INSIDE AFGHANISTAN

The Soviets' Big Push

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The Men Who Hit The Beaches

Remembering D-Day, 1944

American Veteran James B. Ramage At Normandy

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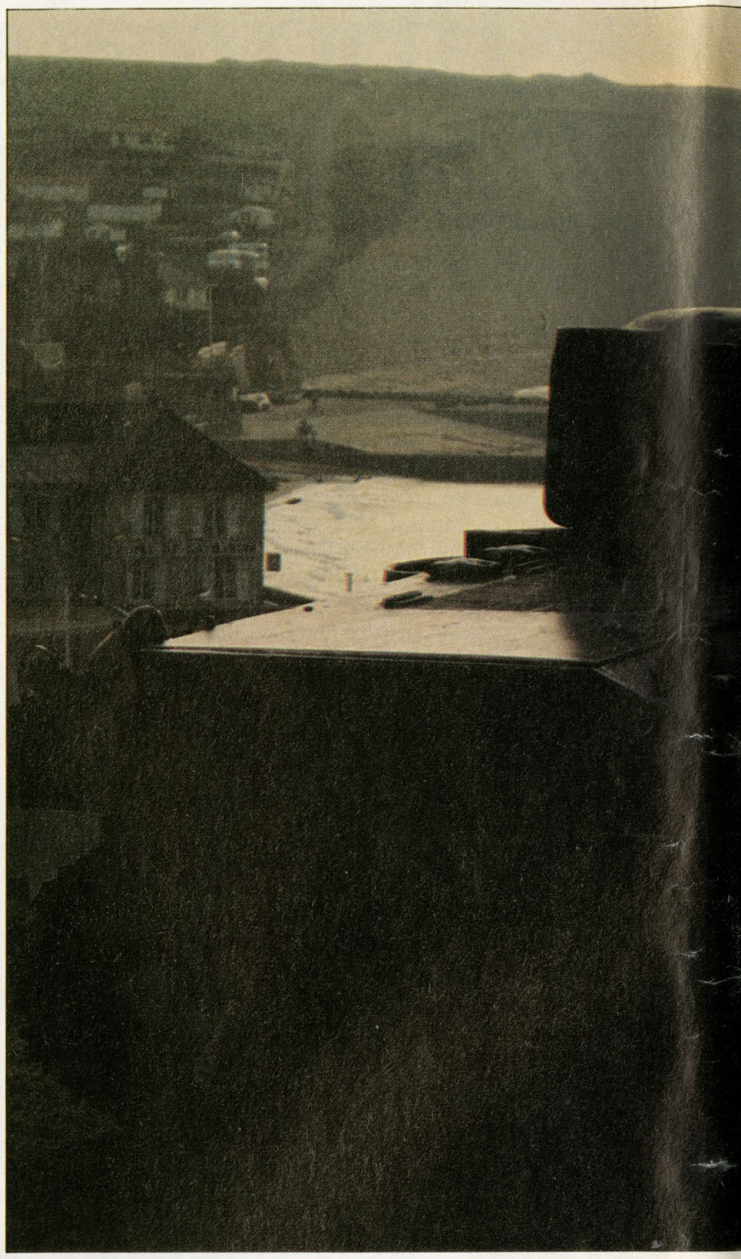
The Men Who Hit The Beach

Forty years ago, 133,000 Allied troops stormed Normandy in the largest amphibious invasion in history. Their valor helped crush the German Army and topple Adolf Hitler's Third Reich. This week survivors will join Ronald Reagan and six Allied leaders to revisit the site of the victory—and to commemorate the heroism of D-Day.

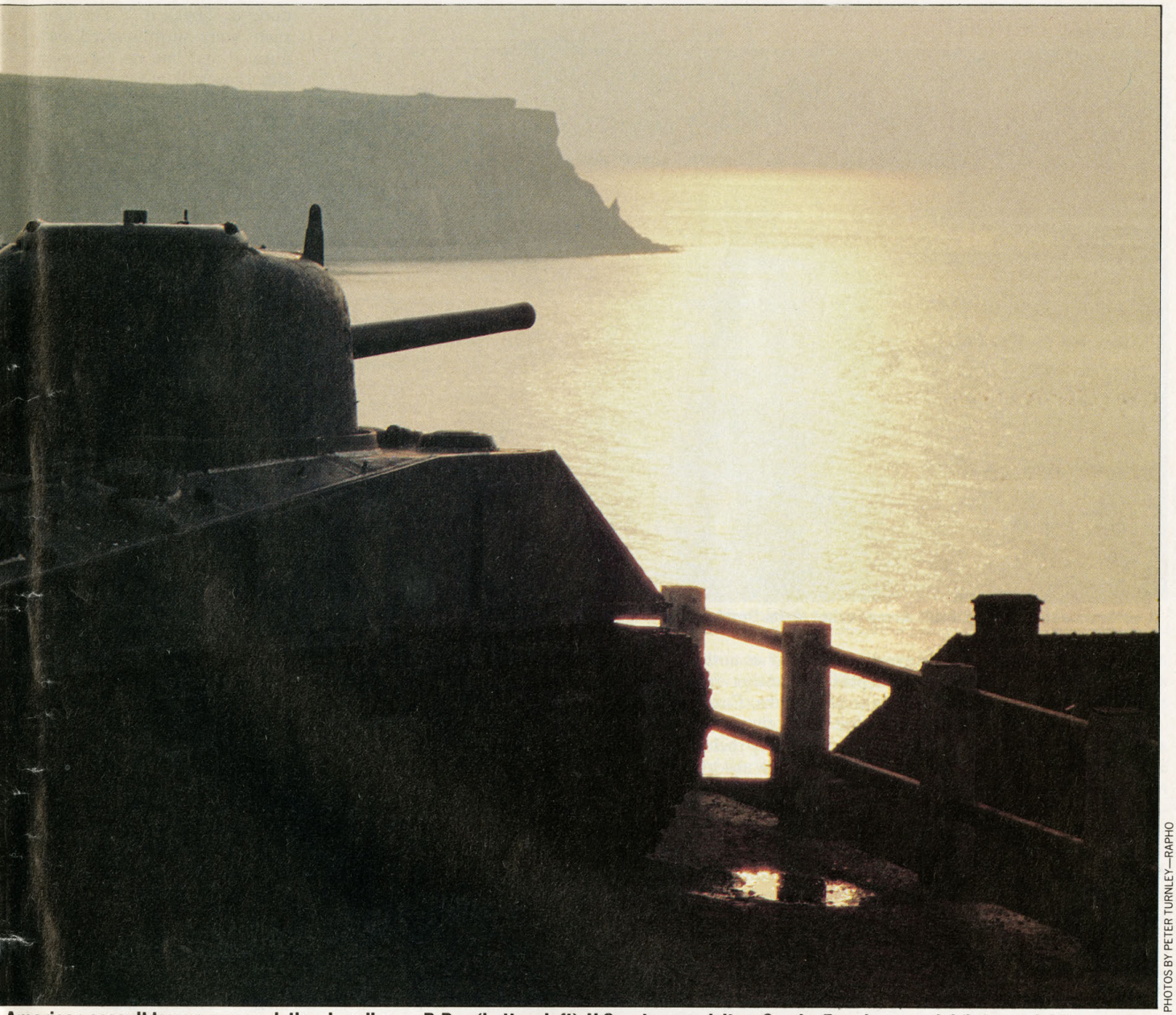
U.S. ARMY



On the Normandy cliffs, a battle relic commands the channel (top),

Their hair is thin and gray now, and midriffs hardened for combat have thickened with age. But as the survivors began filtering back into Normandy last week, their eyes still burned with the memories of what they did on that day 40 years ago. Wrapped in the past, they made their way across the wind-swept beaches where the infantrymen had waded ashore in a haze of morning fog and gunfire. They peered into the slate-colored skies, where the paratroopers had dropped like avenging angels. And they came, one after one, into the fields of tall white crosses to lay flowers for the dead—comrades who had fallen in the great fight of good against evil. Kneeling beside the grave of a high-school friend who was killed in the invasion, U.S. veteran James Ramage, 60, said quietly: "That represents freedom and blood."

If blood was the price, the prize was the fall of Adolf Hitler and his thousand-year Reich. When 133,000 American, British and Canadian troops charged out of the English Channel and hit the beaches of northern France on June 6, 1944, they launched a final push that within 11 months crushed the German Army. It was the beginning of a new era. The largest military invasion in history laid the foundation for the Marshall plan, the recovery of Europe and the birth of the Atlantic alliance. It also confirmed America's rise from wary isolationism to a new role as the world's strongest power.



PHOTOS BY PETER TURNLEY—RAPHO

American assault troops approach the shoreline on D-Day (bottom left), U.S. veterans visit an Omaha Beach memorial (bottom right)

Yet even as the Allies were pushing the Germans back across the farmlands of Normandy, the Soviet Union was advancing on the Polish frontier—dividing Europe almost as soon as it was liberated.

For Ronald Reagan, the 40th anniversary this week will come as a celebration of his own moral absolutes—of the darkness-and-light struggle of free peoples against closed societies. After a nostalgic return to his own roots in Ireland, the president will join Queen Elizabeth, six other heads of state and government and more than 30,000 veterans who will gather in Normandy. He will dedicate a monument commemorating those Americans who fell at Utah Beach, one of the five Allied landing points for the invasion. He will visit the grave of Teddy Roosevelt's son, Theodore Jr., who fought at Normandy. And he will say a few words in honor of Gen. J. Lawton (Lightning Joe) Collins, who led the charge of the U.S. Seventh Corps onto Utah Beach and is now D-Day's highest-ranking American survivor.

Legacies: Then all too quickly, the real world will crowd in on the president's sentimental journey. When he travels on to London for the annual summit of Western leaders, there will be none of the grandeur of the wartime meetings between Roosevelt and Churchill. Instead of plotting the salvation of civilization, the leaders will haggle over interest rates, protectionism and the crisis in the

PHOTOS BY PETER TURNLEY—RAPHO

A veteran wearing his old U.S. Army jacket visits Omaha Beach: Memories more powerful than time

Persian Gulf. They will resolve little and solve nothing. To an extent, their fractiousness will represent another ironic legacy of D-Day. Despite their gratitude to the Yanks, Europeans have never fully accepted the second-place status that the war thrust upon them. And Americans have been spoiled by their shining era of overwhelming superiority. They have yet to absorb the limits imposed on their power by Europe's postwar recovery and by the Soviet Union's sense of its own manifest destiny.

Four decades later, Operation Overlord still stands as a miracle of military planning and logistics. In less than five months the Allies managed to assemble two battalions and six infantry and three airborne divisions along the coast of southern England. Despite delays, darkness and rough seas, they successfully crossed the English Channel and stormed a front 60 miles long. With decoy maneuvers, they persuaded the Germans that the assault would come farther up the French coast at Pas-de-Calais, not along the wide-open beaches of Normandy. Gustav Pflocksch, then a lieutenant in Hitler's Army in Normandy, recalls rubbing his eyes in amazement as row after row of landing craft sailed out of the dawn, with warships behind them "looming there like skyscrapers." At that moment, Pflocksch says, "we realized that this battle was the beginning of the end of the war."

Tough Fight: It turned out to be just that—but the invasion was not a walkover. British war correspondent and historian Max Hastings stresses the point in his new study, "Overlord: D-Day and the Battle for Normandy," which will be published on June 6. "There was a sort of collective relaxation on D-Day plus one," says Hastings. "All those men got on the beaches and they seemed to say to themselves, 'Well, we've done it. That's it'." The Germans were outnumbered, outgunned and had no air cover. But they still put up a tough fight: with only 30 tanks and 1,000 men, the 12th SS Panzer Division held up the Canadian Second Corps for two weeks at Falaise. If they had had one more panzer division, Hastings argues, it would have been touch and go. Other historians agree. "We had a *very* close shave," says Prof. Francis Loewenheim of Rice University, coeditor of a collection of Roosevelt and Churchill's wartime correspondence.

For Germans, the anniversary in Normandy can only offer sobering reflections. D-Day helped topple Hitler. But the time that followed led to the division of Germany and a political quandary that has lasted to this day: how to put Nazism in the past and establish democratic credibility with the West while dealing with the practical realities of 17 million countrymen in East Germany and 272 million Russians lurking just behind them. In a pointed snub, the leaders of the old alliance did not invite West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl to the ceremonies this week. Meantime, most West Germans paid little attention to the anniversary: the pro-American paper Die Welt is the only major publication in the country that has devoted much space to it. "When you mentioned June 6, 1944, I had to think twice to remember what happened on that particular day," said Reinhard Schmoeckel, a government official in Bonn. "It was just one of many days of disaster."

Mementos: The feelings of the French are also mixed. Socialist President François Mitterrand remains a staunch supporter of the alliance largely because of his gratitude toward America for liberating his country. But Charles de Gaulle rankled at his exclusion from the inner circle that plotted D-Day, and his lofty insistence on French independence and grandeur eventually led him to withdraw France from NATO in 1966. Now the people of Normandy—many of whom still keep dollar bills and Lucky Strike cigarettes as

A French survivor at a memorial service, a child's tribute at a Normandy cemetery: Honoring the fallen

G. RANCINAN—SYGMA

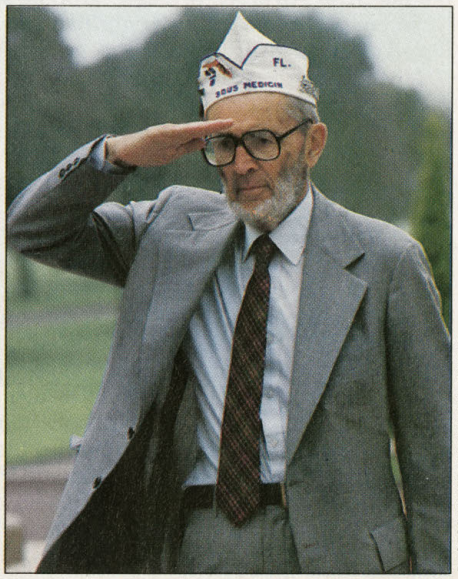
A rusting gun emplacement still marks the German defense line: For Hitler's troops, the surprise attack was the beginning of the end

souvenirs of the invasion—complain that the rest of the country no longer appreciates the magnitude of what the Allies did for them. "There are many people who don't remember anymore," says Madame Georges Gondrée, the owner of the first house to be liberated during D-Day. "And there are many ingrates."

For the British, the reverberations of D-Day began well before June 6, 1944. In the winter of that year, tens of thousands of American soldiers swept into southern England to prepare for the invasion. The Americans took the exhausted, bombed-out country by storm, flaunting their industrial might, their brash self-confidence and their charm with the local girls. When it was all over, they left Britain to withdraw from empire and to ebb into a decline that has never been reversed. For an entire generation of those who fought alongside the Yanks and those who cheered them on, any hard feelings were tempered by an abiding sense of thankfulness. But others understandably resent the United States for eclipsing Britain so completely.

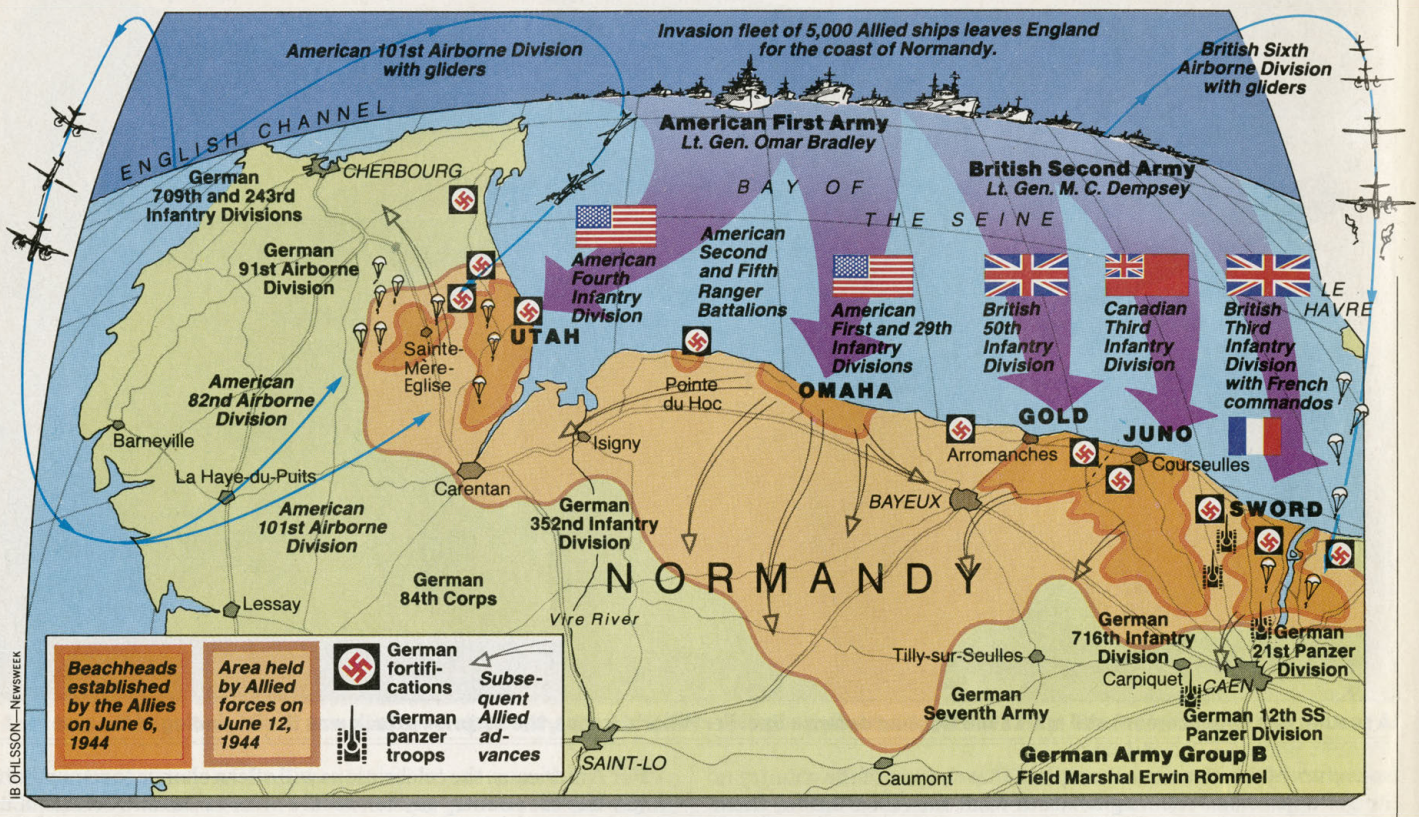
For Americans, the celebrations will offer a chance to remember a time when the country still felt secure in its values and certain of its destiny. After covering the invasion, former CBS correspondent Charles Collingwood remembers experiencing a sense of euphoria. "We really did believe," he says, "that not only could we determine the future of the world, but we had a duty to do so." Since then the world has changed. Nuclear weapons have given the United States far more firepower than it had in 1944, but far less ability to use it. Today few wars seem so just as the struggle against the Nazis; particularly since Vietnam, America's iron confidence has rusted badly. But the old men returning to Normandy this week have kept faith with virtues that have not changed—valor and sacrifice in the defense of freedom. And in honoring them, the anniversary of D-Day will always keep that spirit alive.

MARK WHITAKER with DEBBIE SEWARD in Paris, TONY CLIFTON in London, MAKS WESTERMAN in Bonn, ELEANOR CLIFT and THOMAS M. DeFRANK in Washington, BOB LEVIN in Atlanta and SHAWN DOHERTY in New York



PHOTOS BY PETER TURNLEY—RAPHO

A toast to past triumphs, a salute at the grave of a fallen comrade: Remembering a time of boundless confidence and unshaken values



Operation Overlord: Synchronizing Watches

D-Day: June 6, 1944

12:10 a.m.: 1,136 RAF bombers fill the sky between Cherbourg and Le Havre, raining 5,853 tons of bombs on enemy coastal batteries. The aerial offensive is directed against Hitler's "Atlantic Wall"—1,800 cement blockhouses dug into the dunes at intervals of 100 yards, beginning at Cap de la Hague and running all the way to Honfleur. The bombing prepares the way for the most ambitious amphibious operation ever attempted.

1:30 a.m.: Thousands of paratroopers tumble out of waves of U.S. aircraft swooping low over Normandy's coast. The 101st and 82nd Airborne divisions drop down by Ste.-Mère-Eglise, intending to connect with right-flank invaders at Omaha Beach.

2:30 a.m.: British paratroopers, the 6th Airborne Division, float to earth east of the Orne River and push for Pegasus Bridge, preparing to join the seaborne left flank.

5:50 a.m.: Battleships bombard German positions; U.S. bombers shower shore defenses, and fighter bombers swarm in to finish the job, knocking out individual targets. As the sun rises, the silhouettes of 5,000 invasion craft suddenly loom on the horizon 12 miles out. They close steadily on the coast.

6:30 a.m.: The first ships of the American First Army reach shallow water; supply-laden men spill out and make for shore under heavy supporting fire. The Fourth Infantry Division winds up at the "easy" beach, Utah, while the First and 29th wash up on "Bloody Omaha." Thinking that Allied bombings have cleaned out German emplacements, they plow headlong into a lethal barrage that obliterates companies and craft alike.

7:00 a.m.: At Pointe du Hoc another blood bath is under way as 225 members of the U.S. Second and Fifth Ranger battalions, equipped with scaling ropes and extension ladders, scramble up the 100-foot bluff of this enemy holdout. Perched above, the Germans slash ropes, upset ladders, shove boulders over the cliff's edge, and pepper the soldiers with gunfire and grenades. Only 90 Rangers make it to the top.

7:30 a.m.: The British Second Army wades in at the eastern end of the Calvados coast—the 50th Infantry Division tackles Gold Beach, as the Third Division takes Sword.

8:00 a.m.: Canada's Third Infantry Division works the wind-whipped waters off Juno Beach. Their boats tossing atop six-foot-high whitecaps, the troops manage to destroy most of the enemy machine-gun nests within hours.

Although battles on other beaches take many casualties, by evening all five seaborne forces are firmly on French soil.

June 7: The Allies announce their troops have "cleared all beaches of the enemy." Having broken through the formidable Atlantic Wall, Americans, Britons and Canadians flood the interior fields and farmlands, storming German defenses—fewer and weaker than on the coast.

June 8: The British capture historic Bayeux, on the main Cherbourg-Paris line, the first town to be liberated in France.

June 9: The British continue southward toward Caen, but are repelled before they take the town by panzer divisions poised to protect this coveted link in the German defense line. The piecemeal enemy efforts elsewhere are less successful.

June 10: Allied liaison operations begin as Americans work their way east to rendezvous with the Anglo-Canadian beachhead, and west toward Carentan.

June 11: The Allied bridgehead now stretches uninterrupted for 60 miles—from the Orne River to above Ste.-Mère-Eglise.

June 12: A bitterly contested Carentan falls, capping the first phase of Supreme Commander Eisenhower's "great crusade." Ten months later, the eastward-moving Allies, having recouped Battle of the Bulge losses, lunge across the Rhine and, on May 7, force Germany's hand to an unconditional surrender.

JOANNE TURNBULL in New York

Reliving a Day of Terror and Triumph

For the survivors of the Normandy invasion, this week's 40th anniversary will summon up wrenching moments of horror and powerful memories of heroism.

What We All Shared

Richard Merrill was a captain in the U.S. Army's Second Ranger Battalion, which went ashore at Dog Green on the right flank of Omaha Beach. Now 64, Merrill lives in Norcross, Ga. He retired after 28 years with The Coca-Cola Co.

We thought getting across the beach would be no problem—but it didn't turn out that way. The advance units had been washed down the beach as they landed, plus running into strong opposition. The tide was lower than we thought. There was a longer area to cross, and it was cross-stitched with fire. Small-arms fire, machine-gun fire, mortar fire, artillery fire—they were shooting at the landing craft and the people in the water. I was the first one off the craft. Capt. Frank Corder, from Texas, was the next man off. And I remember Frank's exact words: "This is no place for Mrs. Corder's little boy Frank."

You knew the shortest path was a straight one right across the beach. You'd hear "zip-zip"—just strings of machine-gun bullets and automatic weapons crisscrossing paths. You're soaking wet; everything is heavy. You'd try to time it to run and you'd fall. You'd run on a dry piece of sand and then hit water and immediately tumble, get up and keep going. I don't remember anyone right with me; I was just hoping the others were coming behind me.

There were a few bodies around in the water, and there were others once you got across the beach road. One of the men from my boat, we saw him get hit and tumble and get up and we were hollering: "Keep going, Rusty! Keep going!" He got across the beach, was evacuated and sent home. I saw Frank Corder, too, but he was tough to recognize because he'd lost an eye and teeth. Someone had gotten to him and put a big bandage over part of his face. I put him up on an amphibious tank so they could carry him down to a more quiet area of the beach, where they were collecting people to evacuate them. He survived.

Of the first seven off the boat—if I was the first one out, the seventh man was the next one to get across the beach without being hit. All the ones in between were hit. Two were killed; three were injured. I had a shovel on the back of the pack, and the wooden handle had a bullet hole straight through it about three inches in back of me. That's how lucky you had to be.

About 60 Rangers are going for the anniversary; we will be on the stand with President Reagan. Being on location for the first time again with the men that you served with, it's very meaningful. You shared diving into a foxhole and a buddy landing on top of you and you don't know at first whether you're both going to be blown up, whether this is it, and then the fire moves on down and you've lived. You shared something together that you'll never experience in the rest of your lifetime.

DAN HELMS—DUOMO

Merrill with war medals, as a young Ranger: A cross-stitch of gunfire

The British 'Funnies'

As a lieutenant with the 22nd Dragoons of the British Army, Ian Hammerton went in with the first wave of the invasion to clear the way with antimine tanks.

At arms: Snakes and buffaloes

We were known as the funnies because of all the secret assault equipment we had: flail tanks for clearing the mines; "snakes," which were fire hoses filled with nitroglycerin; some crocodile flame throwers; "buffaloes" (armored swimming vehicles); DD tanks, which were boat-shaped Sherman tanks that provided fire support for the infantry. Anything that could blow things up—you name it and we had it.

My landing craft was one of the leading ones. The commanders were instructed to open the sealed bags they had been given. Out of my bag, I took maps which showed me for the first time where we were going: Bernières-sur-Mer, a little seaside town. There were aerial photos of our beach taken two or three weeks before and holiday snapshots of families on the beach showing the sea wall.

Hammerton with his wife: A sea of bodies, a driver who panicked

After crossing the bar we were straightway in rougher waters. Then there was this overwhelming smell of diesel. The only person who was not seasick on our landing craft was

the skipper. Dawn came, and the Germans were shelling over our heads. I remember seeing a Spitfire that must have flown into a salvo, because there was a puff of black smoke and a flash—and then there was no Spitfire.

The first tanks off my landing craft were two flails; their job was to flail from the water's edge up to where the bridge was going to be placed. As the tank with the bridge went out, it started to lurch dangerously. A gun fired and killed the commander. We had one chap who panicked. He was a codriver of one of the tanks and he said he just couldn't trust himself with his pistol; he made someone else look after it for him. My sergeant had a codriver who got a bit jittery; once on land, he wouldn't get out of the tank for weeks. I walked along the sea wall to link up with my sergeant. I can remember passing dead bodies and a sea of wounded men—including a Canadian soldier who was sitting there, moaning and with no face. A padre was trying to comfort him. The chap obviously wanted a cigarette. Only there wasn't anywhere to put it, you see . . .

My oldest son is now living near Baden-Baden. He's got a German girlfriend; she's a lovely girl. We went there for Easter and her parents invited us into their home several times. Her dad was called up when he was 17, but was captured early on. He was a prisoner of war for the British and then for the Belgians. He was recounting some of his more hilarious moments to me. There we were, sitting next to each other and laughing over war experiences. And that was a very curious feeling, too.

The Specter of Defeat

Heinrich Severloh was an assistant to a German battery commander at Normandy. He was 20 years old at the time.

Sometime around midnight on June 5 the alarm sounded, and we rode on horseback down to the beach and took up our posts. Altogether there were 27 or 28 men on this half-mile stretch. The rest of the German soldiers were stationed at least a half mile inland. Today I am absolutely sure that I am the only one on the beach who survived.

We sat in the trench and looked out at the sea. When it started to get light, I saw ships through the haze. When the fog lifted, it looked like a city out there. Between the ships you couldn't see any water. It was unbelievable—terrifying to behold. Directly in front of us stood an enormous ship, and the GI's began to spring out. Then the commander said to me, "The saddest thing that there is, is when you say 'you poor pig' to a man." You say "poor pig" when someone is crippled or terribly sick. Then you don't know what's left to do; there is no more chance of improvement. "You poor pig," he said to us.

Throughout the whole day, I was not afraid. At that time we were totally different people, we reacted totally differently. We were under the domination of Hitler, and independent thought was forbidden. We were so deadened by the constant drills that the thought that we might actually be killed hardly made an impression on us. The commanders used to point to the horses that carried the artillery and say, "Leave the thinking to them, they have more in their heads."

When you were on the line, as I was there on the beach, then it came damn close to your skin. At that time we could still pray. And I know that that day I went off to the side and prayed—not like in church, but really prayed. And then I was sure, although I had no chance at all, that I would come out alive.

NOVUM

Severloh today, at age 20 in Hitler's Army: A city on the water

The Smell of Pure D. Hell

Henry Basey was a 20-year-old private first class when he landed at Omaha Beach. He was wounded nine times after the invasion and fought at the Battle of the Bulge in 1944. He is now retired and living in Houston.

The Texas was shooting holes in the German walls, but they had a big old gun called Bertha inside the hill on tracks. We never could find it for a long time. It was well camouflaged. It kept hitting targets. My group was trying to stay together. I was supposed to drive the commander's jeep, but he got killed. There was lots of confusion.

The ground was *vibrating.* Just shaking something awful. You couldn't hear anything for about two or three hours—just the big guns and mortars and small-arms fire. You could have walked halfway up on the bodies piled at the bottoms of those hills.

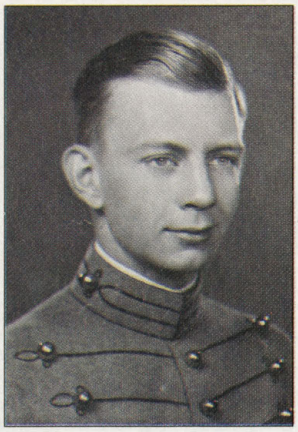
What I remember was Pure D. Hell. The smell of the bodies and the gunpowder is something I will *never* get out of my nose. There were guys falling all around me, hollering, and there was no one to help them. I didn't think I'd live through it myself, but I knew it was something I had to do. So I asked the Lord God to guide me.

So many of the leaders got wounded and killed that mostly you had to use your own judgment. And that's what we did. We knew our country was at stake. So we bunched together, those of us that was left, and we set the mines to keep them from coming down the road we built to the top of the hills. Even when it was getting dark we were afraid to sleep.

I feel like I've come a long way in these years. But there's some things that just never leave you. The scent of the dead is like nothing else. Sometimes I can still smell it. Sometimes I can't stay in the house by myself because I feel like I did then. Going on that beach was like going into a dome where there is no air. You know that death is there.

HERMAN J. KOKOJAN—BLACK STAR

Basey at home, a wartime snapshot: Big guns that shook the ground



DAN HELMS—DUOMO

Dulaney, as a soldier: Passwords and Cracker Jack crickets

'Everybody Was Lost'

Jack Dulaney, a Ranger captain, was one of the paratroopers who dropped behind Utah Beach hours before the boats landed. An injury at Normandy ended his military career; he spent 24 years at Allied Chemical and, after a few other jobs, retired last year. He now lives in Duluth, Ga., with his wife.

It must have been about 11:30 at night when we took off. When we jumped, God Almighty, the machine-gun fire was just coming up there, you could hear it hitting your parachute. I even slipped my chute, let most of the air out of it so I could drop as fast as I could to get out of the line of fire. I remember hitting the water, and I saw these other planes coming over and the machine guns were just following them and there were thousands of tracer bullets and I remember thinking: "I'm the only man alive in France; they're slaughtering us."

There was a dry road leading over this swampy area down to Utah Beach—our mission was to clear it of any Germans. I tried to find out where in hell I was. The thing about D-Day was everybody was so damned lost, so confused—you might've been exactly where you were supposed to be but it didn't look like nothing that you'd seen on these maps. I'd picked up men from all kinds of units, practically had a little army of my own. The Germans could have slaughtered us in the dark, but they stayed right where they were.

We had these little crickets, like you used to get in a Cracker Jacks box, and they'd go click-click, and click-click-click-click, which was the countersign. But we also had a password, "Thunder," and the countersign was "Welcome," on the theory that the Germans would say "Toonder" and "Velcome." But people wanted to make sure. They'd say, "Babe Ruth," "apple pie," "Joe DiMaggio," "Red Grange,"—anything that came to mind.

There were all these little bands of paratroopers, stumbling into Germans, and vice versa. It was pitch dark, and there were huge hedgerows on both sides of the road, and someone yelled something, and I remember diving for the ditch. Immediately the road lit up with tracer bullets and they sprayed both sides of the ditch and one bullet went right through my arm. Another bullet took out part of the back of my jacket; I came within that far of being a paraplegic.

The other thing about D-Day is the Frenchmen were hostile. You'd seen pictures of them waving, throwing flowers and passing out wine; but those Normans, man, they wouldn't give you the time of day. It was language for one thing, but I think they figured the Germans were gonna kick our ass. They were waiting to see who won. Right after I'd gotten shot, it was just breaking daylight and all of a sudden an old man and a young boy, little fellow about nine years old, materialized, and I'm trying to ask him in my fractured French where the hell I was and he drew back his cane and sputtered and the little kid slugged me with a rock.

On the fourth day I got shot up in the top of the femur and that was it. Durned if it wasn't a ricochet, too. Some of it's still in there. I got out of the hospital three years later. I was going to be a career officer but I was retired with 80 percent disability.

I dream about D-Day all the time. In it I'm going back, but this time I don't get shot. But it's always the most frustrating dream. I don't have my helmet; I'm in civilian clothes; I don't have a gun; I can't find any ammunition. I'm trying to borrow a gun from somebody. Yet here I am with all these Germans around me.

I don't want to go back to Normandy now. Maybe in six months or a year, when there wouldn't be a billion people stomping around. I'd like to go back and find out where I was—and maybe track down that little boy who threw the rock at me.

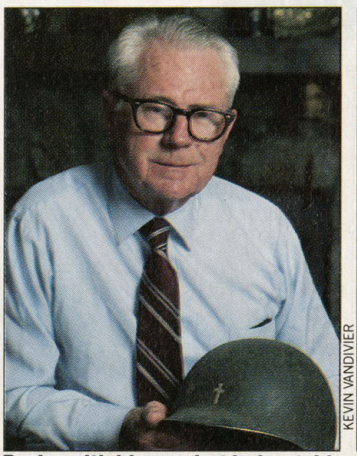
'Chaplain, We're Scared'

Chaplain Louis B. Parks of Kerrville, Texas, was a 26-year-old U.S. Army captain when he went ashore at Omaha Beach.

On land we had been conducting chapel services several times a day and they were full to overflowing. But once we had boarded the ship on June 4, the men seemed to withdraw into themselves. We were on an old merchant ship with 1,800 men, but only a handful came to services. Oh, they'd stop me around the deck and say things like: "Chap, be sure you remember me to the man upstairs." They just wanted to make contact, then they'd go back to their own thoughts.

I was with the litter squads. We wore International Red Cross armbands. As soon as we were onshore and at the top of the hill where our boys were digging in, we went around to gather up the wounded to carry them back to the aid station. After the fighting lulled, we went and searched out the dead. The chaplains and aid people tried to help the wounded Germans, too. Most of the Germans were just kids, but there were also some seasoned people. In one foxhole I found an SS trooper. His arm and leg had been blown off, but when I reached down to try to help, he began spitting at me.

Whenever we could, the chaplains went from foxhole to foxhole and from gun emplacement to gun emplacement, just talking. Simple things. Home. Family. I think this was really important for the men. We were close to them. We'd trained with them and had come through this. I had boys say to me: "Chaplain, I'm scared. You're probably scared too, but if you're here, I feel better." Even though all of us were scared at times, morale stayed excellent. Lots of the boys would come up and say: "When we get this thing over with . . ."



KEVIN VANDIVIER

Parks with his combat helmet, his old uniform: Words of comfort

The Bicycle Underground

As chief of the French Resistance along Normandy's coast, Guillaume Mercader was one of the few Frenchmen who knew about D-Day in advance. He supplied vital information to the Allies on the deployment and strength of German forces. After the war Mercader, now 69, was decorated with America's Bronze Star and France's Légion d'Honneur and Croix de Guerre.

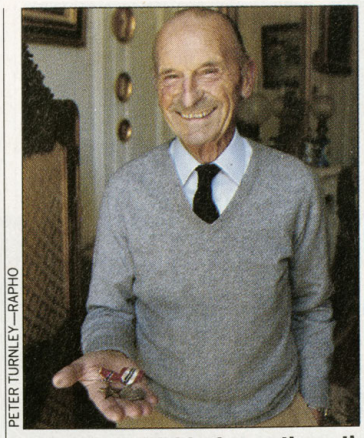
Our job was to get information on the enemy fortifications, the location of military equipment, ammunition depots, weapons and on the German Army's general staff in the region. I personally sifted through all the information, kept what was valuable and made a synthesis of it all. From sketches we made maps.

It was easy for me to get around during the occupation because I had previously been a professional bicycle racer; I had managed to keep my license under the pretext that I had to continue with my training. On Wednesdays I rode over to Caen and handed the information I had gathered to my superiors. I hid the documents in the tubes of my bicycle. Sometimes I rode as much as 140 kilometers a day.

On the second of June I was called to Paris and told that the invasion was imminent. I was told two messages would be broadcast over the BBC: "It's hot in Suez" and "The fairies are on the carpet." On June 5 at 6:30 p.m., the first of the messages came over the air. Then I heard the second one. I immediately warned my principal agents in the underground that the invasion would take place on our shores.

But our job was not done. We were put in contact with the British to discuss the possibility of constructing groups behind enemy lines. I was dispatched to the American OSS, and I was one of the first French officers to enter Buchenwald. I have good memories of the OSS. They were simply remarkable men.

I think that rapprochement between France and Germany is a good thing, but the war cost me a lot. I lost my mother and father in the bombings. I didn't find out about their death until more than a month after it happened; we never found their bodies. Some of my agents were arrested and shot. What I fear about the 40th anniversary is that it may be a bit too much show business. There are few among those invited to the ceremonies who actually lived through the invasion. It's important to acknowledge the anniversary, but not to make it a spectacle.



PETER TURNLEY—RAPHO

Mercader with his decorations, the bicycle spy: Hidden documents

PETER TURNLEY—RAPHO

The Braults at home in Normandy: The bride wore army shoes

Love in the Ruins

June 6, 1944, was to have been Juliette Brault's wedding day. Then the invasion began, and the 16-year-old Frenchwoman was told that her fiancé had been killed. Three days later he turned up alive, and with help from the U.S. Army, the couple completed their interrupted wedding. Today the Braults live with their cat, Airborne, near Utah Beach.

My fiancé, Georges, and I wanted to get married quickly. We were sick of the occupation. The day before the wedding I went to the dressmaker for a final fitting. I can still see myself in my white dress. I was ecstatic.

The bombs dropped the entire night before the wedding. I was at my parents' home. We barely talked, just prayed. It was dreadful; I thought we were going to die. I thought about Georges all the time. I wondered if I would ever see him again. In the morning we took refuge in a farm. I was told Georges had disappeared and was dead. We stayed in the trenches while the Americans and Germans bombed us from both sides. We had to go to another farm. Finally Georges found me. I didn't want to be separated from him again.

We took refuge near an American camp. I don't know how the Americans knew I was to get married. My dress was riddled by shell fragments. I had lost my white shoes. The Americans brought me at least three pairs of shoes. One pair from a parachutist rose high over my ankles and wasn't pretty. Another was also too big. But the third was a pair of civilian shoes from an officer. I wore them for my wedding.

The mayor who married us called it love in the ruins. The night of our marriage we slept in a bad bed. But the others slept on straw. The next day we saw a girl killed by a bomb. That memory has always followed me. We saw a lot of dead. It is unthinkable now, but we had two lives: occupation and liberation. After D-Day I tried to forget. We wanted to forget the war, and we wanted to work.

This year I am moving up our 40th wedding anniversary so we can celebrate it with the American parachutists who come back. I am making parachute decorations for the cake and hanging little parachutes in the house. I also have a banner that says, "Welcome our beloved American friends." If there were another war, I am sure the Americans would come again.

After D-Day: Answered prayers

'It Was Not Like the Movie'

British Maj. John Howard commanded the first Allied forces to land on D-Day—a 180-man glider unit that flew in after midnight on June 5, capturing the first bridge in Normandy, code named Pegasus, and liberating the café owned by Georges Gondrée. Now 71, Howard often returns to the Gondrée café, where he still dines free of charge.

Ready for battle: No bagpipes

Although we left at one-minute intervals from Britain in the Horsa gliders, there was no telling in what order we would land. Crash-landing was the big fear. My other worry was that we were all carrying grenades that were already primed. If one of those went off and exploded, it would have blown all the ammunition in the glider.

Within 10 minutes of landing, I had no platoon commanders. Two had been killed and the third seriously wounded. But we managed to capture the bridge intact. It was not like the film "The Longest Day." I don't care what Darryl Zanuck tells you, there were no explosives under that bridge. And there were no bagpipes going over the bridge either, because of sniper fire. We had to run over the bridge as fast as we bloody well could.

PETER TURNLEY—RAPHO

Howard visits a Normandy street named after him: Champagne for all

We decided to take a nearby house as a first-aid station. It was the café of Georges Gondrée. Dear old Madame Gondrée went around kissing us all and getting her face black from my British troops. Georges went into the garden and dug up 99 bottles of champagne he had buried. You can imagine the cork-popping that went on.

It was the most positive experience of my life, but I wouldn't wish war on anybody. I am glad to see so many children shown the battlefields. I go out of my way to talk to them and explain the horrors of war—so that we'll never risk having another.

'100 Percent Spirit'

O. B. Hill was a 22-year-old communications sergeant in the 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment of the 82nd Airborne. On D-Day he was dropped into the Douve River in Normandy. Today he's a retired accountant living outside Los Angeles. He spends much of his time keeping track of his buddies in the 508th.

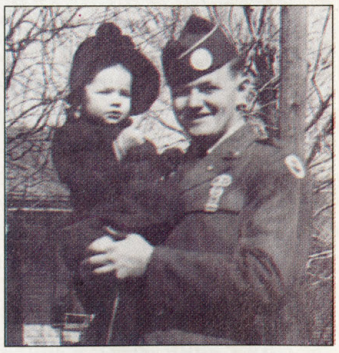
We knew something was up from the time we were sent overseas at the beginning of March, but we didn't know where or when we were going to jump. Some men guessed Holland, others the northern part of Italy and some said Munich. We were moved from a tent city near Nottingham, England, to Folkingham around the first of June, and told we were going into Normandy. We were supposed to jump on the fifth of June. The weather was bad that day, so we waited until the sixth.

We blackened our faces with lard and soot because it was going to be a night jump. We were given three days' supply of food and ammunition, but most of us tried to load up with extra ammunition. I had an M-1 rifle and a .45 pistol, fragmentation grenades, two British Gammon grenades and a land mine. I also had a trench knife which my father, a coal miner, had made me. I was so heavy I had to be helped into the airplane. I threw the inside of my gas mask away and filled it with cigarettes.

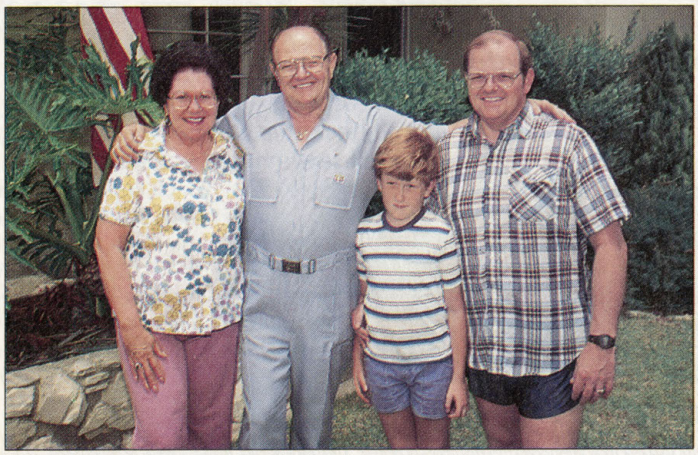
Eighteen of us took off in our C-47. I was the pusher on that plane—the last one to jump—but no one had to be pushed on that day. Others, who landed in the rivers, drowned—you didn't have a chance with all that equipment. Out of my plane, only four of us made it through D-Day. As I was coming down, machine-gun fire ripped a hole in my rubber gas-mask case. When I fell into the river, my cigarettes were ruined. That is the kind of silly thing you remember.

I managed to get into a ditch behind a hedgerow when I heard a group of maybe 15 Germans marching by. I stayed down until I heard a voice which gave me the word for the night, which was "Thunder." I was supposed to answer "Welcome," but with all the excitement I couldn't remember and said, "Oh, shit." It was Bill Brown, one of my corporals. We met up with others until we were maybe 38 strong. We got up to a road near a house which had Germans in it. We started firing at the house for 20 or 30 minutes. Then we heard an American voice saying, "Back off, they are killing us in here."

I don't suppose there has ever been an army like that before or ever will be again. The spirit of the individuals was 100 percent, American gung-ho, right to the limit. The men I served with are as close to me or closer than my family. At the first convention of veterans from the 508th, you'd see these 50-year-old guys running up to each other after 30 years. My son says it's some sight to watch these bald, fat and wrinkled old paratroopers who are supposed to be so rough and rugged standing around and crying all over each other.



Going off to war: Ties that last



LESTER SLOAN—NEWSWEEK

Hill with buddies—and family: Soot-smudged faces, soggy cigarettes

Why D-Day Won't Happen Again

The heroic task for our time is not to win new wars but to avoid them.

By SCOTT SULLIVAN

For all the bloodshed and tragedy of D-Day, the beaches of Normandy will always evoke a certain nostalgia: a yearning for a time when nations in the civilized world buried their differences and combined to oppose absolute evil, when values seemed clearer and the terrible consequences of war stopped short of the annihilation of humanity. But 40 years after the Allies hit those wave-battered sand flats and towering cliffs, the Normandy invasion stands as a feat unlikely to be repeated. There will never be another D-Day.

Technology has changed the conditions of warfare in ways that none of the D-Day participants could have conceived. All-out war in the 1980s would surely spell all-out destruction for the belligerents, and possibly for the entire human race. No credible scenario for a future world war would allow time for the massive buildup of conventional forces that occurred in the 1940s. The moral equivalent of the Normandy invasion in the nuclear age would involve a presidential decision to put tens of millions of American lives at risk. And the possible benefits for the allies would be uncertain at best. European defense experts often ask whether the United States would be willing to "trade Pittsburgh for Düsseldorf." In practice, the question may well be whether it is worth sacrificing American cities to avenge a Europe already reduced to rubble.

SIGNAL CORPS

Spoils of war: The liberators display a captured Nazi flag

At the same time, American and European perceptions of the potential threat have developed along differing, if not opposite, lines. The Soviet Union is seen by all the allies as a nuisance and a danger. But Konstantin Chernenko scarcely inspires the messianic opposition that Adolf Hitler did. Few Europeans believe that a third world war, pitting Russia against the West, will erupt in their lifetimes. Many Americans worry that the allies are unwilling to pay the cost of their own defense. The quarrels that spring up in NATO over these points are unimportant in themselves: at heart, the alliance remains firm. But the internal disputes betray a deeper pattern. In case after case, the objective interests of NATO members have diverged. The United States can no longer expect lock-step solidarity from the Europeans on East-West trade, on Grenada or on the Persian Gulf. The Europeans, in turn, have come to discount automatic American support in a major crisis.

In late 1979, Henry Kissinger spoke the blunt truth that he had so carefully fudged as secretary of state. Addressing a blue-ribbon audience of defense experts in Brussels, Kissinger warned the European allies against "asking us to multiply strategic assurances that we cannot possibly mean or if we do mean we should not want to execute because, if we execute, we risk the destruction of civilization." He added: "We must face the fact that it is absurd in the 1980s to base the strategy of the West on the credibility of mutual suicide." Kissinger's expert audience was surprised to hear the point made publicly by so prominent an American. They were not shocked at the substance. For they had come to the same conclusion themselves. In the early 1960s Gen. Charles de Gaulle pointed out that American and European interests were bound to diverge someday. He argued that it would be illogical, and indeed inhuman, to expect one nation to risk nuclear holocaust on behalf of another. Europe, the general contended, could only defend itself in the future if it developed its own *European* defenses, including a credible nuclear arm.

At the time, de Gaulle's argument outraged "Atlanticists" on both sides of the ocean. Today the central Gaullist insight is accepted by nearly all European planners and theorists. They speculate not about whether the United States will reduce its troop commitment to Europe, but when. French President François Mitterrand and West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl have been urgently discussing ways to strengthen the "European pillar" of the NATO alliance—to make up for what they both see as the inevitable diminution of the United States' role.

Challenges: The changes wrought by nuclear technology and 40 years of roller-coaster history have not undercut the Western world's shared commitment to democratic and humane values. Indeed, with the addition of West Germany and Japan, the community of free nations is arguably much stronger than it was in 1944. But the strategic and psychological setting has changed out of all recognition. The kind of heroic crusade that found its highest expression on the Normandy beaches will not occur again—not because the forces of freedom have lost their nerve but because the nature of the challenges has changed.

Other kinds of efforts can and should be made to protect the free world. The recognition that the heroism of 1944 has fallen out of date, while saddening, can be instructive and valuable. It can lead to new realism in the alliance. It can contribute to the long-postponed strengthening of the European pillar, and perhaps to a measure of understanding in the American administration for European doubts and fears. An alliance more keenly attuned to the real current threats—Soviet meddling in the Third World, intimidation in Central Europe, the fragility of Mideast energy supplies—would be stronger, more flexible and more secure. In the end, of course, the heroic project for our time is not to win new wars but to avoid them. The task is to ensure that the horrors that made D-Day necessary do not arise again.