soldiers after a certain amount of time spent on the front lines. The Army was aware of this condition, as its internal study of the subject documented:

Most men were ineffective after 180 or even 140 days. The general consensus was that a man reached his peak effectiveness in the first 90 days of combat, that after that his efficiency began to fall off, and that he became steadily less valuable thereafter until he was completely useless ... The number of men on

⁴²⁵ Cited in: Keegan, *Face of Battle*, p. 329.

⁴²⁶ Brian H. Chermol, *Wounds without Scars: Treatment of Battle Fatigue in the U.S. Armed Forces in the Second World War*, in: *Military Affairs*, Vol. 49, No. 1 (1985), p. 10.

duty after 200 to 240 days of combat was small and their value to their units negligible.⁴²⁷

It comes as no surprise that the principal causes of combat fatigue were identified as *battle losses* and the length of time an individual was exposed to fighting. Factors correlating with these incidents were death or injury involving a close companion, loss of unit commanders and loss of confidence in leadership or in one's own unit, impotence to respond actively to a threat (in the event of artillery or air attacks), lack of information, weather conditions, poor diet and permanent lack of sleep.⁴²⁸ Basic to all these factors was, of course, the amount of exposure to combat. Spacing this out would have been the only sustainable way to prevent combat fatigue, but such action was impossible for reasons related to staffing. As already mentioned in the introduction, for technical reasons, the composition of Army Ground Forces presented an unfavorable tooth-to-tail ratio.⁴²⁹ This meant that, in spite of its troop strength in absolute terms in the ETO, only a relatively small number of infantry divisions (42, to be precise) were available. With these very limited means in comparison to their tasks, it was impossible to take effective measures⁴³⁰ to prevent combat fatigue. For the dogface soldiers in the European and Mediterranean Theaters of Operations right up to the end of the war, only German capitulation, their own death or a serious injury offered any possible relief from the horrors of war.

Although Army authorities informally recognized the basic existence of combat fatigue, whether and how to treat the psychologically wounded dogfaces frequently depended on each commander's personal attitude. More than a few of them held the opinion that institutions for the treatment of combat fatigue would only serve to encourage the phenomenon. Lieutenant General George S. Patton, Jr. voiced his displeasure in his memoir, *War As I Knew It*, concerning *the shameful use of "battle*

⁴²⁷ Cited in: Keegan, *Face of Battle*, p. 329.

⁴²⁸ Chermol, *Wounds without Scars*, p. 10.

⁴²⁹ The ratio between the number of actual combat troops in a formation and the number of military administrative and supply personnel.

⁴³⁰ A tour of duty system such as that used in the Vietnam War, in which the length of service time was limited to one year and the three regiments of an infantry division followed a rotation principle whereby one of the regiments was always assigned to rest areas behind the front.

*fatigue” as an excuse for cowardice.*⁴³¹ Only when casualties related to combat fatigue reached significant levels (something that happened in nearly all formations sooner or later) did the commanders (including Patton) revise their opinion and call for psychiatric support.⁴³² Over the course of the war, most armies, corps and infantry divisions created so-called ‘exhaustion centers’ where combat fatigue patients were treated using essentially the same principles as in World War I.

As a result, return-to-duty rates rose from approximately five percent to between 60 and 90 percent depending on the individual unit. For example, the First Army maintained two exhaustion centers, each with a capacity of 1000 beds, following the particularly dreadful Battle of the Bocage⁴³³, while additional treatment centers at First Army’s division level operated with up to 250 beds each during the same time period. A total of 11,150 combat fatigue patients were seen during this battle that lasted more than two weeks. Of these, 62 percent returned to their units following treatment, 13 percent were transferred to non-combat units, and the rest were evacuated to Great Britain.⁴³⁴ The extent to which returnees to the front were fully healed and the tally of those who experienced another breakdown (John Keegan speaks of an average of five percent even during the same battle⁴³⁵) is a different matter.⁴³⁶

According to official statistics, the various treatment institutions in the Army of the United States (including Army Air Forces) received approximately one million combat exhaustion cases in World War II. Of this number, 300,000 were given their release from military service for psychological reasons following treatment. It is estimated that there were, in fact, twice that number of cases, since statistics only take into

⁴³¹ Patton, *War As I Knew It*, p. 382.

⁴³² Chermol, *Wounds without Scars*, p. 10.

⁴³³ Cf. [Chapter 9.9](#) Northern France: a quartermaster’s purgatory (September 15, 1944).

⁴³⁴ Graham A. Cosmas / Albert E. Cowdrey, *United States Army in World War II. The Technical Services. The Medical Department: Medical Service in the European Theater of Operations* (Washington, D.C. 1992), p. 236.

⁴³⁵ Keegan, *Face of Battle*, p. 328.

⁴³⁶ Chermol, *Wounds without Scars*, p. 10.

consideration cases where treatment was received at the division level or above. All patients successfully treated at units below the *divisional medical facility* were not counted. Apart from that, efforts were made to keep combat fatigue figures artificially low, and intake diagnoses often involved entries suggesting physical injury.⁴³⁷ It can be assumed that the above figures represent only the most serious cases of combat fatigue and that a far greater number of unknown cases existed.

By today's standards, as inadequate as the handling of combat fatigue and the equally incomprehensible hesitation by some commanders to acknowledge the phenomenon may seem, it is important to place this subject in its contemporary and international context. Soldiers fighting for Hitler or Stalin who experienced psychological breakdown were treated exclusively by a firing squad. The existence of a German or Soviet equivalent for combat exhaustion was recognized neither in the Wehrmacht nor in the Red Army, quite in contrast to the well established "fact" of *cowardice before the Enemy* in the malicious vocabulary of the two dictators. In total, 135,000 Red Army soldiers were executed for cowardice (and for multiple other presumed offenses) between 1941 and 1945.⁴³⁸ On the German eastern front alone, drumhead courts-martial sentenced 30,000 individuals to death in the final year of the war for *cowardice before the Enemy*, two thirds of whom were actually executed. In the Battle of Berlin in 1945, 10,000 German soldiers and civilians were murdered for defeatism by summary courts-martial and National Socialist security services.⁴³⁹

Good war stories

Let us briefly return to the cartoon that is the object of our consideration. It deals with the discrepancy between a youthful, propagandized impression of the war and its physically and psychologically destructive reality. The two replacements represent and expect a war that is accompanied by fanfare and assured of victory like the one shown in the movie newsreels. They stand for an adolescent fervor that, according to

⁴³⁷ Ibid., p. 9.

⁴³⁸ Andrew Roberts, *The Storm of War. A New History of the Second World War* (London 2010), p. 183.

⁴³⁹ Ibid., p, 553 ff.

Robert Kotlowitz, the Army must understand to make use of it.⁴⁴⁰ Joe represents the war as it actually was for countless dogfaces: a grueling mix of boredom and excitement; of unending exhaustion, mortal fear and panic; of hunger, thirst and constant discomfort; of loss, indescribable brutality, aggression and hopelessness. It cannot be assumed that he is expecting anything ...

9.4 Cold injury, ground type (March 2, 1944)

...the most serious menace confronting us today is not the German Army, which we have practically destroyed, but the weather which, if we do not exert ourselves, may well destroy us through the incidence of trench foot.

General George S. Patton, Jr.⁴⁴¹

⁴⁴⁰ Robert Kotlowitz, *Before Their Time. A Memoir* (New York 1997), p. 194.

⁴⁴¹ In a memorandum to corps and division commanders of Third Army. Cited in: Cosmas, *Medical Service*, p. 495.



Fig. 9 “Joe, yestiddy ya saved my life an’ I swore I’d pay ya back. Here’s me last pair of dry socks.”
(1944)
Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1944). Courtesy of the Bill Mauldin Estate LLC.

Willie⁴⁴² and Joe sit on the ground in – by all appearances – a field of reeds. Both of them have their feet submersed in water. Each wears an Army M1 helmet and a tanker jacket.⁴⁴³ Joe has stood his Garand rifle on end between his legs with the butt down, and it is leaning against his right shoulder. Willie carries his own rifle slung over his left shoulder. He has draped his right arm around Joe’s shoulders. In his left

⁴⁴² The soldier who is speaking has Willie’s facial features but not his characteristic hook nose. Either this is Willie, who for some reason sports another nose in this instance, or it is another dogface soldier who – apart from the nose– looks very much like him. The identity of Joe’s companion is not essential to the meaning of the cartoon, and therefore we assume that it is Willie.

⁴⁴³ Cf. [Chapter 9.3](#) An excuse for cowardice (January 19, 1944).

hand is a pair of socks. He says: *Joe, yestiddy ya saved my life an' I swore I'd pay ya back. Here's me last pair of dry socks.*

At first glance, the relationship between favor and returned favor in the above cartoon appears far out of balance. In return for Joe's having saved his life on the previous day, Willie offers him his last pair of dry socks. In a review of Todd DePastino's biography of Bill Mauldin, David Michaelis extols this act, ignorant of its full significance, as *small gesture of humanity*⁴⁴⁴. As we shall see shortly, the dry socks in the present case represent a thoroughly appropriate response.

Mediterranean Theater of Operations 1943/44

In mid-November 1943, Fifth Army medical facilities in Italy began to fill with dogfaces whose condition was to become known under the name of trenchfoot (designated in the Army's bureaucratic terminology as *cold injury, ground type*⁴⁴⁵). In the savage mountain fighting within sight of Monte Cassino⁴⁴⁶, cold, rain and snow were omnipresent. In such circumstances, it was impossible for the dogfaces to keep their feet warm and dry. These soldiers were simply not adequately equipped for the climatic conditions under which they had to do soldiering.⁴⁴⁷ Their light wool socks and combat boots offered protection from neither cold nor dampness. Warmer socks were in short supply during most of the winter, and when they were finally able to be delivered, they were useless to many soldiers because the larger sizes were missing.⁴⁴⁸ The first winter in which the young Army of the United States went into combat in field army strength revealed serious logistical shortcomings in its supply system. In the constant cold and damp that plagued the dogfaces' lower extremities,

⁴⁴⁴ Michaelis, *He Drew Great Mud*.

⁴⁴⁵ In contrast, air crews were afflicted with *cold injury, high altitude type*.

⁴⁴⁶ Cf. [Chapter 9.6](#) Italy: SHINGLE – A Stranded Whale (June 5, 1944).

⁴⁴⁷ Charles M. Wiltse, *United States Army in World War II. The Technical Services. The Medical Department: Medical Service in the Mediterranean and Minor Theaters* (Washington, D.C. 1987), p. 262.

⁴⁴⁸ In October 1943, the Quartermaster Corps could only fill 10 percent of Fifth Army's need for socks. In one case, when Bill Mauldin's 45th Infantry Division ordered 16,000 pairs, no more than 500 pairs were actually delivered. (Ross, *Operations*, p. 189.)

blood vessels became constricted and caused circulatory disorders that, for their part, produced an oxygen deficiency in the tissue. The resulting ailments included numbness, swelling and very painful feet. If these conditions were not treated, or were treated too late, they could lead to irreversible damage to arteries and nerve endings, infections, dying tissue, gangrene and blood poisoning. In the worst cases, dogfaces were threatened with foot amputation or death.⁴⁴⁹ Concerning winter 1943/44 in Italy, Bill Mauldin wrote:

There was a lot of it [trenchfoot] that first winter in Italy. The doggies found it difficult to keep their feet dry, and they had to stay in their foxholes for days and weeks at a time. If they couldn't stand the pain they crawled out of their holes and stumbled and crawled (they couldn't walk) down the mountains until they reached the aid station. Their shoes were cut off, and their feet swelled like balloons. Sometimes the feet had to be amputated. But most often the men had to make their way back up the mountains and crawl into their holes again because there were no replacements and the line had to be held.⁴⁵⁰

Other than keeping their feet reasonably dry and warm through regularly changing their socks, soldiers could try to stimulate circulation through movement and regular foot massages. Movement, which implied leaving one's position of cover, was not possible in many cases. Foot massage was likewise a dangerous matter. On one hand, soldiers had to reckon with the possibility of surprise attacks at any time, and to repel such advances without boots would be unthinkable. On the other hand, they also faced the danger that their feet, once removed from the boots, would quickly swell up, making it impossible for them to put the boots back on.

This already significant problem intensified when Fifth Army put VI Corps ashore at Anzio on January 22, 1944.⁴⁵¹ The bridgehead south of Rome was largely situated in the reclaimed marshes of the Pontine Plain, which Mussoli had equipped with a drainage system. The water table remained very high in the landing zone, however. As a result, the bottoms of all trenches, bunkers and foxholes in the bridgehead filled with water even before soldiers had finished digging them. The German Wehrmacht

⁴⁴⁹ Cosmas, *Medical Service*, p. 489.

⁴⁵⁰ Mauldin, *Up Front*, p. 37 ff.

⁴⁵¹ Cf. [Chapter 9.6](#) Italy: SHINGLE – A Stranded Whale (June 5, 1944).

had established observation posts atop the surrounding hills, and thus could direct its artillery fire within the entire bridgehead at will. This left the dogfaces with no option other than to remain motionless in their positions for long stretches at a time, magnifying the trenchfoot problem to epidemic proportions.⁴⁵²

The *Annual Report, Surgeon, Fifth Army* reported 5710 cases of trenchfoot during the period between November 1943 and March 1944.⁴⁵³ These were concentrated among the dogfaces of the infantry divisions, who were forced to endure conditions (including long periods of exposure to the elements without dry clothing as well as continual immobility under enemy fire) that were highly conducive to the emergence of this syndrome.⁴⁵⁴ Besides the individual consequences for all those affected, the epidemic represented a serious impairment for Allied operations, considering that 5700 trenchfoot victims (most of them dogfaces) represented the rifle strength of two infantry divisions. Over the winter, Fifth Army identified three causes for the epidemic: U.S. Army footgear was poorly adapted to winter conditions; the Quartermaster Corps was unable to handle the logistic challenges involved in distributing more suitable equipment or even, as a stopgap, additional socks in sufficient quantity; and lastly, there was a lack of awareness among troops in affected frontline formations of the importance of instituting disciplined self-help actions under such conditions – such as changing socks daily⁴⁵⁵ and performing exercises to stimulate circulation. When greater attention was paid to these matters in the following winter, Fifth Army was able, through heightened foot care awareness and superior equipment⁴⁵⁶, to

⁴⁵² Wiltse, *Medical Service*, p. 285 ff.

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 262.

⁴⁵⁴ Cosmas, *Medical Service*, p. 489.

⁴⁵⁵ One trick to having a pair of dry socks to wear each day was to drape a used pair around one's neck like a shawl. By the time of the next change of socks, these had usually dried out.

⁴⁵⁶ For winter 1944/45, thick wool socks and so-called 'shoepacs' (moccasin-like shoes with rubber soles and leather uppers) were provided and an informational campaign about foot care was instituted (cf. Risch, *Quartermaster I*, p. 106).

reduce the incidence of trenchfoot to 1572, almost a 75 percent drop in a single year.⁴⁵⁷

European Theater of Operations

For unknown reasons, the lessons learned in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations in 1943 did not carry over into the ETO in 1944. When the winter of 1944/45 proved to be one of Europe's wettest and coldest in decades, trenchfoot reemerged as an epidemic. By the spring, the overloaded supply lines were giving priority to channeling ammunition and equipment, and delivery of winter gear was deemphasized. This meant that the dogfaces in the trenches had to endure a second winter with barely adequate cold-weather protection. Omar N. Bradley, Commander of 12th Army Group, recalls:

When the rains first came in November with a blast of wintry air, our troops were ill prepared for winter-time campaigning. This was traceable in part to the September crisis in supply for, during our race to the Rhine, I had deliberately bypassed shipments of winter clothing in favor of ammunition and gasoline. As a consequence, we now found ourselves caught short, particularly in bad-weather footgear. We had gambled in our choice and now were paying for the bad guess.⁴⁵⁸

The cost of Bradley's *gamble*, which of course had to be paid primarily by the dogfaces, was high indeed. In October and November alone, the major American hospitals around Paris saw 11,000 cases of trenchfoot. In November, the percentage of trenchfoot patients recorded in hospital intake statistics rose weekly, from 1.3 percent of the first-week total to 4 percent, then 20 percent and finally to 24 percent of total intake in the last week in November.⁴⁵⁹ In the units of General Patton's Third Army, reported losses due to trenchfoot varied in November between 10 and 15 percent of total troop strength. Losses of this magnitude threatened the formations' combat readiness and caused Patton to issue an urgent appeal to his corps and division commanders:

⁴⁵⁷ Cosmas, Medical Service, p. 489.

⁴⁵⁸ Bradley, Soldier's Story, p. 445.

⁴⁵⁹ Cosmas, Medical Service, p. 494.

... the most serious menace confronting us today is not the German Army, which we have practically destroyed, but the weather which, if we do not exert ourselves, may well destroy us through the incidence of trench foot.⁴⁶⁰

At *ground level*, dogfaces tried out improvised solutions. They wore two pairs of socks with a wrapping of paper interspersed between them, a strategy that failed to produce the desired effect, apart from the fact that, in most cases, their feet no longer fit into their combat boots. Wearing rubber galoshes over the combat boots made them not only waterproof but also fully airtight, causing the feet to perspire to such an extent that the effect equaled that produced by waterlogged boots. The most common method of preventing this predicament turned out to be abandoning the boots altogether to wear the galoshes directly, either layering multiple pairs of socks or inserting bits of blanketing, cloth and straw into them. While such makeshift footgear succeeded in keeping the feet reasonably dry and warm, it reduced mobility to the point where this technique represented a serious risk on the battlefield.⁴⁶¹

In January 1945, with no end in sight to the epidemic and still no weather-appropriate equipment on hand, Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces initiated a campaign to prevent trenchfoot. In a communiqué, Eisenhower personally emphasized *the need for commanders to pay unremitting attention to the problem*.⁴⁶² Army publications began to feature articles and reports on how to prevent trenchfoot through regular foot care. Armed Forces Network Radio broadcast the same message to the front lines. Millions of copies of a trenchfoot brochure were circulated, and replacements were informed about the malady in information sessions. Field armies formed trenchfoot control teams to address the problem in collaboration with their responsible medical officer.⁴⁶³ As necessary and helpful as these steps were, they came too late to have a significant effect. The decrease in trenchfoot incidence after February 1945 was due more to the reduced intensity of combat operations during this period as well as to the onset of spring than it was to the launch of

⁴⁶⁰ Cited in: *ibid.*, p. 495.

⁴⁶¹ *ibid.*, p. 493.

⁴⁶² Cited in: *ibid.*, p. 495.

⁴⁶³ General Board European Strategy, Tactics and Administration Factual Reports, Study No. 94 / File R 727/1: Trench Foot (Cold Injury, Ground Type), p. 6 ff.

preventive measures. Between October 1944 and April 1945, a total of 46,107 cases of trenchfoot were recorded in medical facilities in the European Theater of Operations. They constituted 9.25 percent of all American losses in the campaign in northwestern Europe.⁴⁶⁴ At the *high command* level, such statistics meant victory or defeat in battles and campaigns. At the *ground level*, they represented tens of thousands of dogfaces who were forced to endure, in the best of cases, a very painful and protracted condition. For those among them who were not so lucky, trenchfoot resulted in amputation or even death.

9.5 *Lili Marleen* ... (March 31, 1944)

"Lilli" [*sic*] is immortal

John Steinbeck⁴⁶⁵

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 1 ff.

⁴⁶⁵ John Steinbeck, *Once There Was a War* (New York 2007), p. 60.



Fig. 10 “Th’ Krauts ain’t followin’ ya so good on ‘Lilli Marleen’ tonight, Joe. Ya think maybe somethin’ happened to their tenor?” (1944)
Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1944). Courtesy of the Bill Mauldin Estate LLC.

We see Willie and Joe in a fortified emplacement. It is night. At the edge of the fortification’s trench is a tangle of barbed wire. The two dogfaces wear tanker jackets.⁴⁶⁶ Joe is seated at the left with his back against the wall of the trench. He is wearing his M1 helmet while he plays a harmonica. His pants are torn at the right knee. Willie stands at his left. His forearms rest on the edge of the trench and his left knee presses against the trench wall. He too is wearing an M1 helmet. His tanker jacket is torn at the back and on the left arm. Unlike Joe, Willie wears a hip belt with a knife attached on the left. To the right of the knife are three ammo pouches and, beneath the middle pouch, a first aid kit. A canteen hangs beneath the right pouch.

⁴⁶⁶ Cf. [Chapter 9.3](#) An excuse for cowardice (January 19, 1944).

Willie looks down at Joe and says, *Th' krauts ain't followin' ya so good on "Lilli Marleen" tonight, Joe. Ya think maybe somethin' happened to their tenor?*⁴⁶⁷

Acquaintances

The cartoon deals with two different phenomena. The first of these is communicated by the fact that Joe is concerned about the well-being of the German tenor on the enemy side.⁴⁶⁸ An explanation is found in the imminent operational realities in the area in question. At the end of March 1944, the amphibious assault across the English Channel still lay two months in the future, and the Mediterranean Theater of Operations remained the only area where the Army of the United States was conducting offensive operations. When Operation SHINGLE bogged down in a stalemate after a short time, opposing forces both at both Anzio and the Gustav Line lay immobile across from one another.⁴⁶⁹ In this trench warfare situation resembling World War I, sometimes long periods of time would pass when nothing happened other than combat patrols⁴⁷⁰ and occasional artillery skirmishes; above all, there was no shift in the front line. As a result, the same formations sometimes faced off against each other over long stretches of time, getting to know one another in the process. On occasion, conversations (not often friendly ones) were struck up across the front lines. In *Up Front*, Mauldin describes an exchange between a German soldier and a dogface regarding Italian troops. Following Italy's switch to the side of the Allies, its soldiers were in a doubly difficult situation. Their new partners mistrusted them as

⁴⁶⁷ In Todd DePastino's catalog of Mauldin's WWII cartoons, which this study references in regard to the artwork, the accompanying text is depicted as beginning with "Fritz ain't followin' ya...". In the 1944 armed services edition of "Up Front" it is depicted as cited above, which is why I take the kraut reference to be the original one.

⁴⁶⁸ *Krauts* indicates the Germans in the opposite trench. While the German foe was generally known in World War I as *the Hun*, American army slang in World War II referred to the Enemy variously as *Kraut*, *Jerry* or *Fritz*. (Cf. Bishop, *Army Speech*, p. 246; Pyle, *Brave Men*, p. 256.)

⁴⁶⁹ Cf. [Chapter 9.6](#) Italy: SHINGLE – a stranded whale (June 5, 1944).

⁴⁷⁰ In the 1940s, preceding the invention and development of various means of electronic reconnaissance, regular combat patrols served the purpose of updating the exact position of the front line, identifying enemy formations on the opposite side, detecting troop movements at an early stage, establishing forward observation posts and capturing opponents for interrogation purposes. (Cf. Antony Beevor, *D-Day. The Battle for Normandy* [London 2010], p. 257.)

former opponents and *turncoats*, while their previous confederates saw them as traitors and deserters, treating them as such whenever they were taken prisoner.

“How do you like your new ally?” yelled the German to the American in passable English.

“You kin have ‘em back,” said our guy, having come from a region where diplomacy bows to honesty.

“We don’t want them,” shouted Jerry, and lobbed a grenade up the hill. It fell far short. The American splattered the sniper’s rocks with a burst.

“Swine!” jeered the German.

“Horse’s ass!” snorted the American, and all was quiet again.⁴⁷¹

Not all these acquaintanceships were necessarily of an irreconcilable nature. Elliott Johnson, an artillery spotter in the 4th Infantry Division, recalled a front-line encounter at two opposing forestry towers during the particularly bloody fighting at the Hürtgen forest during winter 1944:

The second day I was there, I saw another forester’s tower. There was a German lieutenant looking right at me. We waved at each other. I marked him on the map. I got my guns zeroed in on him, and I know in my heart he did the same thing to me. He was also an artillery observer. Along my ridge was a road. German tanks rolled along there. My target. He would watch my shooting. He was interested in my effectiveness.

I was bringing the artillery in. One day there came several German vehicles in line. Three ambulances were in the middle. That was hands off. I was just watching them go by. Suddenly somebody started shooting artillery at them. I looked over at the lieutenant right away. I shook my head as hard as I could. He thought I called the fire on those ambulances. I saw him pick up his telephone and I hit the ladder. I barely got in my house and he laid it on us. Almost knocked the tower down. Just his precision shooting. After he lifted his fire, I went tearing up the ladder again. I had my hands up and I was waving and shaking my head:

⁴⁷¹ Mauldin, *Up Front*, p. 50.

not me. He looked at me. Then he took off his helmet. That was his apology to me.⁴⁷²

It could also happen – and this is the transition to the second phenomenon we analyze here – that, in rare cases, opponents would make music together. The obvious and frequently cited example is the moment when the Christmas carol *Stille Nacht/Silent Night* was spontaneously and simultaneously sung in both languages across the front lines. Much more interesting, however, is the case of a young woman – usually portrayed as waiting under a lamppost – who enchanted both Allied and German soldiers.

Song of a young soldier on guard duty

The inaugural radio transmission of the 'Soldatensender Belgrad' [Belgrade soldiers' station] occurred on April 26, 1941, following the German occupation of Yugoslavia. The broadcaster's playlist included a song recorded in 1939 by vocalist Lale Andersen on the Electrola label under serial number EG 6993. The disk's B side featured the song *Lied eines jungen Wachpostens* [Song of a Young Guard], subtitled *Lili Marleen*. Only 700 copies of the record had been sold. The lyrics were from a poem by Hans Leip entitled *Lied eines jungen Soldaten auf der Wacht* [Song of a Young Soldier on Guard Duty], to which composer Norbert Schultze had added music. Andersen, who had been romantically involved with Schultze, featured the song in her stage program for some time before she recorded it for Electrola.⁴⁷³ The text by Leip reads as follows:

Vor der Kaserne, vor dem großen Tor, stand eine Laterne und steht sie noch davor. So wollen wir uns wiederseh'n, bei der Laterne woll'n wir steh'n, wie einst Lili Marleen, wie einst Lili Marleen.

Unsre beiden Schatten, sie seh'n wie einer aus. Dass wir so lieb uns hatten, das sah man gleich daraus. Und alle Leute soll'n es sehn, wenn wir bei der Laterne steh'n, wie einst Lili Marleen, wie einst Lili Marleen.

⁴⁷² Terkel, *Good War*, p. 262 ff.

⁴⁷³ Axel Jockwer, *Unterhaltungsmusik im Dritten Reich [Popular Music in the Third Reich]* (University of Konstanz dissertation, 2004), p. 234 ff.

Schon rief der Posten: „Sie blasen Zapfenstreich! Es kann drei Tage kosten!“ – „Kamerad, ich komm ja gleich!“ Da sagten wir auf Wiederseh'n, wie gerne wollt ich mit dir geh'n, mit dir, Lili Marleen, mit dir, Lili Marleen.

Deine Schritte kennt sie, deinen zieren Gang, alle Abend brennt sie, doch mich vergaß sie lang. Und sollte mir ein Leids gescheh'n, wer wird bei der Laterne steh'n, wie einst Lili Marleen, wie einst Lili Marleen?

Aus dem stillen Raume, aus der Erde Grund, hebt mich wie im Träume dein verliebter Mund. Wenn sich die späten Nebel dreh'n, werd' ich bei der Laterne steh'n, wie einst Lili Marleen, wie einst Lili Marleen.⁴⁷⁴

Lili Marleen (the real title was immediately dropped by the listening public) instantly found its way into the hearts of German soldiers and triggered a wave of enthusiasm that spread as far as North Africa, thanks to the powerful transmitter used by Soldatensender Belgrad. It was there, among the troops of the German Afrika Korps, that the mania over the song began. Listeners were apparently not at all disturbed by the fact that the story was told from the perspective of the young man posted on guard duty. On the contrary, male vocalists who also recorded the song encountered a notable lack of any success.⁴⁷⁵ Those responsible at the Belgrade station first became aware of the extent of the song's popularity when the station director, Lieutenant Karl-Heinz Reintgen, tired of hearing it on his airwaves, forbade it to be played. The resulting storm of indignation on the part of a furious listening audience left no doubt that *Lili Marleen* had struck a sentimental nerve among German soldiers. As a consequence, it was reinstated into the repertoire, earning a permanent slot as the closing number of the broadcast *Wir grüßen unsere Hörer*

⁴⁷⁴ *Lili Marleen* (1938), words by Hans Leip and music by Norbert Schultze.

⁴⁷⁵ Joseph Goebbels himself, among other National Socialist cultural authorities, reacted unsympathetically to this inconsistency. In addition, for various other reasons detailed later in the chapter, Lale Andersen was a controversial figure in these circles. In a radio address on November 17, 1941, it was announced that *Lili Marleen* was to be sung only by men from that point onward and that Andersen's recording should be taken off the air. Subsequently recorded versions by vocalists Wilhelm Strienz, Walter Ludwig, Will Höhne and Sven-Olof Sandberg were commercial flops, however, and the soldiers loudly demanded to have *their* Lale back. (Jockwer, *Unterhaltungsmusik*, p. 238 ff.)

[Greetings to our Listeners], in which letters from home were read over the air for soldiers at the front.⁴⁷⁶

The real surprise, however, was that *Lili Marleen* provoked the same effect on the Allied side of the front that it had produced in the German camp. British soldiers in North Africa, hearing the song initially in the German original version, became the first Allied enthusiasts. In 1942, the Reich's broadcasting company transmitted an English version translated by Norman Baillie-Stewart, a Briton working for Germany's foreign broadcasting service. Once the Army of the United States had landed in North Africa in November 1942, it did not take long for the GIs to adopt *Lili Marleen* as well. It became a symbol for homesickness, separation and yearning as well as the hope of reunion. According to Bill Mauldin:

Our musical geniuses at home never did get around to working up a good, honest, acceptable war song, and so they forced us to share "Lili Marlene" with the enemy. Even if we did get it from the krauts it's a beautiful song ...⁴⁷⁷

Ernie Pyle testified: *... we all loved [Lili Marleen] and ... we practically took [her] away from the Germans as our national overseas song.* Even the German propaganda machine recognized *Lili's* potential, and the song was accordingly approved to be played for Allied soldiers over the Reich's propaganda broadcasts.⁴⁷⁸ *In order to prevent any hint of sympathy for the Enemy that the song in German might generate*⁴⁷⁹, an Allied version was soon recorded by Anne Shelton, at that time the moderator of a radio broadcast for British soldiers in North Africa. Ultimately, in May 1943, the Chappel label in the U.S. released the song in its definitive English version as *My Lilli of the Lamplight*⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁷⁶ Jockwer, Unterhaltungsmusik, p. 236 ff.

⁴⁷⁷ Mauldin, Up Front, p. 50 ff.

⁴⁷⁸ Pyle, Brave Men, p. 258.

⁴⁷⁹ Anthony Hopkins, Songs from the Front and Rear. Canadian Servicemen's Songs of the Second World War (Edmonton 1979), p. 148.

⁴⁸⁰ Jockwer, Unterhaltungsmusik, p. 237.

Underneath the lantern, by the barrack gate, Darling I remember the way you used to wait. T'was that you whispered tenderly, that you loved me, you'd always be, my Lilli of the Lamplight, my own Lilli Marlene.

Time would come for roll call, time for us to part, Darling I'd caress you and press you to my heart, and there 'neath that far off lantern light, I'd hold you tight, we'd kiss good night, my Lilli of the Lamplight, my own Lilli Marlene.

Orders come for sailing, somewhere over there. All confined to barracks was more than I could bear. I knew you were waiting in the street I heard your feet, but could not meet, my Lilli of the Lamplight, my own Lilli Marlene.

Resting in our billets, just behind the lines, even tho' we're parted, your lips are close to mine. You wait where that lantern softly gleams, your sweet face seems to haunt my dreams, my Lilli of the Lamplight, my own Lilli Marlene.⁴⁸¹

In short order, various English-language renditions of the song appeared, including one by the British *Forces' Sweetheart*, Vera Lynn. The version by Marlene Dietrich, the American GIs' superstar of World War II, is often mistakenly assumed to have been the original recording, an error that presumably has something to do with the similarity between her name and the title of the song. *Lilli Marleen* was translated into at least 48 languages. One RCA Victor recording reached #13 on the American Billboard charts in June 1944.⁴⁸²

John Steinbeck, who worked as a correspondent for the *New York Herald Tribune*, devoted his entire column of July 12, 1943 to *Lilli Marlene*, her magic and her success on both sides of the war front. Curiously, his quotation of the song's lyrics was completely at variance with the official version. He cites the beginning of the first verse as: *Underneath the lanterns, by the barracks square, I used to meet Marlene and she was young and fair*. He then describes Marlene as a young woman ... *who first liked stripes and then shoulder bars*.⁴⁸³ In the course of the song, according to

⁴⁸¹ Cited in: *ibid.*, p. 237 ff.

⁴⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 238.

⁴⁸³ In the Anglo-American armies, the rank badges of non-commissioned officers consisted of a number of cloth stripes sewn onto the uniform's upper arm. Commissioned officers' rank badges were metal bars worn on the shoulders.

Steinbeck, she meets a series of soldiers of steadily increasing rank until she finally works her way up to a brigadier general, who proves to be the one she has been looking for from the start.⁴⁸⁴

Steinbeck's first verse and his description of the song's remaining lyrics are consistent with neither the Hans Leip original text nor the English-language Chappel translation. The latter is a cautious adaptation of the Leip lyrics, written to conform to the reality of the GIs. The version described by Steinbeck has nothing in common with either of these texts. It is a theoretical possibility that he based his column on the translation by Norman Baillie-Stewart.⁴⁸⁵ In fact, however, this concept is unlikely. It is difficult to explain why German propaganda would have wanted to portray *Lili Marleen*, its cultural double agent, as a promiscuous gold-digger interested in snagging the highest-ranking officer possible. It would be more reasonable to suppose that Steinbeck's text refers to an independent translation by Allied soldiers that retains the melody, meter, Lili Marleen herself and the lanterns, but otherwise simply recounts a disreputable and promiscuous story.

Steinbeck clearly takes considerable liberties in his creative recounting of the events surrounding the dissemination of *Lili Marleen*. He describes Soldatensender Belgrad as playing the record because most other records had been destroyed by a bombing attack. Then, in Steinberg's telling, after news of *Lili Marleen's* success in North Africa had reached Berlin, it was performed before a select audience of Nazi elites by Madame Goering, who was a former opera singer. This sparked a wave of popular interest in the song that waned only temporarily when Hermann Goering grew weary of hearing it, detecting an inconsistency between Lili's lifestyle and the conservative values of National Socialist ideology. By this point, Steinbeck maintained, the song's triumph had propelled it beyond Nazi control.⁴⁸⁶

We can conclude that Axel Jockwer, whose dissertation on popular music during the Third Reich contains a discussion of the myth of *Lili Marleen*, conducted his research

⁴⁸⁴ Steinbeck, *Once There Was a War*, p. 59.

⁴⁸⁵ The text of Norman Baillie-Stewart's translation is not known to the author and is unresearchable, making an examination of it impossible.

⁴⁸⁶ Steinbeck, *Once There Was a War*, p. 58 ff.

more thoroughly than did Steinbeck. According to Jockwer, Lale Andersen became *persona non grata* to the Nazi regime in the latter half of 1942. She was reputed to have declined a visit the Warsaw Ghetto earlier that year, and this refusal had awakened the first suspicions as to her integrity. In September, the Gestapo had intercepted a letter that Andersen had written from Italy to the principal playwright of the Zurich Schauspielhaus, Kurt Hirschfeld, a Jew living in Switzerland. When additional contacts with Jews abroad subsequently became known, she was banned by the Reichskulturkammer, the committee overseeing cultural matters.⁴⁸⁷ It was determined that she should *vanish from public artistic life* but that no action should be taken *against her personally or to limit her personal freedom* in view of her international celebrity.⁴⁸⁸ The BBC then picked up on rumors in circulation, reporting that Lale Andersen had committed suicide in order to escape threatened detention in a concentration camp. Goebbels himself personally exposed the *lying Allied propaganda* by allowing Andersen to appear publicly as proof of the falsehood. The international attention that the singer gained in this incident served to protect her against further sanctions by the Nazis. The ban on her appearances was relaxed in May 1943, although she remained forbidden by the Hitler regime to perform *Lili Marleen* in public or to have any contact with the song.⁴⁸⁹

9.6 Italy: SHINGLE – a stranded whale (June 5, 1944)

Keep on giving all you have, and Rome will be ours and more beyond.

Franklin D. Roosevelt to General Mark W. Clark⁴⁹⁰

⁴⁸⁷ Jockwer, *Unterhaltungsmusik*, p. 242 ff.

⁴⁸⁸ Cited in: *Ibid.*, p. 243.

⁴⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 244 ff.

⁴⁹⁰ Cited in: Kent Roberts Greenfield (Ed.), *Command Decisions*. Edited with Introductory Essay by Kent Roberts Greenfield (Washington, D.C. 2000), p. 324.

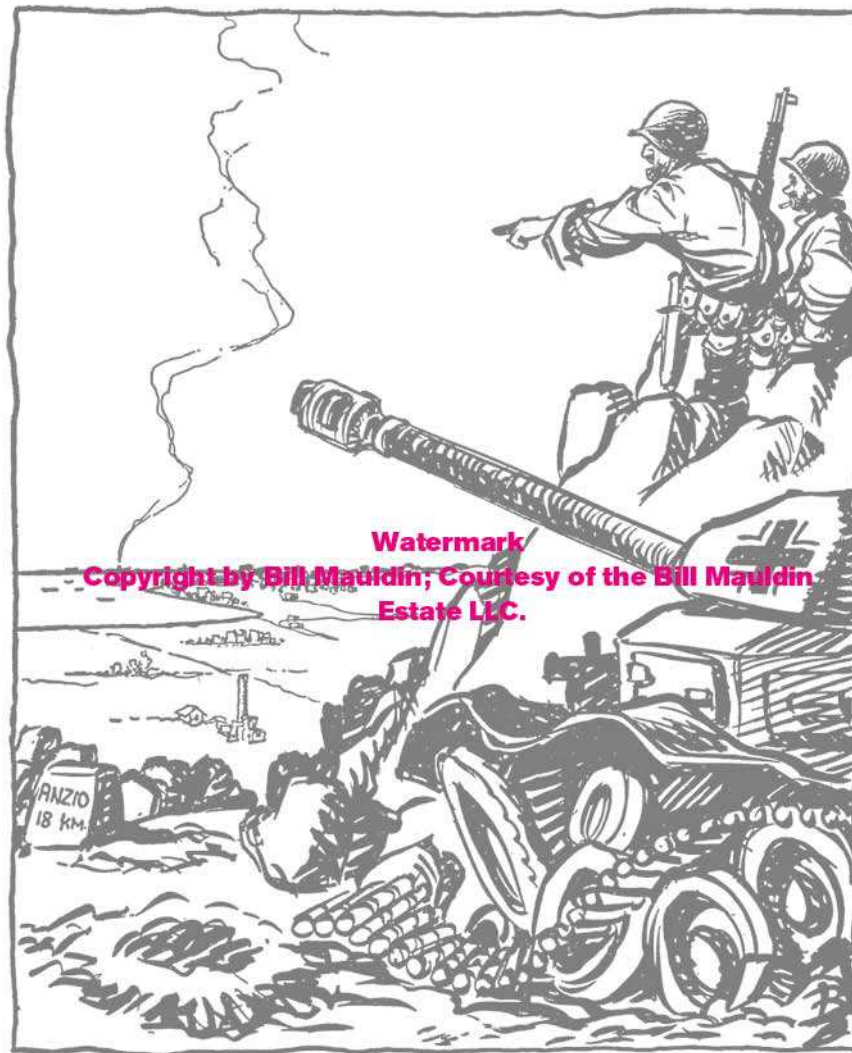


Fig. 11 "My God. There we wuz an' here they wuz." (1944)
Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1944). Courtesy of the Bill Mauldin Estate LLC.

A mountain road winds around a curve. At the upper left, we see a distant coastline with a town a bit further on and some isolated buildings in the foreground. Ships are lying at anchor in the waters beyond the town, and a column of smoke rises from one of them. A destroyed tank fills the image's lower right quadrant. Its left track has been blown off its rollers and its gun is inclined upward. The marking on the turret indicates that it is a German tank. Perched on a rock above the tank are two soldiers who, from their helmets and ammo belts, can be identified as Americans. The one standing at the right, behind the other, smokes a cigarette, his hands on his hips. To his left, the second soldier gestures with his left hand toward the panorama. He is the one, apparently, who says: *My God. There we wuz an' here they wuz.* A milestone at the curve reads: *ANZIO 18 km ...*

Strategic setting

After the Anglo-American Allies' conquest of Sicily in August 1943, Churchill, Roosevelt and the Combined Chiefs of Staff agreed to carry the Mediterranean campaign to the Italian mainland. In their order to Supreme Commander Eisenhower, the Chiefs laid out two strategic objectives for operations on the Italian peninsula: in the first place, Italy should be driven to capitulation and thus eliminated from Hitler's Axis; and secondly, offensive operations should keep the largest possible contingent of German troops occupied in Italy, so that these forces would not be available to fight against either the Soviet Union or the projected 1944 invasion of northwestern Europe. The Allies achieved the first goal even as the landings in Italy were still being planned. In secret negotiations on September 9, 1943, the Badoglio regime capitulated on the eve of the American landings at Salerno on the Amalfi coast. Although the Combined Chiefs had not defined a geographical objective for the operation, Allied commanders were, in fact, aware that the attention of Churchill and Roosevelt was focused on Rome. Both viewed the conquest of the Eternal City – one of Hitler's Axis capitals – as a psychological victory of the first order.⁴⁹¹ Apart from that, there were also military reasons that argued for a march on Rome. Its airports could be used to launch strategic air operations over southern Germany. Rome was the hub of the Italian transport network, through which German forces in Italy were supplied logistically. Lastly, the mountainous areas south of Rome constituted a formidable defensive terrain; in the north, the Allies would face no natural barriers until arriving at the Pisa-Rimini line, which would mean a major leap forward in the direction of Germany. For all these reasons, Rome was the objective.

After Fifth Army under Lieutenant General Mark W. Clark had consolidated its bridgehead around Salerno, it began to advance in the direction of Naples on September 15. In order to supply its Italian operations, it first had to secure a port with sufficient capacity (such as Naples), a mission that was accomplished on October 2. North of Naples, the Allied advance was stalled by increasingly more difficult terrain and a continuous series of defensive positions, designated in the German military geography of Italy as the Barbara and Bernhardt Lines.

⁴⁹¹ Ibid., p. 323.

Allied units engaged in arduous fighting and sustained high casualties as they battled from one mountain to the next, from one medieval town to the next. Meanwhile, the Wehrmacht and the Todt Organization were constructing the Gustav Line, the centerpiece of Germany's defense of Italy.⁴⁹² It stretched from Minturno on the Mediterranean coast to the vicinity of Ortona on the Adriatic. Near the western coast, it blocked entry into the Liri Valley, the only route to Rome suitable for large formations. Toward the end of 1943, Fifth Army's weary spearheads approached the valley's entrance where, in the meantime, the Gustav Line had been converted into an elaborate string of defensive positions. In the Liri Valley it made use of the Rapido and Garigliano Rivers, was anchored on its flanks in the mountains (and thus not vulnerable to a flanking attack), and featured a complex system of caves, bunkers, tunnels, minefields, barbed wire fences and fortifications. At its northern limits, 1,700-foot-high Monte Cassino provided an overview of the entire area while, to the south, the valley was bounded by the heights of Sant'Ambrogio.⁴⁹³ Certainty dawned on Fifth Army command that these fortifications could certainly not be broken by available forces and conventional methods. While searching for a solution to the developing stalemate, planners recalled an option that had been discussed by staffs across the Mediterranean Theater of Operations in the previous fall: an amphibious landing behind German lines.

Planning

Already in October, Clark had established a special amphibious planning staff within his command that would review possible landing sites along the western coast of Italy. This way of proceeding was obvious. The western coast represented an exposed flank for the defense of Italy, impossible to secure and monitor in its entirety. On the other hand, the Anglo-American Allies controlled the Mediterranean Sea and could determine the time and location of a landing operation in the hope of achieving and utilizing the moment of surprise. What stymied the planning of an amphibious operation at the end of 1943 was, in addition to U.S. unwillingness to become

⁴⁹² Blumenson, Salerno, p. 155.

⁴⁹³ DePastino, A Life Up Front, p. 143.

involved in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations⁴⁹⁴, a critical shortage of landing craft. The bulk of these specially constructed transport boats was in Great Britain – or on the way there – to be available for the invasion of northwestern France that was planned for early summer. After it became clear that Fifth Army would not be able to achieve a breakthrough into the Liri Valley (and thus on to Rome) without support, the consequences of Eisenhower's transfer to the ETO began to work in favor of a landing south of Rome.⁴⁹⁵ As a result, the Combined Chiefs of Staff gave the green light to prioritizing a number of amphibious craft for use in the MTO. The landing operation to which the boats were allocated was given the code name SHINGLE.⁴⁹⁶

It became evident relatively early during the short planning phase that SHINGLE, in contrast to the more limited amphibious plans drawn up in fall 1943, would become an autonomous operation of considerable size. VI Corps was replaced at Fifth Army's front to prepare for the mission of coming ashore at Anzio, approximately 30 miles south of Rome. The landing area along the Roman coastal plain bordered on the marshes of the Pontine Plain, which had been drained and made arable in a

⁴⁹⁴ Cf. the discussion of the MTO/ETO controversy in [Chapter 9.1](#) Sicily: Bloody Ridge (October 17, 1943).

⁴⁹⁵ The Anglo-American Allies' highest military authority was the Combined Chiefs of Staff, the joint representative body made up of the chiefs of staff of the ground, air and sea forces of the two nations. Together with Churchill and Roosevelt and in consultation with the supreme commanders of the respective theaters of war, it devised the coalition's strategic guidelines for the conduct of the war. Any situations where the heads of state and the Combined Chiefs disagreed along national lines served to magnify the relative importance of the supreme commanders in reaching a decision. With Eisenhower, an American, as Supreme Commander of the MTO, Marshall was able to push through his restrictive plans for the theater of operations with relative ease. When Eisenhower was replaced by British General Sir Henry Maitland *Jumbo* Wilson on January 8, 1944, the MTO again received more attention vis-a-vis OVERLORD. (Cf. The U.S. Army Campaigns of World War II, Anzio. 22 January–24 May 1944 [Center of Military History Publication 72-19], p. 6; Andrew Roberts, *Masters and Commanders. The Military Geniuses Who Led the West to Victory in World War II* [London 2008], p. 457.) Churchill, who at that time believed that Allied operations in the MTO were of vital importance, took advantage of this shift in the decision-making balance. Even as he was recovering in Tunis from pneumonia following the conferences of Cairo and Teheran, he was already beginning to intervene in favor of SHINGLE. (Blumenson, Salerno, p. 296 ff.)

⁴⁹⁶ Blumenson, Salerno, p. 297 ff.

Mussolini-sponsored land reclamation project.⁴⁹⁷ From that position, roughly 60 miles behind the German lines, SHINGLE was intended to serve two aims. The mere presence of VI Corps so far behind the front would constitute a significant threat to German supply lines and – it was conjectured – force Kesselring⁴⁹⁸ to retreat from the Gustav Line. At a minimum, however, he would have to pull individual formations out of the front line in order to confront this threat in his rear, which was much more strategic than tactical. Fifth Army, which would have launched an offensive against the Gustav Line a few days before SHINGLE, would then use all available forces to break through and march toward Rome. The second objective involved the Colli-Laziali Massif (the Alban Hills). Situated approximately 20 miles north of Anzio and 16 miles southeast of Rome at the northern extremity of the Liri Valley, this chain of mountains up to 3,000 feet in height represented the final geographical barrier on the path to Rome. From this position, it would be possible to control the major transit routes that ran from southern Italy to Rome, which were used by the Germans to supply the Gustav Line but over which Fifth Army also planned to advance to Rome. If these routes fell under Allied control, German forces south of that point would be cut off and the Allies' march into Rome could no longer be driven back. British General Sir Harold Alexander, to whose 15th Army Group Fifth Army was subordinated, summed up SHINGLE's objectives this way:

... to cut the enemy's main communications in the Colli Laziali area Southeast of Rome, and to threaten the rear of the 14 German Corps [at the entrance to the Liri valley opposite Fifth Army]. The enemy will be compelled to react to the threat of his communications and rear, and advantage must be taken of this to break through his main defences [at the Gustav Line], and to insure that the two forces operating under Comd Fifth Army join hands on the earliest possible moment.⁴⁹⁹

Clark interpreted Alexander's instructions in the following order to VI Corps:

⁴⁹⁷ Anzio Beachhead. 22 January–25 May 1944. World War II. 50th Anniversary Commemorative Edition (Center of Military History Publication 100-10), p. 5.

⁴⁹⁸ Field Marshal Albert Kesselring was the German commander in chief in Italy.

⁴⁹⁹ Cited in: Greenfield, *Command Decisions*, p. 330.

Mission: Fifth Army will launch attacks in the Anzio area ... a) To seize and secure a beachhead in the vicinity of Anzio. b) Advance on Colli Laziali⁵⁰⁰

Does point b) constitute an instruction only to advance toward Colli Laziali or to occupy the mountain chain? The instruction in Alexander's order to cut the German connecting lines in the Colli-Laziali area actually presupposes taking the heights. It must be assumed that Clark left his statement intentionally vague in order not to send VI Corps into battle with just one single, inflexible direction. Although he had been an enthusiastic backer of SHINGLE in the early planning stages, there were indications over time that Clark had become increasingly skeptical about the operation's chances for success.⁵⁰¹ In this particular case, with VI Corps commander Major General John P. Lucas assigned to carry out the vague order cited in point b) above, the resulting tactical course of action ended in a nightmare for the troops fighting in Anzio.

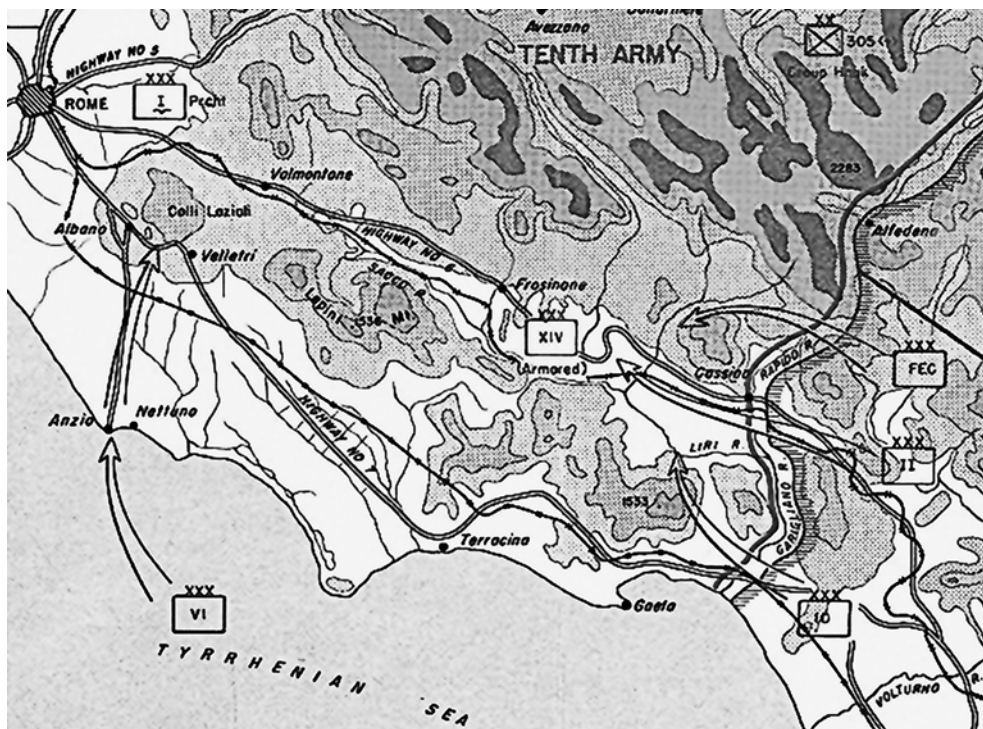


Fig. 12 Allied Strategy in Italy 1944
U.S. Army Center of Military History

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 330.

⁵⁰¹ CMH, Anzio, p. 6.

Operations

As mentioned earlier, the resort of Anzio is situated along the Roman coastal plain in the area of the former malarial marshes of the Pontine Plain. The Mussolini-backed project to reclaim the land resulted in a network of drainages and canals, the largest of which, the Mussolini Canal, ran from north to south approximately 9 miles east of the city. Its plain rises gradually from the beach in a northerly direction until it reaches the Colli-Laziali Massif. In early 1944, still only sparsely developed, it was used primarily for agriculture.

After two days on shipboard, VI Corps began to come ashore at Anzio in the early morning hours of January 22, 1944. As the first landing craft set off for the beaches, Lucas was confronted with a situation that even daring planners had not considered. SHINGLE had achieved one of the most complete moments of surprise in the history of war. Although German forces were well aware of the obvious possibility of an amphibious landing, they were privy to neither the preparations for the operation nor VI Corps' transfer to Anzio. Fifty thousand soldiers and 5200 vehicles had been transported to the target area from Naples in a convoy of over 200 ships without arousing the Enemy's attention. With the intention of inducing the southward redeployment of rear-echelon German reserves, Clark had begun a Fifth Army offensive at the entrance to the Liri Valley a few days prior to SHINGLE. In response, two German panzer divisions that had been in reserve in the vicinity of Rome had moved south to the Gustav Line. As VI Corps landed, it encountered only small, isolated units and individual artillery batteries that presented no threat to the operation. The German Wehrmacht had no formations left in the entire area between Anzio and Rome that could have jeopardized SHINGLE's success in its initial stages.⁵⁰²

Lucas, for his part, should have reacted quickly to this situation. Obviously, in hindsight, he should have occupied the heights of Colli-Laziali with the first wave of his landed troops. The German 14 Korps in the Liri Valley would have been cut off from its supply lines and threatened in its rear, having no option but retreat. The likely result would have been the complete collapse of the strategy for the defense of southern Italy. Instead, Lucas delayed for seven days while he consolidated his

⁵⁰² CMH, Anzio Beachhead, p. 14.

bridgehead at Anzio, personally supervised the startup of port operations and ordered his units to take up defensive positions around the perimeter of the landing area.⁵⁰³ While he was amassing troops and materiel on the beaches for an eventual breakout, Kesselring ordered every available German unit in the wider area to take up positions in the hills around the bridgehead. On January 29, when Lucas was satisfied with his consolidation measures, he ordered VI Corps to attempt a breakout. The tactical situation had fundamentally changed, however, and the opportunity to take the Colli-Laziali heights literally without opposition had been lost. During the seven days Lucas lingered on the beaches, German units had set up defensive positions in the hills surrounding the Anzio lowlands that would be able to contain any attempts to break out. The question was even raised, in the weeks and months that followed, whether the German siege might in fact succeed in driving Lucas' VI Corps back into the Mediterranean.⁵⁰⁴ Between the middle and end of February, the German 14th Army mounted a large-scale offensive to push VI Corps back into the sea, an achievement that was narrowly averted amid heavy losses on both sides. Casualties from the February fighting left both adversaries unable to conduct further offensive operations. As a consequence, the Anzio front developed into a *battle of attrition* in which the opposing forces sought to determine which of them could better

⁵⁰³ In order to understand Lucas's approach, it is important to examine a few details from his immediate past experience. At the time VI Corps was pulled out of Fifth Army's front in order to prepare for SHINGLE, he was suffering from psychological and physical exhaustion, a condition that today would probably be diagnosed as burnout. The cripplingly slow and increasingly difficult mountain battles fought by the Allies in Italy had brought him to the limits of his endurance. SHINGLE's short preparatory phase, caused by the limited window of landing craft availability, created doubts for Lucas that VI Corps could achieve its objectives at all. Lastly, his experience during AVALANCHE (the Salerno landings four months earlier) influenced his management of SHINGLE. One aspect of German land warfare doctrine in World War II that took a heavy toll on the Allies stipulated that every successful attack should be met by a counterattack of maximum strength within the shortest possible time in order to deny the opponent the opportunity to consolidate its gains. (Timothy T. Lupfer, *The Dynamics of Doctrine: The Changes in German Tactical Doctrine During the First World War* [Fort Leavenworth 1981], p. 12 ff.) In Salerno, Clark initially put too little emphasis on securing his bridgehead. As a result, Fifth Army was almost pushed back into the sea. This experience prompted Lucas to view securing the bridgehead and preparing it against a counterattack (which, at any rate, the Wehrmacht would not have been able to mount) as his most important task upon landing.

⁵⁰⁴ Greenfield, *Command Decisions*, p. 338 ff.

sustain the loss of human life. SHINGLE would have no further effect on the static front at the Gustav Line. In the months that followed, the bridgehead at Anzio would instead develop into a second static front. Only at the end of May 1944, after a four-month German siege, could the now massively expanded VI Corps break out from its bridgehead in a coordinated offensive with Fifth Army in order to carry out Allied plans for the conquest of Rome.⁵⁰⁵ The original plans had estimated that this event would occur no later than one week after the landing.

Anzio beachhead

The key to understanding this image lies in the caption *My God. There we wuz an' here they wuz!* From their opponent's perspective, the two dogfaces survey the area where they had been bottled up for the previous four months. They can see how exposed to German guns the VI Corps bridgehead had been. As the Wehrmacht was cordoning it off, it had an unrestricted view over the entire coastal plain from its observation posts in the Colli-Laziali Massif. Furthermore, since the entire bridgehead area lay within easy reach of its artillery, it could choose targets at will. This was an ability that produced, over the four-month siege, what Martin Blumenson recognized as Anzio's special quality of terror:

... the constant, yet hidden presence of death. Casualties were never [after the first month] numerous at any one time. But the continual waiting and expectancy produced strain, for every part of the beachhead was vulnerable to enemy guns and planes.⁵⁰⁶

These characteristics turned Anzio into World War II's most egalitarian front. There was no secure rear area. Troops that normally carried out their logistical duties far behind the front lines died under German fire just like dogfaces. The bridgehead, during its entire four-month existence, took continual fire from the German Wehrmacht. At no time and in no place could troops consider themselves safe from the German shells of various calibers. They hit cooks and bakers, medical personnel and typists, staff of the Army's giant supply system and mechanics – in short, everyone in the bridgehead. Because of the difficult supply situation among the Wehrmacht units in Italy, shooting was often sporadic. The Germans made a

⁵⁰⁵ CMH, Anzio Beachhead, p. 117 ff.

⁵⁰⁶ Blumenson, Salerno, p. 451.

perverted virtue out of this necessity, however, creating a psychological weapon by firing randomly into different sectors of the bridgehead.

During the February fighting, VI Corps suffered 20,000 casualties among the 100,000 troops that had landed by that point. Half of these were directly battle-related: dead, wounded and missing, the so-called combat casualties. The other half were non-combat casualties, including cases of illness and exhaustion as well as incidents of trenchfoot⁵⁰⁷ caused by having to spend countless winter days and nights in trenches half-filled with water.⁵⁰⁸ In order to conceal itself from German artillery observers, VI Corps began to cloak the bridgehead in artificial fog. The limited space and ever-increasing density of troops and materiel meant, however, that even untargeted firing nearly always scored a hit.⁵⁰⁹ Unless they were directly on the front lines, the troops spent their time in improvised underground bunkers, leaving these subterranean dwellings only when it was absolutely necessary to do so. The adverse weather conditions of the first months – constant cold, rain and snow – and the challenges of living in cold, perpetually wet holes in the ground accounted for a consistently large proportion of non-battle casualties. When spring arrived, swarms of mosquitoes from the area south of the Mussolini Canal beset VI Corps, turning malaria into a significant and commonplace problem.⁵¹⁰

Regular ferry service from Naples to supply the bridgehead gave Bill Mauldin the opportunity to make several visits to Anzio. His observations describe the atmosphere of the bridgehead with a profundity that few other first-hand accounts can match:

Anzio was unique.

It was the only place in Europe which held an entire corps of infantry, a British division, all kinds of artillery and special units, and maintained an immense

⁵⁰⁷ Cf. [Chapter 9.4](#) Cold injury, ground type (March 2, 1944).

⁵⁰⁸ Blumenson, Salerno, p. 424.

⁵⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 451 ff.

⁵¹⁰ In order to block the invaders' coastal route from Naples to Rome, the Wehrmacht had flooded all the arable land that had been created south of the Mussolini Canal out of the former marshes of the Pontine Plain.

supply and administration setup without a rear echelon. As a matter of fact, there wasn't any rear; there was no place in the entire beachhead where enemy shells couldn't seek you out.

Sometimes it was worse at the front; sometimes worse at the harbor. Quartermasters buried their dead and amphibious duck⁵¹¹ drivers went down with their craft. Infantrymen, dug into the Mussolini Canal, had the canal pushed in on top of them by armor piercing shells, and Jerry bombers circled as they directed glider bombs into LST's⁵¹² and Liberty ships. Wounded men got oak leaf clusters on their Purple Hearts⁵¹³ when shell fragments riddled them as they lay on hospital beds. Nurses died ...⁵¹⁴

During the four-month existence of the Anzio bridgehead, medical personnel losses amounted to 92 dead (among them six nurses), 367 wounded and 79 missing or taken prisoner.⁵¹⁵

...The krauts launched a suicidal attack which almost drove through to the sea. Evacuation was already beginning in the harbor when a single American battalion broke the point of the attack, then was engulfed and died. Bodies of fanatical young Germans piled up in front of the machine guns, and when the guns ran out of ammunition the Wehrmacht came through and was stopped only by point plank artillery ...⁵¹⁶

⁵¹¹ The DUKW, known colloquially as DUCK, was a triple-axle amphibious vehicle used by the American forces. In the codes devised by its manufacturer, the General Motors Corporation, the acronym signified that it was a 1942-design (D) amphibious vehicle (U) with all-wheel drive (K) and two locking rear axles (W).

⁵¹² LST – Landing Ship Tank.

⁵¹³ Even today, the Purple Heart is the American military order for wounded soldiers. The award itself is given only once, with a so-called oak leaf cluster placed onto the original medal or ribbon to indicate each additional wound.

⁵¹⁴ Mauldin, Up Front, p. 160 ff.

⁵¹⁵ Blumenson, Salerno, p. 452.

⁵¹⁶ Mauldin, Up Front, p. 161 ff.

The above description of 'fanatical young Germans' certainly refers to the Berlin-Spandau Infanterie-Lehrregiment⁵¹⁷. Hitler himself ordered the regiment's transfer from Germany to Italy so that it could participate in a large-scale German offensive in mid-February. As the name suggests, it was a demonstration unit, formed to teach conscripts the proper way to carry out tactical maneuvers on the battlefield. It had no actual combat experience at all. Hitler was convinced of its qualities nonetheless, and he insisted on deploying the regiment at a focal point of the attack. Unsurprisingly, the Infanterie-Lehrregiment attacked with unparalleled élan that could not compensate, however, for its total lack of battlefield experience. After suffering devastating losses, the unit saw its discipline and morale disintegrate, and the few survivors fled in panic. Since, at the express direction of the Führer, it constituted a key element within the German plan of attack, the failure of the Berlin-Spandau Infanterie-Lehrregiment contributed significantly to the failure of the entire offensive.⁵¹⁸

... You couldn't stand up in the swamps without being cut down, and you couldn't sleep if you sat down. Guys stayed in those swamps for days and weeks. Every hole had to be covered, because the "popcorn man" came over every night and shoveled hundreds of little butterfly bombs⁵¹⁹ down on your head by the light of flares and exploding ack ack ...⁵²⁰

At the front lines, German and Allied troops were positioned a few hundred yards from each other. Because of the rise in terrain, as seen from the Allied side, the Germans held the advantage of higher ground everywhere along the lines. There were scarcely any trees or other topographical features that could provide cover to move through the trenches or away from them. By daylight, the simple movement of

⁵¹⁷ In German: Instructional Infantry Regiment

⁵¹⁸ Blumenson, Salerno, p. 419 ff.

⁵¹⁹ 'Butterfly bomb' was the popular name for the German SD2 (Sprengbombe Dickwandig 2 kg – a two-kilogram thick-walled high-explosive bomb) with submunitions. Today this type of ammunition is known as a cluster bomb. A container with a certain number of submunitions is launched, opens, and spreads the submunitions across an area. The SD2 had three different means of detonation: upon impact, time-delayed, or as a kind of booby trap in which the detonator was activated upon impact and then exploded when touched.

⁵²⁰ Mauldin, Up Front, p. 162.

a soldier's head could elicit fire. Wounded troops had to wait until darkness had set in before they could be evacuated. The ground in the bridgehead was marshy, forcing soldiers to stand up to two feet deep in water. This meant that trenches could only be dug deep enough to accommodate a prone or sitting position at the most, and even then, they still filled with water within a short time. In addition to the ground water, the frequent spring rains and low temperatures sapped the energy of the dogfaces. Sleeping under such conditions was almost inconceivable. After repeatedly falling asleep in a sitting position only to be awakened by falling over into the ground water, soldiers lashed themselves to boulders or fallen trees while sitting.⁵²¹

... You wondered how Jerry could see you and throw a shell at you every time you stuck your head out, until you climbed into the mountains after it was all over and were able to count every tree and every house in the area we had held ...

This wasn't a beachhead that was secured and enlarged until it eventually became a port for supplies coming in to supplement those being expended as the troops pushed inland. Everything was expended right here. It was a constant hellish nightmare, because when you weren't getting something you were expecting something, and it lasted for five [sic] months.⁵²²

By the time the four-month siege of Anzio was over, VI Corps had suffered more than 29,000 combat casualties: 4400 dead, 18,000 wounded and 6800 missing or taken prisoner. To those figures were added over 37,000 non-combat casualties: soldiers who were lost due to illness, accidents or trenchfoot – or who were simply unable to endure any more mental strain.⁵²³ Winston Churchill for his part – who, besides serving as British Prime Minister and co-architect of the Grand Alliance, was also destiny's gift to World War II historians on the prowl for catchy one-liners – lamented to his chiefs of staff on January 31, 1944:

⁵²¹ Pyle, *Brave Men*, p. 266 ff.

⁵²² Mauldin, *Up Front*, p. 162 ff.

⁵²³ CMH, *Anzio*, p. 25 ff.

I had hoped that we were hurling a wild cat on to the shore, but all we got was a stranded whale.⁵²⁴

A mountain road winds around a curve. In the background, we see a coastline and a town. Ships are lying at anchor in a bay, and a column of smoke rises from one of them. From an elevation, two Americans survey the panorama, and one says: *My God. There we wuz an' here they wuz ...*

9.7 A door that opens only one way (July 15, 1944)

One problem with the replacements was that they hadn't yet accepted the virtual inevitability of forthcoming damage to their flesh ...

Paul Fussell⁵²⁵

⁵²⁴ Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War. Volume V. Closing The Ring* (New York 1985), p. 432.

⁵²⁵ Fussell, *Crusade*, p. 96.



Fig. 13 "I'm depending on you old men to be a steadying influence for the replacements." (1944)
Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1944). Courtesy of the Bill Mauldin Estate LLC.

Joe sits on the floor, leaning against a wall. He is wearing the shirt, pants and boots of the American summer field uniform, with his sleeves pushed up to the elbows. His M1 helmet is tilted to the side of his head. A bayonet is fastened at the right side of his belt. Joe is holding a paper cutting that shows a series of figures holding hands. His tired-looking gaze is fixed on the paper. Next to Joe, Willie is (apparently) squatting between the wall and a three-drawer dresser. His own shirtsleeves are similarly pushed up, and he too is wearing an M1 helmet. In his right hand, Willie is holding a bottle that reads *COGNAC* and, in his left, a bottle with a three-star label. Beside Willie's left lower arm, an M1 Garand rifle is leaning against the dresser. A cigarette hangs from Willie's mouth, and his apparently disinterested attention is focused on an open window behind Joe, where we see a third soldier, likewise wearing a helmet. He sports a pencil-thin mustache and has his sleeves pushed up

like the others. Captain's rank badges, two parallel bars in a vertical position, appear on his collar and the front of his helmet. The captain addresses the two dogfaces: *I'm depending on you old men to be a steadying influence for the replacements*. Since the only captain in the organizational chart of American rifle companies in World War II was their commander, we can be virtually certain that this one is Willie and Joe's company commander, here to request their support.

This cartoon is the thematic twin to the one from [Chapter 9.3](#)⁵²⁶. Like that earlier image, it deals with two different phenomena: first, implied by the presentation of the two dogfaces, the psychological effects of war on individuals who are exposed to it over time, and second, in absentia, replacements. In [Chapter 9.3](#), we have already discussed the history of psychological casualties of war, the various characteristics of the condition, and the methods used by the Army of the United States to come to grips with it. In the present chapter, our concern is, rather, with the second topic of the pair of cartoons: namely, infantry replacements.

In [Chapter 8.1](#), we concluded that infantry riflemen represented the expendables to the Army of the United States' enterprise of war. How – the metaphor is too tempting not to extend it a bit further – did the processes and procedures of production, distribution and incorporation into the machinery of these expendables work? How did they function?

Replacement system

A basic reality of any army in combat is that it sustains casualties. These include soldiers who suffer fatal or nonfatal wounds from enemy fire as well as those who are captured, have accidents, or are unable to fulfill their military duties due to physical or psychological illness or self-mutilation. This reality engenders one of the fundamental tasks of any army at war: namely, to compensate for its losses through a predefined system that can supply a sufficient number of trained replacements at the required moment at the location where they are needed. The replacement system of the Army of the United States in World War II, like the mobilization of its combat divisions, was organized around the concepts of industrial mass production. Replacements received 13 weeks of basic and weapons training (extended to 17 weeks in mid-1943) in so-called replacement training centers in the United States. After this very short training

⁵²⁶ [Chapter 9.3](#) An excuse for cowardice (January 19, 1944).

period (in comparison to the 52-week infantry training given by the mobilization training program), they were transferred to replacement depots in the U.S. where they awaited their posting to an overseas theater of operations.⁵²⁷

In the case of the European Theater of Operations, most replacements shipped out, either directly or with a layover in Great Britain, to Le Havre. There they were distributed to infantry divisions, passing through an average of four stations on their way. The 15th Replacement Depot at the port of Le Havre served exclusively as a transit station where soldiers generally remained no longer than 24 hours while waiting for their transport toward the front. The next stage was an intermediate or stockage depot under the jurisdiction of ComZ, the Communications Zone, where the process of feeding the replacements into the system began. Here they received their weaponry and were given the opportunity to fill any gaps in their personal equipment. Their personal information was updated and, for the first time since their departure from the United States, they had a payday. They were briefed on the current state of operations on the Continent and required to participate in various other training activities. The intermediate depots received replacement requests from the different field armies that were based on short-term casualty forecasts from their respective divisions. Based on these requirements, the replacements were then sent to replacement depots within the area of responsibility of the respective field armies, where they underwent further administrative procedures and received additional training. At the conclusion of this process, the soldiers then proceeded to the so-called forward battalions, where they were individually assigned to specific rifle companies.⁵²⁸ The entire procedure could take several months to move a replacement soldier through the various replacement depots – or *repple depples*⁵²⁹, as they were commonly known among the dogfaces – until finally arriving at a rifle company.

In contrast to the procedure described above, a textbook example of a replacement system would, ideally, pull an entire division out of the front lines and substitute a

⁵²⁷ Mansoor, G.I. Offensive, p. 43.

⁵²⁸ Ruppenthal, Logistical Support II, p. 338 ff.

⁵²⁹ Cf. Mauldin, Up Front, p. 122.

replacement division. The withdrawn division would then be brought back to full troop strength behind the front, devote time to exercises as a formation, and finally return to the front to replace another decimated division. Unfortunately, the Army of the United States had too few infantry divisions at its disposal to put this rotation principle into practice. To an extent, the replacement system as actually executed certainly made sense, and it facilitated efficient personnel management by replacing losses on an individual basis while formations continued to operate at the front. Left unconsidered in the system's design, however, were the psychological consequences, which had a devastating effect over long periods during the war. An understanding of these ramifications requires a brief look at social psychology.

Primary groups

In their groundbreaking 1948 research, sociologists Edward A. Shils and Morris Janowitz recognized that the so-called 'primary group' was a significant factor associated with motivation and performance in military units. Soldiers were provided with the essential resources they needed for survival in the first instance by their immediate primary group, which the authors considered to be the 12-man squad, and collaterally, by their company of approximately 200 men. This assistance provided them with a framework for mutual respect and affection and regulated their relationship to the military and civilian circles outside the primary group.⁵³⁰ It formed their common living environment, the military equivalent to the family. GIs in general and dogfaces in particular were caught between a powerful, impersonal military bureaucracy on one side and the forces of opposition on the other. The dogfaces' primary group, the immediate physical surroundings in which they lived, and not least, their buddies represented the only human elements in their existence. Outside this temporary support structure, they were little more than tiny cogs in a vast and impersonal military-bureaucratic machine.⁵³¹ Within it, they belonged to a social system in which they had real meaning, value and purpose.

Members of a functioning primary group felt a strong sense of obligation to satisfy the expectations, demands and needs of the other group members that normally

⁵³⁰ Shils / Janowitz, *Cohesion*, p. 280 ff.

⁵³¹ Thomas E. Rodgers, *Billy Yank and G.I. Joe: An Exploratory Essay on the Sociopolitical Dimensions of Soldier Motivation*, in: *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 69, No. 1 (2005), p. 113 ff.

translated into their military performance. Infantry riflemen, whose duties by definition involved a constant, acute risk of death, obviously developed extraordinarily intense relationships with the members of their primary group.⁵³² Ideological motives, however, were found to be comparatively unimportant. *The American Soldier*, a four-volume sociopsychological study of American soldiers in World War II published at the end of the 1940s, revealed a starkly nonideological image of the GIs.⁵³³ Apart from an unsubstantiated sense of being on the right side of the conflict (after all, America had been attacked by Japan and Germany had declared war on America), most GIs knew almost nothing about fascism – at least, not until 1945, when they finally witnessed the ultimate meaning of National Socialism at Dachau and Buchenwald.⁵³⁴

Replacement realities

When they arrived at their units, American infantry replacements were, as a rule, poorly trained for their duties and completely unprepared for what lay before them. Their relatively short preparatory period in the United States only included individual training. Unit exercises or maneuvers in larger formations were not carried out. Up until late summer 1944, all replacements were slotted into the infantry, no matter what the nature of their training had been. The replacement training centers still prepared soldiers according to the requirements of the mobilization phase⁵³⁵, but not

⁵³² Shils / Janowitz, *Cohesion*, p. 284.

⁵³³ Cf. Charles C. Moskos, Jr., *The Military*, in: *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 2 (1976), p. 61. Stouffer's study has no further application to the present volume. It is based on quantitative surveys of American soldiers in World War II, but its sampling methodology exhibits far too little precision to allow reliable conclusions in this context. Cf. Samuel A. Stouffer et al., *The American Soldier. Volume II. Combat and Its Aftermath* (Princeton 1949), p. 64 ff.

⁵³⁴ Arnold Rose, *Bases of American Military Morale in World War II*, in: *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (1945–1946), p. 413.

⁵³⁵ In September 1943, trainee capacity of the replacement training centers in the U.S. with respect to specialization was still distributed in the following manner: 8.6 percent anti-aircraft artillery, 6.1 percent armored, 2.3 percent cavalry, 11,9 percent field artillery, 3,7 percent tank destroyers, and 67.4 percent infantry. Anti-aircraft artillerymen, for example, especially replacements, were by this point no longer needed, however, since Allied air forces already had achieved unlimited control over European air space. A contrasting example is presented by the 22,858 battle casualties sustained by the 9th Infantry Division during the war, 96 percent of which were borne by the division's three infantry

in proportion to actual losses.⁵³⁶ *A good many of the infantry replacements*, lamented an officer of the 4th Infantry Division during the Battle of the Bocage⁵³⁷ in July 1944,

had not been trained as combat infantry ... I have found men trained as mail orderlies, cooks, officers' orderlies, truck drivers etc. ... who had been sent over, assigned to a combat unit, and thrust into combat within 24 hours ... These men were definitely inadequately prepared, both psychological and militarily, for combat duty.⁵³⁸

Even dedicated infantry replacements, however, were in fact little better prepared for the shock of their first combat. During the sometimes excessively prolonged time they spent in the replacement pipeline, many of them could only distantly recall the knowledge gained in their (at any rate short and inadequate) training. The most profound effect was due to the complete absence of formation-level exercises as part of their training. Effective functioning as a formation, the smoothest possible interaction among the various units on the battlefield, spelled the critical difference between victory and defeat and thus between life and death. Because of their rudimentary training, infantry replacements were not in a position to meet these demands. In comparison to the soldiers prepared by the mobilization training program, an above-average number of infantry replacements became frozen in a state of shock when they experienced their first combat situation. Because of their lack of simulation training, they were completely taken by surprise by the realities of the battlefield. The cacophony of deafening noise, concussions caused by explosions, smoke, fire and overall confusion – all this overwhelmed their ability to rationalize and left them staring and motionless. In countless instances, it meant their death.⁵³⁹

regiments. After Eisenhower strongly argued for an adaption of the allocations among the various specializations to match actual casualty proportions, the infantry's share was increased at the training centers. (Cf. Mansoor, G.I. Offensive, p. 251 ff.)

⁵³⁶ Mansoor, G.I. Offensive, p. 251.

⁵³⁷ Battle of the Bocage: Cf. [Chapter 9.9](#) Northern France: a quartermaster's purgatory (September 15, 1944).

⁵³⁸ Cited in: Beevor, D-Day, p. 258.

⁵³⁹ Beevor, D-Day, p. 258.

For the infantry replacements, by far the greatest influence on soldierly performance, going hand in hand with life expectancy, was exerted by the psycho-social effects of the decision to replace losses individually and in the midst of ongoing operations.⁵⁴⁰ Upon the conclusion of their training in the United States, they were sent individually through the logistical pipeline of the replacement system. Social networks that had developed in the replacement training centers were broken up and the replacements' primary groups were dispersed. Detached from their social reference system – consisting of companions but also officers and NCOs as symbols and representatives of the authorities – they proceeded to the front as part of an anonymous mass of strangers. As we discussed in [Chapter 9.3](#), dramatic temporary combat fatigue⁵⁴¹, a common occurrence prior to one's first combat mission, was absorbed socially under the conditions of an intact primary group.⁵⁴² In the social vacuum in which the replacements found themselves, their fears multiplied as a consequence of their isolation, and it meant that infantry replacements experienced by far the highest rates of suicide and self-mutilation in the Army of the United States. *Just before they went over to France*, recalled an American Red Cross nurse who served aboard a troop ship in the English Channel, *belts and ties were removed from these young men. They were very, very young.*⁵⁴³

Front

Only in the rarest cases did arrival at one's rifle company on the front improve the lot of an infantry replacement. *If he was lucky*, according to Paul Fussell, *a company*

⁵⁴⁰ As the catastrophic consequences of the replacement system on individuals became clearer, the infantry divisions, working at their level, attempted to achieve better integration of the replacements into the rifle companies. They tried, whenever possible, to fill out companies only in the rear areas and to give them time to coalesce their troops, achieving in this way a significant improvement in the situation. This approach was only possible, however, when the operational situation permitted. Adapting the replacement system in itself remained impossible throughout the war for reasons of manpower economics. (Mansoor, G.I. Offensive, p. 254 ff.)

⁵⁴¹ Cf. [Chapter 9.3](#) An excuse for cowardice (January 19, 1944).

⁵⁴² Research Memorandum 53-26. Sociometry of the Armed Forces. Effect on Morale of Infantry Team Replacement and Individual Replacement Systems (The Adjutant General's Office / Department of the Army 1953), p. 331.

⁵⁴³ Cited in: Beevor, D-Day, p. 258.

*commander gave him a hurried welcome and urged him to keep his head down and obey his squad and platoon leaders.*⁵⁴⁴ As a rule, the replacement was not so lucky. For security reasons, replacements could normally be brought forward to their platoons only during the darkness of night. There they were assigned to an abandoned foxhole, told from which direction to expect the Enemy and, for the time being, left to themselves and their thoughts. Charles Reis Felix summed up his initial experiences in such a situation:

Nobody gets out of a rifle company. It's a door that opens only one way, in. You leave when they carry you out, if you're unlucky, dead, or if you're lucky, wounded. But nobody just walks away.⁵⁴⁵

If they survived this first night, the morning inevitably brought them face to face with a platoon that had recently taken casualties. It was easily possible that the surviving dogface soldiers were poorly equipped to offer a borderline panic-stricken newcomer an environment in which he could acclimate himself. In most cases, they themselves were afflicted with a variety of clearly pronounced traumas and cases of combat exhaustion. They were more in need of (psychiatric) attention for themselves than in a position to accord it to others. At any rate, the group's interest in welcoming new comrades was greatly limited for diverse reasons. On one hand, a complicated basic mechanism exists in the human psyche that makes it difficult for a man (in this case) to open up to a new acquaintance after having just lost a person he has known and trusted. On the other hand, it was highly probable anyway that the inexperienced replacement, unfamiliar with the reality of industrialized warfare, would be the first to lose his life in the next encounter with the Enemy. In this community, where survival ultimately was associated only with luck, to be doomed to die was viewed as infectious.⁵⁴⁶ As a rule, therefore, infantry replacements were a solitary and extremely pitiable group, privately and often openly despised by their veteran comrades. They were poorly trained, most of the time deeply shocked by the brutality of the front lines, and often completely useless for combat operations. A staff

⁵⁴⁴ Cited in: Fussell, *Crusade*, p. 95 ff.

⁵⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

⁵⁴⁶ Beevor, *D-Day*, p. 258.

sergeant who commanded a platoon at Anzio offered the following pragmatic explanation:

One day at Anzio we got eight new replacements into my platoon. We were supposed to make a little feeling attack that same day. Well, by the next day, all eight of them replacements were dead ... But none of us old guys were. We weren't going to send our own guys out on point in a damnfool situation like that. We had been together since Africa, and Sicily, and Salerno. We sent the replacements out ahead.⁵⁴⁷

Hauling ass

Countless infantry replacements confronted their almost inevitable fate in one way or another. Some of them were not aware of their slim chances for survival, and some recognized their plight but were in a form of shock and saw no possibility of affecting the course of events. Others, in turn, saw an opportunity and took it. In the dogfaces' idiom: *they took off* or *they hauled ass*. The official terminology of the Army of the United States assigned such behavior into one of three categories: absence without official leave (AWOL), *misbehavior in the face of the Enemy* and desertion. Martin Blumenson makes no effort to gloss over such acts in his official report of a battle involving the 90th Infantry Division⁵⁴⁸, which was foundering at that time. He is creative, however, in describing the physical act of running off.

With the descent of darkness, the troops ... began to experience a sense of insecurity. In the pitchblack darkness, some of the demoralized troops began furtive movement to the rear [*sic*]. Stragglers, individually and in groups, drifted unobtrusively out of the battle area. Soldiers pretended to help evacuate

⁵⁴⁷ Cited in: Fussell, *Crusade*, p. 98.

⁵⁴⁸ Immediately following the 90th Infantry Division's first battlefield action on June 10, 1944, it fell into a vicious circle of ineffective leadership, heavy casualties, a high proportion of inexperienced replacements, plummeting self-confidence and, as a result, a series of new defeats with steadily increasing losses. Omar Bradley toyed for a time with the idea of disbanding the formation and assigning its individual units to other divisions. Before he could take this action, Major General Raymond S. McLain, the division's third commander in a few weeks, managed to resolve the dilemma. His competent direction provided the cornerstone for rebuilding division morale. Peter Mansoor wrote that the 90th *would emerge as a quality division in the battles for France and Germany 1944–1945* (Mansoor, *G.I. Offensive*, p. 72 ff.).

wounded, departed under the guise of messengers, or sought medical aid for their own imagined wounds. German fire and the dark night encouraged this unauthorized hegira and added to the problems of unit commanders in recognizing and controlling their recently arrived replacements.⁵⁴⁹

The regulations of the Army of the United States define absence without leave as:

The status of a person subject to military law who has failed to repair at the fixed time to the properly appointed place of duty, or has gone from the same without proper leave, or has absented himself from his command, guard, quarters, stations, or camp without proper leave.⁵⁵⁰

Obviously, desertion and *misbehavior in the face of the Enemy* carried more severe punishment than unauthorized absence. In practice, however, the difference among the various offenses was arbitrary and ambiguous. In the case of desertion, *[to] have taken leave without intention of returning, or ... beyond an indefinite length of time, or ... when his outfit is in a critical situation*, the Articles of War prescribed the death penalty. Away from the front, a finding of AWOL resulted in imprisonment, while the same offense at the front lines and *misbehavior in the face of the Enemy* were each punishable by death.⁵⁵¹ Ultimately, the decision of how to classify *furtive movements to the rear* was left to the immediate commander. The author of the present volume is unaware of any specific analysis of infantry replacements in this context. It can be generally stated, however, that all three offenses were normally treated to a certain extent with great understanding. As the primary disciplinary authority, company commanders had a major responsibility to determine how and whether an individual case would be considered. Available information leads to the conclusion that they and higher authorities tended to be very accommodating regarding the various consequences of such offenses. Of the approximately 19,000 deserters in the Army of the United States in World War II,⁵⁵² only one was sentenced to death.⁵⁵³

⁵⁴⁹ Martin Blumenson, *United States Army in World War II. The European Theater of Operations. Breakout and Pursuit* (Washington, D.C. 1993), p. 203.

⁵⁵⁰ U.S. War Department Pamphlet No. 20-5, *Absence Without Leave* (Washington, D.C. 1944), p. 1.

⁵⁵¹ Arnold M. Rose, *The Social Psychology of Desertion from Combat*, in: *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 16, No. 5 (1951), p. 614 ff.

⁵⁵² Cf. Fussell, *Crusade*, p. 108.

Dogface-ization

If the infantry replacements managed, whether by individual ability or simply through luck or coincidence, to survive their first stint at the front, they themselves quickly became veterans and dogface soldiers. Given time, they assimilated into existing primary groups, earning first the acceptance of their comrades and then later, perhaps, their recognition and affection. They developed basic abilities to survive on the field of combat: how to use cover and camouflage; adjusting their ear and reflexes to the noises of battle; discerning between enemy and friendly fire; calculating the proximity of an incoming shell from its sound.⁵⁵⁴ At the same time, they underwent a transformation, as described by Donald J. Willis in the winter of 1944/45:

These young [replacement] boys will know in a few days the horrible fatigue of the front-line soldier. Also the dragging step and the glazed eyes that see only enemy ... The clean, sharp boy with new clothes ... will be changed. In his place will be a man who at times will not look and act human at all.

Like the rest of the spearhead soldiers, Willis continued, *they will be dirty, frostbitten, and tired as they have never been before*⁵⁵⁵. Then the vicious circle characterized in Mauldin's cartoon would begin all over again with the next new group of infantry replacements.

9.8 The shorn women (summer 1944)

... their look, in the hands of their tormentors, was that of a hunted animal.

Forrest Pogue, August 31, 1944⁵⁵⁶

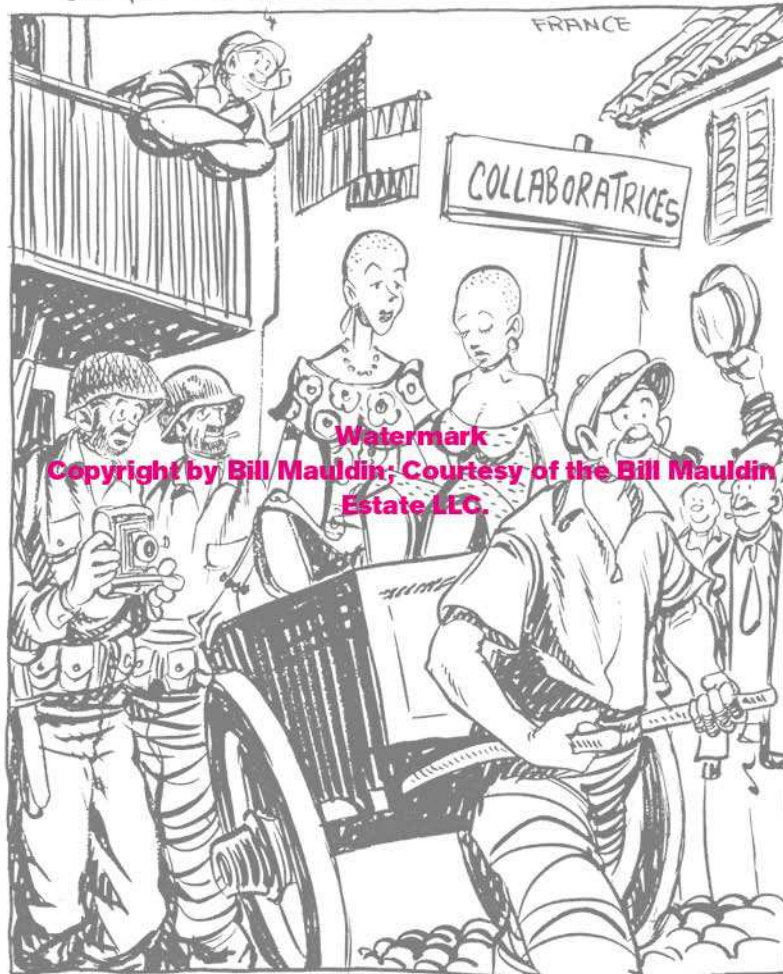
⁵⁵³ In all, the Army of the United States executed 102 of its soldiers during World War II. Of these, 101 offenders were put to death for rape or murder. The executed deserter had twice fled his unit during the heat of battle in winter 1944. (Cf. [footnote 733](#); Rose, *Desertion*, p. 614.)

⁵⁵⁴ Peter S. Kindsvatter, *Effects of Combat*, in: Peter Karsten (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of War and American Society* (New York 2005), p. 167.

⁵⁵⁵ Cited in: Fussell, *Crusade*, p. 99.

⁵⁵⁶ Forrest C. Pogue, *Pogue's War. Diaries of a WWII Combat Historian* (Lexington KY 2006), p. 199.

(Ed. note for Unifeature – they do this to little gals who “collaborate” with Jerry. You can put it a little milder –



152 "I'm gonna send this home an' scare my gal outta foolin' around wit' garrison sojers..." (62)

Fig. 14 "I'm gonna send this home an' scare my gal outta foolin' around wit' garrison sojers ..." (1944) Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1944). Courtesy of the Bill Mauldin Estate LLC.

A French street scene. In the background, buildings jut into both sides of the image. On the house at the right, we see a shuttered second-floor window and a shingled roof. Only a balcony can be seen on the house at the left. At its corner, two flags – the Stars and Stripes and (apparently) the French Tricolore – hang at an angle from their short flagpoles over the paved street. Leaning over the balcony is a man with his shirtsleeves pushed up to the elbows. It is hard to make out whether he is wearing something on his head, but he has a pipe in his mouth. The man's interest is apparently focused on the events in the street below him. In the center foreground, a man pulls a hand cart. He wears a short-sleeved shirt and a visored cap, sports a

pipe in his mouth, and has a contented and happy expression on his face. Two women, both of them with heads shaven, are sitting in the cart. The one at the left wears a short-sleeved summer dress in a flower print, earrings, a necklace, and a bracelet on her right wrist. She appears to be pursing her lips as she looks over the left shoulder of the man pulling the cart, her eyebrows raised. The second woman, sitting at her right, wears a sleeveless polka-dotted summer dress with straps. Its cut is lower than that of the first woman's dress, and its straps have slipped off her shoulders. She appears to be the younger of the two and, like her companion, she is wearing earrings. With a frown, she gazes downward. Behind her, a sign reading *COLLABORATRICES* is displayed above the cart.

Besides the pipe-smoker on the balcony, two different groups are observing the events from the edge of the street. To the right of the hand cart stand three individuals. At the front of the group is a man wearing a jacket, shirt, tie and beret. He has a moustache, and a cigarette hangs from the corner of his closed mouth as he observes the scene, showing no apparent emotion. Between his right shoulder and the right upper arm of the man pulling the hand cart can be seen the shirt-clad torso of another man, who is smiling. Behind the beret, the dark sleeve of an arm, its hand holding a hat, is raised into the air. Willie and Joe are standing behind the hand cart. Both are wearing the summer field uniform of the Army of the United States, consisting of wool shirt and pants. Each also wears an M1 helmet and has an ammo belt around his waist. Willie's helmet is dented above his right eye. Joe carries his gun slung over his right shoulder. A bayonet is fastened to his ammo belt. He is holding a bellows camera in the vertical position. Both are unshaven. Willie wears a neckerchief, and his face reveals a closed mouth and a difficult-to-decipher, almost neutral expression. Joe leans forward slightly and pays close attention to the scene, his mouth open. He comments to Willie: *I'm gonna send this home an' scare my gal outta foolin around wit' garrison sojers ...*

The drawing in Fig. 14 is from an undated facsimile of Mauldin's original work. Above the picture is a note from the cartoonist (*Ed. note for Unifeature – they do this to little gals who “collaborate” with Jerry. You can put it a little milder –*), giving rise to various questions in connection with the image. We have already established that *Jerry*

refers to German soldiers.⁵⁵⁷ But: who are *they*, what exactly is *this* and what meaning are we supposed to derive from the word *collaborate* in the caption? The instruction – *You can put it a little milder* – at the end of the note can be overlooked in this context, as it is probably an editing or print suggestion.

The savage purification

As the Allied Expeditionary Forces advanced across France in summer 1944, they left a power vacuum in their wake that set off a vast wave of violent recriminations, thousands of them with fatal consequences, in the liberated areas. In general, the local Vichy governments had collaborated with the German occupation forces. The anarchical conditions that emerged as a result of their liberation were used by the various political wings of the *Résistance* to take revenge on actual (as well as alleged) collaborators. As the general public vented its fury on all those who in any way reminded it of the humiliating four-year German occupation, some of them also took advantage of the situation to settle personal and political scores. These included putting private accounts to rights and sidelining political rivals for power in a post-war France. At least 14,000 individuals were murdered during this spontaneous national cleansing that entered French history under the name *épuration sauvage*.⁵⁵⁸ Historian Stanley Hoffmann insisted that a history of French collaboration needs to be highly discriminating in its approach. It could, he maintained, even limit itself to presenting a lengthy series of individual case studies, since there were almost as many kinds of collaboration as there were individual collaborators.⁵⁵⁹ Hoffmann's argument, even if exaggerated, is basically irrefutable. It is, in fact, essential to distinguish among a variety of forms of collaboration that, in turn, were motivated by a number of circumstances. We will now focus on one of these ways of collaborating with the German foe, along with the motives for, and causes of, such collaboration.

Horizontal collaboration

In keeping with the Mauldin drawing, we are concerned here with attacks on French women who were accused of engaging in *collaboration horizontale*, as it was called -

⁵⁵⁷ Cf. [footnote 374](#): Jerry / jerry can

⁵⁵⁸ Beevor, D-Day, p. 447 ff.

⁵⁵⁹ Stanley Hoffmann, Collaborationism in France during World War II, in: The Journal of Modern History, Vol. 40, No. 3 (1968), p. 375.

intimate relations with German occupiers. Even in the case of this particular form of collaboration, we can identify various motives and causes. Many of those who subsequently became victims were prostitutes who had done nothing more than expand their commercial operations during the occupation to include the Wehrmacht. While, in some regions, this act was accepted as a business decision, people in other parts of France persecuted such women as political traitors against the *Grande Nation*. Other objects of similar scorn were teenage girls who had quite simply fallen in love with German soldiers of their own age group or formed liaisons due to boredom, rebellion or other reasons. Thousands of young mothers whose husbands were prisoners of war or forced laborers, or had even died, had few options in wartime to feed themselves and their children other than to strike up a relationship with a German soldier. As Ernst Jünger observed while he indulged in the luxurious decadence of the Parisian restaurant *La Tour d'Argent*, food was power.⁵⁶⁰ In other cases, a mere suspicion was enough to call a woman to account for *collaboration horizontale*. In Villedieu, such an accusation was leveled against a woman whose crime consisted of working as a cleaning lady at the headquarters of the local German garrison. Single women who billeted occupation troops in their homes, whether or not of their own volition, were accused of being mattresses for the *Boches*. It was assumed that women suspected of having undergone abortions were likewise associating with *Boches*.⁵⁶¹

The tondues

For all the varied circumstances, causes and motives behind (actual or assumed) *collaboration horizontale*, the ordeal that faced these women following liberation was similar in most cases. As soon as the Allies had liberated a town or village, an eruption of self-righteous anger began against all real or suspected beneficiaries of the German occupation. In most cases, it was the women – as the easiest and most vulnerable scapegoats – who became the first targets of a violent moral outrage that

⁵⁶⁰ Beevor, D-Day, p. 449.

⁵⁶¹ Antony Beevor, An ugly carnival, in: The Guardian (June 5, 2009), <http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2009/jun/05/women-victims-d-day-landings-second-world-war> (date of most recent access: June 25, 2015).

often masked plain envy and a desire to create a distraction.⁵⁶² Mobs rounded them up in public squares. In many cases, their outer garments were torn from their bodies before their heads were shaved in a repugnant and humiliating procedure.⁵⁶³ While they were being forced to endure this torture, they were cursed and spit upon; some were trampled and beaten; others were smeared with tar, or their foreheads were painted with swastikas. There were known cases in Paris where prostitutes who had served a German clientele were beaten to death by mobs. As a final act to this perverted festival, the *tondues*, the shorn women, were paraded through the streets of town to display their public degradation to the widest possible local audience.⁵⁶⁴

In mid-June, on the first market day in Carentan after the 101st Airborne Division had liberated the town, 12 women were publicly shorn in the main square. In Cherbourg, an open truck packed with *tondues*, mostly teenagers, paraded them through the streets on Bastille Day, July 14. Many of the French as well as Allies were disgusted by the display, but they perceived either (in the French case) that they were not in a position to intervene or (in the Allied case) that they were not qualified (or eager) to

⁵⁶² The envy involves the material advantages that accrued to a woman who took up a liaison with a German, such as access to food in greater quality and quantity than that available to the average citizen during the exploitation of France. In 1992, in the midst of many eulogies occasioned by the death of the French actress Arletty, it was not overlooked that she had carried on an affair with a German Luftwaffe officer. A certain air of bitterness still prevailed even after almost 50 years, less because she had slept with the Enemy than because she had dined with him at the *Ritz* while the rest of France went hungry. Following liberation, many Frenchmen tried to hide the fact that they had not actively participated in the *Résistance* by eagerly joining in the hunt for *collaboratrices*. (Cf. Beevor, *D-Day*, p. 450.)

⁵⁶³ The public head shaving of women has a long and inglorious tradition in Europe. In the Middle Ages, the practice was employed as a punishment for unfaithfulness, since it presumably robbed the woman of her most seductive quality. In the 20th Century, this form of retribution and humiliation underwent a renaissance. German women who engaged in liaisons during the French occupation of the Rhineland in the 1920s were punished in this way following Germany's remilitarization. In the Spanish Civil War, Falangist women from republican families were shaved and forced into prostitution under the insane assumption that the left, at any rate, practiced free love. The most famous (fictional) victim in the Spanish Civil War is María, Robert Jordan's lover in Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. In Nazi Germany during World War II, an edict was issued that women accused of sleeping with non-Aryans or forced laborers should be publicly punished in this manner (Beevor, *An ugly carnival*).

⁵⁶⁴ Beevor, *D-Day*, p. 448 ff.

judge the event for themselves. John Colville, Winston Churchill's private secretary, witnessed the spectacle in Bayeux:

I watched an open lorry drive past, to the accompaniment of boos and cat-calls from the French populace, with a dozen miserable women in the back, every hair on their heads shaven off. They were in tears, hanging their heads in shame. While disgusted by this cruelty, I reflected that we British had known no invasion or occupation for some nine hundred years. So we were not the best judges.⁵⁶⁵

Sergeant Forrest C. Pogue had studied at the Sorbonne between 1937 and 1939 before returning to the U.S. following the German invasion of Poland. His time in Paris had turned him into an incurable francophile, and it was a great day and a *sentimental journey* when he returned to the scene of his studies on August 31, 1944 as one of the historians of the American V Corps. Near Saint-Denis, his jeep was blocked by a crowd:

... [we] found a group taunting a girl who had been friendly to German soldiers. Her head has just been shaved and Free French soldiers were escorting her down the streets while the crowd hooted. She, and her sister sufferers we saw later, got our sympathy no matter what they had done. For their look, in the hands of their tormentors, was that of a hunted animal. It seemed to that nothing made a person look so naked in the world, nothing was so overwhelmingly brutal in its humiliation, than this forcible shaving of heads. Rather to be pilloried all the day than to be ridden through the crowd like this. Neither did I like the placards on nearby shops that said "here is the house of a Boche," or "supplier of the Boche." It smelled too much of the "Here is a Jew" signs I had seen in Germany in 1938.⁵⁶⁶

To the leaders of the *Résistance* in Paris, these actions represented a thorn in their side, but they lacked the means and possibility to end the anarchy. Colonel Henri Rol-Tanguy posted warning notices in the hope that threatening the *tondeurs* (head-shavers) with retaliatory measures would deter them. René Porte was another Resistance leader in the capital, widely known for his enormous strength. He was reported to have personally cracked the heads of youthful perpetrators in an effort to

⁵⁶⁵ Cited in: *ibid.*, p. 449.

⁵⁶⁶ Pogue, *Pogue's War*, p. 199.

stop them from tormenting a young woman.⁵⁶⁷ Apart from general calls for order and individual measures, however, even the *Résistance* leadership could do little. It was too decentralized and its command structure largely too voluntary to be able to enforce a ban. In total, at least 20,000 cases are known where French women were forced to suffer this fate. In the face of some estimates that 80,000 French children had German fathers, the actual number could be much greater.

Sociological digression

Sociologist Joane Nagel describes a case from 1944 in which a young French woman whose father was in the *Résistance* suffered the same fate as other *collaboratrices horizontales*:

The war was not finished, but in Paris it assumed another form – more perverse, more degrading ... The “shorn woman” of rue Petit-Musc ... walked along with her wedge-soled shoes tied around her neck, stiff like those undergoing a major initiation. Her face was frozen like a Buddha, her carriage tense and superb in the midst of a shouting, screeching mob of faces contorted by hatred, groping and opportunistic hands, eyes congested by excitement, festivity, sexuality, sadism.⁵⁶⁸

Using this example and two photographs (two *tondues* being led through the streets by a mob and a blindfolded male collaborator awaiting the firing squad), Nagel advances the thesis that the punishment of female sexual collaborators succeeding in reinstating the sexual and nationalistic hegemony of the French patriarchy. National sexual order was restored.⁵⁶⁹ Her comparison of the two photos reveals ... *the gendered nature of patriotism, treason, betrayal, and the relation and relative importance of men and women to the nation.*⁵⁷⁰ It is undeniable that patriotism and especially treason and deceit had meanings that differed by gender in a patriarchal and occupied society like that of 1940s France. What is not apparent to the author of

⁵⁶⁷ Beevor, *An ugly carnival*.

⁵⁶⁸ Cited in: Joane Nagel, *Ethnicity and Sexuality*, in: *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 26 (2000), p. 107.

⁵⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

⁵⁷⁰ Joane Nagel, *Sexualizing the Sociological: Queering and Querying the Intimate Substructure of Social Life*, in: *The Sociological Quarterly*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (Winter 2000), p. 3.

the present work, however, is whether Nagel, in the example she cites, assigns a relatively greater nationalistic importance to the male collaborator, because he is the one being executed. Against this, one could argue that women and men were killed in roughly equal proportions during the *épuration sauvage*. In Brittany, for example, two times more women than men were put to death during the cleansings. How does one incorporate that particular fact into this reasoning? A regional phenomenon of nationalistic regard for the importance of womanhood, perhaps?

Furthermore, to make the gendered confusion complete, it also occasionally happened that men were shorn of their hair for having worked voluntarily in German factories.⁵⁷¹

I am convinced that these events should naturally be viewed in the context of the patriarchal society within which they took place. Discovery of a sexist-patriarchal conspiracy in thousands of more or less individual incidents can only be either illusional or agenda-driven. Nagel's theory draws from two fragments of source material to analyze a highly complex system of multicausally intertwined events. On closer examination, questions immediately arise. I would rather make the case for an approach that is more mainstream but still firmly rooted in the realities of 1940s France: namely, that within the patriarchal mindset negotiated above, *collaboration horizontale* was the principal activity, among the few available to women, by which they could be accused of collaboration. There are several explanations why the *tondues* were more often humiliated than murdered: first, because (pure) sexual collaboration as an insult against the French nation did at best immaterial damage. From a pragmatic Resistance perspective, it could even be viewed as a distraction and a potential source for exploitable individual vulnerabilities to the German occupation force, while male-dominated fields of collaboration like politics, economics and intelligence had a price tag measurable in influence, blood and raw power. As a result, *collaboration horizontale* (in the inherent rationale) did not merit capital punishment. Second, the perverted logic that a traditional punishment for sexual misconduct was appropriate in these cases. Third, that putting women to death was considered to be a more of a taboo in patriarchal-conservative and pre-emancipation France than might be the case these days.

⁵⁷¹ Beevor, D-Day, p. 448 ff.

Dear John

Let us return now to Bill Mauldin's cartoon. The questions we posed at the start of this chapter have now been sufficiently answered: *they* – refers to the perpetrators, *this* – to the deed, yielding the specific definition of *collaborate* in Mauldin's note. All this reveals as well the meaning of Joe's captioned observation: *I'm gonna send this home an' scare my gal outta foolin around wit' garrison sojers ...*

Following the logic of Nagel's approach, Joe intends to send his girlfriend a photo of the scene being played out in front of him. Through this implicit threat of comparable punishment, Joe seeks to communicate his manifest claim to sexual hegemony over her. Furthermore, this scenario of intimidation reveals his intention to prevent any unilateral emancipation from his sexual hegemony facilitated by a *garrison sojer*⁵⁷².

In actuality, the importance of letters from the homefront, and particularly their positive effect on the compass that guided the dogfaces' general morale, should not be underestimated. Such correspondence represented the only possibility for soldiers abroad to remain in touch with family, friends or a wife or girlfriend in the United States. A particular kind of communiqué known as the *Dear John letter* was the major exception. This was the dogfaces' vernacular expression designating a letter from a wife or girlfriend in which she informed her soldier of her intention to end the relationship in order to take up with another man.⁵⁷³ The reality of spending months or years apart exerted great stress on both participants in a partnership and the circumstances under which they had to keep relationships with homefront partners alive gave rise to profound concern on the part of many dogfaces.

They themselves were confronting the absolutely exceptional circumstances of warfare. One way of dealing with this threatening, extraordinary situation was to idealize and magnify everything – particularly romantic relationships – that represented home. They saw the prospect of going back to their sweetheart as their reward for enduring the war's hardships.⁵⁷⁴ Those with more flexible moral

⁵⁷² Garrison soldiers served away from the front; the reference in this case is to the Zone of the Interior, which was the United States.

⁵⁷³ Morris Finder, "That's All She Wrote", in: *American Speech*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (1957), p. 239.

⁵⁷⁴ Kennett, G.I., p. 71 ff.

tendencies viewed the very extraordinary circumstances as an opportunity to engage in a dual code of ethics. One set of values applied to contacts with the homeland, while the other was valid for the day-to-day realities of war. In most cases, the dogfaces' living conditions were far too unstable and constantly changing to allow for serious love affairs. In the case of the morally flexible, any short-lived amorous adventures were too rare to threaten their back-home relationships.⁵⁷⁵

The (in our case always female) partners who remained in the U.S. found themselves in another sort of extraordinary circumstances. Six million American women took up the industrial jobs left by the men who went to war. They received unequal pay for equal work, were passed over for promotion in favor of male co-workers and had to endure allegations that they lacked professionalism. With respect to their families, it was of course expected that they would keep house as perfectly, and keep their children as happy, as they had done before the war. Support facilities like day care centers were rare, and workplace relations so inflexible, that shopping and other basic household chores could turn into logistical challenges. Fundamentalist conservatives in dread over the imminent collapse of the American family sang the background tune in this new work-filled life.⁵⁷⁶

In spite (or perhaps exactly because) of these adverse conditions, a new feminine self-awareness emerged. Women indeed filled the manpower vacancies in American industry. They did their part in the war against the Axis powers. In most cases, they discovered a way to overcome the parallel challenges of work, housekeeping and family. They earned paychecks and made financial decisions, and they experienced a degree of independence and freedom that had been unthinkable up to that point.⁵⁷⁷ Embedded in a wholly new daily routine, the absence of their partners could also become day-to-day reality, paving the way for psychological separation. With their partners – even those who were assiduous in their letter writing – fading into distant memory, it was often simply a question of time before women found themselves in

⁵⁷⁵ Mark P. Parillo, World War II, in: Peter Karsten (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of War and American Society* (New York 2005), p. 955.

⁵⁷⁶ Maureen W. Greenwald, *Women in the Workforce: World War I and World War II*, in: Peter Karsten (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of War and American Society* (New York 2005), p. 939 ff.

⁵⁷⁷ Parillo, *World War II*, p. 956.

situations where an opportunity arose to open up to someone new – a *garrison sojer*, for example.

Mauldin's cartoon touches on feelings of insecurity and powerlessness that soldiers experienced thousands of times with respect to life at home, sentiments that only truly self-assured dogfaces would have managed to avoid. In sum, he portrayed an unwilling captivity in the "wrong" life, while the "right" one back home developed into increasing uncertainty from the perspective of the dogfaces. The specific manner in which Mauldin conveyed his topic may not appear to be particularly tasteful – in hindsight, a comparatively simple judgment.

9.9 Northern France: a quartermaster's purgatory (September 15, 1944)

Port capacity is not what it should be, the roads are already clogged with our transport, bridges are out, signal communications are bad; yet these deterrents are overshadowed by the frequent headlines of victorious battles.

Harry C. Butcher, August 31, 1944⁵⁷⁸

⁵⁷⁸ Butcher, *Three Years*, p. 655.

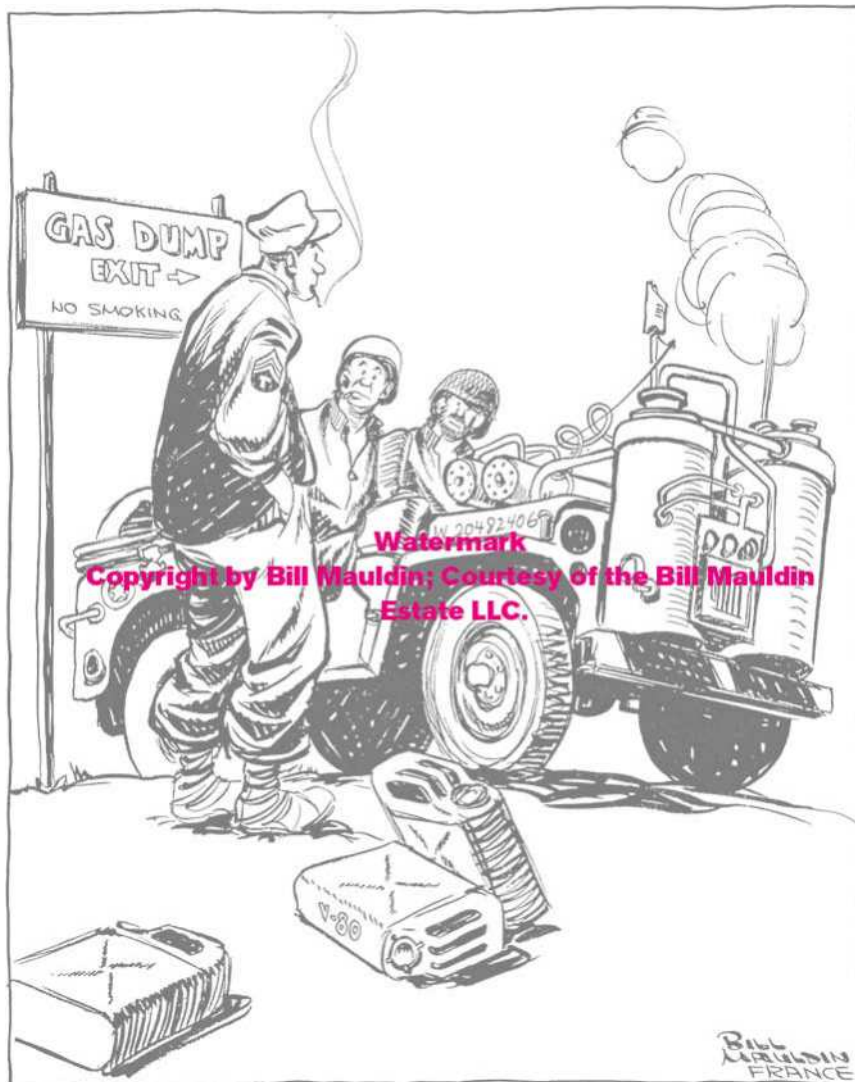


Fig. 15 “Sorry. Now we’re outta charcoal too.” (1944)
Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1944). Courtesy of the Bill Mauldin Estate LLC.

Three jerry cans are seen in the foreground of the cartoon.⁵⁷⁹ On a sign in the background at left, an arrow pointing to the right indicates the exit of a *GAS DUMP*. A warning in smaller print below it reads *NO SMOKING*. Of course, a cigarette is hanging out of the corner of the mouth of the T/4⁵⁸⁰, who is standing in front of the

⁵⁷⁹ Cf. [Chapter 9.1](#) Sicily: Bloody Ridge (October 17, 1943).

⁵⁸⁰ T/4 – Technician Fourth Grade: Technicians, who were introduced into the Army at the beginning of 1942, held specialist ranks. A badge with three yellow stripes worn on the right upper arm was the designation for a sergeant. The letter T in the bulge at the bottom of the badge, as shown in the cartoon, indicates that the wearer is a T/4. Because of their special qualifications (for example, tank driver or combat engineer, but also cook or mechanic), such soldiers received sergeant’s pay without having the customary command responsibilities (for example, as a squad leader). T/4s formed part of

jerry cans, hands – at least the right one, which is visible to us – in his pants pockets. He wears his Army field uniform with the shirt untucked, and a herringbone twill cap⁵⁸¹. In the background, between the T/4 and the sign, an apparently modified ¼-ton 4x4 truck⁵⁸², better known as a jeep⁵⁸³, is idling. Two soldiers in tanker jackets

a rank order that included the T/5 (corporal) one rank below and the T/3 (staff sergeant) a rank above. The term *grade* refers to the pay grade for enlisted soldiers and NCOs that extended from 1st Grade (first sergeant) down to 7th Grade (private). As a rule, these service grades were addressed not as technicians but according to their equivalent NCO service grades of corporal, sergeant or staff sergeant.

⁵⁸¹ The short brim herringbone twill cap was originally developed for Armored Corps troops. It was subsequently also distributed to mechanics and other technical troops such as filling station personnel (Stanton, Army Uniforms, p. 75).

⁵⁸² The ¼-ton 4x4 truck – or jeep – joined the motor fleet of the Army of the United States in 1940. That summer, the Army, which had been considering a small, fast reconnaissance motor vehicle since the 1930s, tested a model built to its specifications by the American Bantam Car Company of Butler, Pennsylvania. Robust, powerful and extremely agile, only 10 feet in length and approximately 3 feet in height, it fulfilled all expectations, and the first consignment of 1500 vehicles was ordered. The Quartermaster Corps objected, however, to giving such a large contract to a relatively small manufacturer like Bantam, and thus equivalent orders of 1500 vehicles were placed with Willys Overland and Ford, companies that had expressed their interest in the meantime. Ford and Willys Overland were authorized to use the Bantam blueprints in constructing their own cars, naturally leading to (unsuccessful) protests coming from Butler. Following the testing of all three (very similar) models, the Quartermaster Corps selected the Willys Overland version as its standard. When another 16,000 vehicles were put out for bid, Willys submitted the lowest quote and received the contract to build them. Shortly after the start of production, it became clear that Willys would not be able to meet the required quota, and Ford was additionally contracted to build the Willys model, using Willys construction plans. As a small manufacturing company, Bantam was totally excluded from jeep production at this time. While the Butler firm later received Army contracts for trailers, it played no further part in the production of the vehicle that it had developed from scratch. After the war, when Willys Overland introduced the slogan *we created and perfected the jubilant Jeep*, Bantam sought and was awarded an injunction against its use. An early Bantam jeep model was included in an exhibit at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington as a recognition of Bantam's pioneering role in the vehicle's development (Harry C. Thomson / Lida Mayo, United States Army in World War II. The Technical Services. The Ordnance Department: Procurement and Supply [Washington, D.C. 1991], p. 276 ff.).

⁵⁸³ A larger ½-ton 4x4 truck was originally designated as 'jeep', with the ¼-ton 4x4 truck being called 'peep'. When the ½-ton truck was dropped from the motor fleet of the Army of the United States, the name 'jeep' was transferred to the smaller vehicle. There are two theories as to the etymology of the name. The first maintains that the word sounds like the vehicle's 'GP' (general purpose) designation.

are sitting in the vehicle.⁵⁸⁴ The bearded face and M1 helmet with camouflage netting displayed by the one in the driver's seat create the impression that he is a dogface soldier, while the clean-cut appearance of his closely shaven passenger suggests that this is an officer. The barrel of an M1 Garand rifle protrudes from an exterior gun case mounted behind the jeep's right front fender. The vehicle has been modified to accommodate two cylindrical objects mounted vertically at the front of its grill. Lying across the hood, at a right angle to the driving direction, are two smaller cylinders. A rectangular object can be recognized in front of the grill attachment, at the lower portion of which is a kind of hatch with a bolt handle and grid. Above it are three round objects. A gauge-like object protrudes from the left-hand front cylinder. All five of the attached elements described above are connected to one another by various straight and spiral tubes. Gas or steam is escaping from the right-hand front cylinder, and what looks like a steam whistle juts out of the cylinder on the left.

The two soldiers sitting in the vehicle are looking perplexedly at the T/4 as he tells them: Sorry. *Now we're outta charcoal too.* The cartoon's setting, the location information in the picture, its caption and date of publication lead to the conclusion that the jeep's modification is a charcoal carburetor. The illustration's subject thus has to be the Allied supply crisis in northern France in late summer and fall of 1944. This crisis marked the end of an operational (and, for the dogfaces, emotional and physical) *tour de force*. In order to grasp its full meaning, we need to look back three months and review the course and characteristics of the Allied campaign in northern France and, not least, its *ground-level* significance for the dogface soldiers.

OVERLORD

Following years of planning, Allied forces crossed the English Channel on June 6, 1944 and returned to French soil, deploying the invasion force between Le Havre and Cherbourg. Under the command of General Sir Bernard Law Montgomery's 21st Army Group, units of the Second British Army came ashore west of the Orne River, while those of the First Army landed north and east of the mouth of the Vire River at the lower end of the Cotentin Peninsula. The landings developed largely according to

According to the second explanation, it refers to a character by the same name in a comic strip by E. C. Segar (Thomson, Procurement, p. 276).

⁵⁸⁴ Cf. [Chapter 9.3](#) An excuse for cowardice (January 19, 1944).

plan. In one of the five landing areas, OMAHA beach in the American sector, troops encountered particularly heavy opposition and suffered accordingly. Overall, however, troop losses were lighter overall than pessimistic planners had predicted. After the Allied Expeditionary Forces had secured its initial bridgehead, VII Corps sealed off the base of the Cotentin Peninsula and captured Cherbourg by the end of June.⁵⁸⁵ With the port city in their possession, the Allies began to fall behind their schedule⁵⁸⁶ for two reasons.

In the eastern part of the landing zone, Montgomery had not succeeded in his announced objective of occupying Caen on D-Day itself.⁵⁸⁷ Nonetheless, the city on the Orne was the gateway to the so-called *tank country* to the south from where mechanized formations could reach Paris without encountering notable topographical barriers. Since the left (British) flank also represented the shortest route to the German border, OVERLORD planners (with the crucial support of Montgomery as ground commander) had tasked Second British Army with breaking out of the bridgehead and commencing mobile operations.^{588, 589} German high command was,

⁵⁸⁵ Amphibious landing operations took place in a sequence of three phases: *breakin – buildup – breakout*. The *breakin* phase of course signified gaining a foothold on the enemy coast, establishing a bridgehead and securing it against immediate counterattacks. During the *buildup*, the bridgehead was expanded in order to achieve two preconditions for a *breakout*. On one hand, the expansion served to open up space to accumulate forces and supplies for the *breakout*. On the other hand, the expansion needed to establish a topographically favorable *jump-off line* from which the forces that had accumulated during the *buildup* could break out of the bridgehead and commence maneuver warfare. (Gordon A. Harrison, *United States Army in World War II. The European Theater of Operations. Cross-Channel Attack* [Washington, D.C. 1993], p. 79.) The conquest of Cherbourg held a high priority in U.S. invasion planning because the city was the largest seaport in the surrounding areas, crucial for the supply of the Allied Expeditionary Forces. Once the Cotentin Peninsula had been cleared and Cherbourg taken, First U.S. Army began to expand in the direction of a *jump-off line*. (Harrison, *Cross-Channel*, p. 438 ff.)

⁵⁸⁶ Cf. [Fig. 16](#).

⁵⁸⁷ It would in fact take until July 9 before British and Canadian forces occupied Caen.

⁵⁸⁸ Cf. Michael D. Doubler, *Closing with the Enemy. How GIs Fought the War in Europe, 1944–1945* (Lawrence 1994), p. 32.

⁵⁸⁹ This notion is supported by, among other things, the fact that the first Allied tank formations disembarked along the British landing sectors. Several large-scale attempts to take the city in June

of course, also aware of both the proximity of the countryside south of Caen to Paris and its topography. In addition, since it regarded British troops as the more dangerous foe due to their greater experience, it deployed its mechanized formations to face Second British Army on the left flank of the invasion area.

*Dirty bush war*⁵⁹⁰

Starting at the end of June, the dogfaces of First Army, on the right flank of the landing area, were forced to battle topographical adversity as well as the Wehrmacht. Even in retrospect, it seems difficult to understand: U.S. invasion planners were so focused on the multiple problems and dangers of coming ashore and remaining there that no one thought much about what would await the dogfaces beyond the beaches.⁵⁹¹ What lay ahead of them was compared by Major General J. Lawton “Lightning Joe” Collins – commander of First Army’s VII Corps and a veteran of Guadalcanal in the Pacific – to the jungle warfare waged in his previous theater of operations. Omar N. Bradley, his superior at First Army, called it *the damnedest country I’ve ever seen* – the bocage.⁵⁹²

The bocage is Normandy’s characteristic landscape. It begins approximately 9 miles inland from the Normandy coast and stretches in a wide arc from Caumont to the western coast of the Cotentin Peninsula. Its dominant feature consists of countless small, irregular parcels of land that were divided by the Celts who farmed the area long before the arrival of the Romans. Narrow lanes between these parcels connect the individual fields, pastures and orchards. In order to demarcate their own land,

failed. Montgomery later maintained that his plan had never been to achieve a breakout, seeking instead to focus the attention of the German command on the British sector in order to facilitate a breakout by the First U.S. Army in the west. Apart from the topographical and geographical arguments, the deployment of tank formations and the fact that Montgomery’s own forecast of operations had announced that Second Army would be five miles southeast of Caen by June 14, the General’s own personality argues against this interpretation. Neither before nor after the Normandy campaign did Montgomery ever exhibit the trait of modesty or determine of his own accord to play a supporting role. (Beever, D-Day, p. 183 ff.)

⁵⁹⁰ Wehrmacht soldiers, cited in: Beever, D-Day, p. 252.

⁵⁹¹ Doubler, Closing, p. 36.

⁵⁹² Beever, D-Day, p. 252.

fence their cattle and protect against erosion caused by the severe ocean winds, the Celts built earthen embankments along the boundaries of their property, on which they planted hedges, trees and bushes. More than a millennium of growth and rooting transformed the embankments into solid barriers crowned with impenetrable vegetation, hedgerows in Allied parlance, up to 16 feet high. Over the same period of time, the hooves of the Norman cattle and the winter rains served to lower the surface of the connecting lanes far below the level of the surrounding plots of land.⁵⁹³

The tactical implications of such topography are striking. The hedgerows separated the land into tiny patches and provided the Wehrmacht, which was operating on the defensive, with excellent cover and perfect camouflage. Tanks could neither maneuver nor fire their main armament in the narrow pathways between the fields, and they were easy prey for German antitank weapons. The two operational factors securing American superiority over the Wehrmacht, its own mobility and firepower, were neutralized in this environment. Taking advantage of the topographical restrictions, the German defense of the bocage was designed to rob the American attack of leverage and coordination while it exploited the defensive advantages of the terrain.⁵⁹⁴ Each parcel was organized as a separate fortification to be defended by means of a lethal mix of fire, both direct (machine guns and anti-tank/anti-aircraft guns) and indirect (mortars and artillery).⁵⁹⁵ Ernie Pyle accompanied the dogfaces during the Battle of the Bocage:

The Germans used these [hedgerow] barriers well. They put snipers in the trees. They dug deep trenches behind the hedgerows and covered them with timber, so that it was almost impossible for artillery to get at them ... They even cut out a section of the hedgerow and hid a big gun or a tank in it, covering it with bush.

⁵⁹³ Cf. Keegan, *Six Armies*, p. 152 ff.; Doubler, *Closing*, p. 34.

⁵⁹⁴ The German defensive doctrine in World War II was derived from the tactical experiences of World War I. In fall 1916, the German army adapted a new defensive doctrine of elastic, in-depth defense. It emphasized flexible utilization of the terrain in sequential lines of defense, maximum use of automatic weapons and artillery to destroy attacking forces, and direct counterattacks to take advantage of the attacker's confusion upon capturing a line of defense. By 1944, little had changed to require the doctrine's revision, and the bocage offered ideal conditions for its implementation. (Lupfer, *Dynamics of Doctrine*, p. 12 ff.)

⁵⁹⁵ Doubler, *Closing*, p. 37.

Also they tunneled under the hedgerows from the back and made the opening on the forward side just large enough to stick a machine gun through. But mostly the hedgerow pattern was this: a heavy machine gun hidden at each end of the field and infantrymen hidden all along the hedgerow with rifles and machine pistols. We had to dig them out.⁵⁹⁶

Formations that had already seen action in North Africa, Sicily or Italy at least had the benefit of the experiences and instincts of veterans who had survived several encounters with the enemy. For the units receiving their baptism of fire in Normandy, the Battle of the Bocage became a wholesale traumatic and deadly experience. In training, they had learned how to identify targets and then open fire on them. In the small, compartmentalized fields and orchards of the bocage, however, the Enemy was rarely to be seen. This discrepancy between reality and training cost countless lives, as a brigadier general named H. J. Matchett reported in a 1946 article in the *Infantry Journal*:

In combat we found out that green troops would invariably freeze when first coming under fire. They would stop, seek cover, and then try to find the enemy. They could not see any clear, distinct targets. Therefore they did not fire. Their casualties increased. The conditions under which they had been trained to open fire simply did not exist.⁵⁹⁷

Their opponents – particularly veterans of the eastern front – were familiar with every imaginable stratagem after five years of war, and they exploited the lack of experience exhibited by many American soldiers.⁵⁹⁸ Losses took on alarming dimensions. The 22nd Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Division suffered 729 casualties in less than five days in the bocage, including three battalion commanders and five of nine company commanders.⁵⁹⁹ Even more unsettling to the dogfaces than the fact of being engaged by a seemingly invisible enemy was the feeling of being alone. The small, isolated fields generated an impression, that every individual group of soldiers

⁵⁹⁶ Pyle, *Brave Men*, p. 466 ff.

⁵⁹⁷ Cited in: Kennett, G.I., p. 134.

⁵⁹⁸ Beevor, *D-Day*, p. 255.

⁵⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 250 ff.

was up against the entire German Wehrmacht. In his study *Men against Fire*, S. L. A. Marshall commented:

In such circumstances a man had the terrifying feeling that he was all alone; he would cease all motion, all activity. I hold it to one of the simplest truths of war that the thing which enables an infantry soldier to keep moving with his weapon is the near presence or the presumed presence of a comrade.⁶⁰⁰

The inexperienced Tough Ombres⁶⁰¹ of the 90th Infantry Division, draftees from Texas and Oklahoma who had only arrived in Great Britain at the beginning of April, lost 2465 men in June alone. In July, which they spent almost entirely in the bocage, their losses rose to 5468; most of these, of course, were dogfaces from the rifle companies. A War Department study published in 1946 stressed the particular psychological effect of the bocage on inexperienced units:

For most of the American soldiers, it had been a thankless, miserable, disheartening battle. It was, perhaps, particularly hard on fresh divisions, coming into their first action with the zest and high morale born of long training and of confidence in their unit. Many units were – or felt they were – wrecked by the losses that hit them in the course of a few days' fighting, wiping out key men ... The close ties within a unit, built up by long association, were broken irreparably; new officers and new men had to be assimilated in the midst of battle, sometimes on a wholesale scale.⁶⁰²

But even such veteran formations as the 1st, 4th, 9th and 29th Infantry Divisions paid a high price in the Normandy hedgerows. One study indicated that the rifle companies of these four divisions lost an average of 60 percent of their enlisted ranks and 68

⁶⁰⁰ Cited in: Kennett, G.I., p. 134 ff.

⁶⁰¹ The insignia of the division was an olive-green square with the letters T and O, representing Texas and Oklahoma, superimposed in red. These two states contributed most of the division's manpower. With some creativity, its members derived their nickname of 'Tough Ombres' from the same initials (Office of the Theater Historian, Order of Battle United States Army. World War II. European Theater of Operations. Divisions [Paris 1945], p. 331).

⁶⁰² Cited in: Mansoor, G.I. Offensive, p. 158.

percent of their officers between June 6 and July 31, 1944.⁶⁰³ In absolute figures, the July casualties came to 4773 for the 9th Infantry, 4718 in the 29th and 4421 in the 30th. The heavy losses during the Battle of the Bocage, the isolation in its small fields, pastures and orchards and the fear of an invisible foe waging a dirty bush war against them led to an extraordinary, hate-filled hardness that characterizes the Battle of the Bocage. *The only good Jerry soldiers are dead ones*, wrote a 1st Infantry dogface to his parents in Minnesota. *I've never really hated anything quite as much. And it's not because of some blustery speech of a brass-hat. I guess I'm probably a little off my nut – but who isn't. Probably that's the best way to be.*⁶⁰⁴

For Allied planners, it appeared in the latter half of July as if their worst fears were becoming real and the Allied Expeditionary Forces were becoming bogged down in a slow and costly war of attrition reminiscent of World War I. By D+48⁶⁰⁵, the Allied forces had advanced to a line their plans had anticipated them reaching at D+5.⁶⁰⁶ Few observers at that time would have been able to imagine that triumphant Allied armies would be at the frontier of Nazi Germany just six weeks later.

COBRA

As the dogfaces of First Army were dying in unacceptably large numbers in the bocage, Lieutenant General Omar Bradley and his corps commanders were planning a forced transition from this static war of attrition to a classic *war of maneuver*. Proponents of maneuver warfare speak of *surfaces*, areas where the Enemy is present *en masse*, and *gaps*, areas where he is not. A military force naturally favors attempting its breakthrough via a *gap* and seeks to avoid *surfaces*. In Normandy, however, there was no *gap*; it was necessary at the outset for Bradley's First Army to create one by employing mass and firepower.⁶⁰⁷ His plan, dubbed 'Operation

⁶⁰³ The U.S. Army Campaigns of World War II, Normandy. 6 June–24 July 1944 (Center of Military History Publication 72-18), p. 34.

⁶⁰⁴ Cited in: Beevor, D-Day, p. 252.

⁶⁰⁵ D+48 signifies the 48th day after D-Day, which was June 6, 1944.

⁶⁰⁶ Scott B. Cottrell, From Cobra to the Seine, August 1944. A Microcosm of the Operational Art (Fort Leavenworth 1986), p. 2 ff.

⁶⁰⁷ Mansoor, G.I. Offensive, p. 160.

COBRA', was therefore to extend the Normandy bridgehead as far as Saint-Lô. This was where, along a straight-line road running from Saint-Lô to Périers, Bradley established his *jump-off* position. From here, First Army was to pierce the German line, through which Third Army⁶⁰⁸, about to be activated under the command of Patton, would act as an *exploitation force* to strike the rear of the German forces. His first objectives were the Breton port cities of Brest, Lorient and Saint-Nazaire, which had priority for reasons related to supply. In order to provide the COBRA offensive with the necessary heft, Bradley concentrated the three infantry and two armored divisions of VII Corps along a four and a half-mile stretch west of Saint-Lô.

Shortly before 10:00 on the morning of July 25, 1944, the members of the German Panzer-Lehr and 5th Parachute Divisions, who were positioned (albeit unknowingly) opposite Bradley's *jump-off position*, heard an increasingly loud humming sound. The roar originated from 550 fighter bombers that, together with over 1000 pieces of artillery as well as 1500 heavy bombers and 380 medium bombers⁶⁰⁹, attacked the

⁶⁰⁸ By the end of July 1944, Bradley's First U.S. Army already had control of 21 divisions, while the Second British Army had six divisions and the newly activated First Canadian Army (with British participation) had ten. Since such a massive number of subordinated forces far outstripped the administrative capacity of a field army headquarters, a reorganization of U.S. forces in the ETO was implemented as of August 1, 1944. First Army transferred nine of its more mobile divisions to the Third U.S. Army, activated on that same date under Lieutenant General George S. Patton, Jr. and also received a new commander, Lieutenant General Courtney Hodges. Bradley, released from his First Army command, took over the likewise newly activated Twelfth Army Group which, for its part, directed both First and Third Army. (Bradley, *Soldier's Story*, p. 358 ff.)

⁶⁰⁹ The tactical use of strategic air forces was unusual if not unique. The OVERLORD landings themselves and Montgomery's assaults on Caen were similarly prepared by bombardments carried out by strategic air forces. In the case of Operation COBRA, these had tragic consequences for the American troops on the *jump-off line*. Bradley had demanded that the planes make their approach parallel to the Saint-Lô–Périers road in order to maximize the precision of the bombardments. Allied air commanders rejected this because their squadrons would have had to make their approach run over German anti-aircraft defenses. While COBRA was originally scheduled for July 24, its launch was cancelled at the last minute because of cloud cover over Saint-Lô that reduced visibility for the bombers of the Eighth and Ninth U.S. Air Forces. The radio communication of the cancellation did not reach all squadrons already in the air, however, and over 300 planes dropped bombs through the cloud layer – short of the target, as it turned out – striking some of their own 30th Infantry Division units, which suffered 150 casualties as a result. Although Bradley was furious about this, he did not want to give up the element of surprise. He put off the start of the operation by 24 hours and ordered

German frontline prior to First Army's attack. Ernie Pyle, who was, along with other correspondents and military observers, an eyewitness to the launch of COBRA, described the scene:

The first planes of the mass onslaught came over a little before 10 A.M. They were the fighters and dive bombers. The main road, running crosswise in front of us, was their bomb line ... We stood and watched them barrel nearly straight down out of the sky ... They came in groups, diving from every direction, perfectly timed, one right after another. Everywhere we looked separate groups of planes were on the way down, or on the way back up, or slanting over for a dive, or circling, circling, circling over our heads, waiting for their turn.

The air was full of sharp and distinct sounds of cracking bombs and the heavy rips of the planes' machine guns and the splitting screams of the diving wings. It was all fast and furious, yet distinct. And then a new sound gradually droned into our ears, a sound deep and all encompassing with no notes in it – just a gigantic faraway surge of doomlike sound. It was the heavies ... They came in flights of twelve, three flights to a group and in groups stretched out all across the sky ... they came in a constant procession and I thought it would never end. What the Germans must have thought is beyond comprehension ... I've never known a storm, or a machine, or any resolve of man that had about it the aura of such ghastly relentlessness.

... And then the bombs came. They began like the crackle of popcorn and almost instantly swelled into a monstrous fury of noise that seemed surely to destroy all the world ahead of us. From then on for an hour and a half that had in it the agonies of centuries, the bombs came down. A wall of smoke and dust erected by them grew high in the sky ... The bright day grew slowly dark from it. By now everything was an indescribable caldron of sounds. Individual noises did not exist. The thundering of the motors in the sky and the roar of bombs ahead filled

his troops to move further back from the target area for safety reasons. On the next day, individual bombers once more released their bombs too early, hitting their own troops yet again. The *friendly fire* of July 25 cost 111 dead and 490 wounded. Among the fatalities was the commander of the Army Ground Forces, Lieutenant General Leslie McNair, who was present at the launch of COBRA as an observer. (Blumenson, *Breakout*, p. 228 ff.) As a result of the tragedy, the 30th Infantry Division had the unenviable reputation of being the most bombed division among U.S. forces. The angry dogfaces of the division referred to Eighth and Ninth Air Forces from then on as the Eighth and Ninth Luftwaffe (Mansoor, *G.I. Offensive*, p. 165).

all the space for noise on earth. Our own heavy artillery was crashing all around us, yet we could hardly hear it.⁶¹⁰

Two hours after the bombardment had ceased, dogfaces who had begun to advance to the other side of the Saint-Lô-Périers road found themselves in cratered landscape. Across an area of several square miles, the terrain looked as if it had just been plowed. Few creatures had survived the bombardment and artillery shelling, and the entire area was covered with the grotesquely deformed remains of German military hardware. Vehicles, artillery pieces and machines of all varieties used by the military protruded from the ruptured ground. Tanks that had been catapulted into the air by blast waves lay inverted like turtles on their backs. Fritz Bayerlein, the commanding general of the bombed German troops, later wrote that he did not imagine hell to be as bad as this inferno. Apart from the raw destructive power of the bombardments, its psychological effects were disastrous for the few survivors. An American Army doctor noted in his diary: *many of [the prisoners taken] were actually babbling, knocked silly*. Bayerlein wrote that it was impossible to organize a defense; his surviving troops were like madmen, incapable of any coordinated action.⁶¹¹

Bradley could not guess at the time that Operation COBRA would develop into the decisive maneuver of the battle for France. For the dogfaces of his infantry divisions, it was the start of a campaign that would differ from the Battle of the Bocage in every detail. The war of attrition within the hedgerows of Normandy had affected the substance of not only the Army of the United States. By July 25, German forces who had blocked the Allied bridgehead were strained to the breaking point. As First Army began to penetrate the devastated terrain near Saint-Lô, the responsible commanders gradually realized that their forces had achieved a decisive breakthrough. On July 27, Bradley issued new orders. COBRA was unfolding so advantageously that he ordered his forces to race to Avranches, the gateway to Brittany. When Third Army was activated on August 1, Patton drove his formations at breakneck speed through the now captured traffic junction and into Brittany.⁶¹²

⁶¹⁰ Pyle, *Brave Men*, p. 459 ff.

⁶¹¹ Beevor, *D-Day*, p. 348 ff.

⁶¹² *The U.S. Army Campaigns of World War II, Northern France. 25 July–14 September 1944* (Center of Military History Publication 72-30), p. 11.

LÜTTICH

Hitler's left flank in Normandy was at the point of disintegration – in terms of operations, a clear signal to fall back and reorganize western defenses on different soil. The Führer's typically immutable will⁶¹³ was to call instead for offensive action. The American field armies, which had in the meantime become widely separated from one another in Normandy and Brittany, respectively, were only linked by a narrow corridor between Avranches and Mortain along the Normandy-Brittany divide. Bradley was conscious of the danger that Third Army could be cut off at this point. From his Wolf's Lair in far-off Rastenburg, Hitler too recognized the theoretical possibility, sending orders to Kluge⁶¹⁴ to counterattack at the Avranches–Mortain corridor in order to cut off Third Army. However, the tactical symbols on Hitler's maps in East Prussia showed a deceptive picture of German forces in Normandy who, in reality, were exhausted and bled dry. Panzer divisions that should have been equipped with 150 tanks actually fielded 20; infantry divisions, similarly, were reduced to between 10 and 20 percent of their full strength. Kluge was aware of the fact that a successful counterattack could not be mounted with the forces available. Being a passive confidant of the July 20 plotters⁶¹⁵, he was equally mindful that to propose retreat after the failed tyrannicide was no longer an option. Following Stauffenberg's attempt, the entire German officer corps was dishonored in Hitler's eyes and under general suspicion. Hitler's commanders could prove their loyalty only through unconditional execution of his orders. Kluge was forced to appear loyal in the extreme for his own self-protection. For this reason alone, he launched Operation LÜTTICH⁶¹⁶, the counterattack on the Avranches-Mortain corridor,⁶¹⁷ during the night of August 6.

⁶¹³ "...mein unabänderlicher Wille..." was a well-used phrase of Hitler's.

⁶¹⁴ Field Marshal Günther von Kluge, Commander of Heeresgruppe B in northwestern Europe.

⁶¹⁵ Stauffenberg's attempted coup d'état envisioned assassinating Hitler with a bomb. Subsequently, the conspirators planned to use an emergency contingency plan code-named Valkyrie (designed to put down an uprising by slave laborers) to seize power in order to make a separate peace with the Western Allies.

⁶¹⁶ In Liège, a Belgian city known in German as Lüttich, exactly 30 years (to the day) previously, Ludendorff had led the great German maneuver to encircle the French army in August 1914. To the

On August 9, two days after the launch of LÜTTICH, Henry Morgenthau⁶¹⁸ visited Bradley's 12th Army Group headquarters during the course of a tour of the European Theater of Operations. In his conversations, the general surprised the secretary with his view that the German counterattack would be *...an opportunity that comes to a commander not more than once in a century. We're about to destroy an entire hostile Army.*⁶¹⁹ Convinced by his field commanders that they could keep the Avranches-Mortaine corridor open, he decided on a daring yet promising maneuver. Instead of redeploying parts of Third Army back from Brittany in order to reinforce its communications through the corridor, he ordered Patton to perform an all-out turn to the east in order to cut off and counter-encircle the German attack. German high command could already foresee by this point that Operation LÜTTICH had failed. A few days later, situation maps on both sides began to feature the outlines of what would soon, under the name 'Falaise pocket', signify the destruction of Heeresgruppe B⁶²⁰ in northern France.⁶²¹

Up until then, German forces in northern France still retained the possibility of a fighting withdrawal across the Seine to establish new defensive positions along its opposite bank. As the ring around Falaise began to close, however, all that was left to them was to save as many troops as possible from encirclement and make a run for the borders of the Reich. Difficulties in internal coordination kept the Allies from completing their encircling maneuver, and thousands of German soldiers were able to escape the enclosure. Nevertheless, the Wehrmacht was beaten west of the Seine and exposed to the vicious circle of an unorganized retreat and disrupted communications. Few commanders knew the exact whereabouts of their formations.

fate-obsessed Hitler, this was by far too striking a coincidence not to portend success for his own counter-encirclement plan. (Keegan, Six Armies, p. 245.)

⁶¹⁷ Keegan, Six Armies, p. 238 ff.

⁶¹⁸ Secretary of the Treasury.

⁶¹⁹ Bradley, Soldier's Story, p. 375.

⁶²⁰ Heeresgruppe: Army Group. All German forces in northern France were part of Heeresgruppe B. Its subordinate formations were the 7th Army south of the Seine and the 15th Army north of the river.

⁶²¹ Beevor, D-Day, p. 441 ff.

In their stampede, fragmented divisions clogged eastward road connections. Supplies of fuel and ammunition failed to reach units in need, and vehicles had to be abandoned.⁶²² At the end of August, the scattered remnants of Heeresgruppe B reached prepared defensive positions along the Marne and Somme Rivers. By this time, however, they had become too exhausted, disorganized and demoralized to hold these positions. Shortly thereafter, in a new encircling maneuver near Mons, First Army captured 25,000 prisoners and thus neutralized what was left of Heeresgruppe B.⁶²³ *During 1943 his direction of the war had lost him Armies*, writes John Keegan of Hitler; *in 1944 it had begun to lose him whole Army Groups*. With its 56 infantry and 11 panzer divisions, Heeresgruppe B had once been the Wehrmacht's most powerful formation. Following Falaise, it was effectively destroyed. Fifty thousand German soldiers had fallen in the 10 weeks since D-Day, and at least 200,000 were in Allied captivity, awaiting embarkation for Great Britain or the United States. What remained of the Wehrmacht tried to find some way across the Seine and back to the Reich, with Allied forces close at their heels.⁶²⁴

*Touring France with an army*⁶²⁵

The Germans were on the run, wrote Robert Capa in describing the scene following mid-August 1944, *and the good campaign began. Here the French were full happy*.⁶²⁶ *The food was good, and the first glass of wine was free in the bars*.⁶²⁷ Largely youthful dogfaces pursued the defeated remnants of the Wehrmacht across

⁶²² Ibid., p. 357.

⁶²³ CMH, Northern France, p. 24 ff.

⁶²⁴ Keegan, *Six Armies*, p. 283.

⁶²⁵ *Touring France with an Army*, presumably a word play on Henry James's *A Little Tour in France*, is the title of the section of Patton's memoirs *War As I Knew It* that deals with summer 1944 (Cf. Patton, *War As I Knew It*).

⁶²⁶ Following the heavy fighting of June and July, Normandy was thoroughly devastated. In addition, many thousands of Normandy residents lost their lives in the areas where the war raged. It is not surprising that the joy the survivors felt at their liberation came with a bitter aftertaste. As the Allies chased the remains of the Wehrmacht across France to the German frontier, collateral damage to life and property was minimal, and the joy of the liberated French people more absolute.

⁶²⁷ Capa, *Slightly*, p. 166.

summertime France. In every village and city they entered, they were celebrated as heroes and liberators. Edward W. Wood, Jr. described the victory-drunken mood of those days:

To be nineteen years old, to be nineteen and an infantryman, to be nineteen and fight for the liberation of France from the Nazis in the summer of 1944! That time of hot and cloudless blue days when the honeybees buzzed about our heads and we shouted strange phrases in words we did not understand to men and women who cheered us as if we were gods. That summer, that strangely glorious summer, when we rushed across France, the Nazis fleeing just ahead of us. *Drive east, drive east.* South of Paris the day it was liberated, across the Marne to Château-Thierry (battlefields of the war in which my father and uncle had fought), then Reims with its cathedral, the most beautiful structure I had ever seen in my life, its magical flying buttresses brilliant against the August sky. Each village we entered started another party for us, as we shared bottles of wine hoarded since 1940 and kisses from wet-mustached men and soft-cheeked women while we hurled cigarettes and chocolates from our armored half-track and got drunk together and laughed and cried and screamed, for we had freed them from evil. For that glorious moment, the dream of freedom lived and we were ten feet tall.⁶²⁸

Paris

As the Army of the United States approached Paris, the dogfaces were gripped with the collective fever to liberate the City of Light. *To a generation raised on fanciful tales of their fathers in the AEF*⁶²⁹, recalled Bradley in his memoirs, *Paris beckoned with a greater allure than any other objective in Europe.*⁶³⁰ Churchill had personally assured Eisenhower prior to D-Day that His Majesty's first minister would consider it the greatest victory in modern times if Allied Expeditionary Forces could liberate Paris before the winter.⁶³¹ As Allied columns approached the city in the second half of August, the Supreme Commander was in no hurry at all to liberate the city. Paris was

⁶²⁸ Cited in: Fussell, *Crusade*, p. 10 ff.

⁶²⁹ General John J. Pershing's *American Expeditionary Force in World War I*.

⁶³⁰ Bradley, *Soldier's Story*, p. 384.

⁶³¹ CMH, *Northern France*, p. 21.

insignificant from an operational standpoint. Militarily, the obvious strategy was to encircle the city on the Seine and await the inevitable surrender of the isolated German garrison. SHAEF⁶³² planners feared that the Allies would become entangled in costly street fighting in Paris that would produce considerable destruction as well. In addition, the provisioning of the city would further exacerbate the already strained supply situation of the Allied Expeditionary Forces.⁶³³

Still, Eisenhower had made his plans without reckoning on de Gaulle and the Paris Résistance. Opposition movements in the capital were split politically. Most participants could agree on only one common goal: to free the city on their own without having to wait for their Anglo-American liberators like the princess in the tower. As a result, Gaullists, Communists and various other factions were already jockeying to take credit for the eventual liberation. Beyond the city limits, it was supremely important to de Gaulle's postwar position that he go down in history as the Liberator of Paris. On August 19, as news spread through the city that Allied forces were at the gates, the Résistance began to occupy government buildings, newspapers and the city hall. What it lacked, however, was the means to drive out the Germans by itself. The German military governor of the city, for his part, did not want to battle an urban guerrilla force, agreeing instead to a truce that left each side in control of certain parts of Paris. On August 22, emissaries of the Résistance alerted Eisenhower to the imminent end of the truce and asked for assistance. De Gaulle again insisted on liberating the city immediately. When the emissaries persuaded Ike that Choltitz⁶³⁴ was only waiting to be able to surrender to regular Allied forces⁶³⁵, the Supreme Commander pragmatically changed his mind with respect to Paris.

⁶³² Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces – Eisenhower's headquarters.

⁶³³ SHAEF calculated that 4000 tons of supplies would need to be brought daily to Paris in the event of an occupation. Converted into fuel for Allied divisions, this was equivalent to three days of motorized march toward the German frontier. (Blumenson, Breakout, p. 590 ff.)

⁶³⁴ Lieutenant General Dietrich von Choltitz, the military governor of greater Paris, who received Hitler's order to leave nothing but scorched earth to the Allies.

⁶³⁵ Regular army units as opposed to an irregular guerrilla movement like the Résistance.

... *mouvement immédiat sur Paris!*⁶³⁶

Eisenhower had assured de Gaulle that, if possible, he could assign the liberation of Paris to a formation of the FFI⁶³⁷. On the evening of the 22nd, in keeping with this arrangement, he ordered Major General Jacques-Philippe Leclerc's⁶³⁸ Second Armored Division (in French, deuxième Division Blindée, abbreviated 2^{ème} DB)⁶³⁹ to march to Paris from the west. In support, 4th Infantry Division would enter the city from the south, though it was instructed to give precedence to the 2^{ème} DB. As Leclerc set his columns in motion on the morning of the 23rd, they were slowed by unexpectedly stiff resistance. For the 4th Infantry, delay usually meant that every village on the road to Paris was insisting on celebrating lavishly with its liberators, and Bradley simply assumed that Leclerc's division *[was] danc[ing] their way to Paris.*⁶⁴⁰ As a result, he decided to ignore the interests of the Free French, ordering 4th Infantry to take the city. Leclerc saw national honor at stake if Americans were to beat his men to Paris. To avoid this, he immediately ordered a task force of armored vehicles to proceed to the city center as rapidly as possible. On August 24, 1944 at 9:20 pm, the mission was accomplished when tanks and half-tracks of the 9th Company of the 2nd Ad Hoc Regiment of Chad, made up primarily of Spanish Republicans, Communists and anarchists under the command of captain Raymond Dronne, rumbled into the Place de l'Hôtel-de-Ville.⁶⁴¹ On the next day, after the bulk of the 2^{ème} DB and parts of 4th Infantry had reached the square, Choltitz surrendered

⁶³⁶ Leclerc on August 22, to Captain Gribius, his G3 (Operations Officer), after he had been ordered to march to Paris (Blumenson, Breakout, p. 605.).

⁶³⁷ Forces françaises de l'intérieur, the umbrella organization of the French resistance.

⁶³⁸ Leclerc was a *nom de guerre* used by Philippe François Marie de Hauteclocque in order to protect his wife and six children in France against German reprisals. Following the fall of France in 1940, Leclerc had been flown to London to serve in the FFI forces (Keegan, Six Armies, p. 300 ff.).

⁶³⁹ At this time, the 2^{ème} DB was the only Free French formation in the Allied Expeditionary Forces. Uniformed and equipped by the United States, it included French exiles, Spanish Republicans, foreign legionnaires and French colonial troops.

⁶⁴⁰ Bradley, Soldier's Story, p. 392.

⁶⁴¹ Beevor, D-Day, p. 500 ff.

to Leclerc. Symbolically, however, Paris had already been liberated on the previous evening.

*... the most unforgettable day in the world*⁶⁴²

When the morning fog cleared on August 25, 1944, it heralded a day of summer sunshine following a number of rainy days. Throughout the night, news of the arrival of French troops in the city had spread. Parisians, many of whom had not slept that night, gathered at first light in the streets and squares of the southwestern districts. A tense but quiet air of excitement lay over the city. As formations of the 2^{ème} DB and U.S. forces crossed into Paris from the west and south, respectively, the tension erupted into a mass frenzy without compare. Parisians swarmed around their liberators, waving flags they had sewn overnight and flashing Churchill's *V for Victory* sign.⁶⁴³ Ernie Pyle, accompanying a column of 4th Infantry Division, found himself in the midst of a monumental outburst of joy and spontaneous affection. His comment to Hank Gorrell of United Press summed up the mood: *Any G.I. who doesn't get laid tonight is a sissy.*⁶⁴⁴ Naturally, he had to use more euphemistic language in his column for the home front in order to convey this insight to his readers:

I had thought that for me there could never again be any elation in war. But I had reckoned without the liberation of Paris ... one of the great days of all time.

... Gradually we entered the suburbs, and soon into the midst of Paris itself and a pandemonium of surely the greatest mass joy that has ever happened. The streets were lined as they are by Fourth of July parade crowds at home, only this crowd was almost hysterical ... As our jeep eased through the crowds, thousands of people crowded up, leaving only a narrow corridor, and frantic men, women and children grabbed us and kissed us and shook our hands and beat on our shoulders and slapped our backs and shouted their joy as we passed ... We all got kissed until we were literally red in the face, and I must say we enjoyed it ... Everybody, even beautiful girls, insisted on kissing you on both cheeks. Somehow I got started kissing babies that were held up by their parents ...⁶⁴⁵

⁶⁴² *The liberation of Paris was ...* (Capa, Slightly, p. 189).

⁶⁴³ Beevor, D-Day, p. 504 ff.

⁶⁴⁴ Cited in: Tobin, Pyle's War, p. 201.

⁶⁴⁵ Pyle, Brave Men, p. 482 ff.

The acoustical background to this festive mood consisted of repeated explosions, gunshots and machine-gun fire as well as the distinctive scream of tank rounds flying overhead. The German garrison had not yet surrendered, and it continued to do battle with the city's liberators from its isolated strongholds. Most of these fortifications were located off the main thoroughfares, which explains why the Allies directed their triumphal procession through just these routes. But even when sporadic gunfire broke out here and there along the edges of the march, it could not disrupt the celebratory mood. In such cases, Parisians became interested front-row observers (often with no regard at all for their own safety) of how the American and FFI troops went about their work.⁶⁴⁶ Pyle again:

At any rate, from two in the afternoon until darkness around ten, we few Americans in Paris on that first day were kissed and hauled and mauled by friendly mobs until we hardly knew where we were. Everybody kissed us – little children, old women, grown-up men, beautiful girls. They jumped and squealed and pushed in a literal frenzy ... As we drove along, gigantic masses of waving and screaming humanity clapped their hands as though applauding a performance in a theater ... Those who couldn't reach us threw kisses at us, and we threw kisses back.

They sang songs. They sang wonderful French songs we had never heard. And they sang "Tipperary" and "Madelon" and "Over There" and the "Marseillaise." ... And then some weird cell in the inscrutable human makeup caused people to start wanting autographs. It began the first evening, and by the next day had grown to unbelievable proportions. Everybody wanted every soldier's autograph.

... Paris seemed to have all the beautiful girls we heard it had. The women have an art of getting themselves up fascinatingly. Their hair is done crazily, their clothes are worn imaginatively. They dress in riotous colors in this lovely warm season, and when the flag-draped holiday streets are packed with Parisians the color makes everything else in the world seem gray. As one soldier remarked, the biggest thrill in getting to Paris is to see people in bright summer clothes again.⁶⁴⁷

⁶⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 484 ff.

⁶⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 484 ff.

Although the effect of strong, cheerful colors on men who had spent months and years in a world consisting exclusively of olive and khaki should not be underestimated, Pyle had his eye on the censor when he wrote these lines. One soldier from Robert Kotlowitz's platoon expressed more succinctly the dogfaces' collective emotions and hopes surrounding a sojourn in Paris. *We're all going to get laid! French-style*, he exclaimed as his unit⁶⁴⁸ relocated from Cherbourg to its new deployment in Lunéville to relieve 4th Armored Division.⁶⁴⁹ Presumably *the biggest thrill in getting to Paris* had to do more with hopes as expressed in the quotation above, not merely the summer dresses of Parisian women. The reason for the high expectations of many dogfaces lay in their often very precise yet not necessarily accurate images of France in general and Paris in particular. These ideas were fed by Hollywood stereotypes, pulp fiction, and their fathers' stories of Pershing's American Expeditionary Force, rendered ever more colorfully over the years. For the dogfaces, France, especially Paris, meant *l'amour, le cognac, les Folies Bergère* and the elegance of Maurice Chevalier.⁶⁵⁰ It was Montmartre and Pigalle, the *Moulin Rouge* and the scandalous eroticism of Josephine Baker.

The Army was aware of the potential dangers inherent in a clash between the behavior of mostly postpubescent GIs guided by (sexual) stereotypes and the sad reality of France following four years of German oppression, exploitation and occupation. The *G.I. Pocket Guides*⁶⁵¹ to France and Paris attempted to put these concerns into plain language: *France has been represented too often in fiction as a frivolous nation where sly winks and coy pats on the rear are the accepted form of address*, counseled the France edition in its chapter entitled *Mademoiselle: you'd*

⁶⁴⁸ 26th Infantry Division (Yankee Division), 104th Infantry Regiment, Company C, Third Platoon.

⁶⁴⁹ Kotlowitz, *Before Their Time*, p. 92 ff.

⁶⁵⁰ Kennett, *G.I.*, p. 206.

⁶⁵¹ *Pocket Guides* were essentially paperback travel guidebooks published by the War Department's Information and Education Division for every region where the Army of the United States operated. They contained local history, routine tourist tips regarding area attractions and regional cuisine, but also information about local political traditions and stories as well as a section devoted to *words and phrases*. An important section of the *Pocket Guides* concerned local culture, urging soldiers as a rule to show respect and tolerance for cultural differences and to conduct themselves in accordance with local realities.

*better get rid of such notions right now if you are going to keep out of trouble.*⁶⁵² It went on:

A great many young French girls never go out without a chaperone, day or night. It will certainly bring trouble if you base your conduct on any false assumptions.

France is full of decent women and strict women. Most French girls have less freedom than girls back home. If you get a date don't be surprised if her parents want to meet you first, to size you up. French girls have been saying "No" to the Nazi soldiers and officers for years now. They expect the men in the American Army to act like friends and Allies.⁶⁵³

The cities edition addressed the hot potato on the very first page of its chapter on Paris, proposing cultural enticements as an alternative:

One of the first ideas you should get out of your head is that Paris is a city of wicked and frivolous people. There's an old French proverb, "Cherchez la femme," which in G.I. language means "Find the woman." Well, maybe you will find the woman, but chances are you may not. At any rate, you'll find that the real Paris is not the Paris of nightlife and wild women. Instead, you will probably find it a city of great beauty and culture.⁶⁵⁴

Nevertheless, the dogfaces witnessed sights on their tour of wartime France that were unimaginable in the prudish and conservative America of the 1940s. Men who casually urinated on buildings or even monuments. Dark-skinned people who moved about the society apparently unhindered by any institutionalized segregation. French women who danced with women; others who were completely at ease dancing with dark-skinned men. Men who hugged and kissed each other. For many Americans, such behavior was an indication that France had a looser, more flexible approach to moral conventions.⁶⁵⁵ Naturally, the dogfaces trusted their own eyes more than the

⁶⁵² U.S. Army Information and Education Division, *A Pocket Guide to France* (Washington, D.C. 1944), p. 19.

⁶⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 19 ff.

⁶⁵⁴ U.S. Army Information and Education Division, *A Pocket Guide to Paris and the Cities of Northern France* (Washington, D.C. 1944), p. 1.

⁶⁵⁵ Kennett, G.I., p. 206 ff.

contrary pronouncements of an Army bureaucracy they had come to doubt in principle. As a result, they acted under false assumptions in countless encounters, causing problems and tensions. The sole exception was the liberation of Paris.

A unique set of rules governed this day and the one that followed. *The road to Paris was open*, wrote Robert Capa, *and every Parisian was out in the street to touch the first tank, to kiss the first man, to sing and cry*. In addition, to paraphrase Winston Churchill⁶⁵⁶, *never were there so many who were so happy so early in the morning*.⁶⁵⁷ The advancing Allied columns made very slow progress, continuously surrounded by a surging mass of people shouting *merci, merci, vive l'Amérique* (and of course *vive la France*). *At every one of the numerous halts*, recalled the commanding officer of 12th Infantry Regiment, *mothers would hold up their children to be kissed, young girls would hug the grinning soldiers and cover them with kisses, old men saluted, and young men vigorously shook hands and patted the doughboys*⁶⁵⁸ *on the back*.⁶⁵⁹ The true men of the hour were, of course, the soldiers of Leclerc's 2^{ème} DB who, as French liberators, received particularly frenetic acclaim.

⁶⁵⁶ Capa's phrase mimics Churchill's famous address to the House of Commons on August 20, 1940, a speech that is still remembered today. At that time, the German Luftwaffe sought to bring the British air defense system to its knees in a battle of attrition, flying massive sorties against the airstrips and control centers of Sir Hugh Dowding's Fighter Command. When indications appeared by late summer that the Luftwaffe would not be able to break British resistance, Churchill praised the approximately 1500 British and international pilots who had fought the now-iconic Battle of Britain, memorably proclaiming: *Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few* (Winston Churchill, *We Will All Go Down Fighting to the End* [London 2010], p. 55). Shortly thereafter, a variation of this aphorism appeared in North Africa, where Lieutenant General Richard O'Connor's limited Western Desert Force maneuvered numerically far superior Italian formations into surrender and imprisonment: *Never in the field of human conflict was so much surrendered by so many to so few*.

⁶⁵⁷ Capa, *Slightly*, S. 179.

⁶⁵⁸ In a manner similar to the dogfaces of World War II, infantrymen in World War I were known as doughboys. Many soldiers who served between 1914 and 1918 continued to use the expression that had become so familiar to them. It can be assumed from his service grade that Colonel Lockett of the 12th Infantry had in fact served in the AEF in 1917/18; his inclusion of the term 'doughboy' provides further evidence of the case.

⁶⁵⁹ Beevor, *D-Day*, p. 506.

Witnessing all this, the U.S. troops were magnanimous in their displays of understanding. At any rate, there was so much joy and affection in the air on this day that they too received their share of it.

Delights of a night dedicated to Venus

At the close of the day began certainly the most legendary part of the liberation of Paris. In the words of a young officer of the 2^{ème} DB: *les délices d'une nuit dédiée à Vénus!*⁶⁶⁰ Throughout the day, countless Parisians had called out to their (American) liberators in more or less broken English: *We've waited for you for so long.* By liberation night, in the dogfaces' tents and armored vehicles, many Parisian women offered a physical expression of the unbounded gratitude and affection they felt in that moment. Père Roger Fouquer, a Catholic priest, had entered the city with the first Allied troops. Returning from a dinner with friends, he took note of the amorous goings-on and had a feeling of providential relief when the need to observe a nightly order forced him to withdraw from this night of madness.⁶⁶¹

By the following day, August 26, 1944, the entire city appeared to be nursing a collective hangover. *The combination was enough to wreck one's constitution*⁶⁶², reflected David Bruce in his diary, referring to the alcoholic mix of the previous night, consisting of beer, cider, white and red bordeaux, white and red burgundy, champagne, rum, cognac, armagnac and calvados. The dogfaces of 4th Infantry Division bivouacked in Bois de Vincennes in the eastern part of the city and on the Île de la Cité behind the cathedral of Notre-Dame. As the sun rose over Paris, U.S. officer John G. Westover recorded: *Slowly the tank hatches opened, and bedraggled women crawled stiffly out.*⁶⁶³ These nights of Venus frequently ended with the sharing of a K-ration breakfast⁶⁶⁴ at the campfire. Then the dogfaces headed back into a campaign so unbelievably and unexpectedly successful that it was of increasing concern to SHAEF.

⁶⁶⁰ Referring to Venus, the Roman goddess of love.

⁶⁶¹ Ibid., p. 513.

⁶⁶² Cited in: Beevor, D-Day, p. 513.

⁶⁶³ Ibid., p. 513.

⁶⁶⁴ Cf. [Chapter 9.2](#) 5-in-1s (December 11, 1943).

A quartermaster's purgatory

A German general is credited with the declaration that blitzkrieg is the tactician's paradise and the quartermaster's hell. In 1944, Ernie Pyle described the Allied campaign in northern France in August and the first days of September as *a tactician's hell and a quartermaster's purgatory*.⁶⁶⁵ We can disregard here and now which of the two maxims is more appropriate in regard to the tactician. With respect to supply logistics, the two commentators are in basic agreement. In dealing with the logistical implications of the Allied 'blitzkrieg' in France, therefore, we return to the opening subject of this chapter: Bill Mauldin's cartoon.

As previously mentioned, the Allied encircling maneuver at Mons in the beginning of September destroyed or captured the remnants of Heeresgruppe B. Because these troops represented the last substantial reserves between the front lines and the German border, the Allied leadership found reason for great optimism.⁶⁶⁶ Lieutenant General Courtney Hodges, whose First Army had carried out the maneuver, assured his staff on September 6 that the war would be over if weather remained favorable for another ten days.⁶⁶⁷ In the days that followed, the Allied Expeditionary Forces advanced to the frontier of Nazi Germany and occupied a line extending from the Swiss border to Antwerp. That is where the Allied blitzkrieg ended, however, as the AEF ground to a halt when fuel and ammunition ran out.

OVERLORD plans relied on an assumption that the Allied Expeditionary Forces would march steadily to the German frontier. So-called *phase lines* were established to indicate what line the AEF would reach by what day: Avranches by D+20, Le Mans D+35, D+90 along the Seine⁶⁶⁸ and the Rhine itself by D+350. The imperatives of these plans were based not so much on operations as on logistics. The *phase lines* served the logistical planners as benchmarks for the creation of a supply chain on the European continent.⁶⁶⁹ In reality, the Allies reached the Seine by D+79, but their

⁶⁶⁵ Both cited in: Ruppenthal, Logistical Support I, p. 489.

⁶⁶⁶ Bradley, Soldier's Story, p. 407 ff.

⁶⁶⁷ CMH, Northern France, p. 25.

⁶⁶⁸ Cf. [Fig. 16](#).

⁶⁶⁹ Ruppenthal, Logistical Support I, p. 188.

march was anything but continuous. From D+49 to D+79, they covered a distance that had been anticipated for the period between D+15 and D+90. While it had been calculated that 12 U.S. divisions at the most would require provisioning at the Seine by D+90 (September 4), in fact 16 divisions had already pushed 150 miles beyond the Seine by that date. One week later, the spearheads of First Army had reached the outskirts of Aachen, situated on the German border 200 miles east of Paris. From August 25 (D+79) to September 12 (D+98), Allied forces occupied an area that had been forecast to be taken between D+90 and D+350.⁶⁷⁰ Operationally, the wildest dreams of OVERLORD's planners had been exceeded by far and wide. Logistically, this achievement presented them with an impossible task.

Fig. 16 Gordon A. Harrison, *United States Army in World War II. The European Theater of Operations. Cross-Channel Attack* (Washington, D.C. 1993), Map III.

In 1944, the Army of the United States was the most mobile army in the world. Its mobility was prerequisite to its spectacular achievements in the six weeks following COBRA, but this feat also entailed problems. Just one tank consumed an average of 30,000 liters of fuel in a week, while one armored division used 227,000 liters daily if it confined itself to roads.⁶⁷¹ General Hodges' First Army reached a daily fuel consumption average of 1.9 million liters during one week of maneuver warfare starting August 19.⁶⁷² In addition to fuel, of course, an army also required ammunition, food, spare parts and a variety of other supply goods, amounting to an average daily replenishment requirement of 600 tons for a single division. By the end of August 1944, the Allied Expeditionary Forces counted 37 divisions in the field. This meant that ComZ was confronted with the daily task of transporting 22,200 tons of supplies to the front along routes that were steadily becoming longer.⁶⁷³

⁶⁷⁰ Greenfield, *Command Decisions*, p. 422 ff.

⁶⁷¹ Beevor, *D-Day*, p. 433.

⁶⁷² Ruppenthal, *Logistical Support I*, p. 503.

⁶⁷³ Mansoor, *G.I. Offensive*, p. 176.

The French rail network, which in theory could have moved the required tonnage, was unusable. The lines operating west of Paris had been systematically bombed in the run-up to OVERLORD in order to prevent the Wehrmacht from reinforcing its forces along the invasion front. Eisenhower's decision to pursue the fleeing German armies beyond the Seine forced his logisticians to improvise to a great extent. ComZ organized the Red Ball Express⁶⁷⁴, a one-way triangular circuit through Chartres, La Loupe and Dreux that utilized truck convoys in motion around the clock. After August 25, 118 truck companies were employed on this route to transport supply goods from Normandy to Chartres. At the start of September, the Red Ball Express expanded to Soissons and Sommesous in order to be able to supply First and Third Armies separately. Although the plan was an ambitious one, it only partially met expectations because of several reasons. These included a shortage of military police to direct traffic, slow loading times for the truck convoys, multiple vehicle breakdowns due to the virtual impossibility of 24-hour maintenance service, and the lack of a uniform system of traffic management. In addition, the convoys were regularly kidnapped by the field armies in order to deliver the supplies beyond their unloading points into the depots of the individual divisions.⁶⁷⁵ Lastly, trucks used for supply transport had the obvious disadvantage that they not only transported fuel (the commodity that was most urgently needed) but also consumed it in substantial quantities.

Apart from the Red Ball Express, 26th, 95th and 104th Infantry Divisions were deprived of their own transport in order to create 86 truck companies. Two engineer service regiments, a chemical smoke-generating battalion, several antiaircraft units⁶⁷⁶ and other elements were reconfigured for transport duty. Even the field armies contributed their vehicles to be used for ComZ supply purposes. Bradley ordered his formations to leave their heavy artillery behind when crossing the Seine⁶⁷⁷ in order to

⁶⁷⁴ Cf. Marco Robert Büchl, *Shooting War – Kriegsbilder als Bildquellen. Der Zweite Weltkrieg aus Sicht der US-Kriegsfotografie* (Marburg 2009), p. 75 ff.

⁶⁷⁵ Ruppenthal, *Logistical Support I*, p. 558 ff.

⁶⁷⁶ Due to the absolute Allied air superiority, antiaircraft units were seldom needed, and their reassignment to other duties could be accomplished without conflict.

⁶⁷⁷ The decision was obvious because artillery was, at any rate, of almost no use in a battle of pursuit.

free up the artillery trucks for utilization as supply transport.⁶⁷⁸ Beginning on August 19, the troop carrier commands of the Allied Expeditionary Forces were freed up for supply duties. They were also required for combat operations, however, but following August 25, they assumed at least some of the provisioning obligation for Paris. Their daily transport tonnage never exceeded 1000 tons and sometimes fell to around 250.⁶⁷⁹ Ultimately, the Red Ball Express and the various other measures taken to beef up transport capacity enabled the Allies to sustain the momentum of operations through the middle of September. Then the system finally reached its limits. Necessary truck repairs doubled during September. While an average of 29,000 truck tires per month had to be replaced between June and August, this number rose to 55,000 in September.⁶⁸⁰ Spare parts, tires and tools were scarce commodities throughout the European Theater of Operations. Exhausted to the limit from their constant duty, truck drivers were responsible for soaring accident rates. Many of the ad hoc transport companies neglected vehicle maintenance so blatantly that they were referred to spitefully as 'truck destroyer battalions'.⁶⁸¹ Damage and wear to the supply system's equipment and infrastructure occurred to such a degree that even minimal requirements could no longer be met. As a result, Allied forces that had lived hand to mouth for weeks were left entirely short of supplies.

During the six-week pursuit of the German Wehrmacht through northern France and Belgium, Eisenhower had repeatedly put medium-term logistical needs on a back burner in favor of short-term operational possibilities. Although these decisions took their toll on the logistical system, they proved correct in the end. The virtually total collapse of the Wehrmacht in France offered the unique opportunity to attain the borders of Nazi Germany in a short time and with scant casualties. By the middle of September, however, this hand had been overplayed, and the existing supply system was no longer in a position to perform its tasks. The Allied Expeditionary Forces had to halt, consolidate their supply lines and amass the stocks necessary to make a final push into Hitler's Reich itself. On one hand, Mauldin's cartoon stands for the frenetic

⁶⁷⁸ Ruppenthal, *Logistical Support I*, p. 570.

⁶⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 576 ff.

⁶⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 571.

⁶⁸¹ Ross, *Operations*, p. 399.

efforts and improvisational skills of those days, when each additional mile could be won with minimal casualties and collateral damage. On the other hand, it also marks the end of this phase.

9.10 The brass

We are disciplined, so we lie here (*in an artillery barrage*) and take it, because in the end, we are more afraid of defying the authority of an officer, backed up by the whole Army and a court-martial composed of officers like him, than we are of death by shell fire. Discipline is fear, not leadership, and we are afraid – not of Peacock (*the platoon-leading lieutenant*) but of the irresistible force that he represents. Afraid of our lives, we are more afraid of the system that holds us in thrall, and so we lie here and wait to be killed, because an officer tells us to lie here.

David Kenyon Webster⁶⁸²

No cultural history of any infantry whatsoever could claim to be comprehensive if it did not address the essential relationship between ordinary soldiers and their commissioned officers. The history of the dogface soldiers in the Army of the United States is no exception here. It could be characterized as the lowest common denominator of all armed forces, as well as a prerequisite to becoming operational, that commissioned officers hold virtually dictatorial authority. This simple fact alone guarantees that no front-line dogface soldier in World War II could afford to remain indifferent to the hierarchy of commissioned officers commanding him. No other individual factor influenced the life and survival of the dogfaces as the competence, personality and, ultimately, good will of their superiors.

The individual characteristics of this topic require that we leave the beaten path in order to approach it formally in a different way. While most of the cartoons examined in this study concern a concrete situation or a particular fact grounded in historical reality, officer cartoons must, as a rule, be viewed differently. More than the majority of Mauldin's cartoons, they rely on stereotypical images and describe aspects of the mutually complex relationship between these military castes. It goes without saying that such interactions are defined by the relative positions of the protagonists in the hierarchical power structure of the Army of the United States. In their commentary on

⁶⁸² David Kenyon Webster, *Parachute Infantry. An American Paratrooper's Memoir of D-Day and the Fall of the Third Reich* (New York 2008), p. 167.

the various dimensions of this complex relationship, Mauldin's officer cartoons touch the very core of contemporary realities and literally harbor historical emotions, (pre)conceptions and significance. In order to lend structure to the following considerations, we will shape them around the three divisions of modern commissioned officership: in descending order, general officers⁶⁸³, field officers⁶⁸⁴ and company officers⁶⁸⁵. The commentary below will focus on one cartoon relating to each of these service-grade groups. In this way, one can become familiar with the respective specifics of each of these divisions. Naturally, the three visual analyses can only be understood as a cursory overview of this particularly complex, multi-layered and critical field in the history of the Army of the United States. In any case, they indicate the historiographical value of Bill Mauldin's work regarding the topic addressed here within the overall context of the subject.

Before we get into the middle of things, however, we need to point out the linguistic differentiation of terms related to officers. The term 'officer', while used constantly throughout the discussion of this particular group, is misleading in a historiographic context because it is not sufficiently discriminating with respect to the topic. Specifically, it should be noted that the common term 'officer' as used in this text refers to commissioned officers as opposed to non-commissioned officers or NCOs. As a rule, this latter group consisted of enlisted men who were promoted in service grade and furnished with a tightly defined authority to exert command according to the tasks assigned to them (by commissioned officers). In contrast, commissioned

⁶⁸³ General officers included, in ascending order, brigadier generals, major generals and lieutenant generals with one, two and three stars as rank insignia as well as (full) generals with four stars to mark their authority. Five-star Generals of the Army were (and are) created by special congressional resolution only in wartime. Their counterparts were the British rank of field marshal and the German Generalfeldmarschall.

⁶⁸⁴ Field officers, occupying the service grades of major, lieutenant colonel and colonel, commanded battalions and regiments or held staff positions in superordinated formations.

⁶⁸⁵ At the lowest hierarchical level of these service-grade groups were the so-called company (or junior) officers holding service grades of second lieutenant, first lieutenant and captain. Organizationally, as the umbrella term for this category suggests, these service grades were predominantly if not exclusively used at the company level. According to the Tables of Organization, an infantry company had three second lieutenants as platoon leaders, one first lieutenant as executive officer (XO) and a captain as company commander.

officers were authorized, in the technical sense of the word, to exercise autonomous command over military units and formations. Their command authority stems from their being 'commissioned' in the name of the President (and in the case of the top brass, directly by him) through a document that essentially provides certification from the highest levels of an officer's authorization.

Inspirin' (December 5, 1944)

The crusty, straight-backed veteran had a reputation for never wavering or flinching. When artillery shells landed near the bridge, Anderson stood erect on the riverbank, even after several NCOs asked him to take cover. Then a number of Luftwaffe airplanes streaked by strafing and bombing, but when the smoke cleared, the old colonel still stood in the same spot ... Such methods fell into disfavor during the war, but many officers still persisted in the dangerous practice.

Michael D. Doubler.⁶⁸⁶

⁶⁸⁶ Doubler, Closing, p. 237.

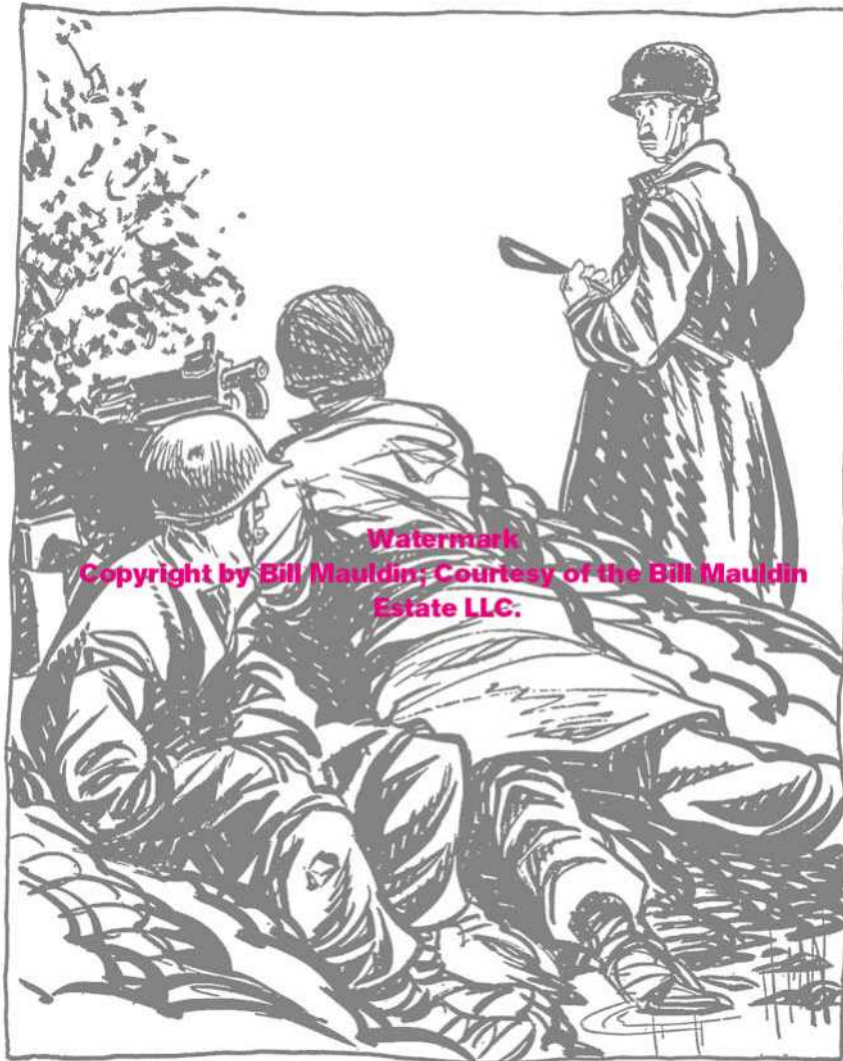


Fig. 17 “Sir, do ya hafta draw fire while yer inspirin’ us?” (1944)
Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1944). Courtesy of the Bill Mauldin Estate LLC.

Willie and Joe have taken cover against a slope. They man a light, air-cooled M1919A4 Browning machine gun⁶⁸⁷, the standard company-level support weapon, positioned behind a bush. Joe lies in a prone position behind the machine gun with his legs spread behind him and his left foot in a puddle of water. Willie is sitting beside him with his hands buried in his coat pockets. They both wear steel helmets and long coats over their field uniforms, while Willie has wrapped a scarf around his head, presumably to protect against the cold. Joe’s coat is torn at the right shoulder and Willie’s pants at the right knee. Above them on the slope - and thus in full view of whoever has caused the two dogfaces to seek cover – stands a brigadier general, recognizable from the single star at the front of his steel helmet. His service grade

⁶⁸⁷ Cf. Thomson, Procurement, p. 179.

identifies him as an assistant division commander or division artillery commander, or possibly a staff officer of a higher organizational unit.⁶⁸⁸ Like the two dogfaces, he wears a long trench coat. With a riding crop pressed under his left arm, he focuses his attention on the two soldiers in a look that may indicate astonishment. The reason for his presumed surprise is likely Willie, who asks him: *Sir, do ya hafta draw fire while yer inspirin' us?*

In the American Army of World War II, general officers were almost exclusively regulars and products of Army educational institutions like West Point, Virginia Military Institute, the Army Industrial College, the Army War College and lastly, the Command and General Staff School in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. A few noteworthy exceptions started their careers in the National Guard, and there were still fewer who, over decades, rose through promotion from private to a general's rank.⁶⁸⁹ Virtually without exception, these had been enlisted men or – as mentioned – privates during World War I, shaped by the negative public perception of the *chateau generalship* that was very pointedly described by John Keegan:

The impassive expressions that stare back at us from contemporary photographs do not speak of consciences or feelings troubled by the slaughter over which those men presided, nor do the circumstances in which they chose to live: the distant chateau, the wellpolished entourage, the glittering motor cars, the cavalry escorts, the regular routine, the heavy dinners, the uninterrupted hours of sleep. Joffre's two-hour lunch, Hindenburg's ten-hour night, Haig's therapeutic daily equitation along roads sanded lest his horse slip, the Stavka's diet of champagne and court gossip, seem and were a world away from the cold rations, wet boots, sodden uniforms, flooded trenches, ruined billets and plague of lice on, in and among which, in winter at least, their subordinates lived.⁶⁹⁰

In choosing their physical distance from the events, World War I generals were necessarily tied to the logistics of communications; otherwise, it would be very difficult to find a reasonable explanation for such strikingly inappropriate conduct. In

⁶⁸⁸ Cf. Order of Battle, p. 26.

⁶⁸⁹ These included the controversial Commander of the 1st Infantry Division, Terry de la Mesa Allen, and Theodore Roosevelt Jr., son of President (1901-1909) Teddy Roosevelt.

⁶⁹⁰ John Keegan, *The First World War* (London 2000), p. 312.

order to ensure the ability to communicate, they needed to situate their headquarters at the junction of landline telephone connections to subordinate formations under their command, connections that could only be maintained at a safe distance from the front due to their vulnerability. In a process that John Keegan ranks among the *great industrial enterprises of Europe in the first years of the twentieth century*⁶⁹¹, larger armies were assembled and equipped throughout Europe than at any preceding point in time. Even the smallest formations under the command of a general were dispersed over a section of the front that was too wide to be reviewable by a general operating near it. While 19th-Century commanders still took care to ride back and forth along the front lines within view of the Enemy in order to obtain a clear picture of events and to intervene personally where it became necessary, other principles applied in the 20th Century. The nearer a World War I general approached to the front, the more difficult it became to supply him with all the information needed to direct a battle and thus the more poorly situated he was to perform his command.⁶⁹²

No matter what the necessities of communications were in 1914, most of the future generals of 1939 through 1945 were deeply affected by their predecessors' open displays of insensitivity. At least the troop commanders among them were mostly inclined to cultivate a fairly close relationship with their men. Many World War II general officers expressed their opinions regarding the leadership behavior of their forerunners by consciously choosing to return to the killing zones. Montgomery, who commanded a formation of several hundred thousand men, insisted on maintaining a tactical headquarters within earshot of combat operations. James *Slim Jim* Gavin, the Irish-American commander of 82nd Airborne Division, who – uniquely for a general officer – took part in four combat jumps during the war, could frequently be found at the front lines if his paratroopers were engaged in battle. Matthew Ridgeway, his predecessor, shared this tendency. German generals of the same generation often used similar methods to attempt to wash away the sins of their forerunners. In this vein, Rommel's leadership style was to direct battles from an armored vehicle at the front. Similarly, Guderian roamed the battlefields in a radio command car, usually

⁶⁹¹ Ibid., p. 20.

⁶⁹² Ibid., p. 312 ff.

within range of enemy fire.⁶⁹³ All these examples represent negligent and, from a pragmatic point of view, counterproductive behavior compared with the actual command responsibilities of a general. Within their own commands, however, it was difficult to go against the will of generals who insisted on sallying forth in these ways. Although such daredevilry was frowned upon at the highest levels of military decisionmaking, superiors could not effectively intervene. As a rule, they were geographically too distant from the events to be able to keep a constant eye on the forward thrusts of a subordinate.

A key element of the cartoon under discussion relates to a basic consequence of this risky behavior. At the focus of events, witnessed by both his own troops and those of the Enemy, the commander is engaging in personal behavior under fire that could have potentially far-reaching consequences. From Caesar to Henry V to Napoleon and Wellington, the history of organized killing is filled with accounts of great commanders whose stoic-heroic behavior in the face of the Enemy has become legend. World War II generals had been students of this history in the midst of the greatest of all wars, and they were products of a military education system that was still guided by 19th-Century virtues. Thus it seemed desirable to many of them that they should react to the experience of enemy fire with a particular nonchalance. *Older career officers especially clung to the belief that a commander's bold but calm presence on the front lines instilled the troops with confidence*⁶⁹⁴, writes Michael Doubler.

Many general officers responded to the escalation of personal endangerment related to their proximity to the front in two ways, both viewed at the time as highly eccentric. In contrast to the elitist tradition of keeping officers at a distance from the bloody business of killing, involving the carrying of only symbolic weapons or often none at all, they implemented their own personal rearmament. Patton's obligatory ivory-handled revolvers are the best-known example. To cite two other well-known instances, Gavin customarily carried a carbine, while Ridgeway wore a pair of hand grenades.⁶⁹⁵ On the German side, General Seydlitz-Kurzbach also sported a

⁶⁹³ Keegan, *Face of Battle*, p. 330.

⁶⁹⁴ Doubler, *Closing*, p. 237.

⁶⁹⁵ Cf. Keegan, *Face of Battle*, p. 329 ff.

private's carbine for personal protection. In addition, many generals began to don the uniforms of ordinary privates, some of them declining even the star insignias that indicated their rank as general. Whether this practice was a quest for simplicity appropriate to the deadly business of war or an effort to demonstrate visually a closeness to the lowest ranks in their command, it represented a pragmatic necessity, given the circumstances. Because of their leadership position and their importance to the cohesion and coordination of their formations, officers generally represented a priority target for every rifleman (especially sharpshooters) in the front lines. Soon after their baptism of fire, a great majority of front-line commanders came to realize that they could significantly extend their life expectancy if their visual appearance was indistinguishable from that of their troops. Nonetheless, the need to study maps and make use of tactical radio communications regularly forced officers to identify themselves as such.⁶⁹⁶ By the same logic, officers on the front lines represented targets whose tactical neutralization could lead to operational consequences. For this reason, it became a minimal prerequisite for personal security to avoid open identification as a general, to whatever extent possible, when operating near the front.

Let us return again to our cartoon. Viewed as a profile of socio-cultural tendencies of American general officers in the Army of the United States, there is no case to be made against the validity of the above assumptions. In Bill Mauldin's cartoon, however, these self-reflective and history-burdened realities of a high command overlap with those of the dogfaces, thereby taking on a new significance that, at most, could be described as a farcical distortion. Front line displays of guilt and atonement, as well as the reprocessing of the Great War within the present one, played a very minor role in the reality of the dogfaces. They found themselves firmly in the grip of a phenomenon that philosopher J. Glenn Gray, in his classic study *The Warriors*⁶⁹⁷, labeled the 'tyranny of the present'. According to his characterization, the future and especially the past lose their significance because the present can inflict unforeseen and unforeseeable death at any moment. Combat historian Gerald F. Linderman also reflects on this phenomenon, describing the forces that arise:

⁶⁹⁶ Max Hastings, *Armageddon. The Battle for Germany, 1944–1945* (London 2005), p. 88.

⁶⁹⁷ J. Glenn Gray, *The Warriors. Reflections on Men in Battle* (New York 1998).

... the war itself would be without end. As the moment overwhelmed time, subjugating past and future; as combat came to control the moment, even when soldiers were temporarily freed from fighting; as each clash succeeded the last in sheer iteration of tactics and techniques, battle became limitless.⁶⁹⁸

In such situations, making oneself visible meant becoming a target; and to be a target was something to avoid at all cost. Neither coming to terms psycho-hygienically with the past nor making gestures of solidarity held much meaning for the dogfaces, even if such acts were performed with the best intentions imaginable. Trapped in an incalculable and deadly reality, they sought to protect the only asset left to them: their bare lives. No matter whether the brigadier general's behavior may be explainable through his own personal conception of heroism, leading by example or actual redemption of the sins of earlier generals, it has but one relevant consequence for the two dogfaces: namely, attracting a degree of hostile attention to their immediate surroundings, a situation that can quickly have lethal consequences at the front lines. Mauldin's cartoon focuses on this senseless display of stoic-heroic pseudo-leadership behavior by portraying it against the backdrop of a basic law of the front lines: that an individual's visibility and his life expectancy are inversely proportional to each other.

Beautiful View (September 25, 1944)

The Officers ate on tablecloth with waiters and a wine list on the troopship when we came overseas, then came below to our tiny, sweaty, steerage mess hall and stood over us, shouting, "Hurry up, men, hurry up! There's another company waiting to get in."

David Kenyon Webster⁶⁹⁹

⁶⁹⁸ Gerald F. Linderman, *The World within War. America's Combat Experience in World War II* (New York 1997), p. 347.

⁶⁹⁹ Webster, *Parachute Infantry*, p. 130.



Fig. 18 “Beautiful view. Is there one for the enlisted men?” (1944)
Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1944). Courtesy of the Bill Mauldin Estate LLC.

There is not a great deal of information on physical realia to be elicited by this cartoon. In the picture’s background, we see a dramatically illuminated mountain panorama. Rays of sunshine stream through gaps in the dark cloud layer, falling on a rocky mountainscape. The long shadows seen at right in the foreground suggest that this scene is playing out in the morning or late afternoon hours. The shadows in question are cast by two American soldiers who stand on a slope in the right foreground, contemplating the romantic scenery. Both soldiers are wearing garrison caps.⁷⁰⁰ The one at the left wears a uniform coat with no further identification and has his hands in his pants pockets. A circular rank insignia is recognizable on his left

⁷⁰⁰ Cf. Stanton, *Army Uniforms*, p. 70 ff.

shoulder. This would be a stylized oak leaf that, if gold-colored, indicates a major or, if silver, a lieutenant colonel. The apparently mustachioed soldier standing at the right is identifiable as a captain from the two vertical bars on his garrison cap. He wears a trench coat and, in his hands clasped behind him, holds a baton. As the two officers admire the panorama, he comments: *Beautiful view. Is there one for the enlisted men?*

As we have already stated in this text, the ethos of the officer corps in the American Regular Army was conceived along the lines of European military tradition.⁷⁰¹ The ideological guiding principles of this body of thought were enunciated beginning as early as 1802 at the United States Military Academy in West Point, New York and are reflected in the Academy's motto: *Duty, Honor, Country*.⁷⁰² West Point taught prospective officers to see themselves as virtually an aristocratic caste, as 'officers and gentlemen'. According to this mindset, NCOs and enlisted men were clearly not gentlemen but instead a lower class of virtual pariahs who were necessary to the military. Commissioned officers were distinguishable to the eye from their subordinates while, in the social arena, they kept to themselves. Service-related contacts were reduced to a minimum and, as far as possible, mediated by NCOs. Discipline was harshly enforced at all times. *They wore uniforms that were distinctly different from those of the other ranks*, so Scott Hendrix,

on formal occasions, they carried swords and, for less formal occasions, swagger sticks, both traditional symbols of authority. The relationship between officers and enlisted men was based upon the European model that saw officers as "gentlemen" and enlisted men as distinctly not. Strict subordination was insisted upon, and discipline was maintained by severe punishment and regulated by the Articles of War, derived from those of the British Army of the 18th century. Enlisted men were expected to be deferential and obedient. They made formal gestures of submission by standing to attention when an officer spoke to them and by saluting.⁷⁰³

⁷⁰¹ Cf. [Chapter 2.1](#) Regulars – citizen soldiers.

⁷⁰² Todd Forney, United States Military Academy, in: Peter Karsten (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of War and American Society* (New York 2005), p. 517 ff.

⁷⁰³ Hendrix, *European Military Culture*, p. 259.

The significance and expression of this social segregation became intensified over the long periods of American history when professional officers were effectively treated as outcasts in the social circles of the United States. To a society that was roundly critical of centralized authority, they were seen as representatives of Washington's potentially dictatorial military power. In order to compensate for this lack of prestige and respect in the civilian sector, many officers who had been molded by the Regular Army developed a tendency toward an inwardly focused orientation. There, in the Regular Army's de facto parallel society, they could inflate their perceived self-worth by considering and treating their subordinates as lesser beings.

The personal memoirs of American soldiers of the Second World War are filled with accounts of structural and individual discrimination against the enlisted ranks. Better food, more comfortable quarters, a monthly alcohol ration for officers that was denied to enlisted men, dining and entertainment facilities that were *off limits* for the enlisted service grades ... the list could be extended indefinitely.⁷⁰⁴

Zig Borouhgs provides a particularly vivid elucidation of this issue. His unit was ordered to erect a 25-foot-long tent over the officers' latrine ...

... so that the officers could shit in style. [We] also prepared the conveniences ... digging the trenches and erecting the boxes over the trenches, each with two holes ... standard equipment for high-ranking field officers. After the officers' latrine was prepared with the sweat and labor and oaths of the enlisted men, my normally happy disposition was rankled every time I had to lower my pants over a trench in the rain and the mud.⁷⁰⁵

Two letters sent by dogfaces in 1945 to the editor of the weekly magazine *Yank* testify to the fatalistic sense of humor relating to the discriminatory officers' privileges as well as the readiness of internal Army institutions like *Yank* itself to address the subject. In the first of these letters, a certain T/5 Napling complains over an incident involving two Hershey chocolate bars in the PX of his troop transport during his formation's transfer across the Atlantic:

⁷⁰⁴ Linderman, *World within War*, p. 188 ff.

⁷⁰⁵ Cited in: Linderman, *World within War*, p. 191 ff.

Dear Yank, on the troop carrier I was on, the PX ration chocolate, one day I purchased a Hershey Bar with almonds as did the soldier in front of me. It developed upon eating our chocolate bars, that his Hershey contained nine almonds while mine only seven. Is this fair?⁷⁰⁶

A later *Yank* edition published a reply in the form of a second letter to the editor, likewise from members of the *enlisted ranks*, stating:

Dear Yank, in a recent issue of Yank, T-5 Napling stated that the man preceding him in the chocolate bar ration line received nine almonds in his Hershey Bar whereas he himself only received seven. We feel that we can clarify the situation by pointing out that through some gross and unpardonable error the other soldier undoubtedly received an officer's Hershey Bar.⁷⁰⁷

The response letter revealed the conviction shared by many enlisted men that, compared to their officers, they lived a very underprivileged existence in every respect at the low end of the Army food chain. Naturally, a positive example can be found for every negative - for every captain who used his service grade for personal advantage, a major who shared his alcohol ration with his men.⁷⁰⁸ Ultimately, however, many of the structural injustices remained, such as the prohibitive alcohol restrictions on enlisted service grades that stayed intact to the end of the war and many other absurd but unchallenged fantasies of superiority on the part of commissioned officers of all service grades. Mauldin's cartoon succinctly conveys such unfairness.

Changes (November 23, 1944)

The Germans we were facing had been in the war for five years. We were all new to it, and our inexperience, despite our affectations of adequacy, was the most conspicuous thing about us.

1st Lieutenant Paul Fussell⁷⁰⁹

⁷⁰⁶ Cited in: Childers, "The Man's Army".

⁷⁰⁷ Cited in: *ibid.*

⁷⁰⁸ Linderman, *World within War*, p. 200 ff.

⁷⁰⁹ Fussell, *Doing Battle*, p. 104.



Fig. 19 “By th’ way, what wuz them changes you wuz gonna make when you took over last month, sir?” (1944)
Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1944). Courtesy of the Bill Mauldin Estate LLC.

Willie and Joe are sitting in a trench in front of the fortified entrance to a bunker. Barbed wire can be seen in the background, spiraling over the excavation and trailing off behind what appear to be wooden planks next to the opening. The top of the entrance is protected with sandbags, as is the rim of the trench running in front of the entrance. On the ground next to the trench fortification is an almost empty bottle, the contents of which may be presumed to be high in alcoholic content, judging from the three stars on the label. In the image’s foreground, partially submerged at the edge of a puddle, lies a sort of crate or box. A soldier who can be identified from the vertical bars on his helmet as a second or first lieutenant is sitting between the two dogfaces. Unshaven, he hangs a cigarette from the right-hand corner of his mouth as he holds a hand of five cards. From the grouping of the protagonists in the image, it is clear

that this is Willie and Joe's platoon leader. The dogfaces likewise have five-card hands, suggesting both that the junior officer's game is poker and that they are participants in it. Joe and Willie are unshaven, with cigarettes in their mouths. Joe has slung his M1 carbine over his right shoulder, and he is wearing a steel helmet. He holds his right hand to his forehead and stares pensively at his cards. Willie, who is wearing an M-1943 field cap⁷¹⁰, asks his lieutenant: *By th'way, what wuz them changes you wuz gonna make when you took over last month, sir?*

The previous images have shown us the institutional and cultural rifts that existed between officers and enlisted men in the Army of the United States. The present cartoon enables us to see where and how this class segregation between the two groups reached its limits in the reality of a land war.

The rapid expansion of the Army of the United States following 1941 created an enormous need for company grade officers to serve as lieutenants and captains in the dozens of infantry divisions that were activated as a part of Army Ground Forces. The traditional training institutions of the American officer corps, West Point Military Academy and the Virginia Military Institute, quickly reached the limits of their capacity due to the steadily increasing need for manpower. The war brought a period of more rapid promotions for promising talent in the ranks of field grade and general officers⁷¹¹; as they came open, positions were primarily filled from the lower service grades. The ranks of company grade officers, who constituted the basic reservoir from which such promotions occurred, needed to be replenished by newly trained replacements. This training occurred under the acronyms ROTC and OCS. Cadets of the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC), who received training at U.S. colleges

⁷¹⁰ In 1941, the Office of the Quartermaster General commissioned a study of the practicability of head protectors in the U.S. Army. This resulted in the development of a new steel helmet model to replace the British 'tin hat' that had been in use up until that time. The new line of helmets, consisting of a plastic inner helmet for ceremonial occasions and a steel outer helmet that came to be used as well as a wash basin and stool, required separate protection against the cold. After several designs were rejected, a project was begun to develop an all-purpose field head covering based on a ski cap. By the beginning of 1943, these efforts resulted in a water- and windproof poplin cap with short visor, the M-1943 model (Risch, Quartermaster I, p. 102).

⁷¹¹ Eisenhower, to cite the most prominent example, received six promotions between March 1941 and December 1944, rising from lieutenant colonel to General of the Army.

and universities, had at least a certain amount of army experience as reserves.⁷¹² The bulk of the junior officers, however, came from various Officer Candidate Schools (OCS).⁷¹³ The student body at these training facilities was made up of draftees who had exceeded a determined test score during Army recruitment.⁷¹⁴ After completing general basic training, they were prepared as officers in a twelve-week-long crash course at the OCS facilities. As the manpower crisis in the European Theater of Operations reached its zenith in fall and winter 1944, even students who had been deferred from military service under the Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP) were now sent to Officer Candidate Schools as a way of addressing this particularly acute shortage of junior officers. Literary scholar Paul Fussell, one of these ASTP students, found himself suddenly in Europe as an infantry platoon leader. His assessment of OCS training at the time is reflected in his later retrospective appraisal, where he comments: *... our inexperience, despite our affectations of adequacy, was the most conspicuous thing about us.*⁷¹⁵

When American operations officers began to receive increasingly substantial casualty reports in the aftermath of the landings in northwestern France, a stream of replacements began to flow through the North Atlantic supply routes, including thousands of quickly and superficially trained young second lieutenants like Paul Fussell. They were more likely to be adolescents than leadership figures, and they found themselves on the other side of the Atlantic with responsibilities that they could barely meet. Obeying the necessities and design of the replacement system, newly arrived junior officers were assigned to individual units in need of officers. Thus it was unavoidable that the untried 90-day wonders⁷¹⁶, as they were colloquially and disrespectfully called by veterans, would end up leading platoons that frequently

⁷¹² Mansoor, G.I. Offensive, p. 50.

⁷¹³ Ibid., p. 24.

⁷¹⁴ Cf. [Chapter 5.2](#) Induction. The average score on the Army General Classification Test (AGCT) fell within 90 and 109. In order to be accepted into the Army Specialized Training Program, a minimum score of 115 was required, while Officer Candidate Schools required a score of at least 110 (Kennett, G.I., p. 34 f.).

⁷¹⁵ Fussell, Doing Battle, p. 104.

⁷¹⁶ Max Hastings, OVERLORD. D-Day and the Battle for Normandy (London 1999), p. 292.

possessed considerable experience at the front. Reduced to its most basic outcome, this method of staffing rendered a situation that was hardly reassuring to the dogfaces. Against their better judgement, they often had to follow senseless and dangerous commands issued by incompetent junior officers or else reckon with the harsh legal consequences of failure to carry out orders according to the Articles of War. It was established earlier that American soldiers in World War II were more critical of the Army system than might be the case today. The weaknesses of the replacement system did not contribute to allaying this mistrust. In the front lines, the habitat of the dogfaces, the junior officers represented the draconian regime of the Army of the United States and, whether they were competent or incompetent, were criticized accordingly. Max Hastings provides an examination of this phenomenon from a British perspective:

Very many Soldiers respected their NCOs. But in sharp contrast to the British army, in which most men looked up to their officers, few American rankers admitted to thinking well of theirs ... Above all at platoon level ... young lieutenants upon whom so much depended – seldom won the confidence of their soldiers.⁷¹⁷

The 90-day wonders often had no occasion to win the trust and respect of their men. The nature of their military tasks in the middle of the killing zones frequently contributed to their not surviving long enough to be able to win anyone's respect. Following an ethos that was no longer appropriate in the World War II battlefields, a great many junior officers lost their lives while trying to compensate for their lack of practical experience through particularly reckless *leading by example*. The institutions of the Army soon recognized that this view of proper leadership behavior was necessarily leading to unsustainable losses in a land campaign against the German Wehrmacht in northwestern Europe, and they adapted official training guidelines accordingly. Nevertheless, junior officers frequently struggled with their duties and their place at the front. The erroneous ideas of many junior as well as senior officers concerning what was expected of soldiers like themselves could not, however, be sustainably corrected. Up to the end of the war, the Army of the United States suffered the loss of sometimes even high-ranking officers who carelessly found themselves closer to front-line action than their command duties would have

⁷¹⁷ Ibid., p. 292.

required.⁷¹⁸ The reality that many older Army officers from the period between the wars had a heroic-romantic (though not very empathic) vision of their profession is illustrated by the address of a regimental commander to lieutenants newly arrived in Normandy:

As officers, I expect you to lead your men. Men will follow a leader, and I expect my platoon leaders to be right up front. Losses could be very high. Use every skill you possess. If you survive your first battle, I'll promote you. Good luck.⁷¹⁹

If 90-day wonders lived through their first days and weeks in the killing zones, they generally came to recognize a simple but existential truth: their only chance of survival required them to discard all the fantasies of superiority that they had learned in officer training. Their best life insurance policy was to learn about life and survival from their men in the killing zones. It may be assumed that *them changes* mentioned by Willie to his platoon leader involve what was known as *spit and polish*: strict formal discipline, correct military appearance and routines that were passed on from the garrison service. Many junior officers' views of such virtues gradually tended to converge with the attitudes of the dogfaces, who considered all this to be meaningless chickenshit.⁷²⁰ It may be assumed that more existential issues were present on the lieutenants' agendas after one month than *them changes*.

⁷¹⁸ Doubler, Closing, p. 237 ff.

⁷¹⁹ Cited in: Ibid., p. 238.

⁷²⁰ Cf. [Chapter 5.3](#) Chickenshit.

10 The greatest generation?

The war is our world and our life ... and the other one we know fades away.

Orval Faubus⁷²¹

I'm tired and sick of war. Its glory is all moonshine. War is hell.

William Tecumseh Sherman⁷²²

At the outset of these concluding observations, it is important to note that the collection of visual commentaries contained here can represent only a cursory overview of the historiographical potential of Bill Mauldin's war cartooning. The overseas output of this extraordinary artist, cultural anthropologist and social commentator amounts to over 600 works. Their systematic appraisal and analysis using the techniques established in the present study would honor what this text, at its best, can only reveal in their essential features: a precise and exceptionally detailed panorama of a complex web of manifest and latent hierarchies, dependencies, animosities and sympathies adapted to one specific socio-cultural group, as well as the realities specific to the time and place it occupied. Taken together, these findings relate to that fabric of interdependent yet individual meanings that Clifford Geertz, borrowing from Max Weber, characterizes as 'interpretation of culture'.

⁷²¹ Cited in: Linderman, *World within War*, p. 350. Irrespective of his relevant testimony in this connection, it must be pointed out that Faubus, as Governor of Arkansas in 1957, gained notoriety by ordering the Arkansas National Guard to block entrance by black students into Little Rock's Central High School, thus denying the implementation of the decision by the United States Supreme Court in the case of *Brown v. Board of Education* that abolished segregation in American schools. In the course of the so-called Little Rock Crisis provoked by this incident, President Eisenhower placed the Arkansas National Guard under the command of the federal government in Washington, ordered them to return to their garrisons and assigned the 101st Airborne Division – which Eisenhower had visited in southern England on June 5, 1944 prior to its baptism of fire as part of OVERLORD – to protect the free access of African-American students to the school. (Paul Greenberg, *Eisenhower Draws the Racial Battle Lines with Orval Faubus*, in: *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, No. 18 [1997–1998], p. 120 ff.)

⁷²² John Keegan, *A History of Warfare* (New York 1994) p. 6.

Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretative one in search of meaning.⁷²³

In this context, every decision to feature a particular cartoon is simultaneously a decision not to include a multiplicity of equally qualified works. For every topic of interest that has found its way into this study, the corpus of Mauldin's drawings offers various cartoons, no less worthy of display, that could not be included for lack of space. Since the present study represents, so far as I am aware, the first attempt at a systematic visual study of the World War II output of Bill Mauldin, I made the conceptual decision to select works that permit a broad access to the subject matter.

The extremely rich potential of such cultural studies can only be adequately and meaningfully developed if one transcends the boundaries that separate history's chroniclers from its interpreters. Transparency and verifiability are and clearly remain central pillars of the historian's trade. Ultimately, however, we are concerned with a myriad of individual and collective manifestations of the human spirit that exist in complex connection with one another. Solely trying emulate methods of the sciences in the vain hope of gaining a precise measure of historical "truth" can only lead to failure. The task at hand for historical scholarship is to bring together a quantity of loose ends, distill significance from a flood of information and, in so doing, respect no boundaries of time, space, or scholarly discipline. The task of the historian is to transform himself into a traditional historian *and* anthropologist *and* social scientist *and* psychoanalyst of a given subject matter.

Culture

Based on these ambitions, we dedicated ourselves in the first portion of the present study to analyzing, in some detail, various aspects of the past history of the United States. The underlying intention was clearly not to establish legalistic historiographical causal relationships between George Washington's citizen soldiers and the dogface soldiers of Dwight Eisenhower. This exercise was, rather, a methodical means to the end of highlighting the countless manifestations of human will that became consolidated into an American mentality over time.

⁷²³ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures. Selected Essays* (New York 1973), p. 5.

The concept of 'great men' as crucial determinants of historical evolution, so commonly employed in the history of historical writing, is as linguistically indistinct as it is historiologically deceptive. Nevertheless, the conclusions reached in [Chapters 3 and 4](#) concerning American isolationism and the U.S. pivot to internationalist policies and an offensive security strategy suggest that a somewhat more discerning approach should be taken in this context. Even if no 'great men of destiny' in the romantic-historical tradition are to be seen here, the history of the dogface soldiers is certainly characterized by ordinary men⁷²⁴ having the utmost significance for the genesis of the phenomenon. In order to remain true to the terminology of the topic: the tactical cause of the genesis of a distinctive identity and virtual ideology as dogfaces was discussed in detail in [Chapter 8](#). What, though, were the strategic prerequisites? Over long stretches, these can be constructed around the decisions of a handful of individuals who provided decisive impulses to systemic-cultural processes at critical moments:

Wedemeyer is the most interesting example in this context. While at the Kriegsakademie in Berlin, he was equipped with the requisite *land-minded* strategic know-how that allowed him to recognize that Germany's concept of war as an absolute national endeavor could realistically only be countered at the maximum level by means of a decisive battle waged on the land mass of northwestern Europe. In addition, Wedemeyer offers an ideal example of the randomness with which subordinate officers have repeatedly exerted a decisive influence on major military events; the role of German Oberstleutnant (Lieutenant Colonel) Hentsch in annulling the Schlieffen Plan in 1914 is only the most striking example of this phenomenon.⁷²⁵

⁷²⁴ The only woman of any major significance in the history of the Army of the United States was Eleanor Roosevelt, who lobbied her husband and public opinion for equal treatment for African-American soldiers. As discussed earlier in Chapter 6, however, since African-American GIs played only a subordinate role in the phenomenon of the dogface soldiers, the above discussion should not be interpreted as gender insensibility but rather as the consequence of the factual historical situation.

⁷²⁵ In the hypothetical event that the German Reich might conduct a two-front war against Allied France and Russia, the Schlieffen Plan envisioned first defeating France with the bulk of the German Army in a rapid campaign before Russia could have the chance to complete its mobilization measures. In the plan's next phase, most of the German Army would redeploy to the east in a second campaign aimed at defeating Russia as well. Though the plan was based on unrealistic assumptions right from the outset (the German rail connections were incapable of transporting troops and machinery from

Of course, the towering figure of George Catlett Marshall needs to be counted in this elite group. Marshall, who literally created the Army of the United States, recognized the unique quality of the low-ranking Wedemeyer and knew how to make use of it. In addition, Marshall was aware of the fact that an army of citizen soldiers was bound to be more liberal in spirit and character than one made up of Prussian Junkers⁷²⁶, and he ensured through various staffing decisions that this consciousness would spread throughout the hierarchies of the Army of the United States. It is similarly important to cite Franklin Roosevelt, who challenged populist-isolationist trends in American *public opinion* and declared an economic and de facto, if not de jure, state of war against the Third Reich. His demand for unconditional surrender on the part of all Allied foes, made jointly with Churchill in Casablanca, defined the strategic framework to confront history's most perfidious ideology militarily. Churchill, the 20th Century's uber-Briton and (in a stroke of historic irony) son of an American mother, has earned his own listing in this roster. His British tradition of strategic thinking along the periphery – rendered over much friction into conventional and executable strategy by Chief of the Imperial General Staff Brooke – was only prepared to support Wedemeyer's decisive northwestern European battle if the plan also included a Mediterranean campaign that proved to have serious consequences for the history of the dogfaces. Within the hierarchies of Army Ground Forces, it was key systemic figures like Eisenhower, Bradley, Clark and Truscott who were ready to implement Marshall's liberal concept of the Army of the United States. Their basic willingness to allow this relatively liberal atmosphere in their command areas (if not also to play a proactive role in encouraging such conditions) formed a basic prerequisite for extensive cultural cross-linking to be able to occur at the base of their organizations.

west to east in the quantities assumed by Schlieffen) and therefore not executable, it was treated as the Holy Grail by the German General Staff until 1914. After the plan's errors revealed themselves in the fall of 1914, Schlieffen's successor, Moltke the Younger, posted that very lieutenant colonel, Richard Hentsch, to the front in order to evaluate its continued feasibility. Hentsch's negative report resulted in the scrapping of the Schlieffen Plan (Keegan, *First World War*, pp. 29 ff., 120 ff.).

⁷²⁶ Junkers were mostly lower-class, often impoverished members of the Prussian rural nobility who predominantly served in the kingdom's officer corps. From the 1871 German unification until 1945, Prussians continued to occupy a significant number of high military command positions, and the Prussian military tradition kept a firm grip on German military thinking. The Junkers came to epitomize these tendencies.

Genesis

The next section led us on the track of the dogface soldiers through the complex history of the legal foundations and organizational structuring of the Mobilization Training Program, the creation of the Army of the United States based on these assumptions, and the organization and progression of their transfer to the theaters of war in Europe. The history of this Herculean legal, industrial and logistical task is significant regarding various aspects of its particular processes as well as in its supreme influence in creating the basic alloy of what would then become the dogface soldiers. We have traced how, under the watchful eyes of a radical- federalist public, the mechanisms of a general mobilization based on the Selective Service System evolved; under what conditions and according to which considerations that system ultimately conscripted over 16 million Americans into service in the Armed Forces; and lastly, with what technical, procedural, logistical and cultural challenges this operation, so difficult to imagine in its scope, was confronted.

Besides the countless narratives of daily life under the Selective Service System, the gold dust in history's systematic quest for meaning, many insights are of particular significance in a wider national focus as we seek to comprehend this epochal recalibration of America's national consciousness with respect to self-awareness. Armies are universal institutions that turn out to resemble one another closely. In spite of this, as John Keegan declares:

... each is also a mirror of its own society and its values: in some places and at some times an agent of national pride or a bulwark against national fears, or perhaps even the last symbol of the nation itself; elsewhere and otherwise an instrument of national power deprecated, disregarded and of very last resort.⁷²⁷

The transformation of America's Armed Forces from the Regular Army of the period between the wars to the 1945 Army of the United States is a journey from society's margins to its innermost reaches – in the words of Keegan, the transfiguration from a deprecated and disregarded institution into an agent of national pride or even national identification. A variety of conceptual and procedural decisions of general principle formed the foundation for this transformation into the Army of the United

⁷²⁷ Keegan, *Six Armies*, p. xi.

States. In this context, the traumatic experiences of the Depression years served as a catalyst and gave a decisive twist to this development.

Regiments as the fundamental building blocks of modern standing armies were introduced at the start of the 17th Century. These nuclei of all modern armies, in addition to serving their primary purpose of furnishing the state with a permanently available means of professional military power, had another function: namely, that of isolating freebooters, mercenaries and other societal troublemakers and making use of them in a classical political sense. These new social structures soon developed a culturally introspective character. Particular traditions and values systems as well as strong internal discipline resulted in the Army's tendency to separate itself from society at large and to develop parallel social structures.⁷²⁸ The American Regular Army found itself in precisely this self-imposed exile at the end of the 1930s decade. Marshall was aware of this fact and conscious as well of the genuine resentments of the American public against centralized power structures, which they perceived as dictatorial. Obeying his democratic ideals and Puritan ethic, he recognized that the organization and spirit of the Armed Forces needed to open up to the wider society, and not the other way around.

The result of these convictions and his own personal policies that sprang from them was a wartime army of a notably liberal character whose members, while still tightly confined by military necessities, did not reject certain fundamental rights. The most impressive example of this posture is the following comparison: On the eastern front alone in the final year of the war, Hitler's Wehrmacht sentenced approximately 30,000 soldiers to death for *cowardice before the Enemy* and *desertion*, two thirds of whom were actually executed.⁷²⁹ During the entire course of the Second World War, military courts-martial of the Army of the United States in Europe and the Pacific Theater executed 102 soldiers. Of these, 101 had been found guilty of murder or rape. The remaining execution of a GI, occurring at the beginning of 1945, was for two actual desertions and his written statement of intent to desert again.⁷³⁰

⁷²⁸ John Keegan, *A History of Warfare* (Audiobook), Disk 1, Track 12.

⁷²⁹ Roberts, *Storm of War*, p. 553.

⁷³⁰ Private Eddie Slovik, who arrived in France as a replacement soldier in fall 1944, deserted before reaching the front. He spent the next six weeks in the custody of a unit of the Canadian Military Police.

The Army's methods of training, organization and armament were laid out along principles of industrial mass production. Division of labor, standardization, professional management, assembly-line production, economies of scale and interchangeability of parts, all properly subsumed under the heading 'American System of Manufacture', led to the transformation of an absolutist, virtually feudal mounted Regular Army stationed in remote border garrisons into a motorized and mechanized army led according to the maxims of the Harvard Business School.⁷³¹

After being returned without punishment to his own unit, Slovik inquired of his commander whether running away again would be considered desertion. Told that it would, Slovik deserted a second time, again ending up in another unit, where he submitted a note declaring: "I, Pvt. Eddie D. Slovik, 36896415, confess to the desertion of the United States Army. At the time of my desertion we were in Albuff [Elbeuf] in France. I come [sic!] to Albuff as a replacement. They were shilling [sic!] the town and we were told to dig in for the night. The flowing [sic!] morning they were shilling [sic!] us again. I was so scared nerves and trembling that at the time the other replacements moved out I couldn't move. I stayed their [sic!] in my fox hole till it was quite [sic!] and I was able to move. I then walked in town. Not seeing any of our troops so I stayed over night at a French hospital. The next morning I turned myself over to the Canadian Provost Corp. After being with them six weeks I was turned over to American M.P. They turned me lose [sic!]. I told my commanding officer my story. I said that if I had to go out their [sic!] again Id run away. He said their [sic!] was nothing he could do for me so I ran away again AND ILL RUN AWAY AGAIN IF I HAVE TO GO OUT THEIR [sic!]. – Signed *Pvt. Eddie D. Slovik A.S.N. 36896415*" (cited in: Benedict B. Kimmelman, The Example of Private Slovik, in: American Heritage Magazine, Vol. 38, No. 6 [1987]). On November 11, 1944, a military court-martial of the 28th Infantry Division preferred a charge of *desertion to avoid hazardous duty* against Pvt. Slovik. At the start of the proceeding, the court offered him the opportunity to recant his written statement and thereby avoid the maximum sentence (death). Slovik refused, being consequently (and not surprisingly) sentenced to execution by firing squad. A total of 21,000 American soldiers were tried for the crime of desertion in World War II, of whom 49 were sentenced to death. The fact that Slovik was the only soldier on whom the sentence was actually carried out is based on several considerations, including his refusal to recant his written statement, which removed this means of possibly mitigating his sentence, as well as the respective decisions handed down by his division commander, Major General Norman Cota and Supreme Commander Eisenhower at junctures (November 11 in the case of Cota and December 23 for Eisenhower) when the Army of the United States, hard pressed both in the Hürtgen Forest and in connection with the German offensive in the Ardennes, was plagued by desertions in epidemic proportions. In view of these factors, the singular judgment against Slovik – the first death sentence actually carried out by an American army since the Civil War – should be seen as setting an example (Kimmelman, Private Slovik).

⁷³¹ Cf. Keegan, *Six Armies*, p. 235.

The sheer dimension of the Army's expansion under the guidelines of Wedemeyer's Victory Program triggered an unprecedented economic upswing and ensured rapidly rising prosperity following the years of the Great Depression. In addition to the obvious material repercussions, the economic crisis of the 1930s had even more serious psychological effects. This period, which was characterized by grinding poverty, mass unemployment and lack of a realistic outlook for any sort of improvement in these conditions, affected U.S. self-awareness by creating a profound loss of confidence in the idea of America as a country of unlimited possibilities.⁷³² The universal optimism that everyone could make something of him- or herself, which was based on the right to *life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness* enshrined in the U.S. Declaration of Independence, only experienced a rebirth during the early years of the 1940s decade, when the country began its ascent toward becoming by far the richest and most productive nation on earth.

It was only when the Army, not least because of its renewal in terms of personnel, had emerged from its cultural past, only when it became a true and literal *American enterprise* through its fantastic expansion. Only then could it correspond in its missionary-like pioneer spirit to the ideals of the American frontier mentality and begin to occupy a place at the heart of U.S. consciousness.

In addition to its abovementioned movement away from its own past, another highly significant achievement of the Army of the United States contributes to our understanding of the historical origins of the dogface soldiers: namely, their physical transfer across the Atlantic Ocean. Spatial mobility of young males in the United States in the early 20th Century had been extremely limited for several reasons. For a combination of factors related to infrastructure, culture and the economy, most Army draftees had never left their home districts before they made the journey to the reception centers, their draft note in their pocket. Once there, many experienced outright shock when confronted with American cultural and ethnic diversity. When President Roosevelt drew the first number in the draft lottery in September 1940, newspapers reported that, in New York alone, that number (158) was held by young men named Chon, Cody, Faruggia, Weisblum, Stazzone and Liechtenstein among

⁷³² Reynolds, Rich Relations, p. 28.

others.⁷³³ Even beyond New York, the most prototypical of all American melting pots, there was enough ethno-cultural diversity across the country from Washington State to New Mexico to the states of New England to cause a deep disturbance in the often unreflective self-consciousness of young Americans and instill a certain element of doubt.

As a result, the reception and training centers spread across the entire country became transformed into institutions of ethno-cultural differentiation – and the inductee’s stay in them into a crash course on the subject of American diversity. The soldiers’ subsequent overseas sojourn had the opposite effect. Their stays in England, Scotland, Wales and the Northern Irish counties of Ulster Province⁷³⁴ are of particular relevance to this study. Here, amid a population that spoke English (at least a kind of English, as the dogfaces would claim), it was not the divisive but rather the unifying features of that blend called America that came strikingly to the fore. When the fundamentals of a cohesive national consciousness subsequently emerged, the foundations were laid for a common micro-identity as dogface soldiers within the Army of the United States.

The Sharp End

Along with those general prerequisites, in [Chapter 8](#) of the present study we highlighted the conditions under which the socio-cultural group of combat infantrymen separated themselves both ideologically and culturally from the main body of the Army of the United States, giving form and expression to themselves as dogface soldiers in relation to the wider war. In the process, we developed three typologically discrete sets of framework conditions. The plethora of hellish and degrading living circumstances at the front lines constitutes the complex of manmade conditions. Under natural conditions, we listed the adverse effects of particular topographical realities on the operational practicality of U.S. ground war doctrine. While efforts were made to minimize resulting losses through a strong emphasis on mobility and firepower, topographical settings presented such difficulties at critical stages of the

⁷³³ Ibid., p. 84.

⁷³⁴ To acknowledge an Irish republican sentiment expressed in a popular saying (*There is nothing great about Britain and the kingdom is not united*), I leave aside the pragmatic use of the term ‘Great Britain’ and present the constituent elements of the Union Jack separately.

European ground war that mobility became virtually impossible and firepower essentially ineffective. At these stages, the infantry had to fight a war of attrition in no way less horrible than the experiences in the trenches of World War I.

The infantry riflemen were disillusioned over their lot and their status within the Army of the United States and deeply traumatized by the realities of industrial war. In order for them to emerge as dogfaces, two additional catalytic agents were required: the Army's daily newspaper *Stars and Stripes* as a link to the wider GI network, and the person and oeuvre of Bill Mauldin. His creative output sits not only at the heart of this study but also at the hermeneutical core of the dogface phenomenon itself. It was Mauldin's biographical and cultural background that equipped him with the sensors to be able to recognize the dogfaces as a distinctive socio-cultural group; in addition, he possessed the talent to reproduce his perceptions in artistic form and the confrontational character, even in the face of regular opposition, to act as the dogfaces' voice and advocate. If his works are to be seen as the graphic form of a joke, they possess as such those qualities that Freud identified, recognizing jokes under certain conditions as a particular manifestation of aggression, as a weapon and means of rebellion against established authority.⁷³⁵ They satirize and ridicule that which it is forbidden to criticize. A dialectical drawback of the phenomenon is, of course, the fact that the joke can smother in laughter the will to revolt⁷³⁶. Amid all the sentiments in favor of freedom and democracy that we justifiably concede as a benefit of the doubt to Eisenhower and his key AEF subordinates, it would be naive to imagine that they were unaware of the de-escalative effect of Mauldin's works as a pressure valve. It would fit seamlessly into our image of the Supreme Allied Commander as a great pragmatian of power that this aspect of Willie and Joe's effect might have played a certain role in his calculations.

Significance

In conclusion: where does the history of the dogface soldiers fit into the panorama of the American history of World War II? Barely seven decades after the unconditional surrender of Nazi Germany (and Austria), the history of American involvement in war

⁷³⁵ Sigmund Freud, *Der Witz und seine Beziehung zum Unbewussten. Der Humor* (Frankfurt am Main 1996), p. 115 ff.

⁷³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

is a highly ambivalent one, characterizable in short as militarily indecisive and/or morally questionable. For three reasons, the Second World War along with America's role in it is, in comparison, surrounded by the aura of a golden age that appears to grow in lustre with the passage of time.

In the first place, World War II was and is perceived in the United States as an absolutely just and necessary war. De jure, National Socialist Germany declared war on the U.S. Without much contortion, war against Hitler's behemoth became positively identified as a quest in the service of peace, freedom and human rights, even though such terms had not yet been codified at the time. Following the insidious attack on Pearl Harbor by the Japanese empire, parts of U.S. society worked itself up into a racist-revanchist frenzy that, supported by perfidious OWI-propaganda, tolerated neither opposition nor doubt regarding the righteousness of the war in the Pacific.

In the second place, the war ended for the United States in a triumph that left no doubt as to its absolute nature in comparison to all conflicts that followed it. The tepid armistice at the 35th Parallel in Korea, to begin with one of the most significant examples, is testament to America's exhausted political and military will in July 1953. America's exit from Vietnam in the course of Nixon's Vietnamization policy made clear, in spite of this proactive euphemism, that the American Armed Forces could not effectively counter the guerrilla tactics of Viet Cong. As a campaign seen in isolation, Operation Desert Storm may have been a military victory; however, if the time focus is widened and Desert Storm is seen as the beginning of a longer-lasting conflict between the United States and Saddam Hussein's Ba'athist Iraq and, between 2003 and 2011, between the U.S. and insurgents/guerrillas/freedom fighters, then here too, nothing is identifiable that could by any stretch of imagination be described as a victory or success. In the Afghan campaign following the launch of Operation Enduring Freedom in 2001, one only needs to look back on the three Anglo-Afghan wars between 1839 and 1919 and the Soviet-Afghan War between 1979 and 1989 in order to assign a realistic operational valuation to the U.S.-led coalition's chances for decisive victory. With the capitulation of its enemies respectively on May 7 and September 2, 1945⁷³⁷, the United States had single-

⁷³⁷ A German unconditional surrender was signed twice. The first capitulation took place on May 7, 1945 in Reims, the headquarters of General Eisenhower. Although a representative of Stavka, the

handedly defeated the largest military power that had ever existed in the Pacific region while simultaneously playing a towering role in North Africa and Europe as the key member of the Grand Alliance. In defeating Hitler's Wehrmacht in the west in 1944/45, the Army of the United States contributed to vanquishing the remains⁷³⁸ of the most professional, efficient and effective military machine the world had seen up to that moment.⁷³⁹

The third and most serious reason, however, is that the United States of America emerged from World War II as by far the richest and most powerful nation in the history of humankind. America's participation in the war was estimated in 2010 to have cost 296 billion dollars, using dollar values current in 1945⁷⁴⁰. This was the price of achieving production capacities during the war that, in addition to meeting its own needs for war materiel, also provided the Allies with lend-lease supplies worth

Soviet High Command, was in attendance, Stalin insisted on another surrender ceremony in Berlin-Karlshorst in which the weapons would be clearly laid down before the Soviet Union. The Japanese surrender was signed on September 2, 1945 on the deck of the battleship *USS Missouri* in Tokyo Bay.

⁷³⁸ On the eve of its criminal war of annihilation against the Soviet Union, the German Wehrmacht found itself at the zenith of its professional capacity. The campaigns in Poland, Scandinavia, France and the Balkans had sustained manageable losses in order that large portions of its troops might gain priceless practical experience. As American forces encountered Wehrmacht formations in southern and northwestern Europe, many of the experienced blitzkrieg soldiers of 1939 to 1941 were no longer alive. It is thanks to the Red Army's capacity for suffering, brutally enforced by Stalin and difficult to put into words, that the Western Allies found themselves in 1944/45 facing a German opponent that they could defeat.

⁷³⁹ At this point, I have to emphasize a personal concern over how to understand terms like 'professional', 'efficient' and 'effective' – or rather, how NOT to understand them. They should expressly not be viewed in the sense of absurd and idiotic fantasies of Teutonic warrior virtues and traditions. The reasons for the professional and often impressive performance of the German Wehrmacht lie in a combination of a tactical-operational doctrine that was innovative for its time, a soldier class whose military training had actually commenced in childhood, and the totalitarian-malevolent-bellicose ideology of National Socialism that saw no role for humaneness, the individual or reason.

⁷⁴⁰ Stephen Daggett, Costs of Major U.S. Wars (Congressional Research Service 2010), p. 2.

an estimated 48 billion dollars⁷⁴¹ at no initial cost to them. Adjusted for inflation, these figures result in equivalent 2015 amounts of a staggering 3 trillion 897 billion and 632 billion dollars, respectively⁷⁴². The complete absence of war damage in the continental United States, the accompanying implications of this increase in American productive capacity, the massive effects of economies of scale and the extensive devastation borne by most of the other belligerents ensured worldwide economic domination of the United States for a quarter century after the end of World War II.⁷⁴³

Under these conditions, the majority of Americans had no reason to view World War II and their own role in it as anything other than an out-and-out good thing. The U.S., which had been almost completely spared the ravages of the war, catapulted from its stature as a Depression-plagued nation of day laborers into a position of unprecedented power and wealth. In a war that was widely perceived as just, it had achieved a victory on both sides of the globe that could be judged as nothing less than absolute. Civilian and military war propaganda institutions had taken care that only the most selective information about the true horror of industrial warfare should find its way to the home front. Ultimately, such a reduced proportion of the 8 million members of the Army of the United States had been directly exposed to the destructive effects of the war that their stories (if they even wanted to tell them) became lost amid the general and self-satisfied triumphal jubilation. World War II was promptly declared to be *the good war* in the United States, with this concept becoming established in the American consciousness as a synthesis of the *just cause* with economic *good times*. Americans who had fought this 'good war' at home and abroad were transformed into *The Greatest Generation*, revered by an admiring public as virtually a sacrosanct fellowship. In the most simplistic view, they are portrayed without exception as ardent (it is tempting to say flawless) servants of democracy who understood it as their unequivocal privilege to have taken part in the

⁷⁴¹ International Aid Statistics, World War II. A Summary of War Department Lend Lease Activities (International Branch / Army Service Forces Headquarters / War Department 1945), p. 5.

⁷⁴² Calculation according to U.S. Department of Labor (data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl, most recent access: February 1, 2016).

⁷⁴³ Alan S. Milward, War, Economy and Society, 1939–1945 (Berkeley 1979), p. 63.

crusade for peace and freedom against the Axis powers.⁷⁴⁴ George H. Roeder, Jr. explains the singularity of World War II in the American 20th Century by asserting that, in a century of change characterized more by divisiveness than by unity, it has become one of the few moral reference points on which most of the American public can agree.

... Most Americans believe that it affirmed that the United States can serve the cause of protecting human dignity, that it can get a job done, and that it is possible at least sometimes to see clearly the difference between good and evil in the amoral domain of international relations.⁷⁴⁵

Since 1945, this combination of a fairly uncontrolled tendency toward simplification according to a selective fixation on the moral dimension of parts of its own history of war and a belief in an *American mission* that can still be mobilized again and again has led America and the world through an almost uninterrupted series of varied conflicts. The history of the dogface soldiers represents both a central aspect of, and a corrective to, the origin myth of this bellicose missionary history, and it should be understood in this sense as completely relevant. Mauldin's works equip the dogfaces, representatives of a *Greatest Generation* that has ossified into bloodless iconicism, with an urgently needed measure of human qualities. It is a frequently repeated truism that war brings out the worst and the best in human nature. At the end of *The Censored War*, his masterful study of American censorship, propaganda and visual culture during World War II, Roeder applies this platitude to those who, like Bill

⁷⁴⁴ As a student of American history born in Austria, Hitler's homeland, I need to exercise particular caution in this context. In the last instance, many nation-states of continental Europe in the period presently under study were characterized by the fact that they had tolerated or actively enthroned a number of fascist and totalitarian dictators, acclaiming the most evil-minded of them all, an Austrian, as their chief. While it was widely regarded in Austria and Germany as perfectly opportune to profit from murderous wars of conquest and annihilation and the systematic exploitation of an entire continent, and while countless Germans and Austrians found few difficulties in personally benefitting from what they individually may have known as either the persecution or, in truth, the extermination of the Jewish population – during this time it was left to the Anglo-Saxon world to oppose National Socialism with all its resources without betraying the democratic foundations on which the organizations of its states were based.

⁷⁴⁵ Roeder, *Censored War*, p. 3.

Mauldin, tell the story of war with visual means, granting it meaning, direction and significance.

In such a world [of staggering potential for destruction] we cannot ignore, except at everyone's peril, the disturbing yet life-affirming images furnished by those photographers, filmmakers, graphic artists, and others who saw in war and through war our capacity for brutality and dignity, and who did what they could to help us tell the two apart.⁷⁴⁶

Mauldin's true achievement is, within the everyday domain of his dogfaces, to have advocated on behalf of the ongoing distinction between these two distant poles in the human perception of war and, in chronicling events calibrated in black and white, to have provided urgently needed shades of gray. He shares this achievement with photographers like Robert Capa or George Rodger, authors like Paul Fussell, Robert Kotlowitz, J. Glenn Gray and Forrest Pogue, and journalists like Studs Terkel. Among the graphic artists who emerged from World War II, Mauldin occupies a unique position by dint of the scope and content quality of his output. Mauldin's cartoons offer anthropological insights into the military's tribal societies. Graphically as well as artistically, they reproduce and reflect a delicate system of mutual dependencies and both manifest and latent hierarchies. They illuminate a complex, fragile and multilayered system of particular meanings in the context of an image-oriented history of the United States of America, much of which is yet to be told.

⁷⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 157.

List of abbreviations

2 ^{ème} DB	Deuxième division blindée (2 nd Armored Division)
AAF	Army Air Forces
AEF	Allied Expeditionary Forces (1941–1945)
AEF	American Expeditionary Force (1917/18)
AGCT	Army General Classification Test
AGF	Army Ground Forces
ANG	Arizona National Guard
ARC	American Red Cross
ASF	Army Service Forces
ASTP	Army Specialized Training Program
AUS	Army of the United States
AWOL	Absence Without Official Leave
BF	Battle fatigue
BG	Brigadier general
CCC	Civilian Conservation Corps
CE	Combat exhaustion
CF	Combat fatigue
CG	Commanding general
CIGS	Chief of the Imperial General Staff
CO	Commanding officer
ComZ	Communications Zone

CoS	Chief of staff
ETO	European Theater of Operations
ETO-C	European Theater of Operations Circular
FFI	Forces françaises de l'intérieur
GEN	General
GI	Galvanized iron
	Government issue
ID	Infantry division
IR	Infantry regiment
KP	Kitchen Police
LTG	Lieutenant general
MG	Major general
MOI	(British) Ministry of Information
MTO	Mediterranean Theater of Operations
NAAFI	(British) Navy Army and Air Force Institutes
NATO	North African Theater of Operations
NCO	Non-commissioned officer
NG	National Guard
OCS	Officer Candidate School
ODs	Olive drabs
OHIO	Over the Hill In October
OWI	Office of War Information
POE	Port of embarkation

POM	Preparations for overseas movement
PULHES	General P hysical Stamina / U pper Extremities / L ower Extremities H earing / E yesight / P sychological Evaluation
PX	Post exchange (shops)
RA	Regular Army
QMC	Quartermaster Corps
ROTC	Reserve Officers Training Course
RTC	Replacement Training Center
SHAEF	Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces
SSS	Selective Service System
S&S	<i>Stars and Stripes</i>
TO&E	Table of Organization & Equipment
T/4	Technician fourth grade
T/5	Technician fifth grade
USAAF	United States Army Air Force(s)
VE-Day	Victory in Europe Day (May 8, 1945)
WD-C	War Department Circular
WPD	War Plans Division

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