CAPTAINS OF BOMB DISPOSAL

1942-1946

T. DENNIS REECE

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To the memory of Capt. George W. "Wally" Collins
and all those who have given their lives defending the freedoms
we too often take for granted.

Author's Preface

After my father, Thomas R. Reece, died in August 2002, I wanted to know more about what he and other American bomb disposal personnel did in World War II. My search for printed material revealed a startling fact. Although a number of books were available about British bomb disposal, no book had been commercially published in the United States about American bomb disposal during the war. The most extensive published material were the reminiscences of two American enlisted men in an English book otherwise devoted to British bomb disposal. The other available items were limited mainly to some magazine articles, about five pages scattered in two volumes on the Ordnance Department in the official Army history of World War II series, and an unpublished history deposited at the Library of Congress on Navy explosive ordnance disposal.

To a certain extent this is not surprising. Fewer than five thousand Americans were assigned to bomb disposal work during World War II in the Army, Army Air Force (hereinafter usually referred to as the Air Force), Navy, and Marine Corps combined. All, or at least almost all, were citizen officers and soldiers. Their interest was not in advancing a military career, but rather in surviving the war, going back to civilian life, and largely forgetting what they had gone through. Moreover, in contrast to Great Britain, where bomb disposal operations were well known to the public because of massive German bombing, in the United States bomb disposal activity during the war was kept out of public sight, except for selected civil defense personnel. After the war, official and unofficial chroniclers of the great conflict generally overlooked the work of the relatively few and autonomous American bomb disposal units.

Early in my research I had the great good fortune while on vacation in Belgium to stumble across the name and address of a former bomb disposal officer who lived near me in Florida, Stephen M. Richards. Despite his serious ill health, which led to his death in June 2003, he freely talked to me about his military experience, including his participation in something that I had never heard of, Operation "Hidden Documents." Subsequently, another participant in that mission, Wayne Leeman, very graciously made available to me unpublished material from his personal files, as Mr. Richards had so kindly done earlier. My debt to them is incalculable.

Whereas Part II discusses the work of one bomb disposal captain and a top-secret military mission which had profound political and legal consequences, the focus of Part I is wider. While organized around the work of another bomb disposal captain, it attempts to show the kinds of problems bomb disposal personnel in general faced, and how one group of bomb disposal squads, and their parent organization, the Ninth Air Force, helped win the war in northwest Europe.

Bomb disposal personnel had the most technically demanding and dangerous work outside of combat during World War II. Besides typically working long hours under difficult conditions, they were often asked to do things for which they were not adequately trained, or, to use a postwar expression, things which were not in their job description. Remarkably, in all of the bomb disposal unit histories I read there was never one word or even hint of anger, complaint, or resentment. In my opinion this was not just because the men had volunteered for the work. Their attitude toward the job seemed to be that they would do whatever was necessary and overcome any obstacle if humanly possible.

It is hoped that this book will stimulate more interest and writing on American explosive ordnance disposal in World War II and afterward, in all regions of the world and in all military services. To help those who are interested in doing more reading and research, the section of endnotes is disproportionately lengthy compared to the rest of the volume. Most of the primary sources

cited are at either the Air Force Historical Research Agency at Maxwell Air Force Base, or the National Archives at College Park, Maryland. The personnel who helped me there are, to borrow a cliché, too numerous to be named. That does not diminish in any way my great appreciation for their patient, courteous assistance. Without them this book could not have been written.

The cover art consists of the official bomb disposal sleeve patch, and a photograph of the 80th Ordnance Bomb Disposal Squad (Separate), taken on April 24, 1944, at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland. Kneeling in the front row from left to right are T/Sgt. Lawrence J. Norris, Sgt. Russell F. McCarthy, T/5 George P. Ennen, T/5 Howard Croop, T/5 Walter V. Smith, and T/5 Harry Epstein. Standing is Capt. Thomas R. Reece.

PART I

Capt. Thomas R. Reece and the Ninth Air Force

Chapter 1

A Red-Letter Day

Dated December 18, 1941, eleven days after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the letter was bordered in red and marked "Very Important" and "Urgent." The War Department's Indiana Military Area office in Indianapolis was ordering Thomas R. Reece to report for a physical examination in preparation for active military duty.(1) Since 1934, when he graduated from Purdue University and the Reserve Officers' Training Corps program, he had been a reserve officer in the field artillery.

After passing a physical examination at Baer Field in Fort Wayne, Reece reported for duty at Fort Bragg, North Carolina in March 1942. In less than one week he returned home to South Bend, Indiana and reverted to inactive duty as a key industrial employee. As a research chemist at the O'Brien Varnish Company he visited industrial clients in the area, working to resolve problems they had with paint, varnish, and related coatings. Many of those clients, like the Studebaker Corporation, were converting from the production of civilian goods to military equipment. Two weeks after returning home, Reece received notice that the War Department's pool of inactive officers with industrial or academic deferments would be abolished in June 1942. He therefore had to either resign his commission and keep his deferment, or keep his commission and be subject to active duty.

Unwilling to resign his commission, but preferring to stay close to home and his wife of six years, Reece requested a transfer to ordnance, that is, the military branch responsible for the production, delivery, and battlefield maintenance of weapons. He was hoping

to be assigned to the Ordnance Department's Industrial Branch and stationed at Kingsbury Ordnance Plant, in nearby La Porte, Indiana. His transfer out of the field artillery was accepted, and he reported to the Ordnance Officers Replacement Pool at Aberdeen Proving Ground (APG), in northeast Maryland. Things did not turn out there as he had hoped. Some ordnance specialties were in greater demand than others, and he was assigned to the 8th officers' bomb disposal class, beginning August 5, 1942, rather than to the Industrial Branch.

Although the Ordnance School was founded in 1921, its Bomb Disposal School had been open only since February 11, 1942, Reece's thirtieth birthday. The school's creation resulted from a major change in warfare during the preceding two decades. During World War I few bombs were dropped from planes, and unexploded ordnance problems usually involved items near the front lines. Bomb disposal was then an adjunct responsibility of the military engineers, not a different specialty. The first years of World War II, on the other hand, witnessed massive bombing raids on cities far from the front lines. Groups of experts specialized in handling unexploded ordnance were created shortly thereafter in Great Britain, which had been at war since 1939. When handling unfamiliar types of German ordnance, British bomb disposal personnel informed colleagues stationed several hundred yards away of every step they took. If a bomb blew up, then the survivors knew to try something different the next time. Many American lives were saved because of the knowledge gained through these life-and-death experiments. Following a visit to British facilities by American ordnance officers, experienced British personnel came to APG and helped design the Bomb Disposal School curriculum. The British then taught the first classes to American officers and enlisted personnel, who in turn instructed succeeding classes.(2)

The heart of the one-month officers' course in the summer of 1942 covered bomb identification, fuze identification, the disposal of unexploded bombs, and bomb reconnaissance. Students learned that an unexploded bomb (UXB) had not gone off for one of two reasons. One was by accident, usually because some part had failed.

The other was by design, through the use of a time-delay fuze. Obviously, the safest way to dispose of a UXB was to use a small explosive charge, like a block of TNT, and blow it up in place. Official German guidance recommended that procedure for their bombs.(3) Sometimes, however, that was not practical because the bomb was in a sensitive civilian or military location. Then, first a German bomb had to be disarmed by withdrawing the fuze from the fuze pocket and unscrewing the priming charge from the fuze. Next the igniting charge, made of picric acid, was removed from the fuze pocket. If the bomb had been lying in damp conditions the igniting charge could have crystallized. In that case, hot water was to be poured into the fuze pocket until the highly dangerous crystals were dissolved, after which they were supposed to be gently withdrawn with nonmetallic tools. After disarmed the bomb could be moved to a location where it could be blown up or the main charge steamed out.

German fuzes were usually marked with numbers and letters identifying the model. Early in the war the British developed a variety of equipment to neutralize if necessary certain German fuzes during the disarming process. The Magnetic Clock Stopper could be placed on a bomb to stop the mechanical time-delay 17A fuze from running. Although effective, it was heavy and awkward to use. The more portable Stevens Stopper created a vacuum in the fuze pocket and then pumped in a liquid under high pressure to stop the fuze from working.

The Axis powers would take countermeasures if they learned what procedures the Allied experts were using. So Allied bomb disposal techniques were kept secret, divulged only to military personnel with a need to know. Bomb reconnaissance, on the other hand, was for civilians as well. In that area Americans once again benefited from British experience. Early in the war over 50 percent of the reports of UXBs after bombing raids in England turned out to be false, wasting the time of bomb disposal personnel, who were thinly stretched just handling real incidents. Civilians were then trained to make a preliminary determination of whether a bomb was present or had already exploded by looking at the

characteristics of the crater and surrounding land and buildings. If reconnaissance personnel thought that a bomb was present they cordoned off the area and called bomb disposal experts. After a while the percentage of false reports in England declined dramatically. In 1942 Americans feared attacks on their soil, so a two-day course in bomb reconnaissance was given around the country to selected personnel from railroad companies, civil defense, the police, and other appropriate fields.

The first Army bomb disposal course for enlisted men was given in April 1942. It included units on bomb recognition and reconnaissance, but did not include instruction on the deactivation of bombs. Only officers were supposed to defuze bombs, although as the war went on the restriction was sometimes not observed. Enlisted personnel learned how to excavate buried bombs, including the use of wood to prevent cave-ins. Just locating a buried bomb could be more difficult than it might seem at first thought. Usually the bomb would not burrow straight down into the earth, but would curve off. A 250-kilogram unexploded bomb, for example, dropped by a bomber flying at normal high-level altitude would penetrate the ground to an average depth of 15 feet, but it could go as deep as 36 feet. And on average the bomb would offset to one side by 4.6 feet, but it could do so by as much as 20 feet. Another part of the enlisted men's course was on using and maintaining equipment, like winches used to hoist bombs out of the earth.

The final design for a bomb disposal insignia patch to be worn at forearm level on the right sleeve was approved by the Quartermaster Corps in August 1942. About three inches long and one and one-half an inch wide, it featured a red bomb outlined in yellow on a black background. The patch and a jeep with a front bumper edged in red and "BOMB DISPOSAL" or "BDS" stenciled below the windshield would become the two most distinguishing features of bomb disposal personnel in the field.(4)

While Reece was in the officers' bomb disposal course American ground troops had just begun offensive operations in the Pacific, but had not yet done so in North Africa or Europe. At that early stage of the war Army bomb disposal officer positions were authorized

for only sixteen bases outside the forty-eight states.(5) Reece was assigned to the Newfoundland Base Command (NBC) at St. John's, on the eastern coast of the island. Newfoundland, a British colony until 1949, straddled the entrance to the St. Lawrence River and was therefore vital to the defense of Canada and the eastern seaboard of the United States. Pursuant to a formal agreement between the United States and Great Britain, American troops started arriving in Newfoundland in early 1941, even before the United States entered the war.(6) By October 1942 6,500 American Army land and air personnel were stationed there. They were concentrated in four places: Fort Pepperrell, in St. John's; Fort McAndrew, in Argentia, on Placentia Bay in the southeast; the Army Air Force base at Gander, in the northeast; and Harmon Field, at Stephenville, on the western coast.(7) Complementing these facilities, which had not yet been completed, were an American naval base next to Fort McAndrew, and Canadian bases elsewhere on the island.

Detachments of the 3rd Infantry Regiment and numerous coastal artillery installations guarded the island against an invasion. The weather, often very windy with heavy snow, was worse than in Labrador, on the mainland. But when conditions allowed American air patrols, many of them conducted jointly with the Royal Canadian Air Force, looked for German U-boats preying on shipping in the surrounding waters. In March 1942 naval aircraft from Argentia carried out the first American sinking of a U-boat from the air. That did not stop the Germans, who that month fired two torpedoes in St. John's harbor and by the end of the year sank over twenty vessels nearby.(8)

After seven days furlough in South Bend, Reece traveled in mid-September by train through Boston to North Sidney, Nova Scotia. There he boarded a ferry to Port Aux Basques, Newfoundland, from where he completed his trip to St. John's by rail. The journey was without incident but not without danger; while plying the same route the ferry "Caribou" was torpedoed and sunk on October 14, with a loss of 136 lives.(9)

Because of the shortage of bomb disposal officers Reece filled a new position designated for a captain, even though he was still a

first lieutenant. The War Department envisioned that his duties would be threefold: emergency bomb disposal, training selected military personnel in bomb reconnaissance and excavation, and transmitting information on enemy bombs. The last function was vitally important for bomb disposal and other ordnance personnel everywhere if the Allies were to stay abreast of new developments in Axis explosive ordnance.

Reece was assigned in October as commander of the 12th Ordnance Service Company, in addition to his other duties, because of a shortage of ordnance officers. In July 1942 the responsibilities of many Army ordnance units had increased when the job of maintaining all military vehicles was transferred from the Quartermaster Corps to the Ordnance Department. Reece's multifaceted work at times took him away from Fort Pepperrell. He was authorized to visit ordnance facilities elsewhere on the island, and in late December he traveled to Ft. McAndrew for three weeks to train personnel in bomb disposal.

His training role took on added importance the next spring when the Eastern Defense Command at Governors Island, New York, the immediate authority over the NBC, ordered all military personnel in its jurisdiction to take a four-hour course entitled "Recognizing the Effects of Air Raids." It was essentially bomb reconnaissance training, designed in part to familiarize personnel with the signs of unexploded bombs and the need to report such incidents promptly. In addition, an "adequate" number of personnel were to complete a more extensive twelve-hour course which would enable them to investigate reports of UXBs, and to give the four-course course on air raid effects. Only those who had bomb disposal or advanced bomb reconnaissance training at APG, however, could teach the twelve-hour course.(10) Reece was probably the only Army officer at NBC so qualified, and in May 1943 he was relieved of company command at his own request in order to devote more time to bomb reconnaissance and disposal training. He continued traveling around the island, conducting training later in the year at Gander and Harmon Field.

To show servicemen that they were not forgotten back home, the USO arranged for entertainment from the United States. One visit to Newfoundland was by Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy, who after a show for the troops went to the officers' club. During a stag film Charlie McCarthy did a running commentary, which Reece long after the war remembered as one of the funniest things he ever heard.

By the summer of 1943 fewer German U-boats were patrolling North Atlantic waters because of more effective Allied antisubmarine measures. While still playing an important role in antisubmarine patrols, Newfoundland had also become an active transit point for planes being ferried from North America to Europe.(11) Reece helped a naval bomb disposal officer deactivate a German mine which washed ashore, but otherwise his bomb disposal duties were essentially limited to teaching. An enemy attack on Newfoundland now seemed unlikely, so the NBC requested that the Army bomb disposal position be redesignated as armament officer, with bomb disposal duties constituting only 10 percent of the job. After an officer was located who could be quickly trained to meet those qualifications, Reece was transferred back to APG, arriving there in December 1943. In Newfoundland he had done almost no bomb disposal work in the field, but his experience in teaching the specialty would be useful in future assignments, including his new one as commanding officer of the 51st Bomb Disposal Squad.

Chapter 2

Squads in Training

During the fifteen months that Reece had been in Newfoundland, American ground forces had learned in North Africa, Sicily, and mainland Italy (later named the Mediterranean Theater of Operations) that they were facing a very formidable and wily adversary. The Germans had proved to be masters in booby trapping anything that could be moved, from oil cans to corpses. Elsewhere, such as on the shoulders of roads, they were expert in laying antitank and antipersonnel mines. Even some of the mines were booby trapped, designed to explode if lifted. Many Allied soldiers had been killed or injured by those devices.(1)

One new weapon encountered in the theater was the German 88-mm. gun, which was lethal against tanks and could also be used for effective antiaircraft fire. Disposing of its shells would be a difficult task for bomb disposal personnel for several years. Another new weapon encountered in North Africa was the SD-2 antipersonnel fragmentation bomb. Ironically, although it was only the size of a grapefruit and weighed just 4.4 pounds, to the end of the war bomb disposal personnel would fear it more than anything else. Usually twenty-three of the bombs were placed in a canister, which was dropped from an airplane and fuzed to open while airborne, thereby freeing the individual bombs. As each bomb fell four metal plates popped up, one from each side. The plates, together with a twirling motion which armed the device as it fell, gave it the nickname "butterfly bomb." Some of the bombs were fuzed to explode on impact, others were fuzed with a specific time delay, and still others were fuzed to explode only when moved. A

wire cable several inches long sticking out of the top accentuated their strange appearance, and many curious soldiers and civilians were killed or maimed when picking them up. The bombs were designed so that after being armed they could not be defuzed, but had to be blown up in place. The Germans continued using them through the campaign for France in the summer of 1944. But then officials grew so wary of the bombs that they unsuccessfully ordered all stocks of them destroyed.(2)

In England the British continued their pioneering research and development in handling enemy explosive ordnance. Matters became more complicated and deadly when the Germans introduced the first anti-handling, or booby-trapped, fuze. Denominated the "50A" fuze by the Germans and the "Y" fuze by the British, it was powered by two small batteries and became armed when the bomb hit the ground. Using small containers of mercury, the fuze detected when just it or the entire the bomb was moved, and then started the explosive train to set off immediately the main charge. To counter it British scientists developed the "F" technique of pouring liquid oxygen into the fuze pocket. That would freeze the batteries to below minus 40 degrees Centigrade long enough for the fuze to be removed safely. A further complication was that German bombs had two fuze pockets, with some bombs containing a time-delay fuze in one pocket and an anti-handling fuze in the other. Because it was impossible to know for how long the time-delay was set, bomb disposal personnel had to first carefully neutralize the time-delay fuze, and then work on the anti-handling fuze.(3)

In the United States ordnance personnel at APG worked to develop new weapons. One of the most successful, the bazooka, was designed to stop tanks but was also used by the infantry against hardened static defenses. The Germans then copied the idea and developed several versions of the weapon that were used with deadly effect until the end of the war.(4) Destroying the rockets for them, like the artillery shells for the 88-mm. gun, would be a great headache for Allied bomb disposal personnel even after the war. For their part, American scientists copied the butterfly bomb, which

after extensive testing was deployed against the Germans and their allies. Also developed and introduced overseas was an anti-withdrawal American bomb fuze. Those devices would give Axis bomb disposal personnel the same problems their Allied counterparts had been facing.(5)

One of the functions at the APG Bomb Disposal School, later renamed the Bomb Disposal Center, was to gather data from Allied and Axis sources on all explosive devices. Personnel in the Department of Technical Information and Service worked on countermeasures against Axis devices, in their own words "anticipating our enemies' fiendish devices in advance."(6) Useful information on explosive ordnance of all countries was published in the biweekly "Technical Information Bulletin" (TIB), sent to appropriate Allied and American bomb disposal personnel at home and overseas. In order to protect sensitive information it carried an overall confidential security classification. British authorities also issued publications which they similarly disseminated to their own personnel and foreign officials.

Not surprisingly, the increasing complexity and number of explosive devices, both Allied and Axis, had its effect on bomb disposal training. The officers' course was lengthened to seven weeks to cover new subjects and to give more time to old ones. Outside of the classroom, student officers had the opportunity to visit the bomb range to see the effects of explosions; take a field trip to the Navy School of Mines; go to the booby trap house to practice detecting and disarming devices; and use explosives such as blasting caps, TNT blocks, safety fuzes, and Composition C. Not all of those who started the bomb disposal officers' course finished it, but 521 men did so between the opening of the school and March 24, 1944.(7) Many men took the course as part of a broader training program after which they were assigned to other ordnance work.

For enlisted men a program of twenty-two weeks was developed by 1944. Typically, six weeks of basic military training was followed by one week of requirements for going overseas, like immunizations and physical exams. Next, a four-week classroom course covered subjects like explosives, Allied and Axis bombs, fuzes, artillery shells,

mines, and booby traps. Another week of general preparations included malaria control measures and films. Everyone, regardless of assignment, had to view the film "Sex Hygiene," and those going overseas saw six additional ones on such varied topics as censorship, next of kin, and safeguarding military information. After that the men were broken out into squads, training under their commanding officers to gain practical experience and build teamwork.

At first the standard unit for bomb disposal personnel was a company, consisting of four platoons, each with one officer and thirty-four enlisted men, and a headquarters and supply section of three officers and thirty-one men. Experience overseas showed that the bomb disposal company had the disadvantage of not being mobile enough during a rapidly-moving campaign.(8) Although the bomb disposal company was not abolished, in 1943 the standard unit became what was formally designated as the "ordnance bomb disposal squad (separate)." The squad originally had one captain, one technical sergeant (T/Sgt), one sergeant, and four corporals.(9) The last position was changed later to the rank of technician fifth grade (T/5).

The word "separate" in the organizational title indicated that the squad was not an organic part of a larger organization, but operated rather autonomously. The commandant of the Bomb Disposal School in 1943, Col. Thomas J. Kane, cited that characteristic in his successful argument to the Pentagon that the bomb disposal squad, despite its small size, should have a captain as its authorized rank for commanding officer. He pointed out that bomb disposal squad officers in the field operated with unusual independence, exercising the "final authority and responsibility" for deciding how to dispose of each bomb, "regardless of the resulting damage to his men, himself, civilian or military installations . . . ." To carry out these tasks, Kane believed the officer needed a level of leadership and technical knowledge that was more commensurate with the rank of captain than of lieutenant.(10)

APG allotted ten weeks for the core of bomb disposal squad unit training, consisting of four weeks of additional technical training and six weeks of field training. The latter period was

designed to hone essential military skills in general and bomb disposal skills in particular. Sometimes the squads practiced deactivating mines or steaming out explosives from bombs, although American squads would seldom use the latter skill overseas. Weapons ranges at APG and nearby Edgewood Arsenal served two purposes. Bomb disposal personnel could gain practical experience in handling explosives, while weapons personnel could get test results on ordnance under development. On the bomb range at APG squads practiced excavating dud bombs dropped from planes. Some of these squads later served with the Ninth Air Force in Europe. For example, the 3rd Bomb Disposal Squad (BDS) participated in bombing and fragmentation tests, the 44th BDS recovered 4.5 inch airplane rockets fired at Edgewood Arsenal, and the 46th BDS assisted in the testing of fuzes at APG.(11)

Before beginning their field exercises the squads were issued bomb disposal equipment. An extendible probe helped locate a buried bomb. A trowel, shovels and picks in both regular and nonmagnetic versions, and a rope were used to excavate it. Once the bomb was exposed a stethoscope could hear whether a time-delay fuze was ticking and a large impact wrench would hopefully extract a German fuze without any complications. A tool kit, injection kit and pressure pump were also provided for possible use at this stage. A demolition kit was used to blow up a bomb either in place if the officer decided it was too dangerous to try to extract the fuze, or at another site after the bomb was disarmed and moved.

The squads learned how to pack all of this equipment in a one-ton, two-wheel trailer. Also fitted in the trailer was more standard equipment like a tent and camouflage nets. Gas and water cans, buckets, a tow rope, lanterns, and an ax were placed in the truck used to pull the trailer. Of special note were a camera and accessories to photograph items of possible interest to technical personnel, and a safe in which the commanding officer could place sensitive papers, including classified guidance on handling explosive ordnance.

Going on bivouac and driving in convoy gave the squads a chance to practice a number of things. It was also a nice change

from the routine of APG because the trips were typically to towns in Maryland, Pennsylvania, or New Jersey, with bivouacs on Boy Scouts campgrounds. On April 12, 1944, for example, the 79th BDS left APG for Cooper, Maryland. Upon arrival they set up a camp, erecting and camouflaging their tents. The next day they trained in camp operations, establishing a defensive perimeter, solving a map problem, and trying on poison gas masks. On April 14 they drove in a convoy under blackout conditions to Dublin, Maryland and returned to Cooper the same day. Before breaking camp and returning to APG on April 15 commanding officer Lt. James M. Dobbins, Jr. guided the men in drawing maps, and reinforced the message of one of the required films with a lecture on sex hygiene.

To the northeast, Alpine, New Jersey, sitting on the Hudson River across from Yonkers, New York, offered easy access to seagoing traffic. War material from overseas, ranging from tanks and guns to booby traps, mines, and explosive shells, was brought there for examination. In March, just after he had been promoted to captain, Reece went there with the 51st BDS for training in handling explosives. The trip was made jointly with Lt. Lorentz A. Johnsen's 53rd BDS.(12)

Given the dual role of APG in training civilian personnel in bomb reconnaissance and in training military personnel in bomb disposal, arrangements were sometimes made to bring members of the two groups together. In November 1943, following a bivouac in Columbia, New Jersey at Camp Weygadt, the 43rd BDS excavated a UXB in Easton, Pennsylvania in front of a crowd of civilian spectators.(13) The same month, Capt. Max H. Zimmerman led the 46th BDS as it drove to Camp Alcahela, near Stoddartsville, Pennsylvania. The squad then went to Hazelton, where they removed a bomb in three hours which had been planted by civil defense personnel.

Bomb disposal officers had their share of administrative and other bureaucratic duties, just like civilian government employees, even though their jobs were much more dangerous. They had to fill out forms and reports, supervise the issuance of pay to the

enlisted men, and procure equipment and supplies. Before going overseas they also had to train on all weapons their unit would carry. Reece qualified as an expert on the carbine and a marksman on the rifle.

When on their own time personnel in training took advantage of social activities. Captain Reece became good friends with Lt. George W. "Wally" Collins, a tall, personable bomb disposal officer who was the only child of potato farmers in Idaho. When Collins was married in nearby Elkhorn, Maryland on April 22, 1944, Reece was his best man.

The pressing need overseas for military personnel meant that after their training was completed, bomb disposal squads would usually leave soon for foreign duty. The highest priority for American personnel and materiel was given to the European Theater of Operations (ETO). Encompassing northwest Europe, it included U.S. forces for the planned invasion of Normandy, France, and subsequent drive eastward until Germany surrendered. Not surprisingly, the majority of the approximately 215 bomb disposal squads trained at APG during the war, and one bomb disposal company, would go to northwest Europe. The ETO's claim on resources was particularly strong in the months before the invasion, when huge numbers of men and equipment had to be positioned in England. All of the forty-one squads assigned to the Bomb Disposal School in late December 1943 were later transferred to the ETO. Ten arrived in England by the end of February 1944; the other thirty-one squads arrived there before D-Day, June 6, 1944.(14) At APG men were shifted from one squad to another to meet training needs and to fill positions in squads scheduled to go overseas shortly with qualified officers and enlisted men. As part of these transfers, on March 25, 1944, Captain Reece was assigned to the 80th BDS, replacing Lt. Richard P. Lundy, who was assigned in place of Reece as commanding officer of the 51st BDS.

In early April the 80th BDS was alerted to prepare for overseas movement as early as the twentieth of the month. The squad re-examined its equipment and made sure all of its paperwork was in

order. On April 21 the fateful order came, relieving the squad from assignment to APG. On April 26 the men traveled by train with six other bomb disposal squads to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, taking winter clothing on a permanent change of station. The other squads were the 76th under Lt. Jonathan D. Stoddart, the 77th under Lieutenant Collins, the 78th under Lt. Willis C. Vaughn, the 79th under Lieutenant Dobbins, the 81st under Lt. Gordon A. Ruesink, and the 82nd under Lt. Leslie T. Schakenbach.(15)

On May 2 the squads departed Camp Kilmer on two different trains. Reece was designated commander of train number 12, comprising 11 railroad cars with a total of 25 officers and 687 enlisted men. The men reflected the specialization as well as the racial segregation of the American army: combat engineers, postal units, medical personnel, three bomb disposal squads, and African-American quartermaster troops. In Jersey City the men left the train and took a ferry to Manhattan.(16)

At Pier 96 the men of the 80th BDS saw at anchor the "Dominion Monarch," which would be their home until they reached England, barring an unlucky encounter with one of the German U-boats still patrolling the North Atlantic. Built in 1939 in England, the 27,155-ton ship carried cargo and offered first-class accommodations for over 500 passengers before it was converted into a troop transport ship the next year. Reece found the accommodations for officers excellent, with good food and service. Conditions for the enlisted personnel, on the other hand, were vastly different. Four hundred men were crammed into compartments designed for perhaps one hundred. Space was at such a premium that the men had to sleep in hammocks slung above their mess tables. Their food left a lot to be desired also.

Some of the passengers were civilians. Allen Jenkins, a supporting actor in numerous movies, including "I Am a Fugitive From a Chain Gang" and "Destry Rides Again," headed a contingent from the USO. Seventy-five American Red Cross personnel composed another group. Regardless of status, all personnel had to be prepared for enemy attack. After the ship left

New York in the early hours of May 3 life boat drills were held every morning and afternoon. Gun crews occasionally took target practice by firing at balloons.

At first the convoy numbered about fifty ships, with cargo and tanker vessels outnumbering troop ships. Several days later ships from Boston joined the convoy, enlarging it to almost one hundred vessels. Other troop ships bore famous names, like the "Southampton," "Britannic," "Aquitania," "Mauretania," and "Ile de France." Next to the "Dominion Monarch" was an aircraft carrier.

Life on board was sometimes colorful. A cat gave birth to eight kittens, twelve Red Cross nurses were quarantined for measles, and crap games went on for days. On the morning of May 10 things took an ominous turn. The periscope of a submarine broke the water between the "Dominion Monarch" and the aircraft carrier. Escort destroyers gave chase. A series of explosions from depth charges which rocked the troop ship was followed by a big explosion. The bottom of the submarine appeared briefly and then slid out of view. As a precaution, everyone was confined to quarters for the rest of the day, giving people a chance to write letters home or catch up on paperwork.

Things did not stay quiet for long. A case of spinal meningitis broke out, a soldier was caught trying to crawl through the porthole to the room of a Red Cross nurse, a crap game ended in a shooting, and an Air Force captain was diagnosed with a case of venereal disease. At least the weather stayed calm. The green coast of Ireland was sighted on May 13, and at 6:30 P.M. the next day the boat docked in Liverpool.

Chapter 3

Air Forces in England

When he went to bed at midnight as May 14, 1944 ended, Reece was worried. He had just received orders to report to Army Air Force Station 592, at Grovely Wood. There was no further information. Where was it? How would his squad get there?

The next day he watched troops debark from the ship as what was reported to be eight million dollars in gold bullion was unloaded from the forward hold. At 4:45 P.M. the 80th BDS walked down the gangplank to its train, just one hundred yards away. Before they knew it, squad members were passing green fields bordered by stone fences. Accommodations were not much of an improvement over the "Dominion Monarch"; the train was unheated and K rations at midnight served as the evening dinner. But the journey by rail was not as long as the sea voyage.

At 5:00 the next morning, May 16, the train stopped right on time at Wishford station and the squad left the train. From out of the shadows an Army truck appeared and its driver called out Reece's name. Things were falling into place. The truck took the squad ten miles down the road to Station 592. After reporting to the duty officer Reece got into bed at 6:30 A.M. He slept until someone woke him up for dinner.

Grovely Wood was located on Salisbury Plain, perhaps best known for the ancient Druid site of Stonehenge. Deer romped in the surrounding woods and the remains of an ancient Roman road ran through the village. In this quaint and historic setting Station 592 had been opened the previous September as one of three major U.S. Air Force ammunition depots in England. The 2109th

Ordnance Ammunition Battalion (Aviation), supported by the 767th Chemical Depot Company, handled twenty-six thousand tons of bombs, small arms ammunition, and fuzes a month. On May 18 Brig. Gen. Myron R. Wood, head of supply services for the Ninth Air Force, visited the facility. During his visit operations at Station 592 were filmed to show U.S. Merchant Marine personnel what happened to the ammunition they shipped after it landed in England.(1) Throughout the country other supply points with all kinds of materiel fed the enormous logistical appetite of the American armed forces preparing for the invasion.

On May 16 the 76th through 82nd Bomb Disposal Squads were formally assigned to the Ninth Air Force.(2) Relying on twin-engine bombers and single-engine fighter-bombers, the Ninth Air Force had the threefold tactical mission to acquire and maintain air superiority, help isolate the battlefield by bombing targets in or moving to the combat zone, and provide close air support by attacking enemy troops and materiel close to friendly ground forces.

Recognition of the value of tactical air power had been slow in coming. Before the attack of Pearl Harbor almost all American boosters of air power thought that a war could be won solely by strategic air forces. They envisaged heavy bombers, like the B-17, blasting important targets far behind the front lines while the planes' machine gunners by themselves neutralized enemy fighters.(3) Advocates of strategic power believed that their policy had been proven correct in the Mediterranean theater, and thought that the war in Europe could be ended by bombing Germany's industrial facilities. The American Eighth Air Force, which from its airfields in England flew missions as far away as Germany, was the most formidable practitioner of this policy

In the spring of 1943 things looked good to the partisans of strategic bombing. They felt no target was safe from the high flying big bombers, which were still holding their own against the Luftwaffe, the German air force. By the autumn of that year their mood had changed. Murderous losses during attacks on Regensburg and Schweinfurt highlighted two major problems. One was German flak, produced by antiaircraft artillery shells fuzed to

detonate at a predetermined height. The second was skillful enemy pilots, some of whom flew fighters equipped with air-to-air rockets. It was now undeniable that fighter escorts were needed, ideally all the way over enemy territory to the target and back.(4)

The heavy bombers were not designed to provide close air support or to interdict enemy supplies and troops approaching the combat zone. That was the job of tactical air power. At first it had not been very effective in North Africa because of weak coordination between air and ground forces. Eventually, however, a better command structure greatly improved the performance of British and American tactical air forces. Although it was applied on a relatively small scale compared to what would be tried in northwest Europe, tactical air power proved its value as the Germans were pushed out of North Africa.(5)

Experience in the Mediterranean theater showed the importance of having tactical airfields as close as possible to the front lines. It was therefore planned that immediately after the invasion of France, the Ninth Air Force would establish air bases in Normandy, relocating them as the front lines moved. Hopefully, the campaign would quickly move across the Western European plains until Berlin surrendered, unlike the campaign in Italy, which had become bogged down in mountainous terrain. Plans called for the Eighth Air Force to remain in England after the invasion. Similarly, the Fifteenth Air Force, another American strategic air force hitting German targets, would remain at its bases in Italy. On the other hand, British and French tactical air forces, like the Ninth Air Force, would operate from their own airfields on the Continent.

The Ninth Air Force had greatly expanded in size after leaving North Africa and arriving in England. With some 200,000 officers and men, 11 bomber groups, and 18 fighter groups, it was the most powerful tactical air force in the world. Staying close to the front lines had never been tried by such a large air organization, but if it could be done the field armies would benefit greatly. The mission of the Ninth Air Force dictated its organization. As of D-Day, it was divided into seven commands, each headed by a

brigadier or major general reporting to Maj. Gen. Lewis Brereton. (He would be succeeded by Maj. Gen. Hoyt Vandenburg on August 8.) The IX Tactical Air Command (TAC), composed of fighter-bombers, was designated to support the First Army, commanded by Lt. Gen. Omar Bradley. The XIX TAC, also composed of fighter-bombers, was subordinated to the IX TAC, but was slated to become operationally independent when the Third Army was activated in France. The IX Bomber Command, later renamed the 9th Bombardment Division, provided twin-engine light and medium bombers, which as needed were escorted on its missions by TAC fighters. The IX Engineer Command was trained and equipped to construct or repair facilities like air base runways, hangars, and roads. The IX Troop Carrier Command was responsible for the delivery, supply, and evacuation of airborne forces. The IX Air Defense Command had antiaircraft artillery units to protect airfields and other facilities not under the control of the field armies. And finally, the IX Air Force Service Command handled the supply of men and materiel to all the commands, and performed the heaviest aircraft maintenance.(6)

Eventually the War Department would provide 120 bomb disposal squads to support the American Army and Air Force in the ETO. The biggest contingent of those squads, thirty-three, was allocated to the Ninth Air Force. Another squad was assigned to the United States Strategic Air Forces in Europe (USSTAF), responsible administratively for all American Air Forces in the theater. Theater-level officials would shift the other eighty-six squads, based upon need, among the various field armies in the combat zone, the echelons above them, and the various sections of the Communications Zone (COMZ), that is, the area behind the combat zone. The Ninth Air Force received technical information on explosive ordnance from theater-level officials but would maintain operational control over its squads, unlike the other high commands.(7)

Initially the Ninth Air Force assigned its squads directly to its subordinate commands, but then decided to keep them under the operational control of its headquarters. The squads would be

attached to subordinate commands for rations and quarters only. That arrangement would ensure the greatest flexibility and mobility after the invasion, with squads assigned where they were most needed in support of air combat units or aviation engineers.(8)

By May 24 over 70 of the 120 allotted bomb disposal squads had arrived in England, and the Ninth Air Force had received its full contingent, comprising the 3rd, 6th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 41st through 48th, and 68th through 87th squads. On paper this allowed the Ninth Air Force to be self-sufficient in bomb disposal. Unfortunately, many of the squads had arrived in England later than anticipated. Only five of them, the 3rd, 6th, 8th, 9th, and 10th squads, had arrived before mid-January 1944, whereas twenty had arrived in April or May.

The delays in arrival accentuated another problem. It was one thing to practice defuzing a bomb in or near Maryland, but quite another to handle a live bomb in an area of combat operations. Two Army bomb disposal squads in England, the 5th and 7th, had served from June 1943 to early 1944 in the Aleutian Islands. In Alaska they had disposed of much American and Japanese ordnance, at the cost of the lives of the commanding officer and top enlisted man of the 5th BDS.(9) But most of the other squads in England, including all of those assigned to the Ninth Air Force, had arrived from the relative peace and quiet of the forty-eight states. It was felt that the Army and Air Force squads needed more training and experience with live ordnance to prepare them better for what would undoubtedly be very demanding work on the Continent.

Once again the British came to the rescue. British bomb disposal work was divided among three commands. Royal Air Force (RAF) squads handled all incidents on airfields, and incidents anywhere involving bombs jettisoned from Allied aircraft. Royal Navy personnel handled naval ordnance, and Royal Engineer bomb disposal personnel handled everything else. All of the seventy-six American Army and Air Force bomb disposal squads that arrived in the U.K. before D-Day worked with British personnel to get on-the-job training.(10)

The Americans agreed that the British would retain ultimate authority for all bomb disposal operations anywhere in the country. The RAF agreed that American bomb disposal personnel would be assigned to handle incidents based on the joint approval of a British and American official. For this purpose U.S. Air Force ordnance officers were stationed at three of the RAF's bomb disposal sector offices. The Ninth Air Force used the sector offices in West Malling and Harwell, while the Eighth Air Force and the 4th BDS, assigned to USSTAF, worked out of the sector office in Waterbeach.

Several bomb disposal squads were assigned to the Eighth Air Force in 1943, but by early 1944 they had all been reassigned, mainly to the Ninth Air Force. The Eighth Air Force still had some ordnance personnel trained to perform bomb disposal duties on a part-time basis, but for assistance it relied heavily on the RAF, which handled all German bombs for it. The Eighth Air Force wanted to regain a contingent of its own full-time bomb disposal squads, but was thwarted by the reoccurring problem of a world-wide shortage of qualified personnel.

Bomb disposal personnel neither loaded explosive ordnance onto planes nor set fuzes in bombs. Once a plane took off, however, it was normally their responsibility to handle any explosive ordnance which was in the plane when it returned, or which was dropped over friendly territory and did not explode. By 1944 the majority of incidents for bomb disposal squads in England involved Allied bombs which were accidentally jettisoned from planes because of mechanical failure or human error, or which were in planes that crashed. One ordnance officer estimated that during the war over one thousand tons of bombs were accidentally dropped over the United Kingdom by the Eighth Air Force alone.(11) Most unexploded ordnance from those incidents was encountered at airstrips or in the countryside. As the 46th BDS found out in May 1944 when it disposed of a 100-pound incendiary bomb, however, some of it was found on the beaches of the English Channel.(12)

The second greatest number of incidents for bomb disposal squads involved unexploded ordnance of various sizes and types dropped by German planes. Included in that category was a 1,000-

kilogram parachute bomb handled by the 44th BDS. The squad photographed it to help update Allied technical experts on the weapon. In May 1944 the 41st BDS and RAF personnel jointly disposed of another 1,000-kilogram bomb, as well as many 1-kilogram magnesium incendiary bombs. In March 1944 the 46th BDS had its first incident when it disposed of three 50-kilogram German bombs in Dartford, Kent.

Not all of the work involved explosives from aircraft. England did not avoid completely the danger of booby traps, even though it had thwarted Hitler's attempt to invade it. Warnings were received in February 1944 that crates of Spanish onions shipped there might be booby trapped with eight pounds of TNT connected to the J-Feder 504 time-delay fuze, which could be set for up to twenty-one days.(13) Bomb disposal squads were on call to help, as the 46th squad did when it inspected onion crates for the unit to which it was attached in Gloucestershire, the 926th Engineer Aviation Regiment.

Officers and enlisted men of Ninth Air Force bomb disposal squads received training in other ways as well. A number of them attended one of the month-long courses given by the RAF at various locations on either enemy bombs and fuzes or Allied bombs and fuzes. In July 1944 Captain Reece spent several weeks at the RAF Station in Harwell, Berkshire for instruction.(14) Before D-Day the 47th BDS was even trained in amphibious beach landing operations.

Another major part of bomb disposal work for the Ninth Air Force while in Europe was in giving training, especially bomb reconnaissance for other American units. Occasionally it was for units with which they were stationed. For example, the 6th and 9th squads trained their host Eighth Air Force personnel, and the 46th BDS did it for its engineer regiment. In some cases travel to other installations was required. Captain Reece went to the Eighth Air Force's 2nd Division headquarters at Ketteringham, Norwich, to train personnel on bomb reconnaissance. An important part of the material covered was on the butterfly bomb, which the Luftwaffe had dropped on Eighth Air Force bases in 1943.(15)

Just before D-Day normal training was disrupted. Some bomb disposal squads, like the 68th, 71st, and 73rd, were reassigned to bases from which the IX Transport Carrier Command was preparing to embark with airborne units for Normandy. Before boarding the planes many of the troops dropped some of the explosive ordnance they were issued, because they did not want the extra weight to make them hit the ground harder after their parachutes opened. Bomb disposal personnel collected the discarded grenades, ammunition clips, and similar items.

Before departing for France, or the "far shore" as it was termed in official communications, squads had other tasks besides honing their training. Record keeping had to be brought up to date. Vehicles and other equipment going across the English Channel by ship had to be waterproofed. And all necessary equipment not yet issued had to be obtained.

Sometimes a lack of adequate transportation hindered getting around. Despite the best efforts of American industry and the Merchant Marine, there were not enough vehicles in England for all of the troops. In early June 1944 USSTAF had a shortage of over 3,800 two-and-a-half-ton trucks, the workhorse for moving both men and materiel.(16) The 80th BDS often used a formerly wrecked bicycle which T/5 Harry Epstein repaired with parts purchased locally. Before departing the country all of the squads were provided with some type of truck, although it may have been smaller than the one authorized in the official table of organization.

In June Captain Reece went to Services of Supply Headquarters in Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, to check on the status of equipment for his squad. By the end of the month the squad had picked up most needed items at one of the numerous supply depots. The most vital equipment, issued through special channels, were the items designed just for bomb disposal work. They included a British stethoscope, because it would be easier to get spare parts for it than for the American version. The British Stevens Stopper was issued for working with German mechanical fuzes. Using the "F" technique on German anti-handling fuzes would be impractical on the Continent because it required tanks of liquid oxygen, so

two British devices, the "J" and "D" sets, were provided instead. To counteract the ordinary German electrical fuze the American thermal fuze deactivator (TFD) and the British liquid fuze deactivator (LFD) were issued. The former device injected steam into the fuze mechanism; the latter injected a liquid. The LFD turned out to be more reliable and frequently used.(17)

While in high school Reece and a friend bought a 1918 Ford Model T car, tinkering with it in their spare time. That kind of practical mechanical experience was necessary for bomb disposal officers. They learned how literally hundreds of Allied and Axis fuzes, igniters and other parts used in explosive ordnance worked. In addition, a basic knowledge of electricity was required just to use fully the TIB, because it sometimes displayed wiring diagrams of electrical fuzes used in German bombs.

It often took a month or two for the TIB to reach overseas bomb disposal personnel, so British and American bomb disposal authorities attempted to close the information gap. The Ninth Air Force Bomb Disposal Officer received intelligence reports from a variety of American and British sources on technical matters involving Allied and Axis explosive ordnance. He extracted relevant information from them and disseminated it to bomb disposal squads through a weekly technical letter. But, of course, it was quite possible that a squad would encounter in the field a completely unknown item, or a new modification of a familiar device. In that event bomb disposal officers would be much like their British colleagues in the early days of the war, relying on their ingenuity, experience, intuition, and luck to survive.

Chapter 4

Northern France

The success of the Ninth Air Force during the campaign in France would depend as much on its engineers as it would on its pilots and ground crews. The less time its pilots took to fly to their targets the more time they would have to strike the enemy. There were no airfields near the Normandy beaches, however, so the aviation engineers would have to build them. They had planned to build within two weeks after D-Day thirteen airfields and two emergency landing strips at sites previously chosen on the basis of available intelligence. To confirm the suitability of the sites, small reconnaissance units would closely follow the ground combat units and report their findings to their IX Engineer Command superiors, who would make the final decision on the locations.(1)

Like so many other participants in the invasion, the aviation engineers would have to modify their plans when confronted with unexpected situations on the ground. Hostile fire prevented any IX Engineer Command personnel from landing on Omaha Beach on D-Day. The next day elements of the 834th Engineer Aviation Battalion (EAB) managed to make it ashore. With the site originally selected for their first job still in enemy hands, they went instead to St. Laurent-sur-Mer, where at 9:00 P.M. on June 8 they finished an earthen landing strip. Later given the number A-21, it was the first of 241 numbered airfields Ninth Air Force engineers would construct or repair from facilities captured from the Germans. The runway at A-21 was 3,500 feet long, enough for transport aircraft to use. Many runways the aviation engineers completed later would

meet or exceed the ideal minimum length of 5,000 feet for fighter-bombers, light bombers, and medium bombers.

Enemy resistance was lighter on Utah Beach. At 9:15 P.M. on June 6 the 819th EAB finished an emergency grass landing strip at the planned site northwest of the village of Pouppeville. Its meager length, 2,000 feet, was enough for a plane to make a belly landing. Also on June 6 at Utah Beach the 47th BDS landed, becoming the first ordnance unit of the Ninth Air Force to set foot in Normandy.(2) On June 7, led by commanding officer Henry A. Klingensmith, the squad reached a site between St. Mere-Eglise and Beuzeville which had been hit by German *nebelwerfer* (rocket launcher) fire that morning. Personnel of the 819 EAB were going over plans for an airfield to be built there. The next day aviation engineers began construction, stopping at dark because of sniper fire and enemy aircraft activity. Beuzeville (A-6) proved very useful even before its completion on June 14. By June 10 enough progress had been made that a RAF fighter landed there, probably due to a mechanical problem. On June 11 American transport planes landed to deliver supplies and reinforcements for the 82nd Airborne Division. And at dawn the next day twenty thousand tons of ammunition urgently needed by combat ground forces were dropped there by parachute.

Beuzeville was the first American hard-surfaced airfield used in Normandy. Several types of prefabricated material for the surface were considered. Because speed of construction was essential immediately after the beach landings, square-mesh track was chosen for the first six hard-surfaced airfields, and many later ones. It did not require as much grading and related preparation before laying as did other material. The 371st Fighter Group (FG) was transferred to Beuzeville in stages between June 17 and June 23.(3) Until the move was completed the airfield was used for *roulement*, in which fighters landed to rearm and refuel before going back to their home bases, at that time still in England. That system, used as needed at other airfields also, increased the operational capability of the IX TAC by one third, in the opinion of one historian.(4)

Bomb disposal squads were as important for the aviation engineers as the engineers were for the Ninth Air Force. Many noncommissioned officers and other enlisted men in the IX Engineer Command had received mine clearance training. Engineer personnel, however, were not normally trained in disarming bombs. Furthermore, the sheer volume of mines and other explosive ordnance that had to be disposed of from airfield sites was too much for the aviation engineers to handle by themselves. Throughout the campaign in northern Europe bomb disposal squads (from both the Air Force and Army) handled most of the bombs, and many of the mines and booby traps, that were in the way of the IX Engineer Command.(5) High explosive bombs and mines were normally disposed of by exploding them with conventional charges, while incendiary bombs and flares were burned. Some types of artillery shells resisted conventional demolition; on those armor piercing charges were used. The squads also examined captured enemy ammunition, giving what might be salvaged to quartermaster personnel, and destroying what could not.

On June 7 commanding officer Harvey W. Morgan, Jr. led ashore the first Ninth Air Force bomb disposal squad, the 41st, to reach Omaha Beach. The next day the squad ascended the bluffs to a site where the 834 EAB was planning to build an airstrip, not far from Pointe du Hoc. Construction began on June 9, notwithstanding an enemy attack which was repulsed in the morning. Four days later St. Pierre-du-Mont (A-1) was in operation, serving to rearm and refuel fighter-bombers until the 366th FG occupied it within a week.

In addition to A-21, used for supply and evacuation, and the unnumbered emergency landing field, by June 20 the United States had two airfields in France where fighter groups were stationed, and another two airfields used for *roulement*. Ninth Air Force bomb disposal squads were stationed at all of the latter four airfields. A fifth squad had arrived and was assisting aviation engineers at one of the four airfields under construction.

The support rendered from the new airfields in France and older ones in England was crucial for the success of the invasion. The Allies maintained overwhelming air superiority, limiting Luftwaffe activity to occasional attacks which were harassing but never threatened to play a decisive role. Also, Allied tactical and strategic air strikes prevented German reinforcements, including experienced armored forces, from reaching the front lines. That was always important, but it was vital until the Germans evacuated Carentan on June 12, and the Allies were able to link up their forces on all of the beaches.

On June 17 an advance office of the IX TAC, located close to St. Pierre-du-Mont, began controlling all tactical air flights over France, directing missions to destroy enemy equipment and troops near the front lines. Ground and air assaults resulted in the capture of Cherbourg on June 26, furthering solidifying the Allied position on the Continent by wresting from German control the Cotentin peninsula, to the north and west of the invasion beaches.

By July 1 the Ninth Air Force had ten airfields in Normandy supporting eight fighter groups and supply and evacuation operations. General Bradley was very pleased with the close air support the IX TAC, under the command of Maj. Gen. Elwood "Pete" Quesada, had given his First Army. And Ninth Air Force Headquarters was happy with the performance of its bomb disposal squads in France, which had grown to eight in number by the end of June. On July 1 it noted approvingly that "A number of ordnance units are on the far shore now, and from preliminary reports, functioning in a very creditable manner. The largest group of these are Bomb Disposal Squads, which have contributed materially to the rapid clearing and construction of our airfields."(6)

Despite the achievements of Allied ground and air forces, progress had not kept up with the preinvasion timetable. Due to several factors, the Allies' deepest point of penetration south of the beaches as of July 1 was still just eighteen miles, at Caumont-l'Evente.(7) First, the Germans made skillful use of hedgerows, woods, and artificial camouflage to conceal themselves from Allied

air strikes and thwart attacks by ground forces. Second, the lack of rapid communication between ground and air forces limited the effectiveness of tactical air power. Third, bad weather on some days prevented or limited air operations.

Nonetheless, Allied troops and supplies continued to pour into the narrow front and new airfields were opened. Fourteen Ninth Air Force bomb disposal squads arrived in France during the month of July. They were assigned all over the American sector, from Tour-en-Bessin (A-13) and Lignerolles (A-12) in the east, to Maupertus (A-15) near Cherbourg in the north, and to Cretteville (A-14) and Meautis (A-17) in the south. Bomb disposal squads stationed at an airfield with a combat group had to make some of its personnel available for runway duty. They stayed nearby during flight operations to collect explosive ordnance which had fallen from planes taking off or which was on planes that had returned. When not on runway duty personnel might be handling explosive ordnance nearby which had not been picked up or destroyed before the airfield became operational. Another duty for the squads was to respond to calls for assistance from military or civilian personnel in the general area. With all of these tasks, the work could be demanding even at installations farthest from the front lines. The 86th BDS, assigned from July 10 to August 29 to Brucheville (Ste. Marie-du-Mont) (A-16), just behind Utah Beach, handled an average of over ninety explosive devices a day, often in support of the 36th FG.

With Allied forces still bottled up, many airfields were perilously close to the front lines. Lignerolles was under artillery fire during all of its construction, while other airfields, such as St. Lambert (A-11) and Cretteville (A-14), were within artillery range for part of the time. Not surprisingly, a number of Ninth Air Force bomb disposal and engineers were wounded in Normandy. Some were wounded by enemy fire, some by other means.

The Ninth Air Force's first bomb disposal fatality did not come from hostile fire. T/Sgt. William C. Tait had been stationed in Cretteville with the 6th BDS since July 4. On the morning of July 9 he was taking inventory of the squad's collection of unexploded

ordnance, which had been placed in a slit trench prior to demolition. Suddenly, without warning, a load explosion rent the air. A few seconds later T/5 Charles G. Pritchard, who was shaving nearby, saw a human toe dangling on a branch in front of him.(8)

It was often impossible to know what happened in accidents involving large quantities of munitions which destroyed most, if not all, of the evidence, and killed those closest to the scene. If human error was not to blame in the death of Sergeant Tait it might have been due to unstable explosives. Since D-Day American ordnance personnel believed that German ammunition was especially dangerous for three reasons: sabotage during manufacture by slave labor, substandard workmanship and materials as the armament industry strained to increase production, and a shortage of trained personnel for quality control. Later in 1944 it was apparent that German ammunition was spoiling more rapidly than necessary because of inferior packing and preservation, thereby increasing the chances of a fire or explosion.(9) Two other incidents in July 1944 showed the danger of working with explosives, regardless of their national origin. On the 12th of that month an ammunition depot behind Utah Beach caught fire, killing several soldiers. And during the first week of the month several 100-pound bombs with long-delay fuzes in storage for the Eighth Air Force in England exploded because of improper handling.(10)

Whatever the immediate cause of Tait's death, it was connected to a growing problem which the Army had begun to consider only shortly before D-Day: how to dispose of unneeded explosive munitions besides bombs. In 1942 it was thought that bomb disposal personnel would mainly handle bombs, especially enemy ones. By early 1944 the job had expanded to include all bombs, as well as other munitions, including mines and booby traps not handled by the combat engineers. Later in the year training was expanded to include more time on recognizing and handling enemy ammunition. Colonel Kane, who in March 1944 had been transferred from APG to become head of the Bomb Disposal Division in the ETO, had tried to get fifteen ammunition companies assigned to help bomb disposal personnel handle

unexploded munitions. Those companies were unavailable, however.(11) Existing ammunition companies were straining just to deliver munitions to Allied troops, and the combat engineers had no extra time. With the Luftwaffe dropping far fewer bombs than had been feared earlier, it fell to the other American group trained in handling explosives, bomb disposal personnel, to take the lead in handling all types of unexploded munitions.

A third problem, related to the first two, was the staggering quantity of enemy munitions that would be captured as Axis forces in Europe retreated and finally surrendered. The burden of disposing of it would fall most heavily on Army bomb disposal squads, but Ninth Air Force bomb disposal squads would definitely be involved as well. By July 1944 at least a hint of the problem could be seen by looking at the work of just one bomb disposal squad. During the last two weeks of the month the 43rd BDS, under Lt. Michael N. Juzwiak, helped clear the airstrip at Maupertus (A-15). In that time the squad removed, in addition to one 500-kilogram German bomb, over 4,900 German antiaircraft shells of various sizes, 2,927 German mines of various types, 895 German hand grenades, 411 French hand grenades, 18,000 rounds of German small arms ammunition, 350 rounds of American .50-caliber ammunition, 914 German mortar shells, and 10 German bazooka rockets. The squad burned or blew up most of these items, giving the rest to a depot for enemy ammunition. Allied forces, especially airborne troops, would use German and French mortar shells in their 81-mm. mortars. It should also be noted that during these operations both Lieutenant Juzwiak and T/5 James S. Hardy were injured and subsequently hospitalized for three days. Juzwiak was caught in the explosion of a German antitank Teller mine; Hardy was injured while burning some of the munitions.(12)

The rapid pace of airfield construction, or in the case of Maupertus, repair of a captured facility, continued to bear fruit. At the end of July enough airfields were available to allow most of the IX TAC's fighter groups to be stationed in France, and to provide for the delivery of supplies, evacuation of the wounded, and heavy maintenance of aircraft. By then new Allied air tactics and materiel

had helped ground forces break out from the hedgerow country, paving the way for rapid advances over terrain better suited for armored and other motorized vehicles.

In mid-July Quesada revolutionized tactical air power by putting a Ninth Air Force radio and pilot in a First Army tank, enabling fighters to respond immediately to requests for support from armored columns. On July 16 his pilots became the first Americans in Europe to use air-to-ground rockets in combat, blowing up several locomotives. The weapon was very effective, and would soon be used with deadly results against enemy tanks. Of course, the rockets also gave bomb disposal squads one more lethal weapon to handle for the rest of the war. And on July 17 the IX TAC introduced a new weapon to the ETO when they used napalm bombs to destroy a German command post concealed in a woods.

An unorthodox and risky application of strategic air power close to the front lines provided the final blow leading to the breakout from hedgerow country. On July 24 and 25 Allied heavy and medium bombers saturated an area to the west of St. Lo in Operation "Cobra," stunning the Germans and allowing American ground forces to make initial advances. The forward movement gained momentum as Ninth Air Force fighters, now talking directly to First Army tanks, flew armored column cover, eliminating tanks, 88-mm. guns, and other enemy obstacles to the advance. By July 30 the Allies had reached Avranches as the German left flank collapsed.

With this advance the Third Army, under Lt. Gen. George S. Patton, Jr., was activated in France on August 1. Lt. Gen. Courtney Hodges took command of the First Army, replacing Bradley, who moved up the chain of command to head 12th Army Group, comprising the First and Third Armies. To support Patton the XIX TAC, commanded by Maj. Gen. O.P. Weyland, became independent of the IX TAC, which remained under Quesada to support Hodges.

South of Avranches the Third Army split its forces, with one part moving west and southwest. Rennes, the gateway to central

Brittany, was captured on August 4, and one week later most of the region had been liberated. To help subdue several well-fortified ports in the area still under German control, air bases were needed nearby for tactical aircraft. Aviation engineers began repairing captured airfields, like the dual-runway facility at Rennes, and started building new ones. By August 17 Ninth Air Force bomb disposal squads were at all five airfields in or near Brittany hosting, or being prepared for, fighter groups.

The other part of the Third Army turned east. Beginning on August 6 the XIX TAC guarded Patton's right flank along the Loire River, and the Third Army made a spectacular advance on an axis south of Paris. Le Mans fell on August 8, Chartres and Chateaudun on August 16, Troyes, east of the Seine River, on August 25, and Verdun and St. Mihiel on August 31. The closest fighter bases were now hundreds of miles behind the new front lines, requiring Ninth Air Force engineers to quickly construct or repair new airfields in the wake of Patton's advance. The IX Engineer Command assigned its 2nd Brigade, composed of two regiments, each with three or four battalions, to support the Third Army. Assisting the 2nd Engineer Brigade at that time were Capt. George D. Gordon's 68th BDS, which arrived in LeMans on August 9 and moved to Chartres on August 21, and the 76th BDS, which arrived in Chateaudun on August 19. One week later fighters covering the easternmost movements of the Third Army began using the air base in Chateaudun on the *roulement* system.

Nine Ninth Air Force bomb disposal squads landed in France in August. Among the arriving personnel was Captain Reece, who came on a LST on about August 14. He was no longer, however, a member of the 80th BDS, which arrived in Normandy on August 16. In July he had been transferred to the 10th BDS, which served a unique dual function.(13)

On the Continent American bomb disposal operations were not subject to British oversight. But the Ninth Air Force did keep the RAF approach, organizing its bomb disposal squads in three geographical sectors. Ultimate operational control rested with the Bomb Disposal Officer at Ninth Air Force Headquarters. He

established sector boundaries, assigned sector officers within their sectors, and received daily summary reports from them. A sector officer assigned work within his sector to the appropriate squad based on daily reports received from his squads and information received from other sources. Sector officers were not office-bound functionaries. They were assigned an enlisted man as a driver and clerk, and to work in the field they were issued a set of bomb disposal tools and more common equipment, like a typewriter and field desk. Sector officers, the Ninth Air Force Bomb Disposal Officer, and their enlisted assistants were assigned for administrative purposes to the 10th Bomb Disposal Squad, because the official table of organization had no positions designated for them. An additional seven men, the 10th BDS "proper," carried out traditional bomb disposal functions in the field. Bomb Disposal Sector I was established on the Continent in June, and Sectors II and III were established there in August. Although the incumbents of the Bomb Disposal Officer, Sector I officer, and Sector II officer positions all changed after D-Day, sometimes more than once, Captain Reece remained as Sector III officer from August 1944 until the German surrender.(14)

After spending the night on Omaha Beach, Reece went to Le Molay (A-9), where the 8th BDS had been assigned since early July. When stationed with the 80th BDS in England Reece reported in June that the squad was adjusting to the "rigors" of life in the ETO. Now, like those who had arrived in France weeks earlier, he had to adjust to conditions that he found "really terrible." Although the Allies clearly had air superiority, the major combat weakness of the Ninth Air Force remained night operations. Its night fighter squadrons were poor in numbers and equipment. To be safe, Reece slept at night under a truck or in a trench. Instead of a regular shower, he did his bathing out of a bucket, or when he was lucky, in a stream. Demands for bomb disposal were constant, taking him in August from three to thirty miles from the front. During his few idle moments he enjoyed sampling the potent calvados liquor of Normandy, served in small glasses which the uninitiated downed in one gulp, and admired the ingenuity of the aviation

engineers in building runways with prefabricated surfaces. He greatly liked the French people, and lamented the vast destruction of their countryside caused by the heavy bombing and shelling.(15)

Even miles from the front German explosive ordnance continued to be a problem. Reece lost a jeep when it hit a mine. On August 13 Captain Stryjewski of the 86th BDS, still stationed at A-16, was seriously injured when he attempted to a clear a field of German antipersonnel "S" mines and one of them exploded. By the end of the month the 86th BDS was commanded by Lt. Coolie A. Verner. He had recently documented characteristics of a German 4-kilogram shaped, or hollow charge, bomb. Designed to pierce heavy armor plate, they were dropped in containers of seventy-four. Verner's findings appeared in the 15 September 1944 issue of the TIB.(16)

One American device which gave headaches to bomb disposal and other ordnance personnel was the anti-withdrawal long-delay bomb fuze. American fuzes were placed in the nose or in both the tail and the nose of the bomb, rather than in the side. Also unlike the Germans, whose anti-handling fuze was completely different from its regular fuzes, the Americans just modified their normal long-delay 123 series fuze for the anti-withdrawal version. It would detonate the bomb when the fuze was turned more than one and a half revolutions. Lt. E.E. Hughes of the 45th BDS invented a way to remove it safely. A hole half an inch in diameter was drilled at a right angle at a particular point in the booster pocket holding the fuze. The pocket was then rotated until the pin holding the pocket in the bomb could be taken out, allowing the pocket and fuze to be removed.(17)

Events in the northern part of the theater, which were not promising at the beginning of August, took a marked turn for the better. The American First Army and British and Canadian forces, facing a heavy concentration of German forces, initially met strong resistance as they attacked to the south and east. On August 10 the IX TCC air dropped supplies to units of the 30th Infantry Division surrounded during a German counterattack westward toward Mortain. Helped by the IX TAC and other air units, Allied

ground forces, including part of the Third Army which had swung north, then began to encircle a large German force between Argentan and Falaise. On August 20 the operation concluded successfully, ending significant organized resistance west of the Seine River. The liberation of Paris was completed on August 25. Within a week the Ninth Air Force had five bomb disposal squads at nearby airfields, and the 10th BDS had relocated to Chantilly, north of the capital. By August 31 British forces had reached Amiens, on the Somme River, and the American First Army had reached Soisson.

The Allies' somber mood of early July had turned around 180 degrees. American and French forces landed in southern France in mid-August, and on August 24 the XIX TAC began interdicting German forces retreating from that region. Hope was in the air that the war in Europe would be over by Christmas. Even before moving on August 27 to St. Lambert (A-11) and the 74th BDS, Captain Reece shared the general optimism. He wrote to his wife earlier in the month that he would bring her something nice from Berlin "in a couple of weeks."(18)

Chapter 5

To the Siegfried Line

The rapid, large-scale transfer to airfields during combat operations which the Ninth Air Force accomplished in September 1944 was unprecedented in military history. As the month began none of its combat groups was stationed east of the Seine River; seven of its eleven bomber groups were in England; and many of its fighter groups were stationed in Normandy, in the Le Mans area, or to the west. As the month ended all airfields in France hosting Ninth Air Force combat groups were east of the Seine River, save for five exceptions. The westernmost of those was in Chateaudun (A-39), southwest of Chartres. Only one of the Ninth Air Force's eleven bomber groups remained in England, nine airfields with fighter groups were in northeast France within fifty miles of the Belgian border, and two combat groups and one night fighter squadron were in Belgium itself.

Before any wholesale movement of Ninth Air Force units could be made, of course, new ground had to be taken by the infantry and armored forces. In August the Third Army gained the most attention for its run first into Brittany and then into Lorraine. In September the First Army, together with British and Canadian forces on the left flank, grabbed the spotlight with their sweep by the eleventh of the month into most of Belgium and part of Luxembourg. As a result of these successes the Allies established positions they had not planned to reach until May 2, 1945.(1)

In the meantime the American Ninth Army, under Lt. Gen. William H. Simpson, had been activated in Rennes, taking over responsibility for Brittany from the Third Army. Brest, a fortified

city at the peninsula's western tip, had proven a tough nut to crack. Five-hundred pound bombs had little effect on the steel and reinforced-concrete bunkers dotting the area. Despite attacks on some days by as many as twelve Ninth Air Force fighter groups, various Ninth Air Force bomber groups, and heroic ground units, the city did not surrender until September 18.

The fall of Brest accelerated the transfer of forces to the east and northeast from Normandy, Brittany and adjacent areas. In late September the Ninth Army was transferred to the front lines between the First and Third Armies. Captain Reece had been at Rennes (A-27), where the 71st BDS was stationed, from September 1 to September 9. He was then transferred to Clastres (A-71), southeast of Amiens, where the 69th BDS was assigned. The 71st BDS in turn joined the eastward movement on September 19 when it and the fighter group it had been supporting, the 362nd, moved to Prosnes (A-79), southeast of Reims.(2)

The transfer of air combat groups was facilitated by the capture of German airfields in the Paris area, eastern France, and Belgium. Many of them had concrete runways. The second surface used in Normandy for runway construction had been prefabricated bitumen surfacing, also known as prefabricated Hessian surfacing. It had a coating like asphalt, and was more durable than square-mesh track. But neither surface was strong enough to support bombers. For the four bomber groups which arrived in France by September 1 aviation engineers prepared runways of either concrete or pierced-steel plank. The heavy planks took up valuable shipping space in the vessels coming from England, and it took several weeks to prepare runways made with them. Bomb damage in concrete runways, on the other hand, could usually be patched up in a day or two.

For bomb disposal squads captured airfields were a mixed blessing. They often had better sleeping quarters and related facilities than new fields. But established airfields usually had been extensively bombed by Allied planes, leaving duds at the air bases and in surrounding areas. Furthermore, airfields could have large quantities of explosive ordnance abandoned at ammunition dumps

by the retreating Germans, and bombs placed as demolition charges which had failed to detonate.

A good example of this was Peronne (A-72), on the Somme River northeast of Paris. It had been bombed on July 14 by ninety-three B-24s of the Eighth Air Force, and attacked again on August 28 by the Ninth Air Force. The 46th BDS arrived there on September 9, after leaving Lignerolles (A-12) on September 3, and then working for five days at Peray (A-44), north of Le Mans. After three days of housework Captain Zimmerman and his squad moved into two buildings at Peronne formerly occupied by SS troops. In the meantime they had to dispose of about two hundred German bombs at various points around the airfield, some of which had been intended as demolition charges. Those bombs at least were at, or close to, ground level. In addition, several dozen American UXBs had to be excavated, defuzed, and taken to the ammunition dump. Thereafter the main task of the 46th BDS was to support the 474th FG, which arrived on September 12. As time permitted the squad assisted nearby civilians, one of whom was a farmer who found buried in his field ten American dud bombs, probably dropped by the B-24s in July. The squad managed to remove six of them by the end of September. Like other bomb disposal squads, the 46th kept its sense of humor despite the difficulties it faced. At the end of the month Captain Zimmerman jokingly commented to the effect that the squad should have been working on a commission basis.

In August the 1st Engineer Aviation Brigade, structured like the 2nd Engineer Aviation Brigade working to its south, was assigned to support the First Army.(3) The hectic pace of a bomb disposal squad assisting the 1st Brigade was shown by the 86th squad. On September 3 it left Paris and in three days disposed of thirty-nine bombs at the airfield at Beaumont-sur-Oise (A-60). It then moved directly to the airfield being refurbished for bombers at Cormeilles-en-Vexin (A-59), just northwest of Paris. In two days there the squad removed 136 bombs, and then returned to the capital on the evening of September 7. Lieutenant Verner and Sgt. Everett T. Jackson left that night for Laon, halfway to the Belgian border,

where a new airfield was being constructed. Arriving before 4:00 A.M. the next morning, the duo handled over twenty bombs before eating dinner. The two then went immediately to Florennes Juzaine, in western Belgium, where the rest of the squad arrived early on the evening of September 9. The squad handled twenty-two bombs before departing on September 14 for St. Trond (St. Truiden), located roughly between Brussels and Liege. St. Trond (A-92) was a captured airfield that had been extensively used by the Germans and heavily bombed by the Allies. By October 15 the squad handled twenty-two bombs, some of them buried thirty-five feet deep. Nine bombs had booby-trapped fuzes, but the squad managed to remove them safely and quickly enough not to delay repair of the field.

The campaign from Normandy to Belgium exposed the biggest disadvantage in using the squad rather than the company as the basic bomb disposal unit: insufficient labor and vehicles to do the job quickly if a lot of ordnance had to be moved, or when a number of bombs had to be excavated from more than a few feet below the surface. Often the squads did all the digging themselves, but when necessary and able they borrowed additional trucks and hired civilian labor. The 86th BDS used local labor in Belgium, and other squads did so in France. In October a new source of labor was used when German prisoners of war (POWs) helped the 46th BDS excavate buried bombs. (In late August outside Laval, an Army bomb disposal squad, the 67th, used two crews of inmates when removing UXBs from an insane asylum. Of course, for several reasons that was not a desirable option, even if you subscribed to the theory that one had to be a little crazy to do the work anyway.)(4)

In September virtually all Ninth Air Force bomb disposal squads and combat groups were transferred at least once, and many were transferred several times. In the flurry of this activity at least one useful piece of intelligence was developed. Between September 1 and 15 the 76th BDS worked at Chateaudun, Cormeilles-en-Vexin, and Roye Amy before arriving in Tirelement (Tienen), Belgium, for the rest of the month. During this time the squad encountered a previously unknown German 4,000-kilogram

blockbuster bomb, approximately ten feet long and three feet in diameter. Its main charge appeared to be the explosive most commonly used in bombs, TNT, surrounding pellets of RDX, a more powerful explosive which was more dangerous to use because it was more sensitive. Attached to one end of the body of the bomb, for an unknown purpose, was a steel dome with four protruding tubes.(5)

On August 23 Captain (later Major) Syd M. Lerner, Jr. was appointed Bomb Disposal Officer of the Ninth Air Force. He had arrived in Normandy on June 9 as a sector officer and, along with several other members of the 10th BDS, had been wounded in action. In September the remaining personnel at Ninth Air Force Headquarters in England, including those in ordnance, were transferred to offices in Chantilly, France which had been checked for booby traps by the 10th BDS. Captain Lerner headed one of four subsections reporting to Col. William R. Maxwell, Ordnance Officer in Logistics and Supply (A-4). (The other three ordnance subsections were ammunition and supply, administrative and automotive, and technical.)(6) Lerner's full-time attention to bomb disposal matters at headquarters ensured that both administratively and operationally bomb disposal squads in the Ninth Air Force would be properly looked after, which was not always the case for bomb disposal squads assigned to Army commands in the European theater.(7)

Important responsibilities were added to the Ninth Air Force at this time, not all of which were in the preinvasion plans. As anticipated, the XXIX TAC, commanded by Brig. Gen. Richard E. Nugent, was activated on September 14 to support the Ninth Army. Unexpectedly, in late September the Ninth Air Force assumed temporary operational and administrative control of the XII TAC, which earlier had come from the Twelfth Air Force in Italy to support operations in southern France. After landing in southern France the Allies had fought up the Rhone River valley, turned northeast, and linked up with the Third Army near Dijon on September 11. A few days later those forces, the U.S. Seventh

Army and the French First Army, formed the 6th Army Group. The engineer units of the XII TAC had to return to Italy, however, so Ninth Air Force engineers and bomb disposal squads helped it prepare airfields for the 6th Army Group, now operating between the right flank of the Third Army and the French-German border just north of Switzerland. In addition, Ninth Air Force bomb disposal squads were assigned to XII TAC airfields at Ochey (A-96), Tantonville (Y-1), and Luneville (Y-2).

To better position itself to support the Third Army, the XIX TAC next centered its operations east of Troyes. Aviation engineers reached St. Dizier (A-64) on September 7, and the 9th BDS arrived two days later. By the end of the month five bomb disposal squads were stationed from Troyes to the Lorraine region, some helping aviation engineers, others supporting fighter groups.

With vital supplies and manpower shifted northward to other forces, on September 25 the Third Army was ordered to undertake only limited offensive operations. Even before then, however, progress in Lorraine had been extremely slow. The flow of supplies to the Continent and their delivery to combat forces could not keep up with the unexpected progress of the Allies. And Patton's army was fighting in terrain more unfavorable than the rolling plains to the northwest and in Belgium. Lorraine sloped uphill to the east and was dotted with hardened fortifications, especially around Metz. Once again, as it had been at Brest, tactical air support was generally ineffective against reinforced-concrete emplacements.

Progress was also slow in the north. During the second half of September, Operation "Market Garden," British Field Marshall Montgomery's bid to outflank the northern end of the Siegfried Line (West Wall), fell short as Allied ground forces failed to reach Arnhem. The First Army attacked the Siegfried Line at two points, near Aachen and southwest of Bitburg. Bad weather and strong German fortifications helped neutralize Allied air superiority, and the infantry made only limited penetrations in both areas. Tactical air power was more useful in stopping German counterattacks, as

light and medium bombers interdicted reinforcements of German soldiers and supplies.

At the end of September six Ninth Air Force disposal squads were in Belgium. One of them, the 68th BDS, had arrived at Liege/Bierset (A-93) after working nine days in Luxembourg, where its duties included checking the palace and summer home of the Duchess of Luxembourg for booby traps.(8) Only one Ninth Air Force bomb disposal squad remained in England after the 85th BDS arrived in France in early September. Unfortunately, tragedy struck the new arrivals on September 22. Two of its enlisted men were injured at a railway station near Chartres when some munitions they were handling exploded. On October 3 T/5 Russell F. Byington, who lost both legs in the incident, died of his wounds.(9)

In October the weather turned worse, and the monthly number of Ninth Air Force sorties dropped. As rain turned fields into mud the Allies seemed stuck, both figuratively and literally. Bomb disposal squads were among those affected. The 80th BDS, for example, stationed at Coulommiers (A-58), just east of Paris, had to endure frequent periods when area roads were not useable. Nevertheless, it still managed to dispose of 108 tons of American UXBs and enemy munitions during the month. And T/5 Walter V. Smith used his carpentry skills during the extra free time to make some wooden furniture for the two prefabricated huts where the squad had its office and sleeping quarters, just as he had done during the previous June in England. Regardless of the quarters they had, for many veterans, including Captain Reece, the mud would be one of their lasting memories of autumn in France.(10)

The supply situation did not improve much either, despite the creative use of truck companies and air transport. A critical problem was that Germans still held the Schelde estuary from Antwerp to the North Sea, preventing the Allies from using that major port. Until the end of Operation "Market Garden" the problem was largely ignored, but on October 1 the Canadians, supported by the British Second Tactical Air Force and the IX

Bomber Command, began a campaign to clear the estuary. Although the German forces were relatively small in number they were determined, and they still had not been vanquished by the end of the month.

The quietest sector of the ETO was in Lorraine and Alsace. Both the Third Army and XIX TAC had lost men and material transferred to other commands, so launching a major offensive there was out of the question. Limited air and ground attacks in the Metz area did not conquer much new ground, but at least prevented the Germans from counterattacking. The XIX TAC had two other notable successes during October. One was the breaching of the Etang de Lindre dam, depriving the Germans of using the water behind it to flood Allied troops. The other was attacks on airfields in Germany which destroyed a number of fighters and helped deter offensive action by the Luftwaffe.

The highest priority for supplies was given to the First Army for its continuing assault on the Siegfried Line. Once again, support by the IX TAC and IX Bomber Command was most effective in stopping counterattacks and interdicting supply lines. After intensive bombardment by air and artillery and countless infantry and armored assaults, Aachen was surrounded on October 16 and surrendered five days later. Despite a high casualty rate there, and where the Siegfried Line was attacked further to the south, by the end of the month the First Army had only gone twelve miles into Germany.

The Ninth Air Force used this period of relatively static fighting to move thirteen combat groups closer to the front. At the end of the month only one of its eleven bomber groups was still stationed west of the Seine, and that group was just outside Paris. Five bomber groups had moved onto airfields which had been abandoned by fighter groups moving into Belgium. By the end of October there were eight fighter groups, two reconnaissance groups, and one night fighter squadron spread among six airfields in Belgium. The IX TAC and the XXIX TAC each had three of the airfields.

Ten Ninth Air Force bomb disposal squads moved at least once during the month, including the 87th, which arrived in France on October 10. While that country still hosted the majority of Ninth Air Force bomb disposal squads, at the end of October Belgium was home to ten squads, plus Sector III Officer Reece, who had arrived in Liege on October 4. The airfield did not have any combat aircraft stationed there, but by October 30 it housed the 862nd EAB, the 2nd Air Depot Group, and the headquarters of the 70th Fighter Wing. (The wing was the echelon between the air combat group and the TAC for fighters or the 9th Bomber Division for bombers.) Also stationed at Liege were the 68th and 77th Bomb Disposal Squads. On the day Captain Reece arrived, he and Lieutenant Collins and their drivers went by jeep to the border outside Aachen. They had their pictures taken next to a roadside sign reading "ENTERING GERMANY" to document their accomplishment at reaching the enemy's home turf.(11)

Even for the bomb disposal squads stationed far from the front lines the work could be demanding, both physically and mentally. The 10th BDS "proper," back in Chantilly, cleared a mined area after a French child playing in a nearby country lane was killed by an "S" mine. The squad also disarmed several British UXBs.(12) At Peronne the main job of the 46th BDS was to service the 397th Bomber Group. Using POW labor, the squad finished removing all the scattered bombs in the area. They also had to organize the German ammunition dump at the air base, where they found many items out of place. Like other bomb squads stationed at airfields, they were always on call to remove explosive ordnance from planes that crashed in the general area. They removed three bombs from an A-20 light bomber that crashed nearby, and excavated a fourth bomb that had been dropped from the air. Besides being dangerous, the site of an airplane crash could be gruesome. Captain Reece remembered after the war how he and his driver once found in a bomber a crew member's pair of fur-lined boots lying on the floor, with the feet still in them.

While it is not possible to measure the emotional cost of such work, some of the accomplishments of the bomb disposal squads can be quantified, as seen in Table 1.

Table 1

Disposal of Explosive Ordnance by Ninth Air Force Bomb Disposal Squads
June 1944 Through October 1944(13)

	German	American	British	French
Bombs (number)	206,433	3,371	483	2,209
Other items (tons)	533.86	50.60	39.54	19.25

Artillery shells and mines are the most prominent items by weight under the category "Other items," which also includes devices like grenades, small-caliber ammunition, and pyrotechnics. Given the limited number of attacks by the Luftwaffe, most of the German bombs handled were not dropped from the air, but encountered as demolition charges or at ammunition dumps. Runway duty could be time consuming, but resulted in fewer bombs to handle than ones left behind by the enemy.

Because of the inability of the Allies to conquer much new territory it was unlikely that they would capture additional German airfields in November. That month was memorable for Ninth Air Force bomb disposal squads, however, because they began to handle the German V-1 "buzz bomb." It was a weapon which would fall particularly in the northeast area of Ninth Air Force installations, in Bomb Disposal Sector III.

Chapter 6

Winter

Germany first launched V-1s, the world's first cruise missile, on the night of June 13-14, 1944 against London. It carried 1,870 pounds of explosive, almost twice the payload of today's Tomahawk missile, but it was much less accurate. At a predetermined time the engine would cut off, and the "pilotless aircraft" would fall to earth. With three sensitive impact fuzes, two in pockets on the side, and one deep inside connected to the nose, the missile was designed to explode immediately upon impact, causing damage by widespread blast effect rather than by penetration. Some of the fuzes were electric, powered by a 30-volt battery, and some of the fuzes were mechanical, designed to operate if the electrical fuzes failed. Traveling in level flight at 350 miles per hour, with an approach altitude of about 2,000 feet, the V-1 could be shot down by fire from antiaircraft units or fighter planes.(1)

Of the V-1s that impacted in June and July 1944 only four failed to explode, and in two of the latter cases the warhead was seriously damaged. American bomb disposal personnel were requested in mid-July to report "speedily" any information they uncovered on the fuzes and warheads of the V-1s. In November the 74th BDS, stationed in Juvencourt, France (A-68), disarmed an intact V-1, which was then disassembled and shipped by air to England for RAF bomb disposal personnel to study.(2)

The threat of the V-1 prompted a shift in some units of the IX Air Defense Command. From September 24, 1944 to November 3, 1944 the 50th Antiaircraft Artillery (AAA) Brigade had defended airfields between Le Mans and Reims, France. On November 10 it

arrived in Keerbergen, Belgium, about fifteen miles northeast of Brussels, as part of "Antwerp X," the high-priority operation to defend Antwerp, Liege, and Brussels from V-1s. A second American brigade and one British brigade completed the AAA force.(3)

Other Ninth Air Force units moving to Belgium in November included the 41st BDS, which joined the 45th BDS in Chievres (A-84), and the 83rd BDS and 366th FG, which moved from Laon/Couvron, France (A-70) to Asch (Y-29), near Genk.(4) Like Keerbergen, Asch was so far to the north that it was inside the British zone of ground operations. Transferring within Belgium were the 77th BDS and Captain Reece; both moved in mid-month to St. Trond (A-92). With two concrete runways, St. Trond was home to the 48th and 404th Fighter Groups and the 924th Engineering Aviation Regiment. Previously Reece had been mainly at airfields under the IX TAC, but St. Trond was assigned to the XXIX TAC. Reece did not mind leaving the area of IX TAC operations because he found Quesada's personality to be frequently difficult, an opinion shared by some others in the Ninth Air Force and by the general's biographer.(5)

Still stationed in Liege was the 68th BDS. An important industrial city and major supply center for the U.S. Army and Air Force, Liege had been a target for German air attacks since mid-September. For a week beginning on November 21 the Germans launched hundreds of V-1s at the city. The blasts of exploding V-1s shattered many windows, which according to Captain Gordon drove up the cost of glass to three hundred francs a square meter. As a precaution, 68th BDS personnel, quartered on the fourth floor of a six-story apartment building, moved from their beds to the hallway. In a "flak alley" northwest of the city Captain Reece watched a British 90-mm. AAA battery shoot down four out of four V-1s one evening. In a policy designed to lessen casualties, V-1s were not fired on over Liege. Those that landed caused the sky to glow, Captain Gordon wrote, "with a bright orange color" from their explosions. His unit suffered no casualties, but he learned that at least twelve were killed when a hospital compound was hit. In addition, the IX Engineering Command reported that six officers

and sixty-six enlisted men of the 862nd EAB were injured when a V-1 hit their encampment on November 27.(6)

The Germans were not the only ones to put on aerial fireworks in November. To try to facilitate a sustained breakthrough through the Siegfried Line by the Ninth and First Armies, Operation "Queen" on November 16 featured the biggest Allied bombardment to date in northwest Europe to support ground troops.(7) British and American heavy bombers as well as Ninth Air Force medium bombers hit various villages and other targets behind the front lines, while Ninth Air Force fighter-bombers were used to hit both predetermined targets and targets of opportunity. The results mirrored the experience of the previous autumn as fortified targets were not damaged enough to make an immediate difference. More effective were limited tactical strikes in support of ground troops as they advanced after the heavy bombardment and then fought off counterattacks.

The Ninth Army, which in late October had been shifted to the north of the First Army, conducted a joint operation with British forces north of Aachen, which captured Geilenkirchen on November 19. Muddy terrain, extensive minefields, and limited air support by the XXIX TAC because of inclement weather slowed down further advances. By the end of the month the Ninth Army had moved the front only from six to twelve miles. Progress was also slow to the south for the First Army, which had been fighting in the treacherous Huertgen Forest since September. Only in early December, after horrendous casualties, did General Hodges' forces make it to the other side. Bad weather and enemy fortifications limited the contributions of the IX TAC to this effort, despite brainstorming by air and ground officials to try to find new, more effective tactics.

Preceding Operation "Queen" was a smaller version, Operation "Madison," designed to help the Third Army in Lorraine. Bad weather forced cancellation by bombers, but nonetheless the ground assault began on November 8. The weather cleared enough in the morning for the XIX TAC to hit a number of command

posts, thereby disrupting German operations for several weeks. Deciding to bypass the most heavily fortified areas, the Third Army moved two to four miles on the first day. They continued to make good progress for the rest of the month, even though bad weather grounded the XIX TAC for several days.

Since October inclement weather had slowed the Ninth Air Force engineers in winterizing and maintaining airfields.(8) Two new airfields were prepared for the XIX TAC in November so that its units could escape flooding and be closer to the front. As result, the 362nd FG, with the 71st BDS, moved from Prosnes (A-79) to Verdun Etain (A-82), and the 354th FG, with the 44th BDS, went from Orconte (A-66) to Rosieres-en-Haye (A-98), near Nancy. On November 29 the 10th Photo Reconnaissance Group also moved, from St. Dizier (A-64) to Conflans (A-94), southeast of Etain.

In mid-November the French First Air Force and the XII TAC formed the First Tactical Air Force (TAF), which took over administrative and operational control of its subordinate commands. But the Ninth Air Force continued to provide substantial engineering and ordnance assistance because of shortages of personnel and supplies in the new command. On November 22 the 6th Army Group, supported by the First TAF, took Mulhouse and several days later captured Strasbourg. At the end of the month except for the area around Colmar the Allies had conquered most of the Alsace region. The Ninth Air Force's 926th Engineering Aviation Regiment, stationed in St. Nicolas-de-Port, outside Nancy, prepared airfields in the newly liberated territory. While the 6th and 8th Bomb Disposal Squads continued to work at XII TAC airfields, the 43rd and 82nd squads helped the engineers. The 43rd BDS was particularly active between mid-November and mid-December, clearing explosive ordnance from two potential airfields near Strasbourg, plus the airfield at Hagenau (Y-39), a railroad bridge, and some farm land.(9)

Good news in November also came from the northern end of the theater. Combat engineers had been clearing mines from the

Schelde estuary after it was freed of Germans on November 8. As a result, the port of Antwerp, which had suffered little damage from V-1s, was finally opened for shipping on November 28.

Increased AAA activity during the last quarter of the year meant there were more unexploded artillery shells for bomb disposal squads to handle, but attention had to be paid to other ordnance as well. Lt. Keith D. Rising of the 70th BDS, stationed in Chantilly to work on special projects, developed a method to handle the anti-withdrawal mechanism of a British bomb. And Captain Lerner reported new information from the captured notebook of a German noncommissioned officer about fuzes, incendiary bombs, and a 500-kilogram bomb designed to pierce up to 6.3 inches of armor.(10)

At that time Colonel Kane's successor as commander of the APG Bomb Disposal School, Lt. Col. Martin L. Ehrmann, visited the ETO. The most compelling reason for his trip was to locate for the ballistics section at APG new sources of tourmaline crystals, which were used in measuring explosive blasts and had become rare because of wartime disruptions of normal supply channels. He was also interested in seeing bomb disposal conditions in the field. In November he visited the Third Army area, where he concluded that bomb disposal operations were going well. He probably also visited Colonel Kane's Research and Development Section which, like its counterpart at APG, worked with British help on developing new bomb disposal equipment and techniques. Ehrmann approved a plan to send bomb disposal officers to the United States for refresher courses. Faced with the perennial shortage of bomb disposal personnel, however, the Ninth Air Force could not take advantage of the proposal.(11)

There were not enough bomb disposal squads to permit assigning one to every airfield where an air combat group was stationed. That was especially true for airfields farthest from the front lines, which usually hosted bomber groups, each composed of several bomber squadrons. Sometimes a bomb disposal squad would try to cover two airfields, working out of one, and going on emergency calls to the other. In at least one case an ordnance officer

assigned to a bomber squadron did bomb disposal work in addition to his normal duties, based on bomb reconnaissance and limited bomb disposal training in England. For James S. Abbott, III, at Melun, France (A-55), where the 416th Bomber Group was stationed, this meant defuzing abandoned German bombs and supervising their safe removal from operational areas.(12)

As December began the Allies little suspected that the Germans were planning a major counteroffensive. Reconnaissance flights showed increased enemy activity east of the Ardennes, but the Allies concluded that the Germans were bringing up reinforcements to strengthen the Siegfried Line. Given the lack of progress on the ground, the Ninth Air Force planned only to open two new airfields and transfer two air combat groups during the month.(13) One of the airfields was Metz (Y-34), scheduled to be the XIX TAC's airfield closest to enemy lines. It had been heavily damaged in attacks by both artillery and air units. The 830th EAB worked there from December 5 to December 25 to construct a pierced-steel plank runway. From December 19 to December 28 the 9th BDS was temporarily relieved from its assignment at St. Dizier (A-64) in order to help clean up the Metz airfield of explosive ordnance.

The only major American offensive launched during December was in the Third Army sector. The Ninth Air Force gave the usual support, interdicting supply lines and providing close ground support when weather permitted. On December 2 Third Army forces crossed the Saar River, but were stopped from going much farther by stiff German resistance. To the north, after an exhausting campaign which began in November, the First Army reached the Roer River. On December 15 the 6th Army Group crossed the German border on a fairly wide front. But by the next day the farthest Allied advance into Germany was still only twenty-two miles.

On December 16 Germany launched its massive Ardennes counteroffensive, known as the Battle of the Bulge. German goals were first to seize bridgeheads on the Muese River, and then to move on to capture Antwerp, destroying Allied forces along the way. Timed to occur during foul weather in order to neutralize

Allied air dominance, and directed where American forces were spread the thinnest, the attacks at first make good progress. In the vanguard Lt. Col. Joachim Peiper led an armored column of the SS, the elite Nazi military force, which threatened to capture Stavelot. But American forces in the town and at the northern and southern borders of the German incursion held on. When the weather cleared slightly on December 18, squads from the 365th, 366th, and 404th Fighter Groups helped ground forces stop Peiper's column at several crossroads. While he wasted precious time looking for other routes to the Meuse, American forces reorganized. Cut off from solid contacts with his flanks, and low on fuel, Peiper's force eventually was annihilated.(14)

The Germans had advanced in a gap between IX TAC and XXIX TAC airfields, so none had to be blown up. But several supply depots had to be destroyed or evacuated to avoid capture. St. Trond gained additional tenants as elements of the 1st Engineer Aviation Brigade and XXIX TAC Headquarters left the Liege-Maastricht-Spa triangle east of the Meuse, which was in danger of being overrun. Captain Reece prepared the dump holding German ammunition at St. Trond for demolition in the event enemy forces came too close. But the Germans were stopped far enough away that he did not have to set off the explosives.(15)

Meanwhile, other German forces reached as far west as Celles, three air miles from the Meuse. Squads from three fighter groups struck ground targets, helping the First Army to stop that incursion. During the entire counteroffensive no German units got farther west. Equally important was the fact that the shoulders of the bulge continued to hold. The First and Ninth Armies, holding the northern shoulder, were supported by the IX and XXIX TACs and the RAF's Second TAF. The southern shoulder was held by the Third Army, supported by the XIX TAC. The Eighth and Ninth Air Forces bombed interdiction targets to the east, greatly restricting the flow of German supplies and reinforcements.

German progress was also slowed by the gallant American forces holding the vital crossroads at Bastogne who refused to surrender, even when surrounded and facing far superior forces. Escorted by

Ninth Air Force fighters, beginning on December 23 the IX TCC dropped supplies to the cut-off Americans. The day after Christmas 289 transport planes participated in the airlift, and late in the afternoon the Third Army broke through German lines on the southern shoulder to reach the town.

Because the Third Army was given the task of relieving the siege, the XIX TAC grew to eight fighter groups, including three which had been transferred from the IX TAC. Of the eight groups three were used for close air support, three for interdiction, and two for escort and other duties. Flying time to targets was reduced for the 365th and 368th Fighter Groups when they were to transferred to Metz (Y-34) on December 27 and January 5, respectively. Moving with them were the 41st and 45th Bomb Disposal Squads.

To support the German counteroffensive the Luftwaffe increased its bombing and strafing, especially during the day. Enemy fire was not the only danger during these attacks. Two members of the 68th BDS narrowly escaped injury from burning debris when a German FW-190 fighter crashed forty feet from them. After the air attacks Ninth Air Force bomb disposal squads had many UXBs to handle. Previously the Germans had sometimes used as demolition charges American dud bombs dropped on their air bases by replacing the fuzes with igniters. Now the Luftwaffe employed that technique in reverse by converting French 90-mm. and 105-mm. artillery shells into bombs. The German air force also used another French weapon which did not have to be modified, the 10-kilogram fragmentation bomb.(16)

Undoubtedly the biggest Luftwaffe operation occurred on the morning of January 1, 1945, when about twenty Allied airfields were targeted, mainly in the Netherlands and Belgium. Three American airfields were attacked, including St. Trond. Its 150 American planes were a tempting target, and the Germans destroyed about a dozen of the parked aircraft. Over one hundred Allied planes were destroyed on January 1, but German losses in planes and pilots were much higher. The Luftwaffe's inability to replace the many experienced pilots killed or captured that day drastically reduced its effectiveness for the rest of the war.(17)

On January 1 the Germans launched also a new ground counteroffensive, this one aimed at the region of Alsace. The 82nd and 43rd Bomb Disposal Squads had been preparing the airfield at Hagenau for demolition since December 28 by placing bombs at crucial points around the facility. Although the German forces employed were fewer than those involved in the Ardennes campaign, they approached close enough to the airfield that the explosives were set off on January 5. It was the only American airfield in the European theater ever blown up because of an enemy threat. The Germans eventually overran the facility, but they never put it back into operation before it was recaptured in early March.(18)

As Table 2 shows, the enemy counteroffensives in the Ardennes and Alsace caused a sharp fluctuation in the quantity of German explosive ordnance handled by bomb disposal squads.

Table 2

German Explosive Ordnance Disposed of by Ninth Air Force Bomb Disposal Squads by Month, November 1944-January 1945(19)

	Bombs (number)	Other Items (tons)
November 1944	91,498	42.9
December 1944	78,345	36.1
January 1945	118,778	72.35

The Germans continued to launch V weapons, especially during the Ardennes campaign. On December 17 a V-1 destroyed a gasoline dump at Liege. The previous day a V-2 struck a movie theater in Antwerp, killing 296 soldiers. Because the V-2 traveled at supersonic speeds, up to three thousand miles an hour, unlike the V-1 it could not be shot down and gave no audible warning of its approach. Some V-2s, however, broke apart in the air before exploding. Bomb disposal officers were warned to handle the rockets with rubber gloves if they saw liquid in them, because the hydrogen peroxide used in the missiles could blister the skin.(20)

Not surprisingly, bomb disposal squads in Belgium were frequently called upon to disarm unexploded V-1s. The 81st BDS, under Gordon A. Ruesink, by then a captain, gained notice at Ninth Air Force Headquarters for the number of V-1s and V-2s it disposed of while stationed successively at Asch, Keerbergen, and Brasschaat from February through March 1945. While stationed in Keerbergen before the 81st BDS arrived, Wally Collins, also by then a captain, examined a new type of V-1, shot down by the 787th Automatic Weapons Battalion on January 31. The V-1 looked normal except for a cardboard tube extending eighteen inches outside the body. Inside the tube were rolls of propaganda pamphlets. A fuze ignited during launch of the missile set off a black powder charge about nineteen minutes later, forcing the pamphlets out of the tube. The concept was so intriguing that the Psychological Warfare Division of Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) recommended that the War Department consider adopting it.(21)

Even the conventional V-1 was a radical departure from other contemporary weaponry, both visually and mechanically, and it intrigued Captain Reece. He frequently visited bomb disposal squads in his sector while they were inspecting unexploded missiles that had landed. He put more photographs in his World War II scrapbook on V-1s than on any other subject. Most are of V-1s which had landed smoothly on fields and were intact, but one shows a V-1 which had crashed and was sticking straight up, its nose buried in the earth. Some photographs were taken after the bomb disposal squads had disarmed and partly disassembled the V-1s, revealing parts like the two compressed air tanks, battery, and picric acid pellets. One photograph documents a breach of standard procedure as a technical sergeant, bent over the war head of a V-1, gleefully extracts the fuzes and igniting charges from the two side fuze pockets.

By the end of January 1945 the Allies had eliminated the bulge in its lines and prepared to resume the offensive. During February the Ninth Air Force did not open any new airfields for combat operations, but it did move several combat groups and

bomb disposal squads to better support ground troops. Included in the transfers were the last two fighter groups still stationed in the area of Reims: the 367th FG moved southeast to St. Dizier (A-64), and the 406th FG, along with the 81st BDS, moved to Asch (Y-29). Those moves allowed the three groups of the 97th Bomber Wing to move from the Paris area northeast to near Reims. The 405th FG also moved, going from St. Dizier to Ophoven (Zwartburg), Belgium (Y-32). Ophoven was the second airfield which the Ninth Air Force had planned to open in December 1944. Because of disruptions caused by the Germans' Ardennes counteroffensive, however, no American air combat unit moved to the airfield until late January, when the 370th FG, accompanied by the 9th BDS, did so.

The fighter groups at Asch and Ophoven were assigned to the XXIX TAC, which helped in the air effort, led by the British, to support Canadian ground forces attacking along the Rhine from the Netherlands. Later in the month the XXIX TAC, as weather permitted, supported the Ninth Army's drive northeast toward Canadian forces. The IX TAC continued supporting the First Army, which captured the important Roer River dams by February 9.(22) Although the XIX TAC had lost fighter groups for the higher priority offensives to the north, it continued to help the Third Army. Avoiding hardened targets like concrete pillboxes, the planes concentrated on softer targets, breaking up enemy troop concentrations and preventing counterattacks.

Throughout February bombers of the Ninth and Eighth Air Forces continued attacking transportation routes and other targets behind the front lines. Disruptions from those bombings, plus losses from the Ardennes campaign, lessened the Germans' ability to resist the renewed Allied offensives. By the end of February the Ninth Army was only seven miles from the Rhine, the Third Army was threatening Trier, Germany, and the 6th Army Group had eliminated German forces stubbornly holding out in the Colmar pocket.

To provide better escort coverage for its heavy bombers the Eighth Air Force left on the Continent the 352nd and 361st Fighter

Groups, which it had earlier loaned the Ninth Air Force to help repel Germany's Ardennes counteroffensive. Originally stationed at other airfields on the Continent beginning on December 23, as of February 1 they were both at Chievres (A-84), where they were serviced by Lt. James J. Jacques' 83rd BDS. To the east, the 72nd BDS, under Capt. Shirl L. Terry, became the first Ninth Air Force bomb disposal unit permanently stationed in Germany when it moved to Aachen (Y-46) on February 15. With the Allied armies now largely east of both the artificial obstacles of the West Wall and the natural features which had impeded their progress since the previous autumn, it seemed that another breakout, this time into the heart of Germany, was imminent.

Such an advance would mean that the aviation engineers would be called upon again to prepare quickly dozens of airfields, as they did after the breakout from Normandy. To assist them six bomb disposal squads were assigned to the IX Engineer Command: the 8th, 43rd, 68th, 76th, 82nd, and 86th.(23) The other Ninth Air Force bomb disposal squads would move into Germany when needed to support fighter groups, bomber groups, or Ninth Air Force Headquarters.

One bomb disposal officer, Captain Collins, would not be transferred to Germany. Captain Reece received reports from the 50th AAA Brigade of mines near antiaircraft emplacements in southwest Holland, at Steenbergen, and ordered the 77th BDS to investigate. Collins and three other squad members arrived at the scene on February 16.

Among the mines was the German Riegel 43. Although not as widely used as the circular Teller mine, it too was an anti-tank device. Made of sheet metal in a rectangle roughly 32 inches long, 4 inches wide and 3.5 inches high, the Riegel mine 43 held 8.8 pounds of TNT. While Collins was trying to disarm one it exploded, killing him and slightly injuring T/5s Bruce H. Rudolph and William W. Vier.(24)

As in the two previous cases of Ninth Air Force bomb disposal personnel killed in the line of duty, we will never know exactly what happened. What is certain is that the Reigel mine 43 could

easily be booby trapped so the TNT would detonate if the cover was lifted or even if the mine was slightly moved in any way. Ninth Air Force bomb disposal personnel had been warned of the danger in the summer of 1944, and advised to blow up the mine in place if they had any doubt about its condition. Perhaps Captain Collins tried to disarm the mine and it was booby trapped, or he tried to blow it up in place and accidentally set off the main charge prematurely.

Captain Reece went to the site to recover the remains of his comrade and friend, a task which would not have been easy even in the best of circumstances. It was especially difficult because the terrible effects of the blast, among other things, had blown off the deceased's face. The remains were placed in the temporary cemetery in Neuville-en-Condroz, Belgium, and after the war transferred to the permanent Ardennes Cemetery nearby. Ironically, the March 15 issue of the TIB carried Captain Collins' report on the propaganda V-1.

Chapter 7

East of the Rhine to V-E Day

The momentum of Allied successes in February was maintained and increased in March. Venlo, in the Netherlands next to the German border, was captured by the Ninth Army on March 1. On March 9 the First Canadian Army linked up with the American Ninth Army, thereby clearing the west bank of the Rhine River from Dusseldorf to Nijmegen.(1) Within several weeks one fighter group, one reconnaissance group, and the 84th BDS had transferred from Le Culot (A-89) to Venlo (Y-55), the only brick-surfaced airfield the Ninth Air Force would use in Europe.(2) On March 3 Trier fell to the Third Army, and before the end of the month the airfield, Y-57, hosted a photo reconnaissance group. Four other airfields in Germany had American air combat groups by month's end: Aachen (Y-46), with two fighter groups and two bomb disposal squads; Vogelsang (Y-51), with a tactical reconnaissance group; Keltz (Y-54), with the 48th FG, part of the 404th FG and the 3rd BDS; and Strassfeld (Y-59), with the 474th FG and 73rd BDS.

Except in Trier the new American airfields in Germany were occupied by the IX TAC. Their colleagues in the First Army had been the first field army into Germany and followed up by making the most spectacular crossing of the Rhine when the Remagen bridge was captured on March 7. When weather was poor and visibility was low, medium bombers from the Ninth Air Force used blind bombing to attack airports and other targets to disrupt German preparations for counterattacking the bridgehead. When

the weather was better IX TAC fighter groups helped fend off German aerial and ground attacks.

With Allied ground forces pushing east, the tactical air commands destroyed large numbers of vehicles and other supplies as Germans tried to retreat on a transportation network that had been pulverized for months by strategic bombers. On the ground, the Third and Seventh Armies linked up in mid-March to destroy a German army group in the Saar-Palatinate. Then Patton's forces streaked north, completing with the Ninth and First Armies on April 1 the encirclement of hundreds of thousands of German troops in the Ruhr. By then the Rhine had been crossed at both ends of the Allied front, by Canadian and British forces in the north, and by French forces in the south.

On March 26 the Third Army captured one of the largest airfields in Germany, Frankfurt Rhine-Main (Y-73). General Weyland, anxious to move the XIX TAC further east, inspected the facility the next day. Unfortunately, Allied bombing and German demolition efforts had rendered it useless. On March 31 the 8th BDS, headed by Capt. Leadley H. Ogden, arrived to help the 840th EAB repair the airfield. The squad removed sixty German 70-kilogram bombs placed next to the runways as demolition charges. They also excavated fifty-two American 100- or 150-pound bombs buried from three to five feet deep, and disposed of five American phosphorous bombs. By the time they finished, on April 16, the squad had removed over ninety-eight additional tons of German bombs.

Meanwhile, the XIX TAC had begun combat operations from two other airfields in the area, Ober Olm (Y-64), and Frankfurt/Eschborn (Y-74). By mid-April Frankfurt Rhine-Main (Y-73) was fully operational, and the XIX TAC had transferred all of its combat groups from France to Germany. Three bomb disposal squads transferred with the groups they had been servicing.

At this time Ninth Air Force Advance Headquarters also moved to Germany, to Wiesbaden. Part of the 8th BDS began working at the airfield there (Y-80) on April 12, while for four days the other part of the squad continued working at Rhine-Main. Only ten

American UXBs, four of them not buried, were found at Wiesbaden. All of the buried bombs, however, weighed either 500 or 1,000 pounds, and the squad had to dig from seven to twelve feet deep to uncover them. In compensation, "only" six tons of German bombs had to be removed.

By April 15 the Ninth Air Force was conducting combat operations from three airfields east of the Rhine in addition to those in the Frankfurt area. The XXIX TAC had opened Handorf (Y-94), which hosted the 366th FG and the 77th BDS, both transferred from Asch. The IX TAC had the 67th Reconnaissance Group at Eschwege (R-11), and the 365th FG and 404th FG at Fritzlar (Y-86), southwest of Kassel. The latter group arrived after staying only two weeks at Kelz (Y-54). Accompanying the group on both transfers were Captain Reece, and the 75th BDS, under Lt. James Patchell. Stationed at St. Trond the previous winter, the 75th squad had been working close to Reece for some time. In February the squad acquired a pair of geese, appropriately named "Nip" and "Tuck."(3) Unlike their owners the pair became casualties of war, ending up as the main course one night at the squad's dinner.

Once again the transfer of fighter groups allowed bomber groups to move closer to the front. Three of the four bomber groups of the 99th Bomber Wing, as well as three bomb disposal squads, moved to Belgium from France by April 15. Interestingly, despite all of the transfers that had been made since the previous autumn, two bomb disposal squads were still at the same airfields in France where they had been assigned in early September 1944. One of those bomb disposal squads, the 78th, had arrived in England on the same convoy with Reece. Its commanding officer, Willis Vaughn, since promoted to captain, was now at one of the westernmost airfields of the Ninth Air Force, Cambrai Niergnies (A-74), while Reece was at one of the easternmost airfields.

As German forces, including the Luftwaffe, rapidly lost their effectiveness, the number of targets available for Allied bombers dwindled. Medium bombers made their last attack on oil facilities on April 9. On April 10 Ninth Air Force bombers hit Schweinfurt,

a target long familiar to the Allies. The next day it was captured by the Seventh Army.

As the Third Army surged forward, demanding the surrender of German towns, fighter-bombers played a new role. If a town refused to capitulate the XIX TAC bombed the area. With its planes flying overhead, Weyland's force intimidated numerous cities, including Weimar, to surrender without first offering any resistance. In a more traditional role, on April 7 planes from the IX and XXIX TACs attacked German forces in the shrinking Ruhr pocket. On the same day the 362nd FG helped stop a German counterattack at Mulhausen against the Third Army. Similarly, the XII TAC, still assisted by several bomb disposal squads and other Ninth Air Force units, supported the 6th Army Group as it liberated territory in Baden-Wurttemberg.

Between April 5 and April 13 the American First, Third, and Ninth Armies moved 150 miles into central Germany. The drive went so far so quickly that at the end of it the ground forces were practically beyond the range of tactical air support. On April 12 and 13 the Ninth Army crossed the Elbe River at several points in the region of Magdeburg. When German forces counterattacked on April 13, the XXIX TAC could not help. The next day planes from both the XXIX and IX TAC reached the area only by using auxiliary fuel tanks.

One of the airfields used by the XXIX TAC was at Asch (Y-29), where the P-47 Thunderbolts of the 366th FG would be stationed until mid-April, and where the 80th BDS had been assigned since December 26, 1944. There the dangers of servicing air combat units were made clear on April 9, 1945. Less maneuverable than the P-51 Mustang, which excelled at air-to-air combat and escort duties, the sturdier Thunderbolt excelled at air-to-ground attack. The plane that landed at 6:05 P.M. that day was appropriately armed for its role with four rockets and six clusters each of six fragmentation bombs. Following the jolt of the landing, one of the bomb clusters on the left wing fell off and exploded. That set the plane on fire, knocked off and scattered the remaining fragmentation bombs, and dislodged the four rockets. Then three

more fragmentation bombs exploded, and one of the rocket motors caught fire, driving the missile into the pierced-steel plank runway. As gasoline from an exploded fuel tank burned on some of the bombs, more explosions seemed inevitable. Nevertheless, at this point Sgt. Russell F. McCarthy and Technician Fifth Grade Smith of the 80th BDS reached the plane. With complete disregard for their lives they extinguished the fire on the burning bombs and removed from the scene all of the remaining twenty-seven bombs and three rockets. Immediately after they reached safety the auxiliary gasoline tank exploded. Aviation engineers had to cut into the runway later to remove the fourth rocket, which thankfully had not exploded.

It was one of the ironies of regulations that military personnel could be awarded a Purple Heart for casualties suffered as the result of enemy action if they were wounded or killed by explosive ordnance, no matter how far away the nearest enemy combatant was. But regardless of what risks they took they could not be awarded for valor against the enemy unless they were doing their job under hostile fire. The commanding officer of the 366th FG therefore nominated McCarthy and Smith for the Soldier's Medal, the nation's highest military award for bravery not in action against the enemy. He noted that their heroism saved "much vital radio equipment near the scene and possibly the lives of fire fighting personnel." The awards were approved several months later.(4)

In an interesting sidelight, two other enlisted men who had previously been under the immediate command of Captain Reece at APG received the Soldier's Medal. Like the 80th BDS, the 51st BDS arrived in Normandy in August 1944, although it was assigned to Army commands. T/Sgt Clarence C. Coryell and T/5 William H. Hudson received their awards for heroism in May 1945 in Germany, while the 51st BDS was supporting the XVI Corps of the Ninth Army. Unhappily, the squad's commander, Richard P. Lundy, then a captain, lost his left thumb in an explosion while deactivating a German bazooka tube in July 1945.(5)

The 46th BDS suffered a more serious loss on April 19, 1945. While clearing the Kassel/Rothwesten airfield (R-12) of butterfly

bombs, Sgt. Roland H. Engwall was killed and Capt. Zimmerman was injured.(6) Sgt. Engwall had made the long, dangerous journey with the squad from Normandy to Germany. For him and thousands of others the war had not ended soon enough, but at least their sacrifices were bringing victory in Europe into sight.

On April 18 the Ruhr pocket dissolved when 317,000 German soldiers surrendered. With the Soviet Army moving westward, the Ninth Army halted offensive operations when it reached the Elbe River on April 20. The First Army went into a defensive posture five days later when it linked up with the Soviet Army at Torgau. From then on IX and XXIX TAC operations were limited to protecting American airfields, patrolling the front lines, and occasionally escorting medium bombers.

For the Third Army and XIX TAC, on the other hand, there was no respite. Having reached the Mulde River on April 13 the Third Army halted only temporarily, to prepare for a new offensive to the southeast. In the meantime the XIX TAC flew reconnaissance missions a few miles beyond the river to spot possible German reinforcements, and attacked airfields in Germany and Czechoslovakia. When the offensive began on April 19 the XIX TAC resumed one of its traditional roles, providing armored column cover. The 362nd FG protected the XII Corps, and the 367th FG protected the XX Corps. Reminiscent of its part in the Third Army offensive north of the Loire River in France the previous August, the 10th Reconnaissance Group provided flank cover as Patton's XX Corps moved into Czechoslovakia several days later.

In southern Germany airfields were needed for combat operations, but even in other regions of the country aviation engineers and Ninth Air Force bomb disposal squads kept working to construct or repair air bases.(7) In Erfurt, for example, at airfield R-9 the 8th BDS on April 17 destroyed 110,000 blasting caps, 1,000 pounds of picric acid, 20,000 feet of primacord, 200 fuzes, and 50 German 10-kilogram bombs. Since the campaign in Normandy many airfields had been prepared solely for receiving supplies and evacuating the wounded (S&E). In Germany an important new role for these airfields emerged: evacuating former

POWs. Bomb disposal squads were not normally stationed at those airfields after they became operational, but when requested they did help clear them of explosives. After working in central Germany the 8th BDS moved to southwest Bavaria, where at Memmingen (R-67) on April 30 it excavated two 250-pound American bombs buried eight feet deep, and took thirty-five tons of German bombs to an ammunition dump. Over 1,200 ex-POWs were evacuated from that airfield, part of the more than 108,000 ex-POWs who were evacuated by May 9, 1945, from 46 S&E fields east of the Rhine River.

By April 30 all Ninth Air Force fighter groups were stationed east of the Rhine River. In the north the XXIX TAC operated from bases in an arc curving southeast from Munster to Lippstadt and from there northeast to Brunswick. The IX TAC was based at airfields from the Kassel region east to Langensalza (R-2), while the XIX TAC used facilities from the Frankfurt area southeast to the Furth/Nuremberg area. Only three bomber groups and two bomb disposal squads were left in France, as most bomber groups now occupied bases in either Belgium or the Netherlands. On April 17 Captain Reece transferred back to St. Trond, where the 42nd BDS and 386th BG were stationed.

News of Hitler's suicide on April 30, made public the following day, discouraged many Nazis. German forces in the north surrendered on May 3. They had suffered a series of serious reverses since April 16, when the Canadians reached the North Sea. On April 26 the British had taken Bremen. In the following days, under a tacit truce with German forces cut off in the Netherlands, the Allies switched to humanitarian relief operations, dropping supplies to Dutch civilians suffering from food and other shortages.

In the south the fighting continued. In late April the Third Army captured Regensburg as the XIX TAC neutralized a German convoy, which included armor, near Pilsen. On May 2 that army captured Passau, Austria. Five days later, Ninth Air Force bomb disposal operations began in the sixth country on the Continent when the 43rd BDS arrived at Horsching, Austria (R-87). Before moving back to Germany later in the month the squad removed

from that site over 300 bombs, 125 Teller mines, and 21,000 rounds of German ammunition.(8) To the west, moving in tandem with the French First Army, the American Seventh Army captured Munich on April 30. On May 4 they captured Salzburg and Berchtesgaden, and at Vipiteno met American forces moving north from Italy.

Even on V-E Day, May 8, the effective date of German capitulation, there were a few dogfights in the areas of Pilsen and Regensburg. But most Germans were glad to surrender. One pilot of a German biplane circled the town of Pasching, Austria. While working in the bomb dump at Horsching, Lieutenant Juzwiak and T/5 John J. Meloskie of the 43rd BDS saw the plane and drove to the nearby town. They captured the pilot when he landed and took him to the nearest prisoner of war camp. For all enemy combatants in Europe the war was officially over. Like all Allied service personnel in the ETO, bomb disposal personnel of the Ninth Air Force celebrated, even as they pondered the odds of being sent to the Pacific to join in the war against Japan.

Chapter 8

Bombs and Blueberries

In a postwar review of its operations in the ETO the Ninth Air Force concluded with justifiable pride that its bomb disposal activities had ". . . considerable success, accomplishing approximately 85 percent of all bomb disposal on the Continent with approximately 36 percent of the bomb disposal strength. Casualties were relatively low . . . ."(1) The parts of that observation concerning workload and personnel strength need modification. Clearly the Ninth Air Force did not accomplish 85 percent of all bomb disposal if one includes in that term all explosive ordnance. It is difficult to compare quantitatively the accomplishments of bomb disposal units in the Army versus those in the Air Force. Statistics in the official history of American bomb disposal in the ETO do not include work done by Air Force squads between June 1944 and September 1944. Furthermore, the subsequent monthly figures given in that report disagree somewhat with those given in the monthly ordnance reports of the Ninth Air Force, which did almost all U.S. Air Force bomb disposal on the Continent. That said, even according to the figures in the official ETO history, the Ninth Air Force disposed of more than 82 percent of all bombs in the theater. On the other hand, the Ninth Air Force disposed of less than 5 percent of other explosive ordnance, which was handled mainly by Army bomb disposal units.(2)

Table 3 gives the figures compiled by the Ninth Air Force for its bomb disposal squads on the Continent beginning on D-Day. Based on data kept until March 31, 1945, 61 percent of all bombs

were of the high explosive type, weighing on average 231 pounds. The incendiary bombs handled weighed on average 40 pounds.

Table 3

Explosive Ordnance Disposed of by Ninth Air Force Bomb Disposal Squads
June 1944 Through May 1945(3)

	German	American	British	French
Bombs (number)	640,841	7,665	750	2,438
Other items (tons)	1,022.28	108.47	46.34	19.75

If one divides the total number of bombs by the number of days in the year and then by the number of squads, the resulting figure shows that on average each squad disposed of over fifty bombs each and every day, in addition to other munitions handled. At first thought that figure may seem unrealistic, leading one to believe that some erroneous record keeping occurred. If several factors are taken into account, however, the number seems more plausible.

First, as a weapon carried by planes bombs were usually stored at or near airfields. After D-Day the Germans dropped few bombs except for the period shortly before and during their Ardennes counteroffensive. Most German bombs were encountered by Americans at airfields, where Army bomb disposal squads usually did not work. Second, the only Air Force bomb disposal squad on the Continent not assigned to the Ninth Air Force was the 4th BDS, assigned to USSTAF. That squad spent most of its time on special projects and office work, seldom doing bomb disposal work in the field. The Ninth Air Force squads therefore had the greatest opportunity to handle Allied and Axis air force explosive ordnance. Third, many bombs were of the smaller fragmentation varieties, which counted statistically the same by number, although not by weight, as a 4,000-kilogram blockbuster. Fourth, although probably the majority of bombs were disposed of by exploding or

burning, a number of bombs were counted as disposed of once they were disarmed and taken to a dump. The latter procedure was not as time consuming as the former ones, assuming adequate transportation for the bombs was available. Finally, other claims about bomb disposal achievements may also seem unrealistic. The 159th BDS, for example, assigned to V Corps with the First Army, claimed to have destroyed 768.59 tons of enemy ammunition during the first four months of 1945.(4) That is equivalent to well over six tons a day. And ETO officials calculated that overall, bomb disposal personnel "removed on the average of three and a half tons of munitions and unexploded bombs per month per man since D-Day."(5)

As if to compensate for overestimating its bomb disposal accomplishments, the Ninth Air Force overestimated its relative bomb disposal personnel strength. According to ETO statistics there were 972 persons in the Army and Air Force assigned to bomb disposal work in the theater. Because 240 of those were with the Ninth Air Force, they constituted 25, not 36, percent of the total non-naval bomb disposal workforce.

On the subject of casualties, especially fatalities, the Ninth Air Force did fare relatively well. Turning again to official ETO statistics, forty-three bomb disposal personnel were killed and sixty-eight injured in the line of duty, excluding losses during combat.(6) From that perspective, although one life lost is too many, the figure of four men killed in action in Ninth Air Force bomb disposal operations is relatively low because it represents less than ten percent of fatalities theater wide. The figure may reflect the fact that Ninth Air Force bomb disposal personnel disposed of many highly dangerous butterfly bombs, but handled on average less unstable German ammunition than did their Army colleagues. As one Army bomb disposal unit observed, it was actually a relief to go back to disposing of bombs after handling "crusty old ammo."(7)

The Ninth Air Force had more bomb disposal squads assigned to it than any other high command in the ETO (on V-E day the Ninth Army was second highest with eighteen squads, in addition to two bomb disposal platoons), and won high marks for its

administration of them. USSTAF endorsed the Ninth Air Force's system of centralized control of squads by headquarters through sector personnel, and recommended it to the War Department for wider use.(8) And USSTAF's successor organization, United States Air Forces in Europe (USAFE), said in October 1945 that bomb disposal squads should be kept ". . . highly mobile under central control . . . ," implicitly approving the organization and performance of Ninth Air Force bomb disposal.(9) The success of the Ninth Air Force in accomplishing its wartime mission was due to the abilities and dedication of tens of thousands of its officers and men, of whom the bomb disposal squads were numerically a very small part. Perhaps it may be said in that effort the squads played a part disproportionately greater than their numbers as they performed their multiple roles of servicing air combat groups, supporting aviation engineers (sometimes on two airfields simultaneously), and going on house calls to help civilians.

No matter how great a role those squads played during the war, V-E Day did not end the need for their services in Europe. They would no longer have to do runway duty, nor would they have to help clear airfield sites for the aviation engineers. But they would have to help out with all of the explosive ordnance remaining on the Continent. The problem, although most acute in the former belligerent countries, touched even Switzerland. The neutral country had 750,000 rounds of .50-caliber ammunition and 24 bombs from planes that had crashed or made forced landings there during the war.(10)

No one knew exactly how much ordnance there was in northwest Europe, but it may have been as much as two million tons. In July 1946 Col. T.H. Nixon, Chief of Ordnance in Europe, reported that there were about 1.15 million tons of ammunition on V-E Day. Colonel Nixon was apparently referring to American or Allied ammunition only, because he stated that of that amount 675,000 tons were designated "for return to the United States," and that another 156,000 tons had been sent to the Pacific before the Japanese surrendered.(11) Concerning enemy ammunition,

estimates during the war indicated that by November 1, 1944, the Germans had left behind at least 1 million tons of explosives in France alone. Beginning in October 1944 the United States trained several hundred French military personnel in bomb disposal and reconnaissance. Given the size of the task, however, they could not by themselves reduce significantly the quantity of ammunition by V-E Day. From D-Day to the end of the war all non-Navy U.S. bomb disposal personnel in the ETO disposed of less than 32,000 tons of munitions excluding bombs.(12) Furthermore, there were hundreds of thousands of tons of enemy munitions in Germany. The exact figure was unknown. Even by the end of 1945, given the size and number of the ammunition dumps in that country twenty percent had not yet been inventoried by U.S. forces.(13)

Of course, not all of the ordnance to be disposed of was in ammunition dumps, nor was it all of German origin. The 76th BDS on May 15 defuzed and removed a 500-pound American bomb from the third floor of a building used by the 846th EAB in Bremen. Near Frankfurt, the 47th and 80th Bomb Disposal Squads worked together over two days, beginning on June 4, to dispose of a 260-pound American fragmentation bomb buried fourteen feet deep. Following standard procedure, during the work nearby offices were vacant and their windows were open. Nonetheless, had the squads not succeeded some unusual complications could have arisen. The bomb was just twenty feet from the offices of two generals in the occupation government, Lucius D. Clay and Oliver P. Echols.(14)

Those three bomb disposal squads were not the only ones still risking their lives every day. In June 1945 Ninth Air Force squads disposed of 51,588 bombs and 229 tons of other munitions, compared to 25,600 bombs and 262.25 tons of other munitions during the preceding month.(15)

By July 1945 Ninth Air Force facilities were limited in Germany to the U.S. zone of occupation. After the withdrawal of personnel and materiel from numerous installations in the British and Soviet zones, Ninth Air Force combat units and bomb disposal

squads were located mainly in the regions around Munich, Furth, Frankfurt, and Kassel. There were also several installations in France, Luxembourg, and Belgium.

Some bomb disposal squads returned to France to help with the problem of munitions. The 80th BDS, for example, worked at the former German ammunition dump at Roye Amy (A-73) for one week in June, destroying various German and French munitions. The squad then moved to the airfield at Montdidier (Y-29) with the mission of destroying approximately four hundred tons of unserviceable explosive ordnance. By the time it finished on October 9, with the occasional help of the 42nd BDS it had disposed of over 1,800 bombs, 691 flares, and 263 artillery shells. Shortly after beginning demolition work in Montdidier the squad ran into a problem several others would have, that is, finding a place where the explosions would not cause damage to nearby houses or otherwise disturb the civilian population. With the help of French officials they found a suitable, isolated site five miles to the north, between the villages of Davenscourt and Contoire.(16)

After V-E Day Captain Reece also moved between Germany and France. On May 15 he was transferred to Biblis (Y-78), near Mannheim, where the 81st BDS was stationed.(17) For several days he went on temporary duty in connection with personnel service ratings in the areas of Mannheim, Frankfurt, and Stuttgart. He was then with the 87th BDS at Mannheim/Sandhofen (Y-79) for five days. It was not much time, but long enough to see a satirical version of "Carmen" by the Special Services 253rd Infantry. The performance included a twenty-man chorus which also sang the female parts, and an eleven-piece band. He and the 87th BDS were transferred on June 26 to Dole Tavaux (Y-7), France. The move offered a nice change of scenery and chance to relax; he even went to the Swiss border. Hanging over his head, however, were rumors that he and his bomb disposal comrades would be soon ordered to Marseilles for embarkation to the Pacific.

Fortunately, the surrender of Japan in August 1945 obviated the need for the wholesale transfer of personnel from Europe to

the Pacific. On August 13 Reece was transferred back to Germany, this time to the Munich area. There he and the 82nd BDS disposed of some German antiaircraft ammunition and helped repair roads leading to the airport. He saw various German aircraft, including the Me-262 jet, and what he called a "push-pull" plane, which had one propeller on the nose, and another on the tail. Reece also took the opportunity to visit two nearby sites, the Dachau concentration camp and Hitler's mountain retreat in Berchtesgarden.

Since June Reece had been corresponding with the O'Brien Varnish Corporation about the possibility of his release from the military based on employment needs in civilian industry. The company submitted to the War Department the necessary forms. They were approved and on September 27, 1945, orders were issued for his permanent transfer to the United States. He left Germany for the last time in late October by jeep, arriving in Le Havre on October 22 after overnighting in Metz and Montdidier. In Le Havre he roomed with a classmate from Purdue, Capt. James Silvey, until he left on October 27 aboard the Liberty ship "Frances Marion."

Both the ship and return voyage were far different than the trip on the "Dominion Monarch." The "Frances Marion" was much smaller, transporting just 650 officers and men. There was no longer any danger of a U-boat attack, but trouble did come from two other sources. On October 30 a fire broke out among mail sacks in hold number 3. The flames were quickly extinguished, allowing Reece that evening to enjoy the 1944 movie "The Canterville Ghost," starring Charles Laughton and Robert Young. The next day Reece succumbed to the worsening weather and fell sea sick for a week. Finally, on November 8 the sea and Reece's stomach calmed down, and he started eating solid food again.

On November 9 the ship landed in Boston. After overnighting at Camp Miles Standish, Reece left by train for Indianapolis via New York City. On November 13 he finished processing out of the military at Camp Atterbury, in Indiana. Coincidentally, on

that same day the Bomb Disposal Center at Aberdeen Proving Grounds was closed, in the belief that it was not needed in peacetime.(18)

In December 1945 most Ninth Air Force bomb disposal squads were inactivated. Because of the continuing need for bomb disposal work in Europe, USAFE decided to keep in service nine bomb disposal squads from the Ninth Air Force: the 72nd, 73rd, 74th, 75th, 82nd, 83rd, 84th, 85th, and 87th. The Ninth Air Force had been largely dissolved, so the squads came under the authority of the remaining IX Air Force Service Command.(19)

Many of the squads started 1946 severely undermanned due to the general demobilization of veterans. Their slim ranks were partly replenished by a few bomb disposal veterans transferred from inactivated Army and Air Force bomb disposal squads. Some personnel came from other fields. Captain Vaughn, one of the few holdovers from the Ninth Air Force before V-E Day, now commanded the 72nd BDS. When he led a provisional team from mid-April to mid-May 1946 to destroy some sixty-five tons of ammunition in Dijon, France, he had to draw on personnel from seven squads.(20)

Staffing for the IX Air Force Service Command bomb disposal squads dramatically improved in June 1946. The previous month all or most of the enlisted men from seven squads attended the new Army bomb disposal school in Hilpoltstein, southeast of Nuremberg. The school was established in May to train new personnel in the specialty of "demolition technician." The term, which replaced "bomb disposal technician," indicated that handling explosives other than bombs was an important part of the work. The change in terminology coincided with the findings of the General Board, U.S. Forces European Theater, in its review of wartime military operations in the ETO. The Board concluded that bomb disposal personnel had been inadequately trained in handling ammunition. That deficiency combined with the instability of enemy ammunition had caused many "accidents," that is, deaths and injuries.(21) Despite the changed emphasis in

training the work still resulted in casualties, as the second half of 1946 would show.

In June the 72nd BDS was sent to Regensburg, Germany, where Captain Vaughn was made ammunition officer of the 1st Infantry Division. He and Lt. Dewitt E. Tyler of the 83rd BDS developed a plan for disposing of 250,000 tons of surplus ammunition in the area. The two squads, joined by the 74th BDS, began late in the month destroying two hundred tons of explosive powder and munitions weekly. On July 26 Pvt. Jack Austin, a recent graduate of the school at Hilpoltstein and a member of the 72nd BDS, was killed when German ammunition he was unloading from a truck exploded. His nearest comrades were thirty yards away and screened by a concrete wall. No one saw the explosion and, as in similar past incidents, the reason for it was unknown.

Elsewhere in June five bomb disposal squads, including the 73rd, 82nd, and 84th, began destroying one hundred tons of damaged or surplus American and German explosive ordnance at Roth (R-46), south of Nuremberg. The munitions ranged from hand grenades, mortar shells, and 5-inch airplane rockets to 1,000-pound high explosive bombs. Also included were about thirty tons of small arms ammunition which were highly dangerous, having been dumped in the nearby river several months before. Unfortunately, disposing of munitions by dumping them in inland waters was not uncommon. After the war Captain Reece recalled that he had dumped truckloads of munitions "in the Rhine River," and Technician Fifth Grade Pritchard wrote that he had dumped munitions in a lake in Germany.(22) Fortunately, all of the thirty tons or so of ammunition taken out of the river near Roth was disposed of in June without casualties. Also during that month, despite bad weather almost twenty tons of the other explosives were taken to a demolition site northeast of Hilpoltstein and blown up.

In 1946 bomb disposal squads also continued to help civilians with unexploded ordnance on their property. Sometimes, however, the squads could not always please members of the local population.

In July the 73rd BDS was transferred to manage the Army's ammunition depot in Allendorf, southwest of Kassel. It held 6,100 tons of ammunition, most of it foreign, and some 2,150 tons of bulk explosives, including explosive power. During one call away from the dump the squad examined a 500-pound American bomb in Frankenburg. The device was upright and partially submerged in water, making it impossible to dig down and examine the tail fuze. Because it was too risky to move the bomb unless it was lifted straight up, and it was not possible to bring in equipment to do so, it could not be defuzed. The squad offered to blow up the bomb in place, but the local resident refused because it was sitting just eighteen inches from his new house.

Before going to Frankenburg the squad had cleaned up and organized the ammunition depot, after removing explosive power and ammunition found on the ground and covering exposed ordnance. With the help of German laborers the squad during July destroyed over 2,800 tons of ammunition, partly by burning and partly by demolition. Several hundred guns and knives were destroyed using unserviceable thermite grenades.

A new task for several of the squads was preparing ordnance for the sea dumping program. Getting rid of explosives by tossing them in offshore waters was nothing new. For instance, while stationed in Bolleville (A-25), Normandy in August 1944 the 43rd BDS dumped some artillery shells and German bazooka rockets in the sea. And in June 1945 the Army dumped 5,000 tons of bombs in the offshore waters between Le Havre and Arromanches-les-Bains, France.(23) In April 1946 the War Department made ships available for a larger program, and the theater commander ordered all enemy ammunition in the American zone of occupation either dumped at sea or destroyed by the end of the year.(24) Explosives were loaded onto railroad freight cars all over the U.S. zone and sent to the Bremen area, an American enclave in the British zone of occupation. Much of the ammunition was then taken by coastal freighters and dumped in an area of the North Sea designated by the U.S. Navy, while some of it was shipped back for use in the United States. As part of this effort, the three IX AFSC bomb

disposal squads in the Regensburg area and the squad at Allendorf combined to ship out during some weeks in June and July hundreds of tons of explosive ordnance.

The 87th BDS played an instrumental role in the dumping program. Stationed in Brake, between Bremen and Bremerhaven, during the month of June it inspected 11,000 tons of German ammunition which had arrived by railroad. The squad set up a demolition area west of the city for blowing up ordnance which was too hazardous to be taken to sea, such as German 88-mm. shells from an ammunition dump in Feucht, southeast of Nuremberg, which had caught on fire. The Bremen area was not immune from the kind of tragedies which had befallen bomb disposal personnel elsewhere. In October 1946 two men in the 87th BDS were injured and seven men were killed, four of them German POWs, during an explosion in an ammunition dump near Bremerhaven being worked by three bomb disposal squads.

In late June the sea dumping program was scaled back when it was decided to give 250,000 tons of enemy ammunition to the occupation government, which planned to have it disassembled for raw materials to help the German economy. Metals such as steel, copper, and brass were of intrinsic value, and some of the other materials could be used in manufacturing fertilizer, paint, and plastics.(25)

The fact that the occupation government gained legal control of the ammunition did not lessen the duties of bomb disposal squads. Dumps holding munitions had to be properly maintained and guarded, in part from German civilians. Two American officers saw German women opening containers of explosive powder at an unguarded dump near Hagenau in early 1946. And when the 73rd BDS took over the Allendorf facility later in the year it found some thirty-five persons roaming inside the area, picking blueberries.(26)

Some material not suitable for reclamation continued to be processed for dumping, like the 1,400 tons of fuzes the 87th BDS began handling in October 1946. A relatively small quantity of ammunition, less than four thousand tons, was claimed by foreign

governments as having been seized during the war by the Germans. A larger quantity was held in Europe for use by occupation forces. And a still larger quantity, 250,000 tons, was purchased by France from the United States in June 1946.(27) For the rest of the year bomb disposal squads destroyed ammunition which could not be disposed of in any other way.

While the squads carried on in their final months before being inactivated in February 1947, Reece tried to forget his unhappy memories. Upon returning to South Bend he immediately resumed his former job, but the transition to civilian life was not smooth. In reaction to the stress he had been under overseas, for one year he talked excessively, and had nightmares during which he would scream out orders, as his wife vividly remembered for decades afterward. He also paid a brief, very tearful visit to the widow of Captain Collins. Soon, however, life settled down to normal, and he raised two children, retired at age sixty-five, and moved to Florida. He was blessed with excellent health and did not take any medicine until age eighty-nine, when he suffered a stroke which incapacitated him for a year. During the last few months of his life, like many other persons suffering from senile dementia, his recent memories were erased, and his mind returned to the strongest emotional experiences of his earlier years. Reliving for a third time the events of December 7, 1941 and subsequent four years, he reminded us that war has many hidden costs, both physical and mental, some of which are not paid in full until many years later.

PART II

Capt. Stephen M. Richards and Operation "Hidden Documents"

Chapter 9

A Wonderful Shower

On a cold, overcast afternoon in February 1946, U.S. Army First Lt. William J. Owen got out of his command car at the checkpoint on the Czechoslovak border just east of Waidhaus, Germany. He walked over the snow-covered ground and handed the guard some papers and waited. Owen was co-commander of thirteen men on a top-secret intelligence mission traveling in five military vehicles toward Prague. The existence of the mission had been divulged to just a few Americans stationed in Germany, key officials at the American Embassy in Prague, and a handful of officials in the French government. No one in the United States, including personnel at the War and State Departments, knew anything about it.

Almost by definition, no top-secret mission can be called usual. But this one was more unusual than most. Despite the mission's great secrecy, the front bumper of the lead vehicle bore clear markings of Headquarters, U.S. Forces European Theater (USFET). And among the thirteen persons in the convoy was a photographer, a civilian journalist, and, guarded by a French army sergeant, a German prisoner of war (POW).

In the last car sat Capt. Stephen M. Richards, the commander of the 123rd Bomb Disposal Squad (BDS).(1) Born ten years to the day after Thomas R. Reece, Richards was only nineteen years old when Pearl Harbor was attacked. From DeKalb County, Georgia, Richards had been studying at the Georgia Institute of Technology and participating in the Reserve Officers' Training Corps program for three years when he was called to active duty from the enlisted

reserves. After basic training at nearby Ft. McPherson, and some additional training at various places in Georgia, he wound up at Officer Candidate School (OCS) at the Ordnance School at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland.

Attracted by the idea of working more independently than he could in other ordnance specialties, Richards volunteered for bomb disposal training after his graduation from OCS. He completed the seven-week 37th officers' bomb disposal class on July 29, 1944, and was immediately assigned to relieve the commanding officer of the 123rd BDS. Because the squad had already completed its training in the United States, it soon departed for England. The squad was sent from England without further training to the Continent, arriving in Normandy on about September 1. Richards' first assignment in France was in Cherbourg, at the end of the peninsula to the northwest of the Normandy beaches. The city was one of several ports in northwest France which Hitler ordered defended to the last man. The *Fuehrer* wanted to limit the number of supplies and soldiers the Allies could land on the Continent and send into battle to the east, toward Germany. Cherbourg had been heavily damaged in fighting and could not receive ships until the end of August.

After working in the port city, Richards joined the Third Army's rapid drive across northern France to the region of Lorraine. During the Battle of the Bulge the 123rd BDS was part of Patton's spearhead which turned north from Lorraine and raised the German siege of Bastogne. In Belgium the squad's quarters had no heat and no bathing facilities. The men would warm up some water in their helmets, wash their feet every day, and occasionally wash their private parts. After thirty days without bathing, and smelling like it, Richards found out there were some showers in nearby Wiltz, Luxembourg, run by the Quartermaster Corps for infantrymen who had come off the front lines. The squad was not in the infantry, but it went there anyway and its members took the nicest shower of their lives.

Although bomb disposal squads were not supposed to work close to the front lines, even after the breakout from Normandy

they sometimes did so, either by design or accident. Perhaps the most significant case of the former situation happened to the 16th BDS, commanded by Capt. Marshall T. Crow. On the evening of February 9, 1945, the 309th and 311th Regiments of the 78th Infantry Division, attached to the First Army, captured the Schwammenauel Dam, one of several dams on the Roer River. Seizure of the dams was necessary before the Ninth Army, located downstream, could cross the river. To search the dam for explosives a team from the 303rd Engineer Battalion accompanied the 309th Regiment, while the 16th BDS accompanied the 311th Regiment. As a result of fighting against units of the 272nd Volks Grenadier Division, during which the 16th BDS claimed to have killed at least seventeen Germans, Captain Crow was injured and hospitalized for a month before rejoining his squad.(2)

Lieutenant Richards, on the other hand, ended up close to enemy lines by accident. For several weeks after Bastogne was relieved, the fighting increased in intensity as the Allies executed a pincer movement. To try to cut off the retreating Germans near Houffalize, northeast of Bastogne, the Third Army moved up from the south while the First Army and British forces moved down from the north. Upon receiving orders to report to a field artillery battalion, Richards left with his driver and jeep to find it. They passed a farmhouse and went on for about half a mile. They did not see any of the "Dynamite" road signs usually put up in areas controlled by the Third Army. Richards then saw an American soldier dug in at the side of the road and knew they were close to the front. Richards stopped and asked him, "Where's the front line?" The soldier pointed to a copse about 225 yards away and replied, "You see those trees over there? That's the front line." Using some very indecent language, Richards immediately told his driver to turn the jeep around in a hurry.

Control of bomb disposal work in the field armies was much more decentralized than in the Ninth Air Force. The armies assigned bomb disposal squads to ordnance companies for administration, but the squads took their orders from the corps or divisions to which they were attached for operations. As the number of divisions

and corps assigned to the armies varied according to operational considerations, so did the number of bomb disposal squads. On the Continent the Third Army originally had seven bomb disposal squads, but by V-E Day it had eleven, plus one bomb disposal platoon.

Because of the fluid nature of operations and the lack of a strong supporting structure, bomb disposal personnel in the field armies were not always informed of latest technical developments. Richards had a manual of instructions issued at Aberdeen Proving Ground, as well as some British written guidance, but other than that he felt he was on his own. With the Allies maintaining air superiority and the Ninth Air Force handling most enemy air ordnance, he came across few German bombs. His squad handled mostly American and British bombs, as well as artillery shells, mines, and the usual gamut of ordnance fired from infantry and armored weapons. When something new presented itself, he used his ingenuity to figure out a safe way of disposing of it. Sometimes he used captured German dynamite charges to blow up bombs and other ordnance.

After the Germans were pushed back out of Belgium and Luxembourg, the Third Army swept to Kassel, Germany, went eastward toward the Elbe, and then drove south into Bavaria. During the first week of May 1945 parts of the XII Corps, which had been moving parallel to the Danube River, wheeled northeast, liberating parts of western Czechoslovakia. By V-E Day Richards was in Cesky Krumlov, Czechoslovakia, about halfway between Ceske Budejovice and the Czech-Austrian border. Like most Army bomb disposal squads, a major part of the 123rd's duties was disposing of ammunition. Performing that task cost the lives of two members of the 123rd BDS while it was in Czechoslovakia.

Soon the squad went back to Germany, and then was ordered to go to France to prepare for duty in the Pacific. It arrived in Marseilles, but the war with Japan ended before it could disembark. After returning once again to Germany Richards was assigned to an office desk job. Preferring to work outside of an office, through a friend he got a transfer to an ammunition depot in Oberdachstetten, northwest of Ansbach, in Bavaria. Richards found the countryside

picturesque, and he particularly enjoyed visiting Rothenburg, an enchanting, walled town to the west. The area was beautiful, but the work was dangerous. During the war the Oberdachstetten depot had been under the control of the Luftwaffe. There were many 88-mm. antiaircraft artillery shells lying around. Stored separately at the facility were many explosive trains, designed to be placed between the fuzes and main explosive charges before the shells were fired. In addition, there was a large quantity of explosive powder stored there, which just one spark could set off.

Richards thought and thought about how to dispose of the explosive trains. Fortunately, there was a factory in Oberdachstetten which made asphalt tiles. It had a big machine where sand and other ingredients were put in the top and the finished products came out at the bottom. Richards decided to take over the building. The explosive trains were put in the top of the machine and exploded on the way down. Harmless metal pieces would then collect at the bottom. The U.S. Government paid the factory manager for the cost of fuel, the machine kept going, and all of the explosive trains were destroyed without human casualties.

While stationed in Germany, Richards was selected to go back to Czechoslovakia, this time to help seize some documents. The top-secret mission was linked to the fact that the surrender of the German armed forces in Reims, France on May 7, 1945, changed the weapons in the fight against Nazism, but did not completely end the struggle. During the summer of 1945 most American troops in Europe waited for transportation to leave the Continent, either to return to the United States for demobilization, or to fight in the Pacific. In the meantime the American command structure changed. In July 1945 USFET succeeded European Theater of Operations, United States Army (ETOUSA) as the commanding authority for American armed forces in northwest Europe. In that month SHAEF was dissolved, and its commander, General Eisenhower, moved from former SHAEF Headquarters in Reims to USFET Headquarters in Frankfurt, Germany.(3)

In his new headquarters General Eisenhower wore two hats. He was commander in chief of American military forces stationed

from Austria to Norway. He also represented the United States on the Allied Control Council, which took office in Berlin in July. Composed of representatives from the United States, the Soviet Union, Great Britain, and France, the Council was the supreme occupation authority in Germany. For administrative reasons Eisenhower preferred to work out of Frankfurt and visit Berlin only when necessary.

Deputy Commander in Chief for Military Government Lt. Gen. Lucius D. Clay moved out of his office in the Frankfurt area in early July 1945 and became America's resident military occupation chief in Berlin. His position made him also commander of the Office of Military Government, United States (OMGUS). Branches of OMGUS were established in the American zone of occupation, which in addition to a portion of Berlin, comprised the states of Bavaria, Hesse, Baden-Wurttemberg, and the Bremen enclave.

Pursuant to a 1943 agreement of the four powers, all the military governors in Berlin had a civilian advisor. Clay's was Ambassador Robert Murphy, who had the title "political advisor in Germany," and was the highest-ranking American civilian in that country. A career Department of State diplomat, Murphy had much experience during World War II advising key civilian and military leaders. Because Germany no longer had a sovereign government, diplomatic missions were accredited to the Allied Control Council. Murphy thus acted also as a sort of foreign minister in the American zone to foreign delegations from other countries.

Besides handling immediate occupation issues, Clay's and Murphy's offices also worked to prepare Germany for the day when it would resume control over its own affairs. In 1945 that day looked very far off. Unlike World War I, when most of the fighting took place in France and the Low Countries, Germany was physically ruined from relentless aerial bombardment and ground fighting that went from its borders to the heart of Berlin. Hundreds of thousands of persons were homeless, jobless, and without good prospects for food and fuel for the coming winter. In such conditions even a lowly American private seemed like a king, receiving a

comparatively high cash income and enjoying ready access to highly desired items like cigarettes at low prices. Temptations abounded, and discipline was hard to enforce among American occupation troops, especially when it came to rules against dealing on the black market and until October 1945 against fraternizing with German women.

Resentment by some Germans against the Americans arose not only from the comparative riches of the average soldier, but also because of America's role as an occupying power. Particularly dangerous was the possibility that those not yet weaned from the Nazi philosophy would try to subvert the occupation, even through violence. The problem existed also in Austria, the birthplace of Adolf Hitler, and like Germany occupied by the four powers. Austria's population had overwhelmingly and enthusiastically approved incorporation into the Third Reich in 1938. Thus, while the powers grappled with the problem of physical reconstruction in Germany and Austria, they also had to locate known enemies of the occupation, including war criminals; gather intelligence to identify possible new sources of trouble; and, when needed, take action to neutralize opposition.

Chapter 10

Files in the Attic

For the United States the nerve center of the postwar, more covert struggle against Nazism was located in the USFET Headquarters office of Brig. Gen. Edwin L. Sibert, assistant chief of staff for intelligence (G-2). As in other U.S. Army high commands, there were three other assistant chiefs of staffs, one each for personnel (G-1), operations (G-3) and logistics (G-4). In part, G-2 monitored the political and physical security situation in all of Germany and Austria. In the political area it was particularly interested in whether political parties and other organizations showed any fascist or communist tendencies. In its periodic reports for the chief of staff of General Joseph T. McNarney, who became theater commander in late 1945, G-2 included items like pro-Nazi demonstrations by university students and professors in the British zone of occupation, and the potential problems from German military veterans in Austria. The security situation was complicated by the presence of hundreds of thousands of displaced persons (DPs) in the American zone, many of whom had entered the zone illegally and were blamed for much of the crime.(1)

The USFET Headquarters G-2 staff was organized into four branches: Intelligence, Counterintelligence, Censorship, and Operations. The Intelligence Branch had the traditional function of getting information that would be useful if hostilities broke out, such as foreign troop strength and movements. The Censorship Branch oversaw the monitoring of letters, packages, telegrams, and phone calls of persons of interest. Its headquarters personnel also handled policy questions involving the international movement of

mail to Germany. The Censorship Branch supervised the highest number of personnel employed by G-2, about six thousand, both military and civilian, American and foreign. They were needed because of the volume of work; in February 1946 they monitored 126,000 telephone calls and over 625,000 telegrams.(2)

The Counterintelligence Branch formally supervised operations of the Counter Intelligence Corps (CIC) within the jurisdiction of USFET. The CIC had been created during World War II to prevent espionage, sabotage, and subversion in the Army and areas under its jurisdiction. In Europe its wartime exploits included unmasking numerous German civilian and military spies, including cases of Germans disguised as American soldiers who created havoc during the Battle of the Bulge. Before the war ended the CIC also began hunting in liberated areas for German scientists and war criminals.(3)

By 1946 the CIC had some 1,400 agents stationed throughout the American zone of occupation to fulfill its responsibilities, which had increased since V-E Day. In addition to its wartime duties, the CIC was responsible for destroying any vestiges of the German secret intelligence service and police, helping to dissolve the Nazi party and related organizations, and dispersing the German military general staff. One point of departure for its work was a questionnaire which all German adults had to fill out. CIC agents reviewed the replies and interviewed those who were worth a second look, including high Nazi officials and SS officers, and anyone suspected of war crimes. Because many high officials went into hiding, the CIC often had to conduct lengthy investigations to locate them. The CIC's interest in stopping subversion was not limited to the activities of America's recent enemies. In February 1946, for example, it was also concerned about the actions by some French citizens in Karlsruhe, Baden-Wurttemberg, "including deliberate spreading of harmful rumors, intimidating civilians, and recruiting for the French Foreign Legion."(4)

The Operations Branch had the most diverse responsibilities in G-2, often in a mutually supportive relationship with the other three branches. Its chief in early 1946, Colonel R.D. Wentworth,

supervised seventy employees spread among six sections.(5) The Technical Intelligence Section specialized in information of scientific value. By early February 1946 it had helped send 162 German scientists to the United States under Project "Overcast," shortly thereafter renamed Project "Paperclip," and had helped the War Department to contract the services of additional German scientists. Many of the scientists were located originally by CIC agents. Those who were permanently employed by the American government, especially those with experience in German rocket research, later made invaluable contributions to the American military. The potential value of German scientists and technicians was so great that beginning in March 1946 they needed the permission of the Technical Intelligence Section to travel outside the American zone.(6)

The Photo Section supervised two major projects at the request of the War Department. "Casey Jones" was a program to map aerially Europe and adjacent areas, including parts of Africa, after obtaining clearances from the countries to be photographed. The "Dick Tracy" program, which was completed on March 30, 1946, consisted of sorting, indexing, and shipping to military commands and interested agencies captured aerial photography and equipment. The section also assisted the British in their project "Dora," which similarly involved captured film.(7)

Working with Ambassador Murphy's office and the American military attachés in Madrid and Lisbon, the Plans and Coordination Section coordinated the repatriation by air of German agents, diplomatic personnel, and other persons of interest in Spain and Portugal. Participants were taken from a list of four hundred potential subjects compiled by the Strategic Services Unit (SSU), the short-lived successor to the wartime Office of Strategic Services (OSS). Besides routine intra-Branch responsibilities, the section also coordinated all G-2 resources at USFET to help in a top-priority project of the War and State Departments, the investigation of Nazi activities in Argentina.(8)

The Personnel and Training Section supervised the procurement and assignment of all military intelligence specialists, including

interrogators and linguists for the CIC. In January 1946 the section established the European Theater Intelligence School (ETIS) in Oberammergau, Germany, which began giving courses for personnel involved in CIC work or liaison with the Soviet Union. Because of a shortage of German and Russian language speakers among American military personnel both in Europe and the United States, the section paid particular attention to developing elementary and advanced language training. Approximately two hundred officers and enlisted personnel were employed at the ETIS.(9)

The Interrogation Section coordinated locating, transferring, and interrogating prisoners of war and civilian internees. It maintained tens of thousands of reports on persons of interest. At least semimonthly it distributed over one thousand copies of "Rogues Gallery," a publication featuring persons wanted for questioning or war crimes.(10) When extensive questioning was approved the section arranged for the transfer of interrogees to the Military Intelligence Service Center (MISC) in Oberursel, about fifteen miles northwest of Frankfurt.

Like the ETIS, the MISC was a major field site staffed by G-2 and supervised by the Operations Branch. The facility was selected because, as a former Nazi interrogation center for captured Allied airmen, it already had a stockade and other useful facilities. Established in the summer of 1945, it initially drew employees from existing interrogation, photo interpretation, and document control units. By mid-1946 about 350 persons were assigned there, including a group of document examiners.(11)

In the postwar battle against Nazism captured documents would be one of the deadliest weapons. The Nazis were thorough and extensive record keepers, partly due to German bureaucratic tradition, and partly due to Nazi ideological requirements. SS officers, for example, had to prove pure Aryan bloodlines going back for several generations. Some documents were located during the war by special document units attached to field armies or army groups. Other documents were found by the CIC, which was interested in documents of counterintelligence value, and by related T-Force teams, which used highly-trained specialists. (As part of

their miscellaneous responsibilities during the war, Army and Air Force bomb disposal squads had helped intelligence agents by occasionally blowing open safes for them.) Sometimes, collections of documents were discovered by accident by combat units or occupation forces. After V-E Day active searches continued and the number of seized documents increased. By the end of 1945 American authorities possessed thousands of tons of Nazi documents. As just one part of this collection, the MISC by October 1945 had fifteen tons of SS personnel records.(12)

The haphazard nature of war and geographic dispersion of documents by the Germans meant that in late 1945 important documents were in many locations throughout the American zone of occupation. During the war, except for material concerning Japan or German secret weapons, most document collections were not moved. In addition, other occupying powers had valuable documents, already discovered or still hidden, in their zones in Germany. Many countries, whether occupying powers or not, were interested in recovering documents taken from them during the war that might have been relocated to Germany.

In late August 1945 Lt. Col. S.F. Gronich and Major M.M. Spiegel assumed leadership of the G-2 Operation Branch's Document Control Section. It quickly became the top authority in the U.S. Government on captured German documents. Working closely with representatives of other U.S. Government agencies, foreign governments, and key document centers, it formulated policies for acquiring, processing, and sending to appropriate recipients captured documents. It also supervised operations at other document centers in the American zones of occupation in Germany and Austria.

To implement policy, Gronich's organization was dependent on its key subordinate unit, the Document Control Section at the MISC in Oberursel. There a military and civilian staff of about fifteen persons, headed by Capt. Charles Winnick, coordinated targets to be investigated, lists of documents acquired, and requests for specific documents. It also coordinated the actual shipping of

documents, often using its document repository in Fechenheim, on the eastern edge of Frankfurt.(13)

Of all the uses for captured documents, prosecuting Nazi war criminals was the one of the most important, and the most visible. In an unprecedented move the four Allied powers agreed to jointly prosecute major war criminals. To assist in the trial of the top German leaders in Nuremburg, a documentation division, supervised by the G-2 Document Control Section, was established in that city for the United States' chief counsel. Another document division under the section's control was established for the war crimes commission in Wiesbaden. Although the 1946 Nuremburg trial received the most publicity, thousands of other war crimes trials were eventually convened, both by Allied governments and by individual German state governments. Most of the documents introduced as evidence at those trials were supplied through the document sections under G-2's control. As an example of the material supplied, during the last quarter of 1945 the section forwarded records of execution orders from the concentration camps at Auschwitz, Flossenbuerg, and Gross Rosen.(14)

Perhaps the most widespread use of captured documents was for the denazification programs. American occupation authorities in Germany and Austria did not want to directly hire or to put in new governmental positions anyone who had been more than a rank-and-file Nazi party member. Information submitted by Germans who filled out the required questionnaires was checked against the Nazi party membership index. Those records, and other valuable documents, were captured in Bavaria as they were about to be destroyed shortly before the war ended. They were placed later in the Berlin Document Center, one of two depositories in the city under G-2's Document Control Section.(15)

Many captured documents had intelligence value. Documents concerning German naval and shipping matters were sent to the British Naval Intelligence Division, where they were examined by British and American experts. Their findings were disseminated to the British and American navies. The Counterintelligence Branch

was interested in any document about German intelligence and secret police agencies, high-level personnel in Nazi organizations, and contemporary German political activities. Documents about the Luftwaffe were sent to United States Air Forces in Europe (USAFE).

A number of captured documents of intelligence value were sent directly to the United States. In November 1945 regular surface shipments began to Camp Ritchie, a military intelligence center in Maryland. During the last quarter of 1945 three hundred tons of documents were sent there, including material from the libraries of the Nazi party and German military. The quantity of documents designated for Camp Ritchie grew so much that by early 1946 six Germans worked full time at the Fechenheim depository making crates and other preparations for weekly shipments. Other papers were sent to the War Department, which during the first quarter of 1946 received 250 tons of documents from G-2. They included files on the German financing of espionage activities in foreign countries, and films from the German studio UFA. Also in those shipment were photocopies of both Adolf Hitler's last will and testament, and his marriage certificate to Eva Braun, which had been located through an investigation by CIC agents.(16)

One category of documents was important enough that the American government established an agency during the war to work exclusively with it. The Field Information Agency, Technical (FIAT), was created to gather German material of a scientific or industrial nature, like patents, which would be useful to peacetime America.(17) After the war it had a difficult time locating employees in Germany who had both the required technical and language qualifications. Eventually, however, it established a document center in Hoechst, just west of Frankfurt. With the help of G-2 document personnel it received industrial blueprints and other technical and scientific documents.

Some documents were useful for humanitarian purposes. Shortly after the war the United Nations took over from American armed forces responsibility for DPs. The U.N.'s Refugee and Relief Administration Central Tracing Bureau had a documentation

division in Wiesbaden to assist in the reunification of families torn apart by the war. Part of its information base came from the Document Control Section, which sent it rosters of inmates from concentration camp records.(18)

At that time the Library of Congress had a nine-member mission in Germany. Its task was to locate for itself and other libraries and institutions civilian publications from the war years, when normal acquisition was impossible. The mission was not under the operational control of USFET. It had the approval of the Departments of War and State, however, and G-2 document personnel helped the mission locate information about publications, acquire desired publications, and ship material to Washington, D.C.

Given the extensive variety and geographical dispersion of documents, consultation among the four Allied powers took place on both broad policy matters and specific cases. G-2 Frankfurt personnel attended conferences of the Allies, which, reinforced by successful collaboration at the working level, resulted in an important, overarching policy. That was, except for German foreign office records the United States would share copies of its documents with other occupying powers on a reciprocal basis unless to do so would prevent the Unites States from exploiting the records.(19) Under a related practice, the United States gave other governments originals of documents it had seized from the Germans but did not want. During the first quarter of 1946 the United States gave Belgian officials documents on the German occupation of their country. To the other occupying powers the United States gave the British documents on the Krupp corporation, the French documents on the Maginot Line, and the Soviets material from 1880 to 1941 which originally came from Russian libraries.(20)

In 1946 the attitude toward the Soviet Union by most persons in the U. S. Government could probably be characterized as wary but hopeful. The American military hoped to build on the cooperation which existed with the Soviet Union during World War II, and, as noted above, began in February 1946 to train personnel in liaison work with the Soviets. On the other hand, the

deep suspicion of foreigners by the Soviet Union, which at times during the war had hampered the western Allies, also caused problems immediately after V-E Day. Perhaps the most significant problem was Moscow's failure to provide full access by land to Berlin for the other three Allies, which the latter needed for the efficient occupation of the former capital.

Distrust also existed between France and the United States. During the war De Gaulle bristled at the subordinate political and military role France was forced to play in the Allied coalition because of the overwhelming military superiority of the United States. He was skeptical of America's stated intention to quickly turn over to his government the reigns of power in newly liberated areas of France. He was also angry that initially the other Allies did not allocate to France a zone of occupation in Germany. With his approval French commanders sometimes advanced their forces or took other actions contrary to the explicit directives of their American military chiefs. After the war his wariness toward the United States seemed justified when President Truman brusquely refused France a place at the Potsdam conference, which finalized arrangements on the occupation of Germany. Because France as a nonparticipant did not sign the Potsdam agreement, it was not legally bound by its provisions. In that spirit France vetoed a number of projects jointly proposed by the United States and Great Britain on the reconstruction of Germany, including the treatment of the country as a unified economic entity.(21)

American military officials, on the other hand, thought after the war France was a cooperative partner on military intelligence matters. To facilitate access to documents of interest, the French assigned as liaison officer to the Document Control Section in Frankfurt First Lt. Leo A. Silberbauer, who had been a German prisoner of war for over three years. He established an effective working relationship with Lieutenant Owen. Sometimes their discussions involved collaboration with the Soviet Union. In a joint operation in March 1946, personnel from France and the Soviet Union, using a mine detector provided by the United States, retrieved Joseph Goebbels' archives buried near Potsdam, in the

Soviet zone of occupation. The records were then taken to Paris for microfilming.(22)

Goebbels' files were but one example of documents discovered as the Allies followed up investigative leads well after the conclusion of the war. American efforts in that regard were not limited to Germany and Austria. Based on reporting from the American Embassy in Prague, the Department of State believed that during the war Germany had sent documents to Czechoslovakia for safekeeping in as many as fifty different locations.(23)

Czechoslovakia was a logical choice for repositories because it bordered Germany's mountainous southern region. The westernmost province of Bohemia, which included Prague, and the adjoining central province of Moravia had been under the firm control of the Nazis since early 1939. Control of Bohemia began slipping out of Germany's hands only late in April 1945, as Allied troops approached from both the east and the west.

By late 1945 the Czechoslovak government had already provided the American Embassy in Prague with much useful information on war crimes, and was amenable to working with the United States to examine deposits of documents. Short of qualified personnel, the Czechoslovak government agreed to receive two experts the State Department offered to send to help, Dr. Edward M. Mueller and Clifford H. Adams. The State Department hoped to find in Czechoslovakia important documents from the German foreign office which had not been found elsewhere. Of particular interest were items on Germany's relations with the major powers and Turkey, German political and economic activity in Latin America, trade agreements with the Balkan countries, the relationship between German diplomatic missions and Nazi parties overseas, and the presence abroad of German personnel and assets which could still be a threat to the United States.

After their arrival in Czechoslovakia in mid-January 1946 the two experts met with a U.S. Army official stationed there, Major Katek. He told them he believed that General Bartik, chief of the Intelligence Department of the Ministry of Interior, was in charge of German documents in Czechoslovakia. Bartik, however, a short

time later told Katek that the Ministry of Interior actually knew very little about German documents, and suggested that the Americans contact the Ministry of Foreign Affairs instead. In an interesting development, Bartik, who had an excellent working relationship with Major Katek, was forced out of office several days later and replaced by someone not very favorably disposed toward the United States.

Representatives of the Archives Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs told the two American experts that there were about twenty sites where the Germans had stored material. The Czechoslovaks added that probably only two of the locations, however, both castles, had anything more than library books. Unfortunately, one of the castles could not be visited. It was guarded by Russian sentries who refused entrance to anyone without special permission from the Soviet government, indicating that Moscow had probably stored booty there. The other site, Castle Novy Pernstein, located near Duba about halfway between Prague and the German border to the north, was believed to contain records from Germany's top security office, the RSHA.

Dr. Mueller and Mr. Adams, accompanied by a Ministry of Foreign Affairs archivist, visited Castle Novy Pernstein. The three were told by German civilian eyewitnesses that in late 1943 and early 1944 archives and books were deposited there after arrangements were completed with a representative from Berlin of the Sicherheitsdienst (SD), the security service of the SS. Late in 1944 the castle had been used as a hospital by the occupying Germans, who burned part of the files and books for heat, and threw helter-skelter the rest into the attic. By the time of the trio's visit workers at the castle had prepared the books for shipment to libraries but had not yet put the files in order. A cursory examination of the material, however, revealed nothing of major interest, only collections of newspaper clippings from European newspapers, and files on subjects like the Austrian Fatherland Front and central secretariat of the Pan-European Union.

Greatly disappointed, the experts left Czechoslovakia in late January 1946, proposing to return in about three months. The

additional time would give the Czechoslovaks the opportunity to sort and catalogue their holdings. Unbeknown to the parties on both sides, developments were underway elsewhere which in a matter of weeks would make another collection of documents in Bohemia the subject of great interest to high-level officials in both Czechoslovakia and the United States.

Chapter 11

The POW's Strange Tale

Prisoner of war camps by their nature are austere places, in which their inmates are cut off from friends, the comforts of home, and often adequate medical care. SS Sergeant Gunter Achenbach, from Essen, Germany, by the fortunes of war wound up in a French POW camp for SS officers and noncommissioned officers outside Mulhouse, France. Dissatisfied with his condition and hoping for clemency, in November 1945 he told French authorities about his involvement during the war in a secret operation.

Achenbach related that he had been an instructor at an SS engineering school near Stechovice, Czechoslovakia, a town on the Moldau (Vltava) River about twenty-five miles south of Prague. In April 1945 he had helped dig a cave in the side of a ravine in the woods several miles outside Stechovice. The cave was about thirty feet deep, six feet high, and five and a half feet wide. It was lined with wooden boards and had been extensively booby trapped with explosives. He was not there when the cave was filled, but another SS noncommissioned officer told him that two trucks had taken documents there. Achenbach said that after the cave was closed he helped camouflage it with dirt and vegetation so that no one could tell there had ever been any digging there. As proof of his sincerity and goodwill Achenbach offered to take officials to the site.(1)

After hearing his proposal, the French talked to the Americans, who no doubt were very intrigued upon hearing the story. Achenbach did not know anything about the documents allegedly taken there. But if he was telling the truth, it was logical that only

papers of great sensitivity would merit putting them in a specially-constructed, booby-trapped facility hidden in the woods. The involvement of a detachment from the elite SS was another indication that something out of the ordinary was involved. This was in a different category than a castle with books and newspaper clippings thrown in the attic.

The person in charge of taking action on Achenbach's story was M.M. Spiegel, recently promoted to lieutenant colonel and chief of the Document Control Section at G-2, USFET. He moved with great secrecy. Some U.S. Government offices which normally would have been in the information loop were kept completely in the dark, while others were only partially informed. In December 1945 USFET, without fully revealing why, requested that the air attaché at the American Embassy in Prague get aerial photographs of the area around the cave. Later Achenbach was taken to Germany for detailed interrogation, after which his story was judged to be credible. Without providing further details, USFET next requested that the office of the military attaché in Prague arrange for permission from Czechoslovak officials for a group of fourteen American military personnel to enter the country in connection with the December photographic mission. USFET also contacted Ambassador Murphy.(2) As part of his work on political-military subjects he had been involved for many months in civilian and military efforts, including the Mueller-Adams mission to Czechoslovakia, to recover German documents for war crimes trials and other purposes. Murphy did not, however, inform the State Department about this latest project of USFET. Nor did USFET advise the War Department about Achenbach's story and what actions it was taking.(3)

The team that finally went on the mission, code named Operation "Hidden Documents," consisted of thirteen men from four countries with a variety of specialties. The Americans came from all over the United States. As an intelligence officer with experience in the Document Control Section, Lieutenant Owen, from San Francisco, was a natural choice. So too was Lieutenant Silberbauer, with his experience in the section and the involvement

of the French with the POW. Sergeant Achenbach had to go to locate the cave. He was escorted by a French guard, Sgt. Antoine Vital. First Lt. William J. "Wayne" Leeman, in charge of still photographic assignments for the Signal Corps in the theater, was asked by G-2 USFET to find someone to accompany the mission and take photographs. Normally an enlisted man would have been chosen. But Leeman, who had been a newspaper man in St. Louis, Missouri before the war, knew a potentially good story when he heard one. He was due shortly to leave the military anyway, and after thinking it over assigned himself.(4) A Canadian journalist, Lionel Shapiro, heard about the mission, apparently from the French. He was allowed to participate on the condition that he not report the story until given permission by military authorities. Several drivers, including Pvt. Carmine Catusco, of Uniontown, Pennsylvania, and Pvt. John Ecker, of Towson, Maryland, both assigned to the 3578th Quartermaster Truck Company, helped round out the contingent.(5)

The success of the mission, and even the lives of many of its members, would depend on the men who would try to disarm the explosives which Achenbach believed were in the cave. Stephen M. Richards, recently promoted to captain, would be the lead explosives expert. Lt. Colonel Spiegel had asked him if he would mind being commanded by a lieutenant. Richards said he would not mind, if he could be in charge during the disarming process. Spiegel agreed.(6) Two combat engineers were identified to assist Richards: Staff Sgt. Taylor R. Fulton, of Kenosha, Wisconsin; and Sgt. Philip J. Urquhart, of Chicago. Both were veterans from the 1264th Combat Engineer Battalion. The trio was a good combination of complimentary skills and experience. Combat engineers were specialized in removing mines, booby traps and other explosives, such as dynamite charges on bridges, which were obstacles in the path of forward ground forces. They were skilled in the use of mine detectors and had them as part of their standard equipment. Bomb disposal personnel were usually neither trained in using mine detectors nor issued them. In fact, during the war many bomb disposal personnel in northwest Europe thought mine

and booby trap clearance was "incidental" to their main mission.(7) Nevertheless, any bomb disposal officer who survived the war in Europe probably had considerable knowledge of what the Germans could do with mines and booby traps. With his many months of handling German explosive material in the field, and with most other experienced bomb disposal officers gone from active service, Captain Richards was one of the most qualified individuals in his specialty left in Europe. Working together the three men would have as good a chance as any other team of successfully overcoming whatever obstacles the Germans had prepared almost a year previously.

On Thursday, February 7, 1946, Spiegel briefed Owen, Richards, and Silberbauer. Leeman was also present and photographed the group as Spiegel pointed to a wall map. Later during the day the first part of the convoy, consisting of four vehicles, departed Frankfurt.(8) In front was the jeep-like command and reconnaissance car; in the middle were two 6 x 6 cargo trucks; and bringing up the rear was a weapons carrier. Along the way the convoy stopped in Nuremberg, where it picked up Shapiro and was joined by a driver and air compressor truck used by combat engineers. Owen and Richards drove to the Czechoslovak liaison office in Regensburg, Germany to pick up the border passes USFET had asked the American military attaché in Prague to help obtain. In 1946 passes to the country were routinely issued to Allied military personnel, especially to Americans. Owen got the passes without divulging the real reason for the group's travel.

Armed with the entry documents the convoy took off again. It reached the border crossing point on Sunday, February 10. Leeman took some pictures while the group waited for the guards to examine the papers Owen showed them. Soon the gate went up, and the convoy headed toward Prague. After transiting Pilsen the group reached the capital around 8:00 P.M. They parked the larger vehicles in the courtyard of the American Embassy, and then went in the smaller vehicles to the Alcron Hotel, where the group overnighted. Food and other essentials were scarce due to the disastrous economic effects of the war and German occupation. The Alcron and

Ambassador hotels were the only two places where Americans could eat without ration cards.(9)

That evening mission members wondered what would happen the next day. Would Achenbach be able to find the cave? He reported that the Germans had camouflaged the site so that nothing would look out of the ordinary, and he had not been there for almost a year. If Achenbach found it, would the explosives experts be able to disarm whatever devices they encountered? They had no map indicating whether the approach to the cave had been mined or bobby trapped. They also had no wiring diagram for any explosives inside the cave. Successfully clearing the approach meant nothing if the cave itself blew up. If they managed to disarm all of the explosives, would they be able to get the documents back to Germany without being caught? This was supposed to be a top-secret mission, but the group came in five vehicles. Three of them, the two 6 x 6 trucks and the compressor truck, were very large, with distinctive U.S. military markings. Had their convoy's drive that day into Prague already aroused the suspicions of the wrong people?

Any apprehension that might have been felt was not lessened when Owen returned from what he claimed was a visit with American military officials stationed at the embassy. Owen said they told him the embassy wanted nothing officially to do with the mission, according to Leeman's report written one week later. With this troubling news the members of the operation believed that if trouble came, it would be "every man for himself."

The next morning, following orders, everyone had breakfast in his room. The food, consisting of brown bread with ersatz coffee, was typical meager fare in the capital. No milk or cream was available. But what they ate was enough, and before long the convoy left Prague, going south on the road to Stechovice. Outside Stechovice Achenbach, traveling in the lead car, showed the driver where to turn off the paved highway onto a dirt road leading into a woods set among some hills. Soon Achenbach directed the group to stop. After the vehicles were parked the group made its way on foot, with Achenbach still in the lead. The only person they saw

was a woodcutter who, in his rough, simple attire crowned with a low cap, was cutting down pine trees. The party continued through bushes and pine trees, then went down a steep incline. At the bottom a stream rapidly flowed on one side of a ravine. Achenbach walked upstream. Before long he stopped to check his bearings. He looked over the other, nearly flat side of the ravine into the woods. By his side stood Silberbauer, Shapiro, Owen, and Richards. Knowing that nothing they could say would help, none of them said a word.

After a short time Achenbach recognized a rock and small fir tree, pointed, and exclaimed in German, "There it is!" The bespectacled Sergeant Urquhart, bareheaded despite the cold, dangled a cigarette from his mouth as he assembled a mine detector. Accompanied by Sergeant Fulton and Captain Richards, he used the detector to sweep first the bed of the stream. Next he methodically covered the approach to the fir tree, which Achenbach said was above the cave. Hearts skipped a beat when something in the ground set off the detector. Probing the spot, Fulton hit a suspicious object. He then cleared enough dirt away to expose something metallic. A rope was tied on it, and everyone except Urquhart backed away for a good distance. Urquhart then pulled. A harmless piece of metal came up.

The quartet soon reached a spot almost directly below the fir tree. After final sweeps with the mine detector and additional probing, they announced the area was safe. The next job was to remove the dirt, rocks, and brush which had been placed over the cave. Achenbach walked five feet up the slope toward the fir tree, then stopped and began swinging a pick. Richards stood at the bottom and looked up, a shovel by his side. After a while Richards and the others took turns digging. In the early afternoon, about three hours after they started, Richards hit the top of the cave. Knowing that their lives depended on their diligence, they once again began working very deliberately. As they worked from top to bottom, gradually exposing the walled entrance to the cave, Fulton used a trowel to look for any booby traps which might have been laid just in front. He found nothing suspicious.

The explosives experts and Achenbach discussed what to do next. The entrance wall was made of five vertical wooden boards, with two narrow slats fastened diagonally across them, making an "X." The five vertical boards did not quite reach the top; a rough board had been inserted horizontally to fill the gap between the wall and the front edge of the wooden ceiling. Achenbach, who did not speak English, told Urquhart he believed that a ton of explosives was in the cave and that the entrance was booby trapped. Achenbach was quizzed on what he knew about the construction of the cave and what he had heard about explosives that might be inside. Attempting to enter the cave without a wiring diagram was extremely risky. Any or all of the boards could be booby trapped so that if moved they would detonate the explosives inside. Achenbach thought the only safe thing to do was to go the other side of the hill and tunnel in from behind. Richards vetoed that idea, noting that it could take a week to dig in from the back, and that they would have to get more tools.

After a little while Richards decided what to do. It was the gamble of his life, but for the past eighteen months he had survived by making the right moves, whether working with the known or the unknown. Besides, the only safe thing to do, quit now and go back to Germany, was unthinkable. Richards rigged up a rope and pulley to pull off the horizontal piece of wood. After everyone else in the immediate area retreated at least fifty yards, Achenbach, Richards, Vital, Urquhart, and Fulton pulled on the rope. The board came free without an explosion. Everyone breathed a sigh of relief. Looking into the cave with a flashlight, Richards saw several lengths of primacord running to detonators attached to bolts on the vertical boards. If he had tried to remove any board other than the one he chose, the detonators would have sent a charge instantly through the primacord, thereby igniting whatever explosives were inside and killing the intruders.

It was obvious what had to be done next, but not so easy to do. There was just enough room between the entrance wall and ceiling to reach inside with one hand. Richards did so with a pair of wire cutters, severing all the connecting wires he could see. If all

the connections had been cut, the entrance wall could be safely removed. If they had not been, the end would be very different, and very sudden.

The entrance wall was fastened too securely to the surrounding framework to be pulled out by hand. Richards took an ax and cut into the top of the entrance wall at roughly the middle point, between two boards. This made enough room to place a hook, which was connected to a chain and wire running to a winch on one of the trucks. When all was ready the winch was turned on, the cable tightened, the hook dug into the wood, and the wall came out. Thankfully, once again no explosives were set off.

Now it was getting dark. A lot had happened during the day, both at the cave and elsewhere. Lieutenant Owen had gone to Prague to talk to American officials. He ended up raising doubts about the openness of USFET G-2 in its dealings with the embassy, according to the first message Ambassador to Czechoslovakia Laurence A. Steinhardt sent to the State Department on "Hidden Documents." The report stated that the embassy's military attaché office had earlier notified USFET that U.S. Government clearance had been granted for the documents team to enter Czechoslovakia, and that the team should report to that embassy office. Steinhardt did not say whether USFET knew it, but he claimed that the military attaché's office had intended to get the permission of the Czechoslovak government before the documents team began working. But instead of following the military attaché's instructions, the team had gone directly to the site near Stechovice and worked "during the night," that is, Sunday night, February 10. By the next day, February 11, the explosives had been disarmed and most of the crates had been removed, Steinhardt continued. On that day Owen came to the embassy and told Acting Military Attaché Lt. Colonel Taylor that the team had come to seize the documents which he, Owen, believed were from the German Foreign Ministry, and to take them from Czechoslovakia to Germany.(10)

The first account to the War Department by USFET G-2 on Operation "Hidden Documents," including Owen's trip to the embassy on February 11, does not appear to be in the public record

at this time. Ambassador Murphy's first report to the State Department on the mission is, however. In it Murphy, who said he was in contact with USFET about the mission before it left Germany, confirmed that the American military attaché's office in Prague granted permission for the team to enter Czechoslovakia. On the most crucial matter, Murphy also said that for several reasons USFET G-2 decided the Czechoslovak government should not be informed in advance about the mission.(11) Murphy's assertion was supported to a substantial degree by Leeman's contemporary report, which stated, "All advance instructions called for as much secrecy as possible and the avoidance of Prague if that could be done."(12)

The decision to avoid the Czechoslovak government explains why Ambassador Murphy and USFET G-2 did not follow normal procedure and in advance inform the State Department and War Department, respectively, about such a sensitive, important operation. The State Department and the staff of the American Embassy in Prague were concerned primarily with maintaining good relations with the Czechoslovak government. Established practice required that officials of a sovereign country give permission for representatives of another country to enter in order to conduct an investigation or military operation. That was especially true if the foreigners intended to remove persons or property. Personnel at the embassy in Prague and the State Department would never have considered keeping the Czechoslovak government uninformed about Operation "Hidden Documents." Ambassador Murphy, and probably through him USFET G-2, would have known that.

The focus of USFET G-2 was on getting the documents, which given Achenbach's story had to be considered top secret until proven otherwise. The greater the number of people who knew about the mission, the greater the likelihood for failure. Not informing the War Department (and the State Department) about developments lessened the chance that G-2 would fail to get the documents, either through a security leak or demands in Washington that the Czechoslovaks first grant permission for the operation. If there was a security leak, then Nazi sympathizers or others who thought

they might be compromised by the documents could try to destroy or move them. If the Czechoslovak government tried to recover the documents one positive and two negative outcomes were possible. On the negative side, the papers might be accidentally destroyed in the process. Or, the documents could be successfully recovered but not shared with the United States because of anti-American hostility by key personnel in the Czechoslovak government. USFET undoubtedly hoped there was a reasonable chance that the "Hidden Documents" team could go to a rural area and either extricate the documents without attracting suspicion or, if unwanted interest was aroused, to make it back to Germany with their prize. Murphy, although a State Department employee, would have been sympathetic to USFET G-2's position based on his long experience of working with the U.S. military, his job with an Army general in Germany, and his knowledge of problems with the recent Mueller-Adams mission to Czechoslovakia.

The decision of USFET G-2 not to inform the Czechoslovaks in advance also suggests an explanation that helps resolve some of the inconsistencies among the reports of Steinhardt, Leeman, and Shapiro for what happened on February 10 and 11. Under the most plausible scenario, the team overnighted in Prague on Sunday, February 10, as Leeman and Shapiro reported. Contrary to what Owen told the other members of the team as reported by Leeman, however, Owen did not talk to the military attaché's office on Sunday, February 10. He first approached members of that office on February 11, after excavation of the cave had already started. In that way the embassy would be presented with a *fait accompli*, or at least an operation so far advanced that it would be too embarrassing for the American Embassy to ask the Czechoslovak government for permission to continue. To that end, on Monday Owen may have exaggerated the progress the team had made by saying they had begun working the previous night. The fact that some of the group's vehicles were parked on Sunday night at the embassy would not normally have been noticed by any American officials interested in the operation, especially if the convoy left before business hours on Monday morning.

USFET's apparent strategy to protect the security of the operation in part by keeping the Czechoslovak government in the dark, even if it meant misleading officials at the American Embassy, worked. Embassy officials did not tell Owen on Monday to stop the excavation. Steinhardt and his staff obviously decided to hope for the best and counted on the team removing the documents before the host government found out. At no time did the embassy ask the Czechoslovak government for permission to excavate the documents and remove them to Germany. Moreover, although the sovereignty of Czechoslovakia had been violated, and the directives of his staff ignored by USFET, Steinhardt did not immediately inform the State Department of what happened. His first report on the incident was sent only after Czechoslovak authorities found out later and complained.(13)

When Owen returned to the cave on February 11 he told the team that embassy officials were more uncomfortable about the project than they had been the day before. He also said, in Leeman's words, that "It was a question as to how long the operation could continue without the Czechs taking action."(14) If anyone in the group needed his resolve hardened, that news did it. But nothing could be done right away. With all of the explosives yet to be disarmed, it was far too dangerous to work at night. The next day, on the other hand, they would have to work until the job was done.

After an uneventful night, the first order of business the next morning was to remove an inconsequential second door. That was also done without incident, thereby exposing explosives and crates inside the cave. The explosives at the very front of the cave were carefully disarmed and placed to the side of the entrance. It was now clear the SS intended that anyone breaking into the cave by removing the first door would set off Teller mines, which in turn would explode containers of dynamite and ignite cans of flammable oil. In the process not only would the intruder be instantly killed, but a fire would start, burning the crates and documents.

Inside the cave were thirty-two wooden crates, stacked in two columns. In the left-hand column the crates were stacked four high, top to bottom. In the right-hand column the crates were

stacked two high. The stacks on both sides were roughly equal in height, because the crates on the right had been turned horizontally on one side. There was a little room between the top of the columns and the ceiling of the cave, and between the crates and the sides of the cave.

Removal of the crates went much slower than would have been the case in a warehouse or similar setting. As each one was taken out, the explosives experts climbed over the remaining crates, carefully checking for booby traps and explosives. In all they removed about fifty items which had been strategically placed along the length of the cave as part of the explosives system. Disarmed mines were placed in front of the cave to the left. Holes in the center at the top showed where their igniters had once been. Containers of dynamite and cans of flammable oil were placed in front of the cave to the right, next to the boards from the doors which had once barred entrance. Richards, Fulton, and Urquhart estimated that about one ton of explosives had been inside. They told the others it was by far the most elaborate and ingenious arrangement they had ever seen, and that the blast effects from the explosives could have easily killed anyone within three hundred yards.

The crates were about four feet long, three feet wide, and two feet high. Each one was very solidly constructed, with dovetail joints on the corners. The tops were attached by two metal hinges in back and a padlock in front. Each crate had a metal handle on each end and a number neatly stenciled on top. When the first of the crates was removed the reason for their solid construction quickly became apparent. Fully loaded with documents, each one weighed approximately four hundred pounds. Collectively, the crates held more material than the team had planned for. Taking them to the trucks would be very difficult for reasons other than their quantity and weight. There was no easy path to the trucks out of the ravine, and it had snowed intermittently throughout the day. The temperature had not fallen low enough to freeze the ground, however, so the combination of melting snow, dirt, and men's footsteps had turned the ground into mud, making footing

precarious. Shapiro estimated that the angle of the slope on the side of the ravine to the road was sixty degrees. While that was probably an exaggeration, there was no denying that the slope was uncomfortably steep.

First, five men tried carrying a box to the end of the ravine. That way was longer than going up the side of the ravine, but it avoided the steep slope. But the crates were too heavy, the path was too long, and the footing was too slippery. That effort was quickly abandoned in favor of trying to go up the side of the ravine. Wooden planks were put across the stream. Someone had the idea of using the winch to help. One end of a rope was tied around the middle of a crate, and the other end was attached to the cable leading to the winch. The winch was turned on, and two men with considerable effort eventually maneuvered the crate the one hundred yards or so up the slope to the road. That way was not easy, but it was easier than carrying the box to the end of the ravine. It was decided to take all the crates up the slope.

Because it was so difficult to move the heavy crates, even with the help of the winch, Richards ordered that everyone, regardless of rank, had to help. Leeman put down his camera and stood by the winch, guiding the cable. Even with everyone assisting, by the time darkness fell fifteen crates still had to be taken out of the ravine. There was no thought of stopping work and resuming the project the next morning. On two occasions Czechoslovak soldiers had approached the area, apparently alerted by the woodcutter. Once he accompanied an officer with an enlisted man who had a submachine gun hung on his shoulder. Captain Richards went out to talk to them. He gave them some cigarettes and said they were digging for the graves of American soldiers. On neither occasion did the soldiers ask to inspect the area of the cave. The curiosity of the Czechoslovak soldiers seemed satisfied, but the Americans did not know whether the incident had been reported to superior officials, who could have ordered special controls placed on the roads and border crossing points.

Another reason to keep working was the contents of the crates, several of which had broken open while being moved. Even a cursory

examination was enough to suggest to Lieutenant Owen that the documents inside were highly sensitive. Clearly, if Czechoslovak authorities knew what was in the crates they would never let the Americans take them out of the country.

With seven boxes still to be pulled up, the winch broke when the overload pinion sheared. Once again Richards solved the problem, this time by driving the pinion into the support far enough to hold and for the winch to turn again. About this time three Czechs appeared. They were not soldiers, just civilians curious as to what all the activity was about. Because of language problems there was no way to communicate with them, but after seeing what the Americans were doing they pitched right in on their own, lifting crates into the two trucks, and helping with the rest of the operation. Very grateful for such valuable, timely assistance, the Americans gave the Czechs cans of corn and boxes of cereal from their rations, and all of the team's soldiers gave them cigarettes.

The skill and ingenuity of the explosives experts and hard work of the entire team paid off handsomely. By 8:30 P.M. all thirty-two crates had been loaded into the two 6 x 6 trucks, and the disarmed explosives had been put back in the cave. Richards, totally exhausted, sat down and exclaimed, "Hell, I almost forgot. It's my birthday!"(15) Just twenty-four years of age, he had outwitted the SS and literally saved the lives of some of the group's members. He had been so involved in his job that he had lost track of time: his birthday had been the day before.

To increase the chances of escaping with the documents there was no choice but to take them back to Germany immediately. For several reasons the explosives team, however, would stay in Prague for two or three days. The first was to recover from their ordeal. Besides the usual emotional strain of trying not to make a fatal mistake while working with explosives, the physical effort had been difficult. Even when it was not snowing, moisture had seeped into the cave, soaking them and forcing them to work in several inches of ice-cold water. The second reason was to act as decoys.(16) As far as Owen knew, Czechoslovak authorities had not discovered what the group was doing, or at least was not interested in stopping

them. If he was wrong the presence of the trio in Prague might make the authorities think the rest of the party was staying somewhere in country, rather than on the road to Germany.

Shortly after 9:00 P.M. the convoy, minus the weapons carrier and three explosives experts, left the Prague area for the border. Soon the vehicles stopped. The driver of the command car had almost fallen asleep. At Owen's request Leeman relieved the lead driver, and the convoy took off again. Driving was difficult as the roads were covered with ice and about six inches of snow. Nevertheless, the group made slow but steady progress until it was discovered about fifty miles from the German border that they were on the wrong road. A few minutes before they had made a wrong turn. All the vehicles turned around on the road to go back except for one of the 6 x 6 trucks, which was pulling a trailer. To make the big swing the driver turned into a field, where the truck sunk in mud up to the differentials. The engineer air compressor truck pulled up and its winch was used to pull the mired truck free. No damage was done, but thirty minutes had been lost. If border authorities had been alerted about the convoy, those minutes could mean the difference between success and failure.

Around 4:00 A.M. on Wednesday, February 13, the convoy pulled up to the Czechoslovak border post. The group was very nervous, fearing that in the hours since they had left Stechovice orders might have gone out to stop them. Their fears were groundless. After a perfunctory check of the passengers and Owen's papers, the sleepy border guards raised the gate and waived them through. While the explosives trio was fast asleep back at the Hotel Alcron, the convoy entered Germany.

Just a half a mile later a 6 x 6 truck developed a flat tire one of its front wheels. The other vehicles did not wait until the spare was put on, but kept on going to Nuremberg. From there Owen phoned both the G-2 office in Frankfurt and the military attaché's office in Prague to report that the mission had been accomplished. After a delay of three hours the second 6 x 6 truck arrived in Nuremberg. The next day the four vehicles continued on to Frankfurt.

On the road between Nuremberg and Frankfurt, Lieutenant Owen probably reflected proudly on what had happened during the past four days. A number of obstacles had been placed in the recovery and return of the crates, but they had all been overcome. From what he had seen, the documents would be of great interest to G-2 and the State Department. He was still just a first lieutenant, but he had been co-commander of a mission that accomplished what may have been the biggest intelligence coup since V-E Day. All that remained now was for the three members in Prague to return safely.

Chapter 12

Post-Operational Complications

In Prague, on the other hand, things did not go so well on February 13. Czechoslovak authorities told the American military attaché's office that they had learned about the excavation near Stechovice. They knew that something had been taken away, but they did not know exactly what. They were furious about the underhanded way things had been done, and demanded an investigation and explanation.(1)

At the Hotel Alcron, Richards, Urquhart, and Fulton slept late. In the late afternoon they walked around the hotel, returning around 6:00 P.M. to their room to have dinner from their military rations. Before long a uniformed captain and two plain-clothes men entered. The captain asked them in English why they had been digging near Stechovice. Richards said they had never been there, but had been in some mud while working on their truck between Pilsen and Prague.(2)

Not satisfied with that answer, the captain took the three to the General Staff building. Richards was separated from the other two Americans. His border pass, identification card, travel orders issued by USFET Frankfurt, and camera were taken from him. He asked if he was a prisoner. He was told no, but that he could not leave. Two soldiers with submachine guns were posted at the door to make sure he did not try. Richards asked to be visited by someone from the American Embassy. He was told it could not be contacted in the evening.

The interrogating captain then told Richards to write a full story of what had happened during his time in Czechoslovakia.

The American refused. After a short conversation the captain handed Richards a confession and told him to sign it because he had admitted what was in it. Richards again refused, demanded again to see someone from the American Embassy and to be given some food. He was denied any contact with the embassy, but was given some food. After eating he was taken to another building which he surmised was used by the General Staff's headquarters company, and placed in a tiny room furnished only with a bed. He was free to use a toilet located down the hall. To get there or to leave the building he had to pass the orderly's room.

Sergeants Urquhart and Fulton were interrogated until midnight and 1:30 A.M., respectively. In a crude effort to intimidate them, they were told they would be tried as saboteurs, and if found guilty executed. At one point they were told they would be held in custody until they gave a full confession. They refused to cooperate, giving only their name, rank, and serial number. Then they were put under guard in a room on the floor below Richards, but were not allowed to communicate with him.

Throughout the next day, Thursday, February 14, Richards demanded to see someone from the embassy. All of his requests were refused. In the evening he was taken back to the General Staff building, where he was told the embassy did not recognize the group as Americans. They had to have their photographs taken in order to establish their identity. Richards refused to cooperate, but photographs were taken of Urquhart and Fulton.

Being photographed did not help. On the morning of Friday, February 15, a liaison officer of the Czechoslovak General Staff told Captain Johnson, an assistant military attaché at the American Embassy, that Richards, Urquhart, and Fulton had been arrested for their part in the incident near Stechovice. The liaison officer said it was the intention of his government not to release the trio until the crates were returned and an explanation was given. He refused Johnson's request to see the arrestees.(3)

By their treatment of the arrestees the Czechoslovaks probably hoped to bring pressure to bear on both them and the American government. Keeping the three incommunicado without any

prospect for release would make them feel isolated and perhaps even abandoned by the United States. If the Czechoslovaks got lucky one of them would break and confess in order to be released. If that did not happen then Czechoslovak officials, in order to get the embassy to be as compliant as possible, could give it information embarrassing to the U.S. Government allegedly obtained from the arrestees. As long as access to them was denied the information could not be verified. That tactic was tried twice on February 15 by military authorities. A liaison officer claimed to Captain Johnson that the arrestees had made a "full and voluntary confession." Similarly, a contact at the General Staff told Ambassador Steinhardt that Captain Richards had admitted participating in the operation and to being an expert in explosives.(4)

Although Steinhardt did not mention it in his report to the State Department, the details he was told cast doubt on the assertion that the arrestees had confessed. Steinhardt's contact said that the group crossed into Czechoslovakia in eight trucks, used explosives to blow open the entrance to a hidden underground passage, and removed twenty crates. If the incorrect information did not come from the arrestees, Czechoslovak authorities could have reached the wrong conclusions from other sources. In searching the cave site they would have found the disarmed explosives, and could have deduced that explosives were used to blow open the entrance. The fact that Captain Richards was an explosives expert was evident to those who knew the meaning of the red bomb sleeve patch on his winter coat.(5)

One true thing which Steinhardt was told on February 15 made his position even more uncomfortable than it had been two days earlier. Referring to Richards' travel orders, Steinhardt cabled Washington that "the papers in the captain's possession are said to indicate that they were issued by G-1 USFET MAIN." In his telegram reporting the conversation on February 13 between Czechoslovak authorities and the military attaché's office, Steinhardt had laconically asked the State Department for instructions on how to explain to Czechoslovak authorities "the unusual procedure"

followed by the team from Frankfurt. Although the telegram dealt with an embarrassing situation that was threatening to seriously damage relations between the United States and Czechoslovakia, the cable was marked for only routine handling. That meant communications personnel would give it the least expeditious processing possible. By contrast, given the additional complications which had since come to light, Steinhardt reported to the State Department his February 15 conversation with Czechoslovak authorities in a telegram marked "urgent." In it, he requested the State Department to inform the War Department that it appeared the operation was "authorized at a high level" and therefore Czechoslovak authorities would probably not be placated by "any promised disciplinary action at a low level." He recommended that if the Czechoslovak assertions were true he be instructed to make a formal apology for the infringement of sovereignty, and that if possible the crates be returned unopened. After the apology he could then obtain the documents in "the customary manner," by which he probably meant a formal request by the embassy to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.(6)

Even if the War Department and USFET Frankfurt had wanted to, it was no longer possible to return the crates unopened. On February 14 the two 6 x 6 trucks backed up to the MISC warehouse in Fechenheim, and German POWs carried the crates inside, ignorant of their contents. The same day the MISC document team opened the crates and started cataloguing their contents.(7) Lt. Colonel Spiegel personally supervised the work, while Lieutenants Owen and Silberbauer joyfully looked over the impressive stacks of documents put on tables for examination. By early the next week preliminary analysis made clear that the crates were a treasure, not in art or precious metals, but in documentation. Murphy told the State Department the treasure included:

— Archives of the German occupation office for Bohemia and Moravia from 1940 to March 1945;
— Gestapo and SD files on Bohemia and Moravia;

— President Edward Benes' official files from 1918 to 1939;
— Benes' personal files from 1928 to 1938; and,
— Inventories of treasures in various castles in Bohemia.(8)

While Ambassadors Steinhardt and Murphy had been communicating with the State Department, USFET Frankfurt and the military attaché's office in Prague had been informing the War Department of developments. On Tuesday, February 19, members of the War Department from the intelligence division (G-2) and the Operations Division (OPD) went to the State Department to discuss how to handle the crisis. As the unit which normally had liaison with USFET G-2, the intelligence division was the lead office in handling the crisis for the War Department. OPD, not to be confused with the traditional G-3 staff division, had been created during World War II to help plan strategy and ensure that the War Department's strategic directives were being faithfully carried out. It had become more powerful than the four traditional staff divisions and in 1946 was still an influential bureaucratic force.(9)

The State Department representatives told their War Department counterparts they thought the objectives of the U.S. Government in handling the incident should be to:

— Avoid publicity;
— Keep the documents;
— Have the arrested Americans released; and,
— Reestablish good relations and avoid complications with the Czechoslovak government.

Those objectives were rather optimistic, if not unrealistic, given the position enunciated by Czechoslovak authorities that they would not release the American trio until the crates were returned and an explanation given. Nonetheless, the State Department thought the objectives could be achieved if Ambassador Steinhardt apologized and a member of the Czechoslovak intelligence service was invited to examine the seized documents.(10)

On Wednesday, February 20, USFET G-2 was informed telephonically by War Department G-2 of the results of the conference, and requested to solicit the views of USFET Commander in Chief McNarney and Ambassador Murphy. The two individuals discussed the situation. McNarney approved Murphy's proposal that the U.S. Government contact Lt. General Palacek, who was both head of the Czechoslovak Military Mission in Berlin and a representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with the rank of ambassador. Palacek could be told that first, the Czechoslovak government was not informed of the mission ahead of time simply for reasons of operational security, and second, the United States had always intended to share with Czechoslovak authorities whatever information was obtained from the crates, of whose contents the United States only had a vague idea in advance. McNarney and Murphy also agreed that if the United States could reach agreement with the Czechoslovaks on sharing the information or returning the documents, it would not be necessary either to make an apology or, as USFET was requesting, to issue a press release.(11)

Further developments, however, quickly torpedoed the rosy hopes of American officials in Germany. On February 18 the American Embassy in Prague received a diplomatic note from the Foreign Ministry dated February 15. Although the note did not use the word "protest," the language made it clear that the Czechoslovak government would not let the United States blithely talk its way out of the situation. The Czechoslovaks objected to the "patent infringement upon the sovereignty" of their country, requested an explanation "within the shortest possible time," and expressed the expectation that the removed material would be returned.(12)

The telegram from the Embassy in Prague reporting the content of the diplomatic note was received at the State Department's Office of European Affairs on February 21. The harsh tone of the note, coupled with the discussions that had been going on within Washington, D.C. and between the War Department and USFET, helped ensure that the telegram would be handled

more expeditiously, and at a higher level, than had been the case with Steinhardt's earlier communications on the subject. That evening Secretary of State James F. Byrnes discussed the matter with Secretary of War Robert P. Patterson. They agreed that Ambassador Steinhardt should apologize to the Czechoslovak government and inform it of the contents of the crates. Furthermore, he was also to say that the documents would be returned, and details of the operation would be given to the Czechoslovak government by American military authorities.

With the War Department in concurrence, on February 22 the State Department sent an "urgent" and "top secret" telegram to Ambassador Steinhardt authorizing him to make an apology to President Benes. By way of explanation Steinhardt was to say that the operation was undertaken by American military authorities in Germany "without the knowledge or approval of the US Government," and that details would be furnished to Lt. General Palacek. Steinhardt was also authorized to explain that the operation was designed to obtain secret documents buried by the Nazis. Their contents had only become known after they were examined, and instructions had been sent to Germany to return them to Benes.(13)

Up to that point there had been no mention of the incident in the press. Now, at the same time it was becoming clear that the United States would not be able to keep the documents, it was evident that publicity could no longer be avoided. The Czechoslovak Ministry of Interior issued a statement on February 19 assuring the population that rumors of sabotage to the dam in Stechovice and potential flooding of Prague were unfounded. The statement added somewhat cryptically that the rumors had been caused by "another incident" which was under investigation.(14)

Although the Western press did not pick up that report, it did carry several items about travel restrictions to Czechoslovakia. The first item, datelined February 19 in Vienna and published the next day in *The New York Times*, stated that the American military had closed the border to American military personnel, "apparently by the Czechoslovak Government's request." The report said two

explanations were circulating for the closure. One was that American soldiers had entered Czechoslovakia and committed robberies there; the other was that American officers had stolen "diplomatic documents" and fled to Austria. The second item, datelined February 20 in Frankfurt and published the next day in the European edition of the *Stars and Stripes*, reported that the military attaché at the American Embassy in Prague had informed USFET that "effective February 17 no clearance would be granted for travel to or within Czechoslovakia."(15)

The genesis of those press reports was one indication that internally the Czechoslovak government had problems of communication and coordination over the documents. On February 15 a member of the Czechoslovak General Staff told Ambassador Steinhardt that the border had been closed to Americans at 2:00 A.M. on February 13. That was not accurate, as Owen's group crossed the border two hours later that day. But clearly all American military personnel would be carefully scrutinized at the border, if not prohibited from crossing it, until the crisis was resolved. There was also evidence that civilians as well would be subject to closer inspection. Members of the Anglo-American Palestinian Committee of Inquiry, who were carrying diplomatic passports with Czechoslovak visas, were delayed for considerable time before they were allowed by Czechoslovak officials to cross the border from Germany. That occurred on either February 13 or February 14; embassy reporting on the group gave conflicting dates. Based on these developments, Ambassador Steinhardt and his military attaché office reported through their respective channels to the State Department and War Department that the border was closed, at least to American military personnel and vehicles.(16)

On Friday, February 22, the Czechoslovak press, citing official sources, denied Western press reports that the border had been closed, but pointedly explained that vehicles crossing to the west were being searched more carefully for reasons that must be "only too well known to US Army circles in Frankfurt." During that morning Foreign Minister Jan Masaryk confirmed to Ambassador Steinhardt that in fact the Czechoslovak government had not closed

the border to Americans, but had increased inspections until the whereabouts of the crates from Stechovice could be confirmed. Nevertheless, the initial, incorrect reports about closing of the border raised concern among persons in the United States interested in visiting Czechoslovakia for familial or other reasons. These concerns were relayed to Congress, eventually generating numerous inquiries to the State Department from Capitol Hill about the situation.(17)

Moreover, by February 21 news about the mission to Stechovice had been picked up by Western reporters besides Lionel Shapiro. American military intelligence learned that a Swedish reporter had sent a somewhat incorrect version of the operation to Stockholm, and the State Department told Ambassador Murphy that "complete details" were known in the United States about the mission, including the contents of the documents. Interestingly, France was cited as the source of the leaks. American officials in Germany believed that Lionel Shapiro had probably heard about plans for the mission from the French, and the State Department surmised that the French had informed the Paris bureau of the *New York Herald Tribune* about developments.(18)

More importantly, several sources indicated that the French informed the Czechoslovaks about the documents before the Owen-Richards team arrived in Prague. The reports disagreed on some of the few details they provided. On February 20 Ambassador Steinhardt was told by a member of the Czechoslovak General Staff that the French had informed authorities, not further specified, just one day before the operation arrived exactly where the documents were, and requested that the Czechoslovaks remove them. A reliable source of the SSU reported in March 1946 that Colonel Reicin, chief of the Ministry of Defense's secret police, the OBZ, alleged that the French informed General Bartik of the location of the Stechovice documents while he, Bartik, was the Ministry of Interior's intelligence chief. Reicin accused Bartik and his assistant, Dr. Zavadil, of "withholding the information." The date of the French report was not given, but because Bartik left his position in late January, it must have been at least two to three

weeks before the Owen-Richards team reached Prague. Finally, an article appearing on April 3, 1946, in *Svobodne Slovo*, the official newspaper of the Czechoslovak National Socialist Party, alleged that the Czechoslovak intelligence and security services had knowledge of the documents for "months" without taking any action. The article did not say who informed the authorities, but is interesting because of the length of time mentioned.(19)

It is unlikely that the French informed the Czechoslovak government about the Stechovice documents just before the "Hidden Documents" team arrived. The French government would not have wanted to risk the embarrassment of having two of its officials caught in the act of violating Czechoslovak sovereignty. The General Staff member's assertion about the French request was apparently an example of the incredible statements made by Czechoslovak authorities to Ambassador Steinhardt about the operation. He was told another one during his conversation with the General Staff on February 15, when it was alleged that while at the cave the "Hidden Documents" group shot at least once at Czechoslovak authorities.(20) None of the reports by the group's members mentions any hostile action, and the lack of difficulty the team had in leaving the site suggests local authorities neither sent reinforcements to the area nor cordoned it off after the alleged shooting.

A more plausible scenario is that after interviewing Achenbach the French first informed Czechoslovak authorities about his story, and offered to let the POW show them where the documents were. The French did not get a positive response within a reasonable length of time, and then approached the Americans, neglecting to tell them about their earlier communication with the Czechoslovaks on the subject.

If that is in fact what happened, then the question becomes why Czechoslovak authorities did not act on the information. The answer probably lies in the deep ideological division within the Czechoslovak government. Those who received the information from the French may have feared that if politically sensitive information was taken from the cave it would be misused for some partisan, ideological purpose. If General Bartik received the French

report, he could have feared that communists, who dominated the security and intelligence apparatus, would monopolize whatever was found. He therefore might have elected to do nothing until he thought the Czechoslovak government would use the information in an unbiased fashion. If in fact Bartik thought this way, his fears were well founded. In early February 1946, shortly after he left his post, demands by the National Socialist Party were first made public that the Ministry of Interior and security organizations be made more nonpartisan, thereby reducing Communist Party influence in them. Later in the year, after allegations surfaced that Communist Party members were abusing the judicial process to discredit their political opponents, the Ministry of Justice announced that it would no longer accept the testimony of former Gestapo members during the trials of suspected wartime Nazi collaborators. General Bartik's successor, a Communist Party member, was believed to be at the forefront of those abuses.(21)

Regardless of who initially leaked the information, reporters in the United States were not going to let a very unusual and intriguing story drop. On Saturday, February 23, "Hidden Documents" was raised by several reporters with Secretary of State Byrnes in his office. Even though USFET had been requesting for a week a press statement from Washington, the War and State Departments had agreed not to make one until Ambassador Steinhardt had a chance to see President Benes. Now they could not wait any longer. James W. Riddleberger, Chief of the Division of Central European Affairs since January 1944 and a respected expert on Germany, had been the primary decision maker handling the crisis in the State Department. He was informed at home about the Saturday press inquiries, immediately drafted a press release, and phoned it in to the State Department. It was issued the same day, after approval by Secretary Byrnes.(22)

The press release stated that an American detachment from Germany had removed documents from Czechoslovakia which it believed had information about Hitler's planning for World War II and German operations during the war. It added that clearance for the operation had not been granted by the Czechoslovak

government, and that the American government had expressed its "deep regret" to President Benes and "ordered an immediate return of the documents."(23)

That the American, like the Czechoslovak, government suffered from a lack of communication and coordination over the incident was revealed in two incorrect or misleading statements made in the press release. First, on that Saturday Ambassador Steinhardt called on the foreign minister, not President Benes, because the latter was not in Prague. Masaryk readily accepted the apology and the explanation that the U.S. Government had not known about and had not approved the operation. He said the incident would be closed when the documents were returned.(24)

Second, and more substantively, as Riddleberger learned in a conversation that day with Col. John Lovell of War Department G-2, instructions had not been sent to USFET to return the documents. Riddleberger pointed out that the omission was undermining resolution of the incident, to which Lovell said he would correct the situation. During their conversation Riddleberger and Lovell also discussed what to do about Shapiro, who at USFET's request was still sitting on an exclusive, first-hand report of the top-secret mission. They agreed that given the recent press statements it no longer made any sense to keep embargoing his story. Lovell concurred with Riddleberger's suggestion that the embargo be lifted, as long as USFET first reviewed the reporter's draft for security purposes.(25)

Shapiro's colorful and dramatic account of the mission was prominently carried by *The New York Times* on Monday, February 25, in a long two-column item on page 2. The story also ran in newspapers in Cleveland, St. Louis, Milwaukee, Washington, D.C., and Youngstown, Ohio. As published, Shapiro's story named only four members of the team, Achenbach, Richards, Fulton, and Urquhart. He noted that the three explosives experts had been arrested on February 13 and "All efforts by the American Embassy to obtain their liberty have failed thus far."(26)

Unbeknown to Shapiro, on February 19 Richards had tried on his own to regain his liberty. Around noon, when most soldiers

were eating, he slipped pass the orderly room, went down the stairs, and out of the building. Armed with a map of Prague which his captors had not taken from him, he managed to walk one block away when he heard running behind him. He too began running, but within several blocks was slowed down by a soldier in front of him. That allowed the others to catch up. After being pushed down face first onto the ground and punched several times, Richards was taken back, where the chief of the guards told him he would be shot if he tried to escape again.

To Richards' good fortune, the escape attempt actually improved his treatment. A suave captain he had not seen before immediately visited him and repeated what had been said before, that he was a "guest," not a prisoner. More concretely, Richards' room was immaculately cleaned, English-language books were brought to him, the food got better, and wine was served with every meal. High-pressure questioning of him was dropped in favor of a low-key approach, done at the end of visits that were made to appear for social, not interrogation reasons. One of these visits again demonstrated a lack of timely internal coordination in the Czechoslovak government over the documents. On February 25, two days after the Americans promised to Foreign Minister Masaryk the return of the documents from Germany, Richards was told that a high-ranking officer had guaranteed the trio's liberty if they revealed the number and location of the crates.

Interestingly, there is no indication in the telegrams between the State Department and American Embassy in Prague that the possibility was ever raised of Ambassador Steinhardt demanding access to the three prisoners by an American official. The only requests for access appear to have been made by Captain Johnson to members of the Czechoslovak General Staff. That is somewhat surprising, since there was no disagreement that the prisoners were American citizens and had entered the country with passes issued by the Czechoslovak government. Perhaps the ambassador thought that the trio's military status and mission took them beyond the bounds of representation by civilian diplomats. Or, he may have thought that because progress was being made on resolving the

entire matter, a protest over the lack of access to the three was unnecessary.

In any event, the subject appeared moot on Monday, February 25, when Steinhardt sent a telegram about the arrestees to the State Department. The substantive part of the message said in full, "I have arranged for the immediate release of Capt. Richards, Sgt. Urquart [*sic*], and Sgt. Fulton." The telegram differed from the ambassador's normal style of reporting on Operation "Hidden Documents" in two significant aspects, a departure which was especially remarkable given the important news that his message contained. First, Steinhardt did not name or even characterize in any manner the source of his information. Second, the report gave no further details, such as why Czechoslovak authorities had apparently changed their negotiating position on the three detained Americans. Steinhardt's report was received with joy by the State Department, which was "highly pleased" that the trio was going to be released "without protracted negotiations and bargaining."(27)

The source of Steinhardt's information, whoever it was, had raised false hopes. The Czechoslovaks still had no intention of giving up their key bargaining chips until the documents were returned. Events were in motion, however, which before long would result in meeting the Czechoslovak demand. During a meeting with the ambassador, on either February 25 or 26, President Benes, who like Foreign Minister Masaryk graciously accepted Steinhardt's apology, requested that the documents not be unloaded at the embassy, but instead taken directly to his, Benes', palace office.(28) By the time of that discussion, the War Department had sent the necessary instructions to USFET so that preparations could begin for the return of the documents.

To complete arrangements for the transfer, Lt. General Palacek visited USFET offices in the Frankfurt area on Wednesday, February 27. American authorities described to him the elaborate measures used to booby trap the cave near Stechovice, and how the explosives had been deactivated. They also expressed their regrets that Czechoslovak authorities had not been advised in advance of the

operation. Like President Benes and Foreign Minister Masaryk, Palacek was most understanding and anxious to resolve the incident, and said that the matter would be closed when the documents were returned.(29)

After the documents were put back in, the crates were closed and sealed in the presence of Czechoslovak officers. Under the command of Brig. Gen. Egbert F. Koenig, the new American military attaché to Czechoslovakia, the crates were loaded into trucks which left Fechenheim on the afternoon of Friday, March 1.(30)

Meanwhile, back in Prague, Captain Richards had landed in the Czechoslovak military hospital. His throat had become badly infected, preventing him for several days from eating and practically talking. On March 1 his throat was lanced. He was making a rapid recovery when the next day, at about 6:30 P.M., the smooth-talking captain visited him in the hospital and asked if he would like to see some of the capital at night.

Richards jumped at the chance and dressed up, expecting to visit a night club or fancy restaurant. To his surprise, he was taken instead to President Benes' palace. To his greater astonishment he saw there the thirty-two crates of documents which not long before had arrived from Germany. For the occasion he was reunited with Urquhart and Fulton, whom he had not seen for three weeks. The trio was taken back to the General Staff building for a dinner with wine.

The Czechoslovak officers made a party of the occasion, trying to make the three forget their difficult "guest" status during the past several weeks. Although the detainees were not in a mood to treat their hosts as long-lost friends, they were at least relieved to know that their ordeal was coming to an end. The next morning they were released, and spent the rest of the day gathering all of their equipment.

In a few days the trio was back in Germany and Lt. General Palacek was back in Berlin. Palacek told Ambassador Murphy how impressed he was with the courage and skill of the explosives team in disarming a sophisticated system designed simultaneously to kill anyone tampering with it and to destroy all the documents.

Palacek also appreciatively noted the complete cooperation he had received from American authorities in Frankfurt.(31)

It seemed, at least from the perspective of American military personnel in Germany and the War Department, that "all's well that ends well." Military Attaché Koenig reported to the War Department on March 3, 1946, that the former arrestees had left the country, and the incident had been "satisfactorily terminated." From one perspective, things had turned out well. President Benes and Lt. General Palacek had expressed complete satisfaction with the cooperation of American authorities. Although two of the objectives discussed at the February 19 interdepartmental conference in Washington had not been attained, at least the documents had been extricated without human injury, and the explosives experts had been released unharmed. All the documents had to be returned, but before then FIAT personnel apparently had been able to microfilm those of greatest interest to the American government.(32)

Personnel at the American Embassy in Prague and at the State Department in Washington, D.C. could not be so sanguine. The objective of re-establishing good relations between the United States and Czechoslovakia had been achieved because Benes and Masaryk said that would occur when the documents were returned. However, the Stechovice incident had provided potent ammunition for those not friendly to the long-term interests of the United States in Czechoslovakia. Those interests were varied, but perhaps at the top of the list was the re-establishment of a vibrant democracy. The urgent attention and skillful handling of Ambassador Steinhardt and his staff were needed to disarm the explosive material that could be used in the upcoming months to undermine American interests.

Chapter 13

Hooray for the Cowboys

Between the world wars Czechoslovakia had the healthiest, most diverse economy and strongest democracy in Eastern Europe. In many ways it had been more like a Western than an Eastern European country. Diplomatic and military developments during World War II, however, created serious obstacles to the re-establishment of democracy.

One of the biggest controversies remaining from World War II concerns the wartime Allied conferences. One popular belief is that over the course of their meetings the leaders of the Big Three, that is, the United States, the Soviet Union, and Great Britain, carved up Europe into spheres of influence. According to this theory, Britain and the United States agreed that all of Eastern Europe would be under the hegemony of the Soviet Union. Strange as it may seem at first, with the exception of Poland, Soviet domination in Eastern Europe, including Czechoslovakia, came about not because of a sinister political arrangement among the Big Three, but because of the lack of one.

British Prime Minister Churchill was a great foe of communism ever since the Bolsheviks took power in Russia in 1917. He was too much of a realist to believe that Stalin's lessened hostility to Western democracy and capitalism after June 1941 was anything more than tactical maneuvering in order to get Western assistance to defeat the Nazis and preserve communist power in the Soviet Union. To avoid the possible domination of Moscow over all of southeast Europe, as well as to help preserve the British Empire, Churchill wanted spheres of influence demarcated. He went to

Moscow in October 1944 and agreed with Stalin on the proportions of influence to be exercised by Great Britain and the Soviet Union in Greece, Rumania, Yugoslavia, and Hungary.(1)

President Roosevelt did not share Churchill's approach, and sent a message to Stalin that the United States would not be bound by any agreement between the two European leaders. Partly this was a reflection of Roosevelt's practical desire for his country to be included in any discussion on important matters. On a more theoretical level, he believed that policies like spheres of influence and balance of power had led to wars in the past and were obsolete. Roosevelt, and his successor President Truman, thought the best chance for world peace and progress would be through collective security with Stalin and other leaders in the United Nations, of which the United States and the Soviet Union would be charter members.

It was apparent by the end of 1944 that Stalin thought more in terms of spheres of influence than collective security when it came to Eastern Europe, including the Balkans. The American Embassy in Moscow reported in early January 1945 that as the Red Army liberated territory the Kremlin used a variety of means to ensure that governments were installed which were outwardly independent, but in fact stayed in power only through the goodwill of the Soviet Union.(2) For this purpose Moscow used its armed forces as a political as well as a military weapon.

By the conclusion of the Yalta Conference in February 1945 the Big Three had agreed to the establishment of zones of occupation in Germany and Austria, and to the creation in Poland of a government sympathetic to the Soviet Union. The manner of the liberation and occupation of the rest of Eastern Europe, however, was left open. Which troops would liberate and occupy that area would result from the progress they made on the battlefield against the Axis. As Allied forces coming from the east and the west approached each other, their commanders were authorized by their political superiors to negotiate lines between Western and Soviet zones of military operations.

After the German entry into the Sudetenland in 1938 and the occupation of the rest of Bohemia and Moravia the following year,

some members of the Czechoslovak government, including President Benes, fled to London. Others went to Moscow. Similarly, exile Czechoslovak military forces were trained in both England and the Soviet Union. On the question of which Allied forces would first enter Czechoslovakia, in 1943 geographical factors favored those coming from the east, not the west. The Soviet Union was partly occupied, but shared a common border with Czechoslovakia, while Allied forces coming from England would have to gain a foothold on the Continent, cross the entire country of France, and then go through part of Germany. In April 1944, two months before the Allied landings in Normandy, Soviet and Czechoslovak exile troops reached the border in the region of Ruthenia (Carpatho-Ukraine), at the eastern tip of Czechoslovakia.(3)

Tough German resistance in Poland, the Balkans, and Hungary helped delay liberation coming from the east. Soviet and exile forces crossed into Czechoslovakia in October 1944. By March 1945 much of Slovakia had been liberated, and it seemed that before long Soviet forces would be in Bohemia. Czechoslovak leaders from the liberated areas and London, including President Benes, traveled to Moscow to negotiate with Czechoslovak leaders exiled there on the formation of a new cabinet to travel as soon as possible to liberated territory.

The advance toward Prague from the east did not go as quickly as expected, however, and in late April Soviet troops were further from the capital than the American Third Army. At that time Churchill and other British officials requested that American forces for political reasons liberate as much as possible of the western part of Czechoslovakia, including Prague. The State Department agreed with the British view, and proposed to President Truman on May 5 that American forces go to the Moldau River, which flows through Prague.(4) Picking up the theme which the American Embassy in Moscow sounded the previous January, on May 8 the State Department informed Ambassador Murphy, then political advisor at SHAEF, that Soviet troops were apparently trying to occupy as much territory as possible "to further Russian political aims in Europe."(5)

By the time State Department supported the British request, events had moved too far in the other direction. General Eisenhower told General Marshall that he would move his forces for political purposes, thereby going against the policy of both the White House and Pentagon, only if the Combined Chiefs of Staff so authorized him. That authorization never came. Eisenhower informed the Soviets on April 30 that he intended to hold positions on the prewar German-Czech border, but could move as far as a line running through the Czech cities of Karlsbad, Pilsen, and Ceske Budejovice. On May 4, when the Americans still could have easily reached Prague first, Eisenhower offered to send the Third Army as far as the west bank of the Moldau. The Soviets did not accept, and strongly suggested that he hold the Karlsbad-Pilsen-Ceske Budejovice line.(6) And so, American forces did not go to Prague in 1945 for one of the same reasons why they did not go to Baghdad in 1991, namely, an unwillingness to subordinate military considerations to political ones.

Even if Washington had decided to let the Third Army liberate at least part of Prague, communist influence in Czechoslovakia would still have been strong, because of the outcome of the March 1945 negotiations in Moscow. Out of twenty-two senior-level positions in the new government, Communist Party members or sympathizers received nine, consisting of prime minister, both deputy prime ministers, and ministers of defense, interior, information, education, agriculture, and labor and social welfare.(7) The party thus acquired a higher level of influence in the government than it had in the country as a whole, exercising control over many key sectors, including all of the security services and much of the media.

A difference of opinion existed in the American government on whether the new cabinet would owe its allegiance first to Moscow or to Prague. George F. Kennan, probably the United States' most perceptive expert on the Soviet Union, was in 1945 minister-counselor at the American Embassy in Moscow. Kennan knew well the new prime minister, Zdenek Fierlinger, as the latter had been Czechoslovak ambassador to the Soviet Union. Fierlinger

was a member of the Social Democrat Party, but Kennan believed that he was a communist sympathizer and essentially a Soviet agent. Kennan had also been observing the behavior of the other Czechoslovaks exiled in Moscow, and thought the new government was a "stooge" of the Kremlin. Moreover, Kennan's long experience with Soviet communism and the few reports he had on Soviet activity in the newly liberated areas led him to believe that Moscow was maneuvering to have the Communist Party take full control in Czechoslovakia. In short, Kennan believed it was mistake to think that a truly independent government was being re-established in Czechoslovakia.(8)

Benes was deeply committed to democracy and did not like the composition of the new cabinet. Stalin admitted to him during one of their meetings in March 1945 that Soviet policy had previously been to establish communist control in the rest of Europe. The Soviet leader claimed, however, that the policy had changed, and that European communist parties would now work in the interests of their own countries. Stalin confided that based on his knowledge of them over the previous five years the Czechoslovak communist leaders in Moscow were ideologically too narrow. He even suggested that Benes should work to make them more flexible. Benes' optimism trumped the bitter lessons of his personal experience and knowledge of history. He told American Ambassador to the Soviet Union Averell Harriman that the real problem was not Soviet interference, but rather the Czechoslovak leaders themselves. Benes also said he thought that he could control Fierlinger, and that the communists would lose strength when the cabinet was reorganized after Bohemia and Moravia were liberated.(9)

Even after the communists blocked a reorganization of the cabinet in October 1945, Benes remained optimistic. He confided to Ambassador Steinhardt that he thought Minister of Information Vaclav Kopecky was an agent of the Kremlin, but that all other communist cabinet members were Czechoslovak patriots first.(10) Realizing that the Soviet Union would never let a European nation on its border adopt a hostile foreign policy, Benes hoped that

Czechoslovakia could at least keep its independence in internal affairs. He aimed to moderate the beliefs and activities of the communist cabinet members, so that internally democracy would again take root, and externally Czechoslovakia would benefit economically by cordial relations with all major powers and relevant international organizations.

The American Embassy in Prague shared more of Benes' optimism than Kennan's pessimism. It recognized that Czechoslovak foreign policy was heavily under the influence of Moscow, a relationship most clearly demonstrated when Prague authorities passively accepted the incorporation of Ruthenia into the Soviet Union in June 1945. But the embassy did not believe that a total takeover of the country by Moscow was inevitable. In part this was due to the embassy's appreciation of Benes' impact on the political scene after his return via the Soviet Union to Czechoslovakia in April 1945. It was obvious that he was by far the most popular person in the country, enjoying a nonpartisan respect and affection transcending his membership in the National Socialist Party.(11) The embassy's strategy in essence was to support Benes in his efforts to strengthen moderates in the government and to limit the appeal of communism.

In October 1945 a Provisional National Assembly was constituted, composed of two hundred Czechs and one hundred Slovaks. Some seats went to nominally independent industrial and agricultural associations, but most seats were equally divided between the legal political parties: the Communist, Social Democratic, National Socialist, and People's Democratic Parties in Bohemia and Moravia; and the Communist and Democratic Parties in Slovakia.(12)

The Provisional National Assembly was to be replaced after general, direct, and secret elections were held to elect representatives on a proportional basis. Many Slovaks had been were dissatisfied with the regime in Prague between the world wars, believing that the Czechs did not live up to earlier promises to give autonomy to Slovakia. During World War II Czechoslovak leaders agreed that upon regaining its independence the country would have two

national assemblies, one for Bohemia and Moravia, and the other for Slovakia.(13) Later, elections for the assemblies were scheduled for May 26, 1946.

In handling the thorny Stechovice incident Ambassador Steinhardt immediately perceived that he had one important goal in addition to the four enunciated by the State Department on February 19: limiting the damage done to moderate, pro-Western political forces in Czechoslovakia, especially in the period before the National Assembly elections. This was clearly shown by his actions, notably those during a February 23 meeting with Foreign Minister Masaryk, described below. The State Department's Division of Central European Affairs also recognized the problem, telling Steinhardt by telegram on February 28 that it hoped he could take steps "to offset any journalistic or political advantages" for unfriendly forces arising from the incident.(14)

The Communist Party had several historical and organizational advantages in its electoral struggle against other political parties. A large working class had been formed during the industrialization of Bohemia and Moravia in the 19th century. Unlike the situation in the rest of Eastern Europe, the Communist Party had not been outlawed during the interwar period. It had gained considerable influence over the working class in Bohemia and Moravia, as well as among the poor peasants in Slovakia and Ruthenia. In addition, both Czechs and Slovaks were Slavs. They had traditionally looked to Russia as a protector, especially against Germany.(15) More recently, the Soviet Union, and by association the Communist Party, garnered the appreciation of many Czechs and Slovaks when the Red Army liberated most of the country. That helped reinforce the view of many Czechoslovaks that the Soviet Union would be their natural ally against any future German aggression.

In the wake of the liberating Soviet Army, local communists took control of the National Committees, which, despite their name, temporarily handled local and regional government functions. Early in the spring of 1945, when Prague was still in German hands, Moscow sent an ambassador to the new Czechoslovak government temporarily installed in the Slovak town

of Kosice, but blocked Western diplomats from going there by denying them transit across the Soviet Union. Similarly, the National Committees discriminated against noncommunist parties when providing organizational facilities to political organizations. Likewise, communists, who were overrepresented in the national cabinet, often used their positions in government ministries to increase popular support for the party. For example, they took the lead in both distributing land from ethnic Germans who had fled the country, and distributing food aid provided by the United Nations. On the whole, the Communist Party was more disciplined than the other parties. In addition, their control of the armed forces and police intimidated noncommunist members. Fear of physical reprisals may have been a major reason for the lack of greater forcefulness and unity among moderates against the communists.(16)

Although the scales seemed tipped against them, the more moderate parties had several things in their favor. As noted above, President Benes was the most the most influential individual in the country. Pro-Western feeling was still strong in many quarters. Many Czechoslovaks knew that President Wilson had been instrumental in gaining independence for their country at the end of World War I. The American Third Army's liberation of part of western Bohemia had earned the deep appreciation of its inhabitants. Afterward, U.S. forces provided their own rations and were much better behaved than the Soviet Army, whose behavior created widespread resentment. One of the latter's unpopular practices was stealing all of the furniture and other valuables from the many houses it commandeered for temporary use. In one particularly flagrant example of trying to live off the land, Soviet soldiers attempted to seize a large quantity of sugar from a refinery guarded by Czechoslovak soldiers, desisting only when the guards fired shots over their liberators' heads. As it did to many other people around the world, the United States stood in the mind of many Czechoslovaks as the land of promise, with great economic opportunity and political freedom. Captain Richards had discovered during his detention that this feeling extended even to

many of the enlisted ranks in the Czechoslovak army, despite the efforts of the Soviet Union to indoctrinate the armed forces with communist ideology.(17) And the fact that at the end of the war the Soviet Union unilaterally annexed Ruthenia, formerly part of Czechoslovakia, could not have generated much goodwill toward Moscow in the rest of the country.

Not surprisingly, initially the Stechovice incident was roundly criticized by all Czechoslovak political parties. The first public Czechoslovak report describing it, issued by the official news agency, was very negative toward the United States. Carried in local newspapers on the morning of February 23, it characterized the Stechovice mission as "an infringement of Czechoslovak sovereignty." *Mlada Fronta*, the newspaper of the pro-communist youth association, headlined the operation a "hostile act."(18)

Naturally, the communists were delighted with the propaganda possibilities. Thousands of both Soviet and American troops had been stationed in Czechoslovakia until they simultaneously withdrew in December 1945. (President Benes, not wanting Moscow to exercise any more influence on Czechoslovak affairs than necessary, informally asked the U.S. Government not to withdraw its troops before the Soviet Union did.)(19) Although some complaints had been made about the behavior of American troops, Soviet forces had caused wider resentment with their more egregious conduct. Stechovice handed the communists a tool to make the Czechoslovaks forget about the misbehavior of their eastern liberators, who, as Stalin admitted to President Benes, had not been angels.(20)

Foreign Minister Masaryk was not a member of any political party. The son of the father of modern Czechoslovakia, Thomas G. Masaryk, he was, like Benes, one of the major moderating forces in the government. During their meeting on February 23, Masaryk, at Ambassador Steinhardt's suggestion, drafted a foreign ministry press release to help counteract the unfavorable publicity the American government was receiving. The statement was carried in all Prague newspapers the next day and was helpful in widely publicizing the American apology and promise to return the boxes.

In fact, *Mlada Fronta* headlined its story on the apology with "Stolen Cases Will Be Immediately Returned." The statement also described in general terms the contents of the cases, which helped end the public rumors which had spread in the absence of reliable information. Before the announcement, speculation on the contents of the cases varied from jewels taken from Jews by the Nazis, to some kind of information (not specified) that was embarrassing to the United States, to German research on either atomic energy or V-1 and V-2 rockets.(21)

The statement, however, could not erase the fact that, regardless of what level of the American government had approved the operation, the crates had been removed without any Czechoslovak authorization. During the next week editorials in Prague newspapers across the ideological spectrum condemned the United States for its violation of Czechoslovak sovereignty.(22)

Criticism by moderate elements subsequently abated, but, hoping to gain an advantage for the upcoming elections, the leftists kept attacking on several fronts. An article in *Rude Pravo*, the Communist Party newspaper, negatively contrasted the violation of Czechoslovak sovereignty with the correct behavior by Western governments toward Franco's fascist regime in Spain. In the Provisional National Assembly one Communist Party deputy alleged on March 8 that the documents returned to President Benes might not have been the ones taken out of the country. His comments were prominently carried in the Soviet Union's press on March 13.(23)

Because Operation "Hidden Documents" had been launched from Germany, critics of the United States could also play on the deep-seated fears in Czechoslovakia of its neighbor to the west. One newspaper editorial referred to the kidnapping by the Gestapo of a Czechoslovak citizen in 1935, and reminded its readers that the Americans used a German POW in its operation to get the documents. Even though German armed forces had been dissolved, the editorial also called on the Prague government to guard against machinations in Czechoslovakia by "the Reich military and police."(24)

Like any American embassy, the one in Prague used several avenues to try to influence inhabitants in the host country. One way was to emphasize positive factors. Embassy personnel maintained personal contact with civilian and military decision makers to try to persuade them about the correctness of American positions on various issues. The general public could be reached by placing items favorable to the United States in the local media. Like most embassies, the one in Prague regularly reported on articles and editorials in the media about the United States.(25)

Another approach was to remove or avoid factors which might have negative effects. Ambassador Steinhardt felt the major one involved American military personnel. Many Czechoslovak officials and ordinary citizens were anxious to have American military personnel make personal or official visits. Not only were passes to enter the country easy to obtain, but once in the country there were no travel restrictions on Americans. Ambassador Steinhardt and Military Attaché Koenig both believed that the conduct of many American military personnel in Czechoslovakia hurt the image of the United States through black marketeering, conspicuous consumption, and rowdy behavior. They also believed that American military officials in Germany did not understand the serious negative effects of the Stechovice incident on relations between the United States and Czechoslovakia. In mid-March 1946 General Koenig formally requested that USFET prohibit the travel of U.S. military personnel to Czechoslovakia except for those visiting close relatives or those on essential official business. Koenig further requested that military personnel on private visits get the permission of local Czechoslovak officials first, and travel east of Pilsen by railroad.(26)

Although it does not appear that USFET adopted General Koenig's drastic proposals, there were no press comments in subsequent months about misbehavior by American military visitors, based on the embassy's standard weekly reports. That said, the communists did not completely drop their propaganda efforts based on Operation "Hidden Documents" before the elections. In early May one float in a communist youth parade depicted an

American soldier in a standard nontropical uniform, except for a pith helmet. On his back was written just one word: "Stechovice."(27)

Another relevant factor, which was negative in its potential rather than its existing effect, arose from two economic issues. One was a proposed agreement on commercial relations between the United States and Czechoslovakia. Negotiations on it began in June 1945, but did not get close to an accord until April 1946, following a new Czechoslovak proposal. Ambassador Steinhardt advised the State Department that negotiations should not be concluded before the general elections, in order to prevent the Communist Party, through its control of the Ministry of Information, from gaining an electoral advantage by claiming credit for an agreement. The other economic issue was an Export-Import Bank credit to facilitate Czechoslovak purchases of cotton from the United States. Ambassador Steinhardt recommended to the State Department that announcement of the credit also be postponed until after the elections for the same reason. Officials in Washington, D.C. concurred with him on both points. A commercial agreement was not concluded at that time, and the Export-Import Bank credit was not announced until May 31, 1946.(28)

Publicity favorable to the United States came from the one branch of the Czechoslovak government which had not been involved before in the "Hidden Documents" controversy, the judiciary. In June 1945 people's courts were created to prosecute expeditiously Nazis and collaborators who had committed crimes against the state of Czechoslovakia or against persons or property on its territory. Crimes subject to prosecution included traditional ones, such as murder, and some new ones, including membership in the Nazi party or SS, and using forced labor for the German war effort. The courts' jurisdiction explicitly extended to foreigners. By mid-January 1946 the courts had rendered 1,650 verdicts, with 150 defendants given death or life imprisonment sentences. Another twelve thousand persons were awaiting trial.(29)

In late March 1946 the trial began in a people's court in Prague of one of the most notorious Germans who had served in occupied

Czechoslovakia, Karl Hermann Frank. Not to be confused with Hans Frank, Hitler's boss in Poland, Karl Hermann Frank as state secretary was formally the number two official during the Nazi occupation of Bohemia and Moravia from 1939 to 1945. In 1941 SS Lt. Gen. Reinhard Heydrich arrived in Prague to impose a tougher policy than the one followed by the top Nazi boss, Konstantin von Neurath. Heydrich's tough measures, including hundreds of executions, led to his assassination in 1942. Heydrich's successor, SS General Kurt Daluege, and Frank collaborated in a series of reprisals, the most infamous of which was in Lidice. The village was razed, all of its male residents were executed, and of all of its women and children were deported either to concentration camps or, in the case of some of the children, to Germany for adoption.(30)

After the crates from Stechovice were returned to President Benes they were opened in the presence of representatives of all political parties and the Ministry of Interior. Also present was Jaroslav Drabek, chief prosecutor for war crime trials in Czechoslovakia, who combed through the contents, looking for useful material. A number of witnesses to Frank's crimes over the years were available to testify, but, as the trials of the major war criminals at Nuremberg showed, fixing responsibility for that kind of crime was much easier if documentary evidence could be introduced to corroborate eyewitness testimony. During Frank's trial numerous documents unearthed from the Stechovice cave were introduced as evidence against him.(31) In the same April 3, 1946 article which criticized the Czechoslovak intelligence and security services, *Svobodne Slovo* asserted that without those documents the prosecution would have had a very difficult time proving its case against Frank. The newspaper, which had earlier condemned the violation of Czechoslovak sovereignty in Stechovice, changed completely its point of view, editorializing, "So, we must actually say 'Thank God' for the cowboy-like action of the Americans."(32)

The National Socialist Party newspaper article demonstrated how Stechovice had become the subject of political discussions for reasons other than the involvement of the United States. *Svobodne*

Slovo opined in its editorial that the crates had remained buried in Stechovice because the security services, for partisan purposes, had been too busy investigating National Socialist deputies. Even if the newspaper was wrong and the security services had not known about the existence of the cases for months, they, and by extension the Communist Party which dominated them, were open to criticism. In fact, some Czechoslovaks were condemning them on two grounds. One was for letting the soldiers camp out in the woods for several days; the other was for letting the group leave the country with the crates.(33) To those critics, the Czechoslovak government's statement that shots fired by Americans prevented local police from approaching the site did not explain why other action was not taken against the foreigners.

Whatever degree of popular dissatisfaction that existed with the security services was not enough to prevent the Communist Party from doing better than observers expected in the elections for the National Assembly for Bohemia and Moravia, which the American Embassy judged to be free and fair. The party did not attain its goal of winning a majority of legislative seats, but it did garner a 40 percent plurality. That was enough to enable the Communist Party leader, Klement Gottwald, to replace Fierlinger as premier when the new cabinet was formed in July 1946. Benes and Masaryk continued as president and foreign minister, respectively, and the communists maintained all of their cabinet posts in Prague, except for education.(34)

The American Embassy did not see the election as a turning point. Ambassador Steinhardt reported to the State Department that he viewed Gottwald as a man of "common sense" and "a thorough Czechoslovak patriot." While acknowledging that the Communist Party still controlled key government positions, Steinhardt expected that the new cabinet would stay the course of the old one and not embark on any new, radical ventures.(35)

Steinhardt probably thought that the Stechovice incident might have marginally helped the communists in the elections, but would have no long-lasting effects on Czechoslovak politics.(36) From the longer vantage point of six decades later we can see that

the communists' continued hold on key government positions, and the failure of the moderates to unify, would prove fatal to democracy in Czechoslovakia when Moscow applied pressure. The chain of events which led to that was not affected by Stechovice, and was beyond the control of any diplomat in Prague, no matter how skillful, to influence.

Chapter 14

Final Judgment

Difficulties in the American occupation of Iraq in 2003-2004 served as a reminder that winning the peace has been as important and at times as difficult as winning a war. George Washington is revered in American history because he first, as a general, led the colonial army in the struggle for independence, and then, as a civilian and the country's first president, oversaw the successful establishment of the constitutional government. Abraham Lincoln used his political skills and power as commander in chief to hold together a shaky coalition of northern states which vanquished the south on the battlefield during the Civil War. His assassination at the end of the war, on the other hand, deprived the nation of his compassionate leadership in the immediate postwar years, with disastrous consequences which are still felt today.

In the 20th century, American intervention, led by President Woodrow Wilson, tipped the balance in World War I. Germany and her allies in 1918 were defeated, and a number of states, including Czechoslovakia, won their independence in Eastern Europe. The failure to win the peace in the following years led to another world war after Adolf Hitler took political control in Germany by capitalizing on economic problems and resentment over the vindictive measures imposed by the Treaty of Versailles.

Fortunately, World War II saw the emergence of another superb leader both in war and peace, George C. Marshall. Working with Franklin D. Roosevelt, Marshall prepared the armed forces before Pearl Harbor for massive expansion, and was the top military commander during the war. As civilian secretary of state from 1947

to 1949 he led the Marshall Plan, which enabled Western Europe to recover from the material and social destruction of war and become prosperous, vibrant democracies. His efforts, which earned him the Nobel Peace Prize, helped avoid a repeat of the immediate post-World War I years.

The Marshall Plan helped prevent Western Europe from falling under either fascism or communism but could not, however, prevent Eastern Europe, including Czechoslovakia, from falling under communism. Marshall's proposal did not exclude American assistance for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. But Stalin rejected participation by the Soviet Union and was against participation by Eastern European governments. He wanted the Soviet Union to be the dominant power in Eastern Europe for military, economic, and political reasons, and feared that participation in the Marshall Plan by countries in the region would pull them into the orbit of the West.

In a rare display of independence from the Soviet Union on an important issue, without first consulting Moscow the Czechoslovak government accepted an invitation to attend a conference in Paris on the Marshall Plan in July 1947. Before going to Paris the Czechoslovak delegation, headed by Prime Minister Gottwald, went to Moscow. Stalin expressed surprise and anger with the action of the Czechoslovaks, and told them that participation at the Paris conference would be considered an unfriendly act by the Soviet Union.(1) In the face of such blatant, forceful pressure the Czechoslovak government had to publicly withdraw its acceptance. Stalin's actions signaled "nothing less than a declaration of war by the Soviet Union on the immediate issue of the control of Europe," according to Walter Bedell Smith, Harriman's successor as American ambassador to the Soviet Union.(2)

As Western European countries joined the Marshall Plan it became clear to Stalin that Soviet power would have to be consolidated in Eastern Europe. Having failed to gain power by constitutional means in Czechoslovakia, the Communist Party tried other measures, this time successfully. When noncommunist ministers resigned in February 1948 to protest use of the police

for political purposes, communists mounted street demonstrations and physically occupied some noncommunist ministries in Prague to bring pressure on the aged and ill President Benes. He approved the formation of a new government in which the communists had increased power. They quickly moved throughout the country to eliminate opposition in the press, civil service, and other institutions. In March Masaryk was found dead under mysterious circumstances. By May 1948 the communist coup was complete when a new, Soviet-style constitution was adopted, and no opposition candidates were allowed to compete in the new National Assembly elections. President Benes resigned in June, and was succeeded by Gottwald. By the time Benes died in September the country was firmly in Moscow's orbit.(3)

In the 1930's Czechoslovakia's *de jure* independence was the victim of power politics among Britain, France, and Germany as the League of Nations again demonstrated its irrelevance in international security matters. In the 1940's Prague's *de facto* independence was the victim of historical forces originating from World War II which were beyond the power of President Benes and other democrats in Eastern Europe to divert. If Operation "Hidden Documents" had no permanent negative consequences on Czechoslovak politics, it did have at least one on the positive side of the ledger. Karl Hermann Frank was found guilty of various crimes and hanged in Prague on May 22, 1946.(4)

A rather schizophrenic treatment of Operation "Hidden Documents," with great secrecy in some aspects and openness in others, developed in the American military. The standard procedure of the USFET Document Control Section was to make copies of an inventory of newly acquired documents, sending one copy in its periodic, written reports up the chain of command. USFET could not keep the documents acquired by the Owen-Richards team, but it did have enough time to catalogue them before they left the Fechenheim warehouse for Prague. Although the documents were delivered to a foreign government, USFET made only one copy of the inventory, which Lt. Colonel Spiegel personally delivered to Washington in April 1946. That month the French

government, without whose information and assistance the mission could not have been accomplished, complained to American officials in Germany that even it had not received a copy.(5) The secrecy of USFET contrasted with the attitude elsewhere in the U.S. military. Lieutenant Leeman's photographs of the mission were sent under a confidential security classification to Signal Corps officials in the United States, who quickly declassified them. Six of the photographs appeared in a full-page item about the raid in the May 11, 1946 issue of *The Illustrated London News*.

Soon, however, Operation "Hidden Documents" slipped quietly out of public view in the West. The coverage by *The New York Times*, which ended on May 27, 1946, of Karl Hermann Frank's trial and execution never mentioned the role of the documents from Stechovice. Had the mission occurred during World War II it probably would not have been so easily forgotten. All branches of the armed services used a host of professional historians to gather reports written during the war and to conduct interviews afterward to meticulously document the conflict. Thousands of books, movies, and film documentaries informed and entertained the public about the biggest war in human history.

The Cold War, which began in earnest in 1947 as the Marshall Plan crystallized ideological divisions in Europe, was the next big conflict. Cloak-and-dagger stories, both fact and fiction, of East-versus-West espionage and counterespionage next captured the public's attention. With perhaps just two exceptions, neither the public nor academics saw much of compelling historical interest in the two-year period between the end of World War II and the beginning of the Cold War. One exception was the trial of German and Japanese war criminals. But attention was focused on the horrific charges and occasional courtroom dramas, not on how the documentary evidence used by the Allies was gathered. The other exception was the case of Klaus Barbie, a former Gestapo officer who through a series of bureaucratic mistakes in the American and French governments ended up being used as an informant by American counterintelligence.(6)

Like the vast majority of American officers and enlisted men who fought in World War II, the Americans who went to Stechovice were citizen officers and soldiers. Except for one brief, important moment, the individual members of the Owen-Richards team without further incident soon faded into civilian anonymity. That moment was when Captain Richards and Sergeants Fulton and Urquhart were awarded in Germany the Soldier's Medal, the highest award for bravery not in action against the enemy, for their heroism in Czechoslovakia on February 11 and 12, 1946.(7)

One sour note was sounded over the awards. On August 20, 1946, *Rude Pravo* ran a commentary raising the question of how sincere the American apology was for the operation if some of its participants received an award for their actions. The commentary was entirely critical, omitting any mention of the positive use that Czechoslovak legal authorities had made of the unearthed documents. The newspaper could not, however, take away the medals, nor would it prevent history's verdict on how well its editorial policy served the Czechoslovak people during the next four decades.(8)

All three of the American officers who went to Czechoslovakia lived long, full lives. Captain Richards completed his degree at the Georgia Institute of Technology, worked in the chemical industry, and helped develop the port of Tampa. He married shortly after graduating from college and over the course of his long, happy marriage had three daughters. Lieutenant Leeman resumed his employment with the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, retiring in 1982 as the paper's most experienced reporter. In December 1976 he returned to the ravine outside Stechovice, finding the area essentially the same as it had been thirty years earlier. Lieutenant Owen went back to San Francisco and worked in the paper industry.

In contrast, those involved at the highest level in the German occupation of Bohemia and Moravia had an ignominious, often short existence after the war. Daluege, like Frank, was hanged in Prague in 1946. Konstantin von Neurath left prison after serving eight years of a fifteen-year sentence and died two years later.

Wilhelm Frick, who succeeded von Neurath in 1943, was sentenced to death as a war criminal, mainly for his earlier actions as German Minister of Interior.(9)

Looking back many decades later, one can reach different opinions on Operation "Hidden Documents," depending on the ideological prism of the observer. From one angle it can be seen as one of the most daring military missions of the 1940's, highlighting the skill, courage, and ingenuity of the citizen officer and soldier. From another angle it can be seen as an example of American arrogance and disrespect for other countries, demonstrating the need for citizens to carefully monitor their political and military authorities.

If one adopts a more pragmatic view, Operation "Hidden Documents" must be seen as a great success. Failure to notify the Czechoslovak government in advance about plans to conduct a foreign military operation on its soil was unquestionably a violation of its sovereignty. Without the great secrecy under which the operation was conducted, however, the documents may never have been excavated and made available for nonpartisan use. If for no other reason, Operation "Hidden Documents" can be praised for recovering strong evidence of the horrors of the first totalitarian regime in Czechoslovakia before the country succumbed to the second.

Appendix

U.S. Army and Air Force Bomb Disposal Squads in the ETO 1943-1945(1)

Squad Number	Arrived in U.K.	Arrived on Continent
2	4-15-44	6-30-44
3	8-17-43	7-3-44
4	8-17-43	12-17-44
5	4-17-44	c. 6-29-44
6	8-17-43	7-2-44
7	4-16-44	8-6-44
8	8-17-43	7-10-44
9	8-17-43	7-1-44
10	8-17-43	8-1-44
14	11-2-43	mid-June 1944
15	11-9-43	mid-June 1944
16	12-10-43	6-6-44
17	12-9-43	6-11-44
18	12-10-43	mid-June 1944
19	12-9-43	6-12-44
20	12-9-43	6-10-44
21	12-10-43	6-11-44
22	12-14-43(?)	6-30-44
23	12-14-43	6-6-44
24	12-2-43	?
25	12-14-43	7-8-44
26	12-13-43	6-6-44
27	12-16-43	6-6-44
28	12-16-43	6-11-44
29	12-16-43	6-29-44

30	12-16-43	mid-June 1944
31	12-16-43	7-14-44
32	12-16-43	7-16-44
33	12-16-43	7-6-44
34	12-16-43	7-18-44
35	12-16-43	6-29-44
36	12-16-43	7-18-44
37	12-27-43	7-18-44
38	12-18-43	mid-June 1944
39	12-21-43	7-18-44
40	12-16-43	7-18-44
41	1-29-44	6-7-44
42	1-28-44	6-26-44
43	1-31-44	6-28-44
44	1-31-44	6-26-44
45	1-29-44	6-17-44
46	1-31-44	6-19-44
47	1-31-44	6-6-44
48	1-31-44	6-11-44
49	2-27-44	7-18-44
50	2-18-44	8-15-44
51	4-17-44	8-15-44
52	?	8-15-44
53	4-7-44	8-15-44
54	4-16-44	8-6-44
67	5-14-44	7-13-44
68	4-27-44	7-10-44
69	4-28-44	7-15-44
70	4-28-44	7-10-44
71	4-27-44	7-12-44
72	5-7-44	7-12-44
73	5-7-44	8-1-44
74	5-6-44	7-13-44
75	5-6-44	7-14-44
76	5-15-44	7-31-44
77	5-14-44	7-31-44

78	5-14-44	8-1-44
79	5-14-44	8-8-44
80	5-14-44	8-16-44
81	5-14-44	8-18-44
82	5-14-44	8-23-44
83	5-6-44	8-24-44
84	5-6-44	c. 8-29-44
85	5-6-44	c. 9-9-44
86	5-7-44	7-9-44
87	5-24-44	10-10-44
88	5-24-44	7-7-44
89	5-24-44	7-13-44
90	5-24-44	8-4-44
91	5-26-44	?
110	5-30-44	?
111	6-5-44	?
112	?	Oct. 1944
113	?	Oct. 1944
114	?	Oct. 1944
115	?	Oct. 1944
116	?	10-2-44
117	?	Oct. 1944
118	?	Oct. 1944
119	?	Oct. 1944
120	?	Oct. 1944
121	?	Oct. 1944
122	?	Nov. 1944
123	Aug. 1944	Sept. 1944
124	?	Sept. 1944
125	?	Sept. 1944
126	?	Sept. 1944
127	?	Sept. 1944
128	?	Sept. 1944
129	?	Sept. 1944
130	?	Sept. 1944
131	?	Sept. 1944

132	?	Sept. 1944
133	?	Sept. 1944
134	?	Oct. 1944
135	?	Oct. 1944
143	?	Nov. 1944
144	?	Nov. 1944
145	?	Nov. 1944
146	?	Nov. 1944
147	?	Nov. 1944
155	?	Sept. 1944
157	?	Oct. 1944
159	?	Oct. 1944
160	?	Oct. 1944
161	10-12-44	10-15-44
162	?	Oct. 1944
163	?	Oct. 1944
164	?	Oct. 1944
165	?	Oct. 1944
166	?	Oct. 1944
167	?	Oct. 1944
168	?	Oct. 1944
169	?	Nov. 1944
170	?	Nov. 1944
234th B.D. Company	1943	8-5-44(2)

Endnotes

Abbreviations

AC of S: Assistant Chief of Staff
AFHRA: Air Force Historical Research Agency, Maxwell Air Force Base, AL.
APG: Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD.
BDS(s): Bomb Disposal Squad(s)
C of S: Chief of Staff
ETO: European Theater of Operations
FRUS: *Foreign Relations of the United States*
HQ: Headquarters
MISC: Military Intelligence Service Center
NACP: National Archives at College Park, MD.
RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, NACP.
RG 111: Records of the Office of the Chief Signal Officer, Record Group 111, NACP.
RG 156: Records of the Office of the Chief of Ordnance, Record Group 156, NACP.
RG 319: Records of the Army Chief of Staff, Record Group 319, NACP.
RG 338: Records of the U.S. Army Commands 1942-, Record Group 338, NACP.
RG 498: Records of the European Theater of Operations, U.S. Army/U.S. Forces, European Theater, Record Group 498, NACP.
RG 499: Records of U.S. Army Defense Commands (World War II), Record Group 499, NACP.

TAC: Tactical Air Command
TIB: "Technical Information Bulletin"
USAFE: United States Air Forces in Europe
USSTAF: United States Strategic Air Forces in Europe

Chapter 1. A Red-Letter Day

(1) Reece's transition from civilian to military status, his military transfers, and his movements in Newfoundland are documented in official orders and letters in a copy of his "201" personnel file. Material on Edgar Bergen's visit to Newfoundland and the German naval mine are from Reece's military scrapbook, as supplemented by personal reminiscences to the author. Hereafter both the "201" file and scrapbook are cited as Reece papers, which are in the author's possession.

(2) The genesis of British bomb disposal, bomb reconnaissance, and the 1942-1943 curriculum at the Bomb Disposal School are from (A) Vol. III, Historical Data, APG Military Training Division, Part III, "History of Ordnance Bomb Disposal School, APG, January 1, 1941 to March 31, 1943"; file 314.7, History of Ordnance Bomb Disposal Jan. 1, 1941 to Mar. 31, 1943; Ordnance Bomb Disposal School, APG, 1941-1945; RG 156; (B) File 352.11, Course of Instruction Aug. 10, 1942 to Oct. 3, 1942; Ordnance Bomb Disposal School, APG, 1941-1945; RG 156; and (C) Lt. R.L. Piech, "Bomb Disposal," *The Ordnance Sergeant*, VI (August 1943), 108-115. Piech's article includes tables on bomb penetration and offset depths.

(3) Information on German and English bomb disposal techniques is in three documents in file 520.673, 1940-1944, AFHRA: English-language translation of "Leaflet on the Disposal of Unexploded German Aerial Bombs," August 1940, The Quartermaster General, Berlin; "Disposal of Bombs with German 'Y' Fuze(s) Using "F" Equipment," 23 February, 1943, GHQ, Home Forces; and letter, Second Lt. Robert W. Taber to Lt. Col. Sims, "Comparison of American Hydraulic Clock-Stopper and British Stevens Stopper, Mk. II," 21 April 1943, HQ VIII Bomber Command.

(4) Design drawings are in file 320.2, "Allotment of Ordnance Bomb Disposal Units and Personnel"; Ordnance Bomb Disposal School, APG, 1941-1945; RG 156.

(5) Chart, "Allotment of Ordnance Bomb Disposal Units and Personnel," n.d.; in file of same name, 320.2; Ordnance Bomb Disposal School, APG, 1941-1945; RG 156. Internal evidence indicates the chart was probably prepared in November 1942.

(6) (A) Stanley W. Dzinban, *Military Relations Between the United States and Canada: 1939-1945* (Washington, D.C., 1959), pp. 162-175; (B) Stetson Conn et al., *Guarding the United States and Its Outposts* (Washington, D.C., 1964), p. 385.

(7) "Report of Counter-Subversive Systems," October 24, 1942, under cover of Newfoundland Base Command G-2 Report No. 50, 17-24 Oct. 1942, 313.607, AFHRA.

(8) (A) Conn et al., pp. 549-551; (B) Dzinban, pp. 174-175.

(9) (A) "Newfoundland Ship Sunk, 137 Lost; Women, Babies, U.S. Soldiers Die," *The New York Times*, October 17, 1942, p. 1, col. 2; (B) "Lost Skipper Tried to Ram Submarine," *The New York Times*, October 18, 1942, p. 32, col. 5.

(10) Training Memo No. 6, "Bomb Reconnaissance," April 29, 1943; Training Memoranda, Eastern Defense Command and First Army, 1943; Adjutant General's Section, Publications; Eastern Defense Command 1940-1945; RG 499.

(11) Conn, pp. 550-551; (B) Dzinban, pp. 168, 192.

Chapter 2. Squads in Training

(1) Alfred M. Beck, et al., *The Corps of Engineers: The War Against Germany* (Washington, D.C., 1985), pp. 100-104.

(2) (A) Lt. Charles B. Tillson, Jr., "Bomb Disposal in the Middle East," *The Ordnance Sergeant*, VI (November 1943), 260-263; (B) Air Ministry Kingsway telegram No. PX6157, 5 March 1943, 520.673, 1940-1944, AFHRA; (C) "Report of Conference with German Bomb Disposal Officer," Annex 35 to "Ordnance Technical Services, Section V—Bomb Disposal"; Historical Program Files 1943-1945; Ordnance Section, Admin. Branch; RG 498; (D) Operation Reports and Journals April-October 1943, 1st BDS unit history; RG 338. Bomb disposal squad histories in RG 338 are filed by squad number under Unit Records, Ordnance Squads 1940-1967.

(3) "Disposal of Bombs with German 'Y' Fuze(s) Using "F" Equipment (Provisional)."

(4) Lida Mayo, *The Ordnance Department: On Beachhead and Battlefront* (Washington, D.C., 1968), pp. 31-32 and p. 161, fn. 24(3).

(5) The difficulties it gave one Italian bomb disposal unit are described in the memoirs of Captain Orio Marinelli as told to his brother-in-law, Dante Dado de Giacomi, *La Bomba a Farfalla* (Poggibonsi, 1993), pp. 43-53, 70-75.

(6) (A) "History of Ordnance Bomb Disposal School, APG, January 1, 1941 to March 31, 1943," p. 10; (B) Annex No. 1 organization chart under cover of Memo No. 1, Change No. 2, "Organization of the Ordnance Bomb Disposal School," April 7, 1943; File 320.3, Organization of Ordnance Department and Bomb Disposal; Ordnance Bomb Disposal School, APG, 1941-1945; RG 156. The other three departments at the school were Administration, Training, and Supply and Transportation.

(7) The 1944 training curriculum is from three supplements to the booklet "History of Ordnance Bomb Disposal Center, APG," History Ord Bomb Disposal 1 April 1944 to 30 June 1945; Ordnance Bomb Disposal School, APG, 1941-1945; RG 156: Supplement No. 4, 1 April 1944 to 30 June 1944; Supplement No. 5, 1 July 1944 to 30 Sept. 1944; and Supplement No. 6, 1 October 1944 to 31 December 1944.

(8) (A) T/O 9-177, "Ordnance Bomb Disposal Company," April 1, 1942; File 320.3, Organization of Ordnance Department and Bomb Disposal; Ordnance Bomb Disposal School, APG, 1941-1945; RG 156; (B) "Ordnance Technical Services, Section V—Bomb Disposal," p. 13; Historical Program Files 1943-1945; Ordnance Section, Admin. Branch; RG 498. Hereafter cited as "ETO Bomb Disposal History."

(9) Chart, "Allotment of Ordnance Bomb Disposal Units and Personnel."

(10) Letter, Kane to Chief of Ordnance, "Change to T/O & E 9-500," 3 December 1943; File 320.2, Strength of Army Allotments Complete 9-6-43 to 2-19-44; Ordnance Bomb Disposal School, APG, 1941-1945; RG 156.

(11) Info on 3rd, 44th, and 46th BDSs from letter, Maj. Syd M. Lerner, Jr., to Historical Section, A-2, HQ Ninth Air Force, "Unit Histories, Ninth Air Force Bomb Disposal Squads," May 1945, 533.804-2, AFHRA. The document is hereafter cited as Lerner. Unfortunately, the squad histories in

some categories go only to late 1944 and the narratives are short and mostly boilerplate. Lerner includes a useful overview of Ninth Air Force bomb disposal activity from 1943 to April 1945. AFHRA has Air Force bomb disposal squad histories from World War II in its ORD unit history section, filed by squad number, but they cover only a minority of Air Force squads. The ones used in this chapter are for the 46th and 79th squads.

(12) Activities for Reece at APG and his trip to Alpine, N.J. are from Reece papers. Background on Alpine is from "History of 54th Ordnance Bomb Disposal Squad," n.d., p. 1; RG 498. BDS histories in RG 498 are filed by squad number under Historical Reports of Bomb Disposal Units; Ordnance Section, Admin. Branch.

(13) "History of 43rd Ordnance BDS (Seperate) [*sic*]," n.d. [1945], 43rd BDS unit history, RG 338.

(14) Special Orders No. 307, Army Special Service Forces, APG, 24 December 1943, in Reece papers, lists the bomb disposal units on the APG payroll. Also listed is the 233rd Bomb Disposal Company, which did not go to the ETO.

(15) The trip to Camp Kilmer is noted in orders and memos in Reece papers, some of which are also in the 80th BDS unit history, RG 338. Official orders use the spelling "Schakenbach"; Lerner uses "Shakenback."

(16) "Schedule of Events, Boat-trip [*sic*] to Liverpool, England from New York City, 1 May 1944 to 15 May 1944," n.d. [1944], in Reece papers, is his unofficial narrative of the trip from Camp Kilmer to Grovely Wood. Eugene W. Smith sketches the history of the "Dominion Monarch" in *Passenger Ships of the World, Past and Present* (Boston, 1978), p. 553.

Chapter 3. Air Forces in England

(1) (A) 2109th Ord Am Bn, Avn, ORD unit history, May 1944, AFHRA; (B) AAF Station 592 Historical Reports for September and October 1944, Station Histories, AFHRA; (C) Mayo, p. 98; (D) Ninth Air Force Station List, May 1944, 533.273, AFHRA; (E) Map "Ordnance Survey of England and Wales, Salisbury and Bulford, Sheet 122, Second War Revision 1940," [British] War Office, 1942, in Reece papers.

(2) Letter, HQ USSTAF, "Assignment of Units (No. 51)," 16 May 1944, in Reece papers.

(3) Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate, eds., *The Army Air Forces in World War II* (Washington, D.C., 1983 reprint), I, 33-74.

(4) Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate, eds., *The Army Air Forces in World War II* (Washington, D.C., 1983 reprint), II, 194, 681-730.

(5) Ibid, pp. 67-206.

(6) (A) *Condensed Analysis of the Ninth Air Force in the European Theater of Operations* (Washington, D.C., 1984 reprint), pp. 49-92, hereafter cited as *Condensed Analysis*; (B) Craven and Cate, II, 108-121. Because Ninth Air Force fighters could carry bombs, the terms "fighter" and "fighter-bomber" are used interchangeably herein.

(7) "ETO Bomb Disposal History," pp. 13-15.

(8) Lerner.

(9) 5th and 7th BDS unit histories, RG 498.

(10) For the organization of British and American bomb disposal activities in England see 520.673, 1942-1945, AFHRA, especially Air Ministry, "Policy and Organization for the Disposal of Unexploded British and Enemy Bombs or Other Missiles Found in the British Isles," 3rd ed., April 1942; Operations Memorandum No. 5, HQ ETOUSA, 25 January 1943; and letter, HQ USSTAF, "Active Work—U.S. Air Force Bomb Disposal Squads with the RAF Bomb Disposal Organization," 5 April 1944.

(11) Four volumes in the AFHRA file series 520.673 chronicle the problem of jettisoned bombs: March 1943-April 1944; April-June 1944; June-November 1944; and December 1944-May 1945. The tonnage estimate was handwritten by Col. Richard E. Sims, Eighth Air Force, on the cover of the March 1943-April 1944 file.

(12) Unless otherwise noted individual bomb disposal squad activity in this chapter is from ORD unit histories at AFHRA, and Lerner.

(13) HQ VIII Bomber Command teletypes No. F810K, 9 February, 1944, and No. F707K, 8 February 1944, both in 520.673, 1940-1944, AFHRA.

(14) (A) 10th BDS, "Unit History," 15 February 1945, p. 2; RG 338; (B) "History of 43rd Ordnance BDS (Seperate) [*sic*]," p. 3; (C) Charles G. Pritchard, "A Yank on Bomb Disposal with the RAF," in Jim Jenkinson, compiler, *UXB Volume II* (West Sussex, England, 2001), p. 248; (D) Reece travels from orders in his papers.

(15) Air Ministry Kingsway telegram No. PX6157, 5 March 1943; and HQ VIII Bomber Command teletype No. A1297K, 24 August, 1943; both messages in 520.673, 1940-1944, AFHRA.
(16) HQ USSTAF, "Weekly Armament and Ordnance Activity Report," 9 June 1944; 519.8041-1, 27 Apr 1944-6 Sep 1945; AFHRA.
(17) Lerner, pp. 1-2.

Chapter 4. Northern France

(1) *The History of IX Engineer Command* (Wiesbaden, n.d. [1945]), pp. 1-101, chronicles the command from planning for Normandy through September. The book's Annex No. 5 lists by number all Ninth Air Force airfields used on the Continent and gives basic construction data. The locations of airfields, important units, and significant commands of the Ninth Air Force are shown on its installations maps, issued on average monthly, filed at 533.278, AFHRA.
(2) Unless noted otherwise movements and duties of individual bomb disposal squads in this chapter are from AFHRA ORD unit histories, and Lerner.
(3) The transfers of American Air Force combat units in Europe are given chronologically in Eric Hammel, *Air War Europe* (Pacifica, 1994), and are given by unit number in Maurer Maurer, ed., *Combat Squadrons of the Air Force, World War II* (Washington, D.C., 1982).
(4) Thomas Alexander Hughes in *Over Lord*: *General Pete Quesada and the Triumph of Tactical Air Power in World War II* (New York, 1995), examines the activities of Quesada and the IX TAC from D-Day to September 1, 1944 on pp. 141-249. The *roulement* estimate is on p. 154.
(5) *The History of IX Engineer Command*, p. 170.
(6) Ninth Air Force, "Monthly Ordnance Activities Report," 1 July 1944, 533.804, AFHRA.
(7) Martin Blumenson, *Breakout and Pursuit* (Washington, D.C., 1989 reprint), details Army movements from July 1 until September 11, 1944. For Patton and the XIX TAC to September 1, 1944 see David N. Spiers, *Air Power for Patton's Army: The XIX Tactical Air Command in the Second World War* (Washington, D.C., 2001), pp. 56-103.

(8) Charles G. Pritchard, "BD in the US Army Ninth Air Force 1944-1946," pp. 261-262, in Jim Jenkins, compiler, *UXB Volume II* (West Sussex, 2001).

(9) "Ordnance Service-Report of Operations (October, November, December 1945)," p. 36; Operations Reports 1945-1946; Historical Program Files, USFET, Ordnance Section; RG 498.

(10) (A) Mayo, pp. 251-252; (B) HQ USSTAF, "Weekly Armament and Ordnance Activities Report," 7 July 1944; 519.8041-1, 27 Apr 1944-6 Sep 1945; AFHRA.

(11) Annex No. 8, p. 4, to "ETO Bomb Disposal History."

(12) (A) "History of 43rd Ordnance BDS (Seperate) [*sic*]," pp. 4-5; (B) "Ordnance Technical Services, Section III—Ammunition," p. 5; Historical Program Files 1943-1945; Ordnance Section, Admin. Branch; RG 498.

(13) Transfer orders in Reece papers. Reece's movements from August 1944 to the fall of 1945 are listed by him in his papers.

(14) (A) HQ Ninth Air Force Memo No. 140-7, "Ordnance Department: Disposal of UXB's," 28 September 1944, in 80th BDS unit history, RG 338; (B) Lerner, pp. 2-4.

(15) (A) Reece letter dated August 17, 1944 to his wife, and photograph, both in his papers; (B) Reece's reminiscences to author.

(16) TIB numbers 20 to 60 (15 January 1944 to 15 September 1945) are at 173.8-11, AFHRA.

(17) Ninth Air Force, "Monthly Ordnance Activities Report," 4 September 1944, 533.804, AFHRA.

(18) Reece letter dated August 17, 1944.

Chapter 5. To The Siegfried Line

(1) Charles B. MacDonald, *The Siegfried Line Campaign* (Washington, D.C., 1993 reprint), details the First and Ninth Armies campaigns from September 12, 1944 until December 16, 1944. For air support during that time, besides MacDonald see Craven and Cate, III, 263-277 and 612-624; *Condensed Analysis*, pp. 31-39; and for the XIX TAC and Third Army, Spires, pp. 103-149.

(2) Unless noted otherwise the transfers and work of individual bomb disposal squads in this chapter are from the AFHRA ORD unit histories for the 46th, 80th, and 86th squads, and from Lerner for the others.

(3) *The History of the IX Engineer Command*, pp. 82-101, covers the command's operations in September 1944.
(4) 67th BDS, "Unit History," 13 July 1945, RG 338.
(5) TIB No. 39, 1 November 1944, pp. 314-315.
(6) (A) 10th BDS, "Squad History," 28 June 1945, RG 338; (B) Ninth Air Force, "Monthly Ordnance Activities Report," 6 October 1944, 533.804, AFHRA; (C) "The Ninth Air Force and its Principal Commands in the European Theater of Operations," n.d., pp. 504-506; 533.01-1, vol. 1, part 2, 1943-1945; AFHRA; (D) Lerner.
(7) For problems in supervising Army bomb disposal squads see "ETO Bomb Disposal History," pp. 41-42 and Annex 24.
(8) Letter, Capt. Gordon to USSTAF, "Commendation of Enlisted Man," 14 April 1945, in 68th BDS unit history, RG 338.
(9) (A) "Report of Death," 23 November 1944 and "Report of Burial," 6 October 1944, both in Individual Deceased Personnel File for Russell F. Byington, U.S. Army Human Resources Command, Alexandria, VA.; (B) Lerner.
(10) (A) 80th BDS, "Unit History," 4 November 1944, p. 1, RG 338; (B) Photograph and caption in Reece papers.
(11) Photograph in Reece papers.
(12) 10th BDS, "Squad History," 28 June 1945, p. 2, RG 338.
(13) Data computed by taking the total figures for the period June 1944 through March 1945 in Lerner, pp. 4-5, and subtracting the monthly figures for November 1944 through March 1945 in Ninth Air Force monthly ordnance activities reports.

Chapter 6. Winter

(1) (A) TIB no. 32, 15 July 1944, p. 209ff; (B) Report, "Warhead [*sic*] of Flying Bomb," 2 Aug. 1944, [originator not identified, probably British Air Ministry], 142.0423-15, vol. 2, 1944, AFHRA.
(2) Ninth Air Force, "Monthly Ordnance Activities Report," 8 December 1944, 533.804, AFHRA.
(3) (A) 50th AAA Brigade, "Brigade History," n.d., 537.0750, 10 Feb. 1943-May 1945, AFHRA; (B) *Condensed Analysis*, pp. 35-36.
(4) Unless otherwise noted movements of bomb disposal squads in this chapter are from Lerner; ORD unit histories for the 77th, 80th,

86th, and 87th squads; and Ninth Air Force Station Lists, 533.273, AFHRA.

(5) (A) Letter, Reece to author, dated February 20, 1993; (B) Hughes, pp. 91-93, 115-116, and 312.

(6) (A) HQ 68th BDS, "Report on V-1 Attack on Liege, Belgium, 21-29 November 1944," 7 December 1944, in Reece papers; (B) MacDonald, pp. 229-230; (C) *The History of* IX *Engineer Command*, p. 103.

(7) For Army movements and air operations from November through December 15, 1944 see MacDonald; Spires, pp. 149-183; and Craven and Cate, III, 624-635.

(8) *The History of IX Engineer Command*, pp. 101-118, covers the command's activities from October 1944 to the crossing of the Rhine River.

(9) (A) *The History of IX Engineer Command*, pp. 106-108; (B) Ninth Air Force, "Monthly Ordnance Activities Report," 8 December 1944, 533.804, AFHRA; (C) "History of 43rd Ordnance BDS (Seperate) [*sic*]," pp. 8-9.

(10) (A) "Monthly Ordnance Activities Report," 8 December 1944; (B) TIB No. 40, 15 November 1944, p. 350.

(11) (A) "ETO Bomb Disposal History," pp. 35-39, and Annex 19; (B) Ehrmann Mission; R&D: Ehrmann Mission-Postwar Planning; Post WWI Divisions, Services and Other Units; Executive Division, Historical Branch; RG 156; (C) HQ USSTAF, "Weekly Armament and Ordnance Activities Report," 24 November 1944; 519.8041-1, 27 Apr 1944-6 Sep 1945; AFHRA.

(12) Letter, James S. Abbott, III, to author, postmarked September 6, 2003.

(13) Ninth Air Force installations maps of 30 Nov 1944 and 15 Dec 1944.

(14) For Army movements and air support from December 16, 1944 until January 3, 1945 see Hugh M. Cole, *The Ardennes: Battle of the Bulge* (Washington, D.C., 1988 reprint); for later in January see Charles B. MacDonald, *The Last Offensive* (Washington, D.C., 1993 reprint), pp. 22-66. For air operations during the Battle of the Bulge see *Condensed Analysis*, pp. 40-43; Craven and Cate, III, 665 and 682-711; Spires, pp. 185-237; and Hughes, pp. 271-293.

(15) Letter, Reece to ROTC Department, Purdue University, February 22, 1990, copy in his papers.

(16) Ninth Air Force, "Monthly Ordnance Activities Report," 6 January 1945.
(17) For the most detailed coverage of the January 1, 1945 Luftwaffe attack see Danny S. Parker, *To Win the Winter Sky* (Conshohocken, 1994), pp. 373-455.
(18) (A) "History of the 43rd Ord BDS (Seperate) [*sic*]," pp. 9-10; (B) *The History of IX Engineer Command*, p. 104.
(19) Data from Ninth Air Force monthly ordnance activities reports.
(20) (A) MacDonald, pp. 229-230; (B) Cole, pp. 667-668; (C) TIB No. 45, 1 February 1945, p. 38.
(21) Two letters in 142.0423-15, 1944-1945, vol. 5, AFHRA: 77th BDS to Commanding General, 50th AAA Brigade, "Propaganda Container in Divers," 1 February 1945, with 1st Indorsement from G-2, HQ Antwerp X; and Psychological Warfare Division, SHAEF, to G-2, Propaganda Branch, War Department, "Dissemination of Leaflet from Flying Bombs," 6 March 1945.
(22) Movements of ground forces and air support in February are from MacDonald, *The Last Offensive*, pp. 76-173, and 191-193; Spires, pp. 239-257; Craven and Cate, III, 756-767 and 728-739; and Hughes, pp. 297-299.
(23) The 80th BDS unit history in Lerner says it too was assigned to the engineers, but that statement is not supported by either Organization Chart No. 4, dated 5 April 1945, following p. 196 in *The History of IX Engineer Command*, or the pattern of work in the 80th BDS unit history, RG 338.
(24) TIB No. 32, 15 July 1944, p. 216ff; (B) TIB No. 45, 1 February, 1945, p. 38; (C) 77th BDS, "Unit History," 3 March 1945, AFHRA.

Chapter 7. East of the Rhine to V-E Day

(1) The movement of ground forces and air support described in this chapter are from MacDonald, *The Last Offensive*, pp. 173-481; Spires, pp. 257-290; Craven and Cate, III, 751-792; Hughes, pp. 299-302; and *Condensed Analysis*, pp. 45-46.
(2) Unless otherwise noted the transfers and work of individual bomb disposal squads for this chapter are from Ninth Air Force station lists; the AFHRA

ORD unit histories for the 76th BDS; Lerner; and monthly histories of the 8th BDS from March and April 1945, in "History of IX Engineers," April 1945, 544.07, AFHRA.

(3) Photo in Reece papers.

(4) (A) General Orders No. 3, HQ XXIX TAC, 5 July 1945, in 80th BDS unit history; RG 338; (B) Unit histories dated 3 May 1945 and 1 June 1945, 80th BDS, RG 338; (C) No. 80-88, "Incident Reports," in file "Activities Reports," Aug. 1944 to Oct. 1945, 80th BDS unit history, RG 338.

(5) Unit histories for June and July 1945, 51st BDS, RG 338.

(6) 46th BDS, "Squad History Since D-Day," 26 May 1945, RG 338.

(7) *The History of the IX Engineer Command*, pp. 118-130, describes the command's activities east of the Rhine River.

(8) Activities of the 43rd BDS in this chapter are from "History of 43rd Ord Bomb Disposal Squad (Seperate)[*sic*]."

Chapter 8. Bombs and Blueberries

(1) "The Ninth Air Force and its Principal Commands in the European Theater of Operations," pp. 503-04.

(2) "ETO Bomb Disposal History," data sheets following p. 33. If one substitutes Ninth Air Force figures for the Air Corps figures given in those data sheets, then the Ninth Air Force disposed of 85.8 percent of all bombs, and 3.86 percent of all other munitions.

(3) Data from Lerner, pp. 4-5, and the Ninth Air Force monthly ordnance reports for April and May, 1945. Lerner breaks down bombs by type and weight.

(4) (A) 4th BDS, "Squad History," 1 June 1945, RG 338; (B)159th BDS unit history, 1 May 1945, RG 498.

(5) Annex No. 26 to "ETO Bomb Disposal History."

(6) "ETO Bomb Disposal History," pp. 34-35.

(7) 233rd Ord Bomb Disposal Platoon, Unit History 1 January 1945-31 May 1945, p. 7; History Ord BD 231, 232, 233 Service Platoons; Historical Reports of Ordnance Companies, 1944-1945; Ordnance Section, Admin. Branch; RG 498.

(8) "ETO Bomb Disposal History," Annex 34.

(9) USAFE, "Weekly Activities Report," 2 October 1945, 570.114, AFHRA.
(10) USAFE, "Weekly Activities Report," 9 October 1945, 570.114, AFHRA.
(11) "Ordnance in the European Theater: A Discussion of the Year Following VE Day," 1 July 1946, p. 3; Historical Reports and Other Documents Pertaining to Ordnance Activities and Problems in Europe 1946-1959; Executive Office, Historical Branch; RG 156. Hereafter cited as Nixon Report.
(12) "ETO Bomb Disposal History," pp. 30-31, and charts following p. 33.
(13) "Ordnance Service-Report of Operations (Oct., Nov., Dec. 1945)," pp. 36-37. That report said there were some 368,000 tons of ammunition to be disposed of in Germany. Their national origin was not given.
(14) (A) 76th BDS unit history for May 1945, AFHRA; (B) No. 80-47-91 [*sic*], "Incident Reports," 80th BDS unit history, RG 338.
(15) Ninth Air Force monthly ordnance activities reports dated 16 June 1945 and 11 July 1945.
(16) 80th BDS unit histories dated 2 July 1945 and 1 August 1945,and 80th BDS "Incident Reports" Nos. 80-92 through 80-133; all in RG 338.
(17) Reece's activities from April to November 1945 are from official orders, other documents, and photographs in his papers.
(18) Ordnance School, Bomb Disposal Branch, APG letter dated 1 December 1945, covering report "Roster of Men Active in Bomb Disposal," in Reece papers.
(19) (A) USAFE, "Weekly Activities Report," 2 Oct. 1945; (B) "Assignment and Attachment Order (No. 133)," HQ Ninth Air Force, 22 November 1945, in 80th BDS Unit History, RG 338.
(20) The activities of individual BDSs in 1946 are from their unit histories at AFHRA.
(21) (A) Unit histories for the 72nd and 75th BDSs, AFHRA; (B) "The Employment of Ordnance Staff Sections, Ordnance Combat Service Units and Ordnance Service Units in the European Campaign," p. 12; study No. 101, The General Board; 502.101-101, August 1943-May 1945, AFHRA.
(22) (A) Reece conversations with author; (B) Pritchard, "BD in the US Army Ninth Air Force 1944-1946," p. 284, in Jenkins, compiler.
(23) (A) "History of the 43rd BDS (Seperate) [*sic*]," p. 5; (B) Daily Journal

No. 159, 9 June 1945; Theater Chief of Ordnance TSFET Report of Operations with Supp. Documents, 8 May 1945-30 Sept. 1945; Operations Reports 1945-1946; Historical Program Files, USFET, Ordnance Section; RG 498.

(24) Nixon Report, p. 4.

(25) (A) Nixon Report, pp. 4-5; (B) HQ USFET, Theater Commander's Weekly Staff Conference, No. 36, 27 August 1946; Historical Reports and Other Documents Pertaining to Ordnance Activities and Problems in Europe 1946-1959; Executive Office, Historical Branch; RG 156.

(26) (A) Memo, Maj. H.T. Marsh, G-2, to G-3, 1 Mar. 1946, covering communication about Maj. Hitchins' and Lt. Col. Gillespie's trip; G-2 Correspondence 1946; AC of S, G-2, Operations Branch; RG 498; (B) 73rd BDS unit history for July 1946, p. 2, AFHRA.

(27) "French Buy U.S. Ammo," *Stars and Stripes*, European edition, July 28, 1946, p. 3, col. 1.

Chapter 9. A Wonderful Shower

(1) Info on Richards from author's interviews with him on October 23, 2002, and February 11, 2003. As is the case for many other bomb disposal squads, there is no unit history at NACP for the 123rd BDS.

(2) (A) 16th BDS, "Squad History, Jan 1944 to June 1945," p. 7; RG 498; (B) MacDonald, *The Last Offensive*, pp. 73-83.

(3) For the roles of USFET and OMGUS see Earl Ziemke, *The United States Army in the Occupation of Germany 1944-1946* (Washington, D.C., 1975), pp. 308-317; Robert Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors* (Garden City, 1964), pp. 145-303; and Lucius D. Clay, *Decision in Germany* (Garden City, 1950), pp. 7-27.

Chapter 10. Files in the Attic

(1) "Weekly Report of Projects and Problems," 23 February, 1946; Correspondence 1945-1946; AC of S, G-2, Operations Branch, Plans and Coordination Section; RG 498.

(2) (A) Memo, Brig. Gen. Aubry L. Moore, "Survey of the Offices of the G-2 Division," 15 July 1946; Miscellaneous G-2 Files March-August 1945

[*sic*]; Miscellaneous Records, 1944-1946; AC of S, G-2, Administration Branch; RG 498. Hereafter cited as Moore Memo; (B) "Quarterly Report of Operations 1 Jan. 46-31 Mar. 46"; G-2 Div USFET, Report of Operations with Supp Docs 1 Jan. 46-31 Mar. 46; Operations Reports 1945-1946; USFET, G-2 Section; RG 498.

(3) Ian Sayer and Douglas Botting, *America's Secret Army: The Untold Story of the Counter Intelligence Corps* (New York, 1989), covers the CIC role in northwest Europe both during and after World War II.

(4) (A) Moore Memo; (B) Letter, Lt. Col. Dupre Sassard to G-3, "Troop Requirement for G-2," 12 December 1945; Correspondence 1945-1946; AC of S, G-2, Operations Branch; RG 498; (C) Sayer, pp. 286-299; (D) Quote from "Weekly Report of Projects and Problems," 23 February, 1946, p. 2.

(5) Memo, Col. R.D. Wentworth to AC of S, G-2, no subject, 5 February 1946; G-2 Correspondence Plans and Coordination, February and March 1946; Correspondence 1945-1946; AC of S, G-2, Operations Branch, Plans and Coordination Section; RG 498. Hereafter cited as Wentworth Memo, 5 February 1946.

(6) (A) Wentworth Memo 5 February 1946; (B) "Weekly Report of Projects and Problems," 16 March 1946; Correspondence 1945-1946; AC of S, G-2, Operations Branch, Plans and Coordination Section; RG 498; (C) "Operations Report for Period 1 January 1946 to 31 March 1946," 18 April 1946; Correspondence 1945-1946; AC of S, G-2, Operations Branch, Plans and Coordination Section; RG 498. Hereafter cited as Operations Report dated 18 April 1946.

(7) (A) Operations Report dated 18 April 1946; (B) Wentworth Memo 5 February 1946; (C) "Weekly Report of Projects and Problems," 2 March 1946, Correspondence 1945-1946; AC of S, G-2, Operations Branch, Plans and Coordination Section; RG 498.

(8) (A) Letter, Col. R.D. Wentworth, "Operations Report for Period 1 October 1945 to 31 December 1945," 15 January 1946; Correspondence 1945-1946; AC of S, G-2, Operations Branch, Plans and Coordination Section; RG 498. Hereafter cited as Operations Report dated 15 January 1946; (B) Wentworth Memo, 5 February 1946.

(9) (A) Wentworth Memo, 5 February 1946; (B) Operations Report dated 15 January 1946; (C) Operations Report dated 18 April 1946; (D) Moore Memo.

(10) Operations Report dated 18 April 1946.

(11) (A) Capt. Henry P. Schardt to Commanding General, "Report of Operations," n.d. [1946], control symbol G2-X0-29; Operations Reports June 1944-June 1946; USFET, MISC; RG 498; (B) Moore Memo.

(12) (A) Letter, Col. T.J. Kane to Commanding Officer, "Bomb Disposal Publicity," 11 July 1945, in 68th BDS unit history, RG 338; (B) Excerpt of 163rd BDS unit history in Annex No. 33 to "ETO Bomb Disposal History"; (C) Letter, Brig. Gen. Edwin I. Sibert to C of S, "Establishment of National Socialist Exploitation Center," 6 October 1945; Agenda for German Document Conference October 1945; Miscellaneous Records, 1944-1946; AC of S, G-2, Administration Branch; RG 498.

(13) The documentary requirements of agencies and their relationship to the USFET G-2 and MISC document control sections are shown in AC of S, G-2, "Agenda for German Document Conference Commencing 22 October 1945"; Miscellaneous Records, 1944-1946; AC of S, G-2, Administration Branch; RG 498. Periodic activity reports of the G-2 and MISC document control sections are given in an appendix to the MISC USFET reports of operations for 25 Aug 1945-31 March 1946; 1 April 1946-30 June 1946; and 1 July 1946-30 Sept 1946; all filed in Operations Reports 1944-1946; USFET, MISC; RG 498. The Operations Reports 1944-1946 files also contain "List of Intelligence Agencies," dated 21 August 1946, showing the entities at that time under the operational or administrative control of the USFET G-2 Document Control Section.

(14) Operations Report dated 15 January 1946.

(15) (A) Sayer, p. 293; (B) U.S. Congress. House of Representatives. Committee on Foreign Affairs. Subcommittee on International Security, International Organizations, and Human Rights. "U.S. German Agreement on the Transfer to German Control of Nazi Records in the Berlin Document Center," 103rd Congress, 2nd Session, Washington, D.C., 1994, pp. 41-45.

(16) (A) Operations Report dated 15 January 1946; (B) Operations Report dated 18 April 1946; (C) Document Control Section Report for 1 Jan. 1946 to 31 March 1946, in MISC USFET Report of Operations 25 Aug. 1945-31 March 1946.

(17) Ziemke, pp. 314-316.

(18) Operations Report dated 15 January 1946.

(19) Berlin telegram No. 352 (Berlin 352) to State Department, February 2, 1946; Decimal File 840.414/2-246; RG 59.

(20) Operations Report dated 18 April 1946.

(21) (A) MacDonald, *The Last Offensive*, pp. 321-322, 427-433, and 472-474; (B) Murphy, pp. 287, 303.

(22) (A) Berlin 352; (B) Memo, Lt. Owen to Lt. Col. Gleszer, "Archives of Dr. Goebbels," 10 April 1946, under cover of memo from Gleszer to AC of S, G-2, 10 April 1946; Correspondence 1945-1946; AC of S, G-2, Operations Branch; RG 498; hereafter cited as "Owen Memo"; (C) Operations Report dated 18 April 1946.

(23) The documents and attempts to retrieve them are discussed in: (A) Praha telegram No. 770 to State Department, December 19, 1945; Decimal File 840.414/12-1945, RG 59; (B) State Department telegram No. 99 to USPOLAD, Frankfurt, December 29, 1945; Decimal File 840.414/12-2945; RG 59; (C) Berlin telegram No. 396 to State Department, February 9, 1946; Decimal File 840.414/2-946; RG 59; (D) Praha telegram No. 227 to State Department, February 13, 1946; Decimal File 840.414/2-1346; RG 59; and (E) Berlin Political Advisor Despatch No. 2110 to State Department, February 27, 1946; Decimal File 840.414/2-2746; RG 59. "Praha" was the spelling for the Czechoslovak capital used at that time in State Department communications.

Chapter 11. The POW's Strange Tale

(1) (A) Wayne Leeman, unpublished, unofficial report, no subject, 18 February 1946, in Leeman's personal papers, hereafter cited as Leeman Report; (B) LSB Shapiro, unpublished supplementary color story, no subject, February 12, 1946, in Stephen M. Richards' personal papers, hereafter cited as Shapiro color story.

(2) (A) Praha telegram No. 228 to State Department, February 13, 1946 (Praha 228); Decimal File 811.2360F/2-1346; RG 59; (B) Shapiro color story; (C) Berlin telegram No. 566 to State Department, February 20, 1946 (Berlin 566); Decimal File 811.2360F/2-2046; RG 59.

(3) (A) Memo, Starbird to Hull, "Seizure of Documents by American Soldiers in Czechoslovakia," 19 February 1946; Decimal File 1946-1948, 350.05

Section 1, case No. 8; Plans and Operations Division; RG 319; hereafter cited as "Seizure of Documents," 19 February 1946; (B) State Department telegram No. 500 to USPOLAD, Berlin, February 22, 1946 (State 500); Decimal File 811.2360F/2-2046 [*sic*]; RG 59.

(4) Leeman interview with author, November 20, 2003.

(5) The eleven named participants, their units and hometowns are from Leeman's official, annotated photographic record at SC-228291 through SC-228295, SC-228305 through SC-228315, and SC-229095 through SC-229103, all in RG 111. HQ USFET travel orders dated 4 Feb 1946, in Richards' personal papers, name eight persons, including one Cpl. Harold L. Price, who is not mentioned in any other known record of the mission. Both the thirteenth participant, who is not named in any known record, and Price, if they went on the mission, must have been drivers.

(6) Richards' interview with author, February 11, 2003.

(7) Annex 25, Para. 2, to "ETO Bomb Disposal History."

(8) Unless otherwise noted the trip from Frankfurt to Stechovice, and the return with the crates are based on: (A) Leeman Report; (B) Leeman's official photographic record; (C) LSB Shapiro, "Bohemia Raiders Gambled Lives to Recover German Documents," *The New York Times*, February 26, 1946, p. 2, col. 3; hereafter cited as "Bohemia Raiders"; (D) Shapiro color story; (E) Richards' interview with author February 11, 2003.

(9) Enclosure No. 1 to Praha Despatch No. 627 (Praha 627) to the State Department, March 14, 1946; Decimal File 811.2360F/3-1446; RG 59.

(10) Praha 228.

(11) Berlin 566.

(12) Leeman Report, p. 3.

(13) Praha 228.

(14) Leeman Report, p. 6.

(15) Shapiro color story, p. 2.

(16) (A) Stephen M. Richards, "Report of My Internment by the Czechoslovakian Secret Service Following Operation 'Hidden Documents,'" n.d. [1946], p. 1, in Richards' personal papers; hereafter cited as Richards Report; (B) Leeman Report, p. 8; (C) Berlin 566.

Chapter 12. Post-Operational Complications

(1) Praha 228.

(2) Unless otherwise noted the account of the trio's detention is based on Richards Report.

(3) Praha telegram No. 240 to State Department, February 15, 1946; Decimal File 811.2360F/2-1546; RG 59.

(4) (A) Ibid; (B) Praha telegram No. 232 to State Department, February 15, 1946 (Praha 232); Decimal File 811.2360F/2-1546; RG 59.

(5) The patch can be seen on Richards' coat in photograph SC-229096.

(6) Praha 232.

(7) Photographs SC-228310, SC-229100, SC-228311, SC-229099, and SC-228313. Although the photographs' captions do not say to which warehouse the crates were taken, the USFET G-2 "Weekly Report of Projects and Problems" of 2 March 1946 states that the crates left Fechenheim for their return to Czechoslovakia.

(8) Berlin 566.

(9) For the history of OPD see Ray S. Cline, *Washington Command Post: The Operations Division* (Washington, D.C., 2003 reprint).

(10) (A) "Seizure of Documents," 19 February 1946; (B) Memo, Starbird to Hull, "Seizure of Documents in Czechoslovakia," 21 February 1946; Decimal File 1946-1948, 350.05 Section 1, Case No. 8(2); Plans and Operations Division; RG 319; hereafter cited as "Seizure of Documents," 21 February 1946.

(11) USFET telegram to War Department No. S-1983, undated, received by State Department February 20, 1946; Decimal File 811.2360F/2-2046; RG 59.

(12) Praha telegram No. 249 to State Department, February 18, 1946 (Praha 249); Decimal File 811.2360F/2-1846; RG 59.

(13) (A) Memo, Starbird to Hull, "The Czech Incident," 22 February 1946; Decimal File 1946-1948, File 350.05 Section 1, Case No. 8(3); Plans and Operations Division; RG 319; (B) State Department telegram No. 129 to Praha, February 22, 1946; Decimal File 811.2360F/2-1546 [*sic*]; RG 59.

(14) Praha telegram No. 256 to State Department, February 20, 1946; Decimal File 811.2360F/2-2046; RG 59.

(15) (A) "American Troops Curbed," *The New York Times*, February 20, 1946, p. 3, col. 6; (B) *Stars and Stripes*, European edition, February 21, 1946, p. 8, col. 2.

(16) (A) Praha 232; (B) Praha telegram No. 231 to State Department, February 15, 1946 (Praha 231); Decimal File 811.2360F/2-1546; RG 59; (C) Paraphrase of Praha telegram No. 247, February 18, 1946, in Incoming and Outgoing Messages, 1946, Czechoslovakia; AC of S, G-2; RG 319; (D) Memo, "USFET Orders Regarding Restriction of Travel to Praha, CZ," 27 February 1946; Decimal File 1946-1948, File 510, Case No. 103; Plans and Operations Division; RG 319; (E) Praha Despatch No. 540 to State Department, February 18, 1946; State Department Files, Czechoslovakia; Reports and Messages, 1918-1951; AC of S, G-2; RG 319.

(17) (A) Praha telegram No. 274 to State Department, February 22, 1946; Decimal File 811.2360F/2-2246; RG 59; (B) Praha telegram No. 275 to State Department, February 22, 1946 (Praha 275); Decimal File 811.2360F/2-2246; RG 59; (C) State Department telegram No. 137 to Praha, February 28, 1946 (State 137); Decimal File 811.2360F/2-2646 [*sic*]; RG 59.

(18) (A) State 500; (B) "Seizure of Documents in Czechoslovakia," 21 February 1946; (C) Berlin 566.

(19) (A) Praha 254 to State Department, February 20, 1946 (Praha 254); Decimal File 811.2360F/2-2046; RG 59; (B) Memo, Jason Paige, Jr., to Jack D. Neal, "French Informed Czechs on Stechovice Documents," 9 April 1946; Decimal File 840.414/4-946; RG 59; (C) An English-language translation of the *Svobodne Slovo* article appears in No. 254049, Army Intelligence Document File, RG 319.

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(22) Two memoranda of conversation by Riddleberger with Col. John Lovell, "Czechoslovak protest respecting G-2 document expedition," dated February 23, 1946; Decimal File 811.2360F/2-2346; RG 59; hereafter cited as Riddleberger. He documented two conversations that day with

Lovell, but unfortunately for citation purposes the memoranda are identical except for the bodies. On Riddleberger's background and expertise see *Register of the Department of State* (Washington, D.C., 1950), p. 425, and Clay, p. 242.

(23) "Czechs to Regain Papers Army Took," *The New York Times*, February 24, 1946, p. 29, col. 3.

(24) Praha telegram No. 286 to State Department, 23 February 1946, (Praha 286); paraphrase dated 25 February 1946 in Incoming and Outgoing Messages, 1946, Czechoslovakia; AC of S, G-2; RG 319.

(25) Riddleberger.

(26) (A) "Bohemia Raiders"; (B) War Department telegram No. 98844 to USFET Frankfurt, 28 February 1946; Incoming and Outgoing Messages, 1946, Germany; AC of S, G-2; RG 319.

(27) (A) Praha telegram No. 291 to State Department, February 25, 1946; Decimal File 811.2360F/2-2546; RG 59; (B) State 137.

(28) Praha telegram No. 297 to State Department, February 26, 1946; Decimal File 811.2360F/2-2646; RG 59.

(29) USFET Frankfurt telegram No. S-2414 to War Department, 27 February 1946; Incoming and Outgoing Messages, 1946, Germany; AC of S, G-2; RG 319.

(30) (A) Ibid; (B) Frankfurt telegram No. 74 to State Department, March 2, 1946; Decimal File 811.2360F/3-246; RG 59.

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Chapter 13. Hooray for the Cowboys

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(2) Moscow telegram No. 90 to State Department, FRUS, *The Conferences at Malta and Yalta 1945* (Washington, D.C., 1955), pp. 450-451.

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(4) London telegram No. 4122 to State Department; Secretary of State to Acting Secretary of State telegram No. 9; London telegram No. 24 Churchill to Truman; and State Department telegram No. 1917 for Murphy via Caffery, FRUS, 1945, IV (Washington, D.C., 1968), 441-449.

(5) State Department telegram No. 1935 for Murphy via Caffery, FRUS, 1945, III (Washington, D.C., 1968), 281-282.

(6) (A) Forrest Pogue, *The Supreme Command* (Washington, D.C., 1995 reprint), pp. 467-468; (B) Paris 2552 to State Department, FRUS, 1945, IV, 451.

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(9) Moscow telegram No. 993 to State Department, FRUS, 1945, IV, 430-433.

(10) Praha telegram No. 509 to State Department, FRUS, 1945, IV, 504-505.

(11) (A) Paris telegram No. 3318 (Paris 3318) to State Department, FRUS, 1945, IV, 455-456; (B) Praha telegram No. 8 (Praha 8) to State Department, FRUS, 1945, IV, 457-459.

(12) FRUS, 1945, IV, 458, fn. 14.

(13) Hugh Seton-Watson, *The East European Revolution* (New York, 1971), pp. 148-149.

(14) State 137.

(15) Hugh Seton-Watson, *Eastern Europe Between the Wars 1918-1941* (New York, 1967), pp. 68-72 and 172-176.

(16) (A) Paris 3318; (B) Praha 8; (C) Seton-Watson, *The East European Revolution*, pp. 180-182; (D) Praha telegram No. 509 to State Department, FRUS, 1945, IV, 503-506; (E) Praha telegram No. 133 to State Department, FRUS, 1946, VI (Washington, D.C., 1969), 178-179.

(17) (A) Praha telegram No. 30 to State Department, FRUS, 1945, IV, 459-460; (B) Praha telegram No. 352 to State Department, FRUS, 1945, IV, 490-492; (C) Richards Report, p. 6.

(18) (A) Praha telegram No. 283 to State Department, February 23, 1946; Decimal File 811.2360F/2-2346; RG 59; (B) Praha despatch No. 558 to State Department, February 25, 1946 (Praha 558); Decimal File 811.2360F/2-2546; RG 59.

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(20) Josef Korbel, *The Communist Subversion of Czechoslovakia 1938-1948: The Failure of Coexistence* (Princeton, 1959), p. 112.

(21) (A) Praha 286; (B) Praha 558.

(22) Praha Despatch No. 633 to State Department, March 18, 1946; State Department Files, Czechoslovakia; Reports and Messages 1918-1951; AC of S, G-2; RG 319.

(23) (A) Praha telegram No. 340 to State Department, March 7, 1946; Decimal File 811.2360F/3-746; RG 59; (B) Praha telegram No. 390 to State Department, March 15, 1946; Decimal File 811.2360F/3-1546; RG 59; (C) Moscow telegram No. 800 to State Department, March 13, 1946; Decimal File 811.2360F/3-1346; RG 59.

(24) Praha telegram No. 357 to State Department, March 11, 1946; Decimal File 811.2360F/3-1146; RG 59.

(25) Press items were a major topic of coverage in the embassy's weekly despatches in 1946 summarizing political events. They are filed chronologically in State Department Files, Czechoslovakia; Reports and Messages 1918-1951; AC of S, G-2; RG 319.

(26) Praha Despatch No. 627 to State Department, covering a copy of a memo from the Military Attaché Praha to USFET dated March 14, 1946; Decimal File 811.2360F/3-1446; RG 59.

(27) Military Attaché Praha message No. 66-15 to War Department, 15 May 1946; Incoming and Outgoing Messages, 1946, Czechoslovakia; AC of S, G-2; RG 319.

(28) (A) Praha telegram No. 694 to State Department, FRUS, 1946, VI (Washington, 1966), 194-197; (B) "Press Release Issued by the Export-Import Bank of Washington, May 31, 1946," FRUS, 1946, VI, 263-264.

(29) Praha Despatch No. 433 to State Department, January 23, 1946; State Department Files; Reports and Messages 1918-1951; AC of S, G-2; RG 319.

(30) Alice Teichova, "The Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia," in Mikulas Teich, *Bohemia in History* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 267-305.
(31) (A) Korbel, pp. 59-60; (B) Praha Despatch No. 779 to State Department, April 19, 1946; State Department Files, Czechoslovakia; Reports and Messages 1918-1951; AC of S, G-2; RG 319.
(32) No. 254049, 8 April 1946, Army Intelligence Document File, RG 319.
(33) Praha 558.
(34) (A) Praha telegram No. 893 to State Department, FRUS, 1946, VI, 199-200; (B) Praha telegram No. 1221 (Praha 1221) to State Department, FRUS, 1946, VI, 204-205.
(35) Praha 1221.
(36) Walter Ullman did not mention "Hidden Documents" in his *The United States in Prague, 1945-1948*, published in 1978 in New York. Apparently either he concluded that the incident was relatively insignificant, or relevant archival material was declassified only after he wrote the book.

Chapter 14. Final Judgment

(1) Praha telegrams Nos. 872 and 876 to State Department, FRUS, 1947, III (Washington, D.C., 1972), 318-320.
(2) Moscow telegram No. 2413 to State Department, FRUS, 1947, III, 327.
(3) Seton-Watson, *The East European Revolution*, pp. 185-190.
(4) "Frank Hanged for Lidice Crime," *The New York Times*, May 23, 1946, p. 1, col. 2.
(5) (A) Owen Memo; (B) Document Control Section inventories (excluding the one for "Hidden Documents") for the first half of 1946 are at 312.1, Decimal File 1945-1946; AC of S, G-2, Operations Branch, Document Section; RG 498.
(6) Allan Ryan, *Klaus Barbie and the United States Government: A Report to the Attorney General of the United States*, U.S. Department of Justice Criminal Division, August 1983.
(7) G.O. No. 116, HQ USFET, 23 Apr 1946; General Orders, 1942-1947; Adjutant General Publications; RG 498.
(8) Praha telegram No. 1549 to State Department, August 21, 1946; Decimal File 811.2360F/8-2146; RG 59

(9) (A) Richards interviews; (B) "Writer, Editor Wayne Leeman Retires from Post-Dispatch," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, August 1, 1982, p. 6B, col. 1; (C) Wayne Leeman, untitled draft article, n.d. [1977], about his return to Stechovice, in Richards' personal papers; (D) Leeman interview; (E) "Daluege, Who Wiped Out Lidice Hanged; Execution Follows Two Attempts at Suicide," *The New York Times*, October 24, 1946, p. 14, col. 4; (F) Eugene Davidson, *The Trial of the Germans* (Colombia, 1997), pp. 176, 280-281.

Appendix. U.S. Army and Air Force Bomb Disposal Squads in the ETO 1943-1945

(1) Sources: (A) "ETO Bomb Disposal History"; (B) Lerner; (C) Bomb disposal unit histories at AFHRA and NACP.

(2) Disbanded October 11, 1944 and broken into six ordnance service units.

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