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Crusade in Europe

DOUBLEDAY & COMPANY, INC. 1948
GARDEN CITY, NEW YORK

Printed in the United States at
The Country Life Press, Garden City, N. Y.

CRUSADE IN EUROPE

To the Allied Soldier,
Sailor, and Airman of World War II

CRUSADE IN EUROPE

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PHOTOGRAPHS SELECTED BY EDWARD STEICHEN

RECONNAISSANCE INTO RUIN *facing page* 48

"In Germany . . . a carpet of destruction and desolation had spread over the land. Her bridges were down, her cities in ruins . . ."

Infantry Patrol Advances Through Zweibrücken
(Photo by U. S. Army Signal Corps)

PEACEFUL IS BATTLE'S EVE *facing page* 49

"During those hours that we paced away among Gibraltar's caverns, hundreds of Allied ships, in fast- and slow-moving convoys, were steaming across the North Atlantic . . ."

U. S. Navy-Escorted Convoy Nears North Africa
(Official U. S. Navy Photo)

PUNCHING OUT A SNIPER *facing page* 80

"The trained American possesses qualities that are almost unique. Because of his initiative and resourcefulness, his adaptability to change and his readiness to resort to expedient . . ."

Anti-Tank Gun Gets New Normandy Role
(Photo by U. S. Army Signal Corps)

CONQUEST IN SINGLE FILE *facing page* 81

"In the advance eastward from Palermo . . . the only road was of the 'shelf' variety, a mere niche in the cliffs

interrupted by bridges and culverts that the enemy invariably destroyed as he drew back fighting."

Infantrymen Advance Along Sicilian Cliff
(Photo by U. S. Army Signal Corps)

BOMBERS' HOLOCAUST *facing page* 208

In Italy, "head-on attacks against the enemy on his mountainous frontiers would be slow and extremely costly." Only by utter destruction of his strongholds could the battle toll be tolerable.

Smoke Pall Shrouds Cassino as Bombing Begins
(Photo by U. S. Army Signal Corps)

BEYOND THE DUNE—EUROPE *facing page* 209

" 'You will enter the continent of Europe and . . . undertake operations aimed at the heart of Germany and the destruction of her Armed Forces.' "

Assault Troops Hit Normandy Beach on D-day
(Photo by U. S. Army Signal Corps)

CARGO FOR INVASION *facing page* 240

". . . we had . . . to build up on the beaches the reserves in troops, ammunition, and supplies that would enable us, within a reasonable time, to initiate deep offensives . . ."

Ships, Troops, Trucks, Supply Crowd French Beach
(Photo by U. S. Coast Guard)

AXIS ALLY—MUD *facing page* 241

"Some soldier once said, 'The weather is always neutral.' Nothing could be more untrue." In Tunis, Italy, and across the Continent, mud was a formidable barrier to Allied advances.

Even the Jeep Succumbed to Italian Mud
(Photo by U. S. Army Signal Corps)

RED BALL ROARS FORWARD *facing page* 304

On Red Ball Highways, "every vehicle ran at least twenty

hours a day . . . allowed to halt only for necessary loading, unloading, and servicing."

Tank Transporters Rush Armored Supply
(Photo by U. S. Army Signal Corps)

NAKEDNESS OF THE BATTLEFIELD *facing page* 305

". . . each man feels himself so much alone, and each is prey to the human fear and terror that to move or show himself may result in instant death."

German 88 Pounds Paratroopers Near Arnhem
(Photo by U. S. Army Signal Corps)

ISOLATE, THEN ANNIHILATE *facing page* 336

". . . battles of annihilation are possible only against some isolated portion of the enemy's entire force. Destruction of bridges, culverts, railways, roads, and canals by the air force tends to isolate the force under attack . . ."

Ulm Rail Yards After December 1944 Raid
(Photo by U. S. Air Force)

SUPREME OVER GERMANY *facing page* 337

"By early 1945 the effects of our air offensive against the German economy were becoming catastrophic . . . there developed a continuous crisis in German transportation and in all phases of her war effort."

Bremen Is Target of B-17 and B-24 Flight
(Photo by U. S. Air Force)

THESE WERE HITLER'S ELITE *facing page* 440

". . . within eighteen days of the moment the Ruhr was surrounded it had surrendered with an even greater number of prisoners than we had bagged in the final Tunisian collapse . . ."

Nazis Taken Prisoner in the Ruhr Pocket
(Photo by U. S. Army Signal Corps)

DOUBLE-LOADED FOR HOME *facing page* 441

This plan required "one man to sleep in the daytime so

that another could have his bunk during the night. . . .
I never afterward heard of a single complaint . . ."

The Queen Elizabeth Brings Them Home
(Photo by U. S. Coast Guard)

SURVIVING BOMBS AND HITLER *facing page* 456

But no edifice, however sacred, will survive atomic war. "Even the bombed ruins of Germany . . . provide but faint warning of what future war could mean to the people of the earth."

The Cathedral Stands Amid Cologne's Rubble
(Photo by U. S. Army Signal Corps)

PARTNERS IN VICTORY *facing page* 457

"The Russians are generous. They like to give presents and parties . . . the ordinary Russian seems to me to bear a marked similarity to what we call an 'average American.' "

East and West Celebrate at Torgau
(Photo by U. S. Army Signal Corps)

Chapter 1

PRELUDE TO WAR

IN THE ALLIED HEADQUARTERS AT REIMS, Field Marshal Jodl signed the instrument of German surrender on May 7, 1945. At midnight of the next day there ended, in Europe, a conflict that had been raging since September 1, 1939.

Between these two dates millions of Europeans had been killed. All Europe west of the Rhine had, with minor exceptions, lived for more than four years under the domination of an occupying army. Free institutions and free speech had disappeared. Economies were broken and industry prostrated. In Germany itself, after years of seeming invincibility, a carpet of destruction and desolation had spread over the land. Her bridges were down, her cities in ruins, and her great industrial capacity practically paralyzed. Great Britain had exhausted herself economically and financially to carry on her part of the war; the nation was almost entirely mobilized, with everybody of useful age, men and women alike, either in the armed forces or engaged in some type of production for war. Russian industry west of the Volga had been almost obliterated.

America had not been spared: by V-J Day in the Pacific, 322,188 of her youth had been lost in battle or had died in the service and approximately 700,000 more had been wounded.[1] The nation had poured forth resources in unstinted measure not only to support her own armies and navies and air forces but also to give her Allies equipment and weapons with which to operate effectively against the common enemy. Each of the Allies had, according to its means, contributed to the common cause but America had stood pre-eminent as the arsenal of democracy. We were the nation which, from the war's beginning to its end, had achieved the greatest transformation from

almost complete military weakness to astounding strength and effectiveness.

Europe had been at war for a full year before America became alarmed over its pitifully inadequate defenses. When the nation began, in 1939, first steps toward strengthening its military establishment, it started from a position as close to zero as a great nation could conceivably have allowed itself to sink.

That summer the Germans were massing against the Polish frontiers 60 infantry divisions, 14 mechanized and motorized divisions, 3 mountain divisions, more than 4000 planes, and thousands of tanks and armored cars. To oppose them the Poles could mobilize less than a third that strength in all categories.[2] Their force was doomed to quick destruction under the fury and weight of the German assault. But the Polish Army, easy victim though it was to Hitler's war machine, far surpassed the United States Army in numbers of men and pieces of equipment.

On July 1, 1939, the Army's enlisted strength in the United States —air, ground, and service—was less than 130,000; of three organized and six partially organized infantry divisions, not one approached its combat complement; there were two cavalry divisions at less than half strength; but there was not one armored division, and the total number of men in scattered tank units was less than 1500; the entire Air Force consisted of approximately 1175 planes, designed for combat, and 17,000 men to service, maintain, and fly them. Overseas, to hold garrisons from the Arctic Circle to the Equator and from Panama to Corregidor, eight thousand miles away, there were 45,300 soldiers.[3]

Two increases, authorized during the summer and fall of 1939, raised the active Army at home and overseas to 227,000. But there it remained during the eight months that Germany, brutally triumphant over Poland, was readying her full might for the conquest of western Europe.

The American people still believed that distance provided adequate insulation between us and any conflict in Europe or Asia. Comparatively few understood the direct relationship between American prosperity and physical safety on the one hand, and on the other the existence of a free world beyond our shores. Consequently, the only Americans who thought about preparation for war were a few professionals in the armed services and those far-seeing statesmen who understood that American isolation from any major conflict was now completely improbable.

In the spring of 1940, with the German seizure of Denmark and Norway, the blitz that swept from the Rhine through France to the Bay of Biscay, and the crippled retreat of the British Army from Dunkirk, America began to grow uneasy. By the middle of June the Regular Army's authorized strength had been increased to 375,000. By the end of August, Congress had authorized mobilization of the National Guard; six weeks later Selective Service was in operation. By the summer of 1941 the Army of the United States, composed of regulars, Guardsmen, and citizen soldiers, numbered 1,500,000. No larger peacetime force had ever been mustered by this country. It was, nevertheless, only a temporary compromise with international fact.[4]

The million men who had come into the Army through the National Guard and Selective Service could not be required to serve anywhere outside the Western Hemisphere or for more than twelve months at home. In the summer of 1941, consequently, with the Germans racing across Russia and their Japanese ally unmistakably preparing for the conquest of the far Pacific, the Army could only feebly reinforce overseas garrisons.

The attack at Pearl Harbor was less than four months away when, by a one-vote margin in the House of Representatives, the Congress passed the Selective Service Extension Act, permitting the movement of all Army components overseas and extending the term of service.[5] The congressional action can be attributed largely to the personal intervention of General George C. Marshall, who had already attained a public stature that gave weight to his urgent warning. But even he could not entirely overcome the conviction that an all-out effort for defense was unnecessary. Limitations on service, such as the release of men of the age of twenty-eight, reflected a continuing belief that there was no immediate danger.

Thus for two years, as war engulfed the world outside the Americas and the Axis drove relentlessly toward military domination of the globe, each increase in the size, efficiency, and appropriations of the armed services was the result of a corresponding decrease in the complacency of the American people. But their hesitation to abandon compromise for decisive action could not be wholly dispelled until Pearl Harbor converted the issue into a struggle for survival.

Thereafter, in the space of three and a half years, the United States produced the fighting machine that played an indispensable role in beating Germany to its knees, even while our country, almost single-handed, was conducting a decisive war against the Japanese Empire.

The revolutionary transformation of America was not achieved overnight; the fact that it was ever achieved at all was due to the existence of staunch allies and our own distance from the scene of combat. At the outset none of us could foresee the end of the struggle; few of us saw eye to eye on what was demanded of us as individuals and as a nation; but each began, step by step, to learn and to perform his allotted task.

America's transformation, in three years, from a situation of appalling danger to unparalleled might in battle was one of the two miracles that brought Jodl to our headquarters to surrender on May 7, 1945. The other was the development, over the same period, of near perfection in allied conduct of war operations. History testifies to the ineptitude of coalitions in waging war. Allied failures have been so numerous and their inexcusable blunders so common that professional soldiers had long discounted the possibility of effective allied action unless available resources were so great as to assure victory by inundation. Even Napoleon's reputation as a brilliant military leader suffered when students in staff colleges came to realize that he always fought against coalitions—and therefore against divided counsels and diverse political, economic, and military interests.

Primarily the Allied task was to utilize the resources of two great nations with the decisiveness of single authority.

There was no precedent to follow, no chart by which to steer. Where nations previously had been successful in concert against a common foe, one member of the coalition had usually been so strong as to be the dominating partner. Now it was necessary to produce effective unity out of concessions voluntarily made. The true history of the war, and more especially the history of the operations Torch and Overlord, in the Mediterranean and northwest Europe, is the story of a unity produced on the basis of this voluntary co-operation. Differences there were, differences among strong men representing strong and proud peoples, but these paled into insignificance alongside the miracle of achievement represented in the shoulder-to-shoulder march of the Allies to complete victory in the West.

On the day the war began, in 1939, I was in the Philippines, nearing completion of four years' duty as senior military assistant to General Douglas MacArthur, who had been charged with building and training an independent Filipino military establishment.

Local interest in the war was heightened by outbreaks in Manila