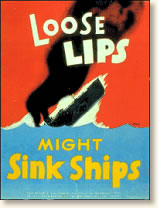
**"Loose Lips Sink Ships"**

***M****illions volunteered or were drafted for military duty during World War II. The majority of these citizen-soldiers had no idea how to conduct themselves to prevent inadvertent disclosure of important information to the enemy. To remedy this, the government established rules of conduct. The following is excerpted from a document given to each soldier as he entered the battle area.*

**WRITING HOME**

THINK! Where does the enemy get his information -- information that can put you, and has put your comrades, adrift on an open sea: information that has lost battles and can lose more, unless you personally, vigilantly, perform your duty in SAFEGUARDING MILITARY INFORMATION?

THERE ARE TEN PROHIBITED SUBJECTS



1. Don't write military information of Army units -- their location, strength,, materiel, or equipment.

2. Don't write of military installations.

3. Don't write of transportation facilities.

4. Don't write of convoys, their routes, ports (including ports of embarkation and disembarkation), time en route, naval protection, or war incidents occurring en route.

5. Don't disclose movements of ships, naval or merchant, troops, or aircraft.

6. Don't mention plans and forecasts or orders for future operations, whether known or just your guess.

7. Don't write about the effect of enemy operations.

8. Don't tell of any casualty until released by proper authority (The Adjutant General) and then only by using the full name of the casualty.

9. Don't attempt to formulate or use a code system, cipher, or shorthand, or any other means to conceal the true meaning of your letter. Violations of this regulation will result in severe punishment.

10. Don't give your location in any way except as authorized by proper authority. Be sure nothing you write about discloses a more specific location than the one authorized.

**TALK**

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| http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/images/ll02.jpg Taking the oath at a Baltimore Induction Center, September 1942 |

SILENCE MEANS SECURITY -- If violation of protective measures is serious within written communications it is disastrous in conversations. Protect your conversation as you do your letters, and be even more careful. A harmful letter can be nullified by censorship; loose talk is direct delivery to the enemy.

If you come home during war your lips must remain sealed and your written hand must be guided by self-imposed censorship. This takes guts. Have you got them or do you want your buddies and your country to pay the price for your showing off. You've faced the battle front; its little enough to ask you to face this 'home front.'

**CAPTURE**

Most enemy intelligence comes from prisoners. If captured, you are required to give only three facts: YOUR NAME, YOUR GRADE, YOUR ARMY SERIAL NUMBER. Don't talk, don't try to fake stories and use every effort to destroy all papers. When you are going into an area where capture is possible, carry only essential papers and plan to destroy them prior to capture if possible. Do not carry personal letters on your person; they tell much about you, and the envelope has on it your unit and organization.

**BE SENSIBLE; USE YOUR HEAD**

**Invasion of Normandy, June 6, 1944**

**A Civilian's View**

**M**arie-Louise Osmont lived in a chateau overlooking the Normandy beaches with her husband, a physician. The occupying Germans appropriated the home for their own use after invading France in 1940 but allowed the Osmonts to stay in a few rooms. The house stood near the point on the Normandy coast designated for attack by the British forces - Sword Beach. Marie-Louis kept a diary of her experiences.

**Landing!**

*During the night of June 5-6, 1944, Marie-Louise's sleep is disrupted by the sound of cannon fire and aircraft overhead. The commotion intensifies and the Germans start packing equipment into trucks in preparation of leaving the area. Confused, Marie-Louise is unsure whether the aircraft and gunfire are German or Allied. We join her story as dawn breaks on the 6th of June 1944.*

"Little by little the gray dawn comes up., but this time around, from the intensity of the aircraft and the cannon an idea springs to mind: landing! I get dressed hurriedly. I cross the garden, the men recognize me. In one of the foxholes in front of the house, I recognize one of the young men from the office; he has headphones on his ears, the telephone being removed there. Airplanes, cannon right on the coast, almost on us. I cross the road, run to the farm, come across Meltemps. 'Well!' I say, 'Is this it, this time?' 'Yes,' he says, 'I think so, and I'm really afraid we're in a sector that's being attacked; that's going to be something!' We're deafened by the airplanes, which make a never-ending round, very low; obviously what I thought were German airplanes are quite simply English ones, protecting the landing. Coming from the sea, a dense artificial cloud; its ominous and begins to be alarming; the first hiss over our heads. I feel cold; I'm agitated. I go home, dress more warmly, close the doors; I go get Bernice [a neighbor] to get into the trench, a quick bowl of milk, and we run - just in time! The shells hiss and explode continually.

In the trench in the farmyard (the one that was dug in 1940) we find three or four Germans: Leo the cook, his helper, and two others, crouching, not proud except for Leo, who stays outside to watch). We ask them 'Tommy come?" They say yes, with conviction. Morning in the trench, with overhead the hisses and whines that make you bend even lower. For fun Leo fires a rifle shot at a low-flying airplane, but the *Spiess*[the German Sergeant-Major] appears and chews him out horribly; this is not the time to attract attention. Shells are exploding everywhere, and not far away, with short moments of calm; we take advantage of these to run and deal with the animals, and we return with hearts pounding to burrow into the trench. Each time a shell hisses by too low, I cling to the back of the cook's helper, it makes me feel a little more secure, and he turns around with a vague smile. The fact is that we're all afraid."

**The Tanks**

*Later in the morning a lull in the shelling allows Marie-Louise and her neighbor to return to the farmhouse and prepare their lunch:*

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| http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/images/dday3.jpg American troops make their way to the beach 6/6/44 |

"Around noon a bit of a lull. We leave to try to have lunch; I busy myself with the fire, Bernice with the soup and potatoes; it's cooking. We start to seat ourselves around the table, two mouthfuls of soup, and then everything changes with tremendous speed. Someone - a Frenchman on the road, the soldiers at the gate - someone said: 'The Tommies!' We watch the soldiers. They hide on both sides of the gate, watching in the distance in panic, confusion painted on their faces. And suddenly we hear these words: 'The tanks!' A first burst of tracer bullets, very red, sweeps the gate; men crouch down. Bernice and I hide in a corner of the room. There's banging in every direction. We're going to have to go somewhere else. Standing in our corner, we gulp a plate of soup, while the *Spiess*, who has been shouting orders, comes with his revolver in hand to see whether men are hiding with us. Everything starts happening. Evidently, they're going to try to leave with their trucks. A German tank arrives and takes the *Spiess* away. The shells bang."

**Destruction**

*The continuing bombardment forces the Frenchwomen to flee the farmhouse for the relative safety of the trench. Around two o'clock in the afternoon the first British soldiers are spotted near the farm. The Germans hold their ground while the two women huddle in the trench:*

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| http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/images/dday2.jpg American troops land under withering enemy fire 6/6/44 |

"Around six o'clock a lull. We get out and go toward the house to care for the animals and get things to spend the night underground. And then we see the first damage. Branches of the big walnut broken, roof on the outbuildings heavily damaged, a big hole all the way up, a heap of broken roof tiles on the ground, a few windowpanes at my place - hundreds of slates blown off the chateau, walls cracked, first-floor shutters won't close - but at Bernice's it's worse. An airplane or tank shell has exploded on the paving in her kitchen at the corner of the stairs, and the whole interior of the room is devastated: the big clock, dishes, cooking equipment, walls, everything is riddled with holes, the dishes in broken pieces, as are almost all the windowpanes. The dog Frick that I had shut up in the next room so he wouldn't get killed on the road, is all right and sleeping on a seat. But we realize that if we had stayed there, we would both have been killed. In the face of this certainty, Bernice takes the disaster very well; we try to straighten up the unspeakable mess a little. Out of the question to eat the soup and mashed potatoes that have been prepared; everything is black with dust and full of shards of glass. Someone gives us soup from the farm. We talk with them for a short while and note the Germans haven't taken away all the trucks from the drive; there are also a lot of vehicles still in the park."

**Silhouettes**

*Marie-Louise and Bernice inspect the rest of the house and step outside to find cows lying dead in the pasture. Meanwhile, the battle continues:*

"The English tanks are silhouetted from time to time on the road above Periers. Grand impassioned exchanges on the road with the people from the farm; we are all stupefied by the suddenness of events. I take a few steps down the drive, toward the Deveraux house, and suddenly I see the replacement *Speiss* and his comrade hugging the wall of the pasture. I tell him that he must still have comrades at the guns, since we can still hear the battery firing. You feel that these two men are lost, disorientated, sad. Later, almost night, I see them again, their faces deliberately blackened with charcoal, crossing the park. What will be their fate? How many of them are still in the area, hiding and watching?"

**References:**   
   Drez, Ronald (editor), Voices of D-Day (1998); Keegan, John, The Book Of War (1999); Ryan, Cornelius, The Longest Day: June 6, 1944 (1975).

"D-Day - June 6, 1944: The Civilian View," EyeWitness to History, www.eyewitnesstohistory.com (2000, revised 2010).

**The Beginning of World War II, 1939**

**Hitler Receives an Ultimatum**

**H**itler's aggressive acquisition of territory began in 1936 when he ordered his army to reoccupy the Rhineland district of Germany. Bordering France, the Rhineland had been designated as a demilitarized zone by the Versailles Treaty ending World War I. It was a high-risk endeavor for Hitler. The German troops were unprepared, poorly equipped and had orders to retreat if the French offered any resistance. In the end, the maneuver went smoothly without any hindrance. Encouraged by this result, Hitler went on to absorb Austria and the German dominated Sudetenland area of Czechoslovakia into the German Third Reich in 1938. In March of the next year he occupied the remainder of Czechoslovakia

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| http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/images/ultimatum1.jpg |
| Residents salute as Hitler enters the Sudetenland, 1938 |

Bolstered by the tepid response of Britain and France to his earlier excursions, Hitler set his sights on Poland. However, British Prime Minister Chamberlain had come to the realization that Hitler's territorial ambitions could not be tempered by submitting to his demands. In March 1939 he declared that Britain guaranteed Poland's independence and vowed to come to her aid if attacked. France soon joined Britain in support of Poland.

Hitler was undeterred. On August 23, 1939 he stunned the world with the announcement that he had signed a non-aggression treaty with the Soviet Union. The German Fuhrer was now assured that he could invade Poland without fear of Russian interference.

The assault was originally scheduled to begin in the early morning hours of August 26th. However, on August 25th, Britain announced that her guarantee of Polish independence had been formalized by an alliance between the two countries. Hitler wavered and postponed his attack to September 1.

The Germans concocted a story of Polish troops crossing their border and firing on various installations. In supposed retaliation, German tanks rolled across the Polish border during the early hours of September 1, 1939. Tensions were running high throughout Europe. Britain and France began mobilization of their armies while Italy's Mussolini desperately tried to intervene with Hitler to forestall war. The British and French representatives met with German Foreign Minister Ribbentrop warning that they would fulfill their obligation to Poland and go to war if German forces did not withdraw from Polish territory.

At 9:00 on the morning of September 3, Sir Neville Henderson, Britain's ambassador to Germany, delivered an ultimatum stating that if hostilities did not stop by 11 AM, a state of war would exist between Great Britain and Germany. Germany did not respond and at 11:15 on the morning of September 3, 1939 Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain went on the radio to announce to the British people that they were at war with Germany.

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**"...there was complete silence. Hitler sat immobile, gazing before him."**

*Paul Schmidt was a translator in the German Foreign Ministry and present at the history-making events of those last days of peace in Europe. The scene is the office of the German Foreign Ministry in Berlin. It is just after midnight on September 3, 1939 and the German juggernaut continues to slam its way into Poland. The Germans have not responded to an earlier British and French demand to withdraw their troops and a message is received stating that Sir Neville Henderson, the British Ambassador to Germany, wishes to meet with German Foreign Minister Ribbontrop. It is obvious to all that the Ambassador's message will probably mean war.*

We join Schmidt's story as Ribbentrop decides that the translator should meet with the British ambassador alone:

"It was after midnight when the British Embassy telephoned to say that Henderson had received instructions from London to transmit a communication from his Government at 9 a.m., and that he asked to be received by Ribbentrop at the Foreign Office at that time. It was clear that this communication could contain nothing agreeable, and that it might possibly be a real ultimatum. Ribbentrop in consequence showed not the slightest inclination to receive the British Ambassador personally next morning. I happened to be standing near him.

'Really, you could receive the Ambassador in my place,' he said to me. 'Just ask the English whether that will suit them, and say that the Foreign Minister is not available at 9 o'clock.' The English agreed, and therefore I was instructed to receive Henderson next morning - that is, in five hours time, it being now 4 o'clock in the morning.

On Sunday, September 3rd, 1939, after the pressure of work over the last few days, I overslept, and had to take a taxi to the Foreign

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| http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/images/ultimatum2.jpg |
| Children are evacuated from London without their parents. September 1, 1939 |

Office. I could just see Henderson entering the building as I drove across the Wilhelmsplatz. I used a side entrance and stood in Ribbentrop's office ready to receive Henderson punctually at 9 o'clock. Henderson was announced as the hour struck. He came in looking very serious, shook hands, but declined my invitation to be seated, remaining solemnly standing in the middle of the room.

'I regret that on the instructions of my Government I have to hand you an ultimatum for the German Government,' he said with deep emotion, and then, both of us still standing up, he read out the British ultimatum. 'More than twenty-four hours have elapsed since an immediate reply was requested to the warning of September 1st, and since then the attacks on Poland have been intensified. If His Majesty's Government has not received satisfactory assurances of the cessation of all aggressive action against Poland, and the withdrawal of German troops from that country, by 11 o'clock British Summer Time, from that time a state of war will exist between Great Britain and Germany.'

When he had finished reading, Henderson handed me the ultimatum and bade me goodbye, saying: 'I am sincerely sorry that I must hand such a document to you in particular, as you have always been most anxious to help.'

I too expressed my regret, and added a few heartfelt words. I always had the highest regard for the British Ambassador.

I then took the ultimatum to the Chancellery, where everyone was anxiously awaiting me. Most of the members of the Cabinet and the leading men of the Party were collected in the room next to Hitler's office. There was something of a crush and I had difficulty in getting through to Hitler.

When I entered the next room Hitler was sitting at his desk and Ribbentrop stood by the window. Both looked up expectantly as I came in. I stopped at some distance from Hitler's desk, and then slowly translated the British Government's ultimatum. When I finished, there was complete silence.

Hitler sat immobile, gazing before him. He was not at a loss, as was afterwards stated, nor did he rage as others allege. He sat completely silent and unmoving.

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| http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/images/ultimatum3.jpg |
| Hitler observes the destruction of Warsaw October 1939 |

After an interval which seemed an age, he turned to Ribbentrop, who had remained standing by the window. 'What now?' asked Hitler with a savage look, as though implying that his Foreign Minister had misled him about England's probable reaction. Ribbentrop answered quietly: 'I assume that the French will hand in a similar ultimatum within the hour.'

As my duty was now performed, I withdrew. To those in the anteroom pressing round me I said: 'The English have just handed us an ultimatum. In two hours a state of war will exist between England and Germany.' In the anteroom, too, this news was followed by complete silence.

Goering turned to me and said: 'If we lose this war, then God have mercy on us!' Goebbels stood in a corner, downcast and self-absorbed. Everywhere in the room I saw looks of grave concern, even amongst the lesser Party people."

**References:**   
   Schmidt, Paul, Hitler's Interpreter (1951); Shirer, William, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich (1960); Taylor, A.J.P., The Origins of the Second World War (1962).

"The Beginning of World War II, 1939," EyeWitness to History, www.eyewitnesstohistory.com (2004).

**London Goes to War, 1939**

**T**ension filled London's air on that sunny, sultry morning of Sunday September 3, 1939. Would war come to Britain? This threat had been raised earlier in the year when Hitler occupied Czechoslovakia. Now, it seemed to be turning into reality. Two days earlier Hitler had unleashed the world's first blitzkrieg as German air and ground forces swarmed across the Polish border. In

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| http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/images/london19393.jpg Londoners scurry to find shelter as an air raid siren wails September 3, 1939 |

response, Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain presented an ultimatum to Germany in the early hours of that Sunday morning: cease the invasion of Poland or face war with Great Britain (see [**"The Beginning of World War II, 1939"**](http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/ultimatum.htm)). Hitler's reaction was to ignore Britain's ultimatum.

At 11:15 AM The Prime Minister interrupted the regular radio broadcasts to announce that Britain and Germany were at war. At 11:27 AM London's air raid sirens began to wail. It was only a test, but unlike the many tests that had been conducted before, this one struck home - the country really was at war. Sandbags were hastily filled to protect important buildings, gas masks became required equipment for civilians, the nightly blackout became a way of life and children were herded aboard evacuation trains to escape the danger of the city.

**London prepares for war**

*Mollie Panter-Downes was an English novelist who wrote about life in London for the New Yorker Magazine. She filed this dispatch with the magazine on that first day of war in London:*

"September 3, 1939

On the stretch of green turf by Knightsbridge Barracks, which used to be the scampering ground for the smartest terriers in London, has appeared a row of steam shovels that bite out mouthfuls of earth, hoist it aloft, and dump it into lorries; it is then carted away to fill sandbags. The eye has now become accustomed to sandbags everywhere, and to the balloon barrage, the trap for enemy planes, which one morning spread over the sky like some form of silvery dermatitis.

Gas masks have suddenly become part of everyday civilian equipment and everybody is carrying the square cardboard cartons that look as though they might contain a pound of grapes for a sick friend. Bowlegged admirals stump jauntily up Whitehall with their gas masks slung neatly in knapsacks over their shoulders. Last night London was completely blacked out. A few cars crawled through the streets with one headlight out and the other hooded while Londoners, suddenly become homebodies...

The evacuation of London, which is to be spaced over three days, began yesterday and was apparently a triumph for all concerned. At seven o'clock in the morning all inward traffic was stopped and A.A. scouts raced through the suburbs whisking shrouds of sacking off imposing bulletin boards, which informed motorists that all the principal routes out of town were one-way streets for three days. Cars poured out pretty steadily all day yesterday and today, packed with people, luggage, children's perambulators, and domestic pets, but the congestion at busy points was no worse than it is at any other time in the holiday season. The railways, whose workers had been on the verge of going out on strike when the crisis came, played their part nobly and the London stations, accustomed to receiving trainloads of child refugees from the Third Reich, got down to the job of dispatching trainload after trainload of children the other way-this time, cheerful little cockneys who ordinarily get to the country perhaps once a year on the local church outing and could hardly believe the luck that was sending them now. Left behind, the mothers stood around rather listlessly at street corners waiting for the telegrams that were to be posted up at the various schools to tell them where their children were.

Although the summer holiday is still on, village schools have reopened as centers where the evacuated hordes from London can be rested, sorted out, medically examined, refreshed with tea and biscuits, and distributed to their new homes. The war has brought

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| http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/images/london19392.jpg At a London train station, children are sheparded aboard an outgoing evacuation train. Behind them, troops disembark from an arriving train. |

the great unwashed right into the bosoms of the great washed; while determined ladies in white V.A.D. overalls search the mothers' heads with a knitting needle for unwelcome signs of life, the babies are dandled and patted on their often grimy diapers by other ladies, who have been told to act as hostesses and keep the guests from pining for Shoreditch. Guest rooms have been cleared of Crown Derby knickknacks and the best guest towels, and the big houses and cottages alike are trying to overcome the traditional British dislike of strangers, who may, for all anybody knows, be parked in them for a matter of years, not weeks.

Today was a day of unprecedented activity in the air. Squadrons of bombers bustled in all directions and at midday an enormous number of vast planes, to which the knowing pointed as troop-carriers, droned overhead toward an unknown destination that was said by two sections of opinion to be (a) France and (b) Poland. On the ground, motor buses full of troops in bursting good humor tore through the villages, the men waving at the girls and howling "Tipperary" and other ominously dated ditties that everybody has suddenly remembered and found to be as good for a war in 1939 as they were in 1914

London and the country are buzzing with rumors, a favorite one being that Hitler carries a gun in his pocket and means to shoot himself if things don't go too well; another school of thought favors the version that he is now insane and Goring has taken over...The English were a peace-loving nation up to two days ago, but now it is pretty widely felt that the sooner we really get down to the job, the better."

**References:**   
   Mollie Panter-Downes' letter was originally published in the *New Yorker Magazine* on September 9, 1939, republished in The New Yorker Book of War Pieces (1947).

"London Goes to War, 1939," EyeWitness to History, www.eyewitnesstohistory.com (2005).

**Blitzkrieg, 1940**

**T**he period between Germany's defeat of Poland in October 1939 and her invasion of Norway in April 1940 is often referred to as the "Phony War." Not much happened. The French stiffened their defenses while the British moved troops to the continent. The British wanted to send their air force to bomb targets inside Germany but were persuaded not to by the French who feared German reprisal. The major activity consisted of dueling propaganda messages blared from loud speakers across the German and French lines.

The French, feeling secure behind their Maginot Line, were ready to fight World War I all over

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| http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/images/blitzkrieg2.jpg |
| Panzers in action, France 1940 |

again - a war of defense. Hitler had other ideas. In order to isolate the iron ore resources of Sweden, and secure his northern flank, Hitler invaded Norway and Denmark on April 9.

The next blow came a month later. In the early morning darkness of May 10, the Germans unleashed their Blitzkrieg against the Netherlands and Belgium. The attack sent the defending troops reeling. The roads overflowed with refugees fleeing the front. French and British troops rushing to the rescue were caught in the headlong retreat and pushed back. German dive-bombers - the Stukas - filled the sky, strafing the retreating mix of civilians and soldiers with machine gun and bomb. The Allies fought valiantly but in vain - the German war machine advanced unperturbed. In England, the invasion forced Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain to resign, to be replaced by Winston Churchill.

The Germans defied military doctrine, skirted the Maginot Line and slashed into France through Luxembourg and the Ardennes Forest. The Blitzkrieg moved with lightning speed as Hitler's tanks turned and raced headlong to the sea. They reached the English Channel on May 21 cutting off the Allied armies in the North.

The Germans turned again, fighting their way north to secure the coastal ports and annihilate the trapped armies. Miraculously, the German high command called a halt to the advance. The reprieve lasted 48 hours, long enough for the British to defend Dunkirk and evacuate what they could of the Allied armies. The Germans entered Paris on June 14. In a humiliating ceremony on June 22, France signed an armistice with Germany, leaving Britain to carry on the fight alone.

**Early Action**

*General Erwin Rommel, who would later gain fame in the African desert as the "Desert Fox", led the 7th Panzer Division as it crashed through the Belgian defenses into France, skirting the Maginot Line and then smashing it from behind. This was a new kind of warfare integrating tanks, air power, artillery, and motorized infantry into a steel juggernaut emphasizing speedy movement and maximization of battlefield opportunities. Rommel kept a journal of his experiences. In this excerpt, he describes the action on May 14 as he leads a tank attack against French forces near the Muese River on the Belgian border:*

"Rothenburg [a subordinate tank commander] now drove off through a hollow to the left with the five tanks which were to accompany the infantry, thus giving these tanks a lead of 100 to 150 yards. There was no sound of enemy fire. Some 20 to 30 tanks followed up behind. When the commander of the five tanks reached the rifle company on the southern edge of Onhaye wood, Colonel Rothenburg moved off with his leading tanks along the edge of the wood going west. We had just reached the southwest corner of the wood and were about to cross a low plantation, from which we could see the five tanks escorting the infantry below us to our left front, when suddenly we came under heavy artillery and anti-tank gunfire from the west. Shells landed all round us and my tank received two hits one after the other, the first on the upper edge of the turret and the second in the periscope.

The driver promptly opened the throttle wide and drove straight into the nearest bushes. He had only gone a few yards, however, when the tank slid down a steep slope on the western edge of the wood and finally stopped, canted over on its side, in such a position that the enemy, whose guns were in position about 500 yards away on the edge of the next wood, could not fail to see it. I had been wounded in the right check by a small splinter from the shell which had landed in the periscope. It was not serious though it bled a great deal.

I tried to swing the turret round so as to bring our 37 mm-gun to bear on the enemy in the opposite wood, but with the heavy slant of' the tank it was immovable.

The French battery now opened rapid fire on our wood and at any moment we could expect their fire to be aimed at our tank, which was in full view. I therefore decided to abandon it as fast as I could, taking the crew with me. At that moment the subaltern in command of the tanks escorting the infantry reported himself wounded, with the words: 'Herr General, my left arm has been shot off.' We clamored up through the sandy pit, shells crashing and splintering all round. Close in front of us trundled Rothenburg's tank with flames pouring out of the rear. The adjutant of the Panzer Regiment had also left his tank. I thought at first that the command tank had been set alight by a hit in petrol tank and was extremely worried for Colonel Rothenbttrg's safety. However, it turned out to be only the smoke candles that had caught light, the smoke from which now served us very well. In the meantime Lieutenant Most had driven my armored signals vehicle into the wood, where it had been hit in the engine and now stood immobilized. The crew was unhurt."

**Piercing the Maginot Line**

*Two days later, Rommel and his forces raced behind and parallel to the Maginot Line, and then turned north to attack the fortifications from behind. He describes the action as his tank formations plunge through the French defenses:*

"The tanks now rolled in a long column through the line of fortifications and on towards the first houses, which had been set alight by our fire. In the moonlight we could see the men Of 7th Motorcycle Battalion moving forward on foot beside us. Occasionally an enemy machine-gun or anti-tank gun fired, but none of their shots came anywhere near us. Our artillery was dropping heavy harassing fire on villages and the road far ahead of the regiment. Gradually the speed increased. Before long we were 500 -1,000 - 2,000 - 3,000 yards into the fortified zone. Engines roared, tank tracks clanked and clattered. Whether or not the enemy was firing was impossible to tell in the ear-splitting noise. We crossed the railway line a mile or so

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| http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/images/blitzkrieg4.jpg |
| German panzer troops reach the French coast, June 10, 1940 A photo taken by Rommel |

southwest of Solre le Chateau, and then swung north to the main road which was soon reached. Then off along the road and past the first houses.

The people in the houses were rudely awoken by the din of our tanks, the clatter and roar of tracks and engines. Troops lay bivouacked beside the road, military vehicles stood parked in farmyards and in some places on the road itself. Civilians and French troops, their faces distorted with terror, lay huddled in the ditches, alongside hedges and in every hollow beside the road. We passed refugee columns, the carts abandoned by their owners, who had fled in panic into the fields. On we went, at a steady speed, towards our objective. Every so often a quick glance at the map by a shaded light and a short wireless message to Divisional H.Q. to report the position and thus the success of 25th Panzer Regiment. Every so often a look out of the hatch to assure myself that there was still no resistance and that contact was being maintained to the rear. The flat countryside lay spread out around us under the cold light of the moon. We were through the Maginot Line! It was hardly conceivable. Twenty-two years before we had stood for four and a half long years before this self-same enemy and had won victory after victory and yet finally lost the war. And now we had broken through the renowned Maginot Line and were driving deep into enemy territory. It was not just a beautiful dream. It was reality."

**References:**   
   Hart, B. H. Liddell, The Rommel Papers (1953); Horne, Alistair, To Lose a Battle, France, 1940 (1969).

"Blitzkrieg, 1940," EyeWitness to History, www.eyewitnesstohistory.com (2002).

**The Evacuation at Dunkirk, 1940**

**I**t was a fateful decision that would ultimately transform a military defeat into a moral victory. As German forces continued their advance into France, General Viscount Gort, Commander of the British Expeditionary Force in France, could see that the German invaders were getting the upper hand. The French Army was in disarray while his own forces were fighting desperately. The French called upon Gort to move his troops south to join them in a defensive stand. The British commander realized the action was futile and could lead to the annihilation of his command. If any of his forces were to be saved for the future defense of Britain, they would have to evacuate France immediately. On the evening of May 23, 1940, Gort ordered his commanders to retreat to the near-by port of Dunkirk - an action that would save the British Army to fight another day.

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| http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/images/dunkirk1.jpg |
| Escape from France |

At the time, however, the success of the mission seemed highly unlikely. The British Army, joined by some French and Belgian forces would have to fight their way to the small port of Dunkirk, defend the town from German attack and hope that they could hold on long enough for ships from England to come to pull them off the beach.

Another fateful decision, this time on the part of the Germans, now helped their rescue. On May 24, Hitler, for reasons that are still unclear, ordered his tanks to halt their pursuit of the retreating Allied forces. In England the call went out for ships - any ships - to help with the rescue. On May 26 an unbelievable armada set sail. Motorboats, sloops, fishing boats, yachts, ferries, barges and every other variety of boat imaginable poured out of the Thames River and the ports that lined the English Channel to make their way across the Channel to rescue the beleaguered troops.

Guided by the smoke and flame filling the sky above Dunkirk, the ragtag rescue fleet made its way through continuous German attack and treacherous waters to the stranded troops. The rescuers found the beaches clogged with men. Some clamored along piers to reach the rescue ships, others wadded out from shore to waters nearly over their heads for rescue. All the time the beach was under attack from German artillery, bombers and fighter planes.

The operation, code-named Dynamo, continued until June 4. At its beginning, the British thought they would be lucky to rescue 50,000. In the end, approximately 340,000 British, French and Belgians were snatched from the shore. 40,000 were left behind and killed or captured.

**"The beach, black with men, illumined by the fires, seemed a perfect target."**

*Arthur D. Divine was one of those who manned the boats that made the rescue. We join his story as he sets sail from England:*

"It was the queerest, most nondescript flotilla that ever was, and it was manned by every kind of Englishman, never more than two men, often only one, to each small boat. There were bankers and dentists, taxi drivers and yachtsmen, longshoremen, boys, engineers, fishermen and civil servants. . .

It was dark before we were well clear of the English coast. It wasn't rough, but there was a little chop on, sufficient to make it very wet, and we soaked the Admiral to the skin. Soon, in the dark, the big boats began to overtake us. We were in a sort of dark traffic lane, full of strange ghosts and weird, unaccountable waves from the wash of the larger vessels. When destroyers went by, full tilt, the wash was a serious matter to us little fellows. We could only spin the wheel to try to head into the waves, hang on, and hope for the best. . .

Even before it was fully dark we had picked up the glow of the Dunkirk flames, and now as we drew nearer the sailing got better, for we could steer by them and see silhouetted the shapes of other ships, of boats coming home already loaded, and of low dark shadows that might be enemy motor torpedo boats.

Then aircraft started dropping parachute flares. We saw them hanging all about us in the night, like young moons. The sound of the firing and the bombing was with us always, growing steadily louder as we got nearer and nearer. The flames grew, too. From a glow they rose up to enormous plumes of fire that roared high into the everlasting pall of smoke. As we approached Dunkirk there was an air attack on the destroyers and for a little the night was brilliant with bursting bombs and the fountain sprays of tracer bullets.

The beach, black with men, illumined by the fires, seemed a perfect target, but no doubt the thick clouds of smoke were a useful screen.

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| http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/images/dunkirk3.jpg |
| Small boats are towed down the Thames to Dunkirk. These were used to ferry troops from the beach to larger ships offshore. |

The picture will always remain sharp-etched in my memory - the lines of men wearily and sleepily staggering across the beach from the dunes to the shallows, falling into little boats, great columns of men thrust out into the water among bomb and shell splashes. The foremost ranks were shoulder deep, moving forward under the command of young subalterns, themselves with their heads just above the little waves that rode in to the sand. As the front ranks were dragged aboard the boats, the rear ranks moved up, from ankle deep to knee deep, from knee deep to waist deep, until they, too, came to shoulder depth and their turn.

The little boats that ferried from the beach to the big ships in deep water listed drunkenly with the weight of men. The big ships slowly took on lists of their own with the enormous numbers crowded aboard. And always down the dunes and across the beach came new hordes of men, new columns, new lines.

On the beach was a destroyer, bombed and burned. At the water's edge were ambulances, abandoned when their last load had been discharged.

There was always the red background, the red of Dunkirk burning. There was no water to check the fires and there were no men to be spared to fight them. Red, too, were the shell bursts, the flash of guns, the fountains of tracer bullets.

The din was infernal. The 5.9 batteries shelled ceaselessly and brilliantly. To the whistle of shells overhead was added the scream of falling bombs. Even the sky was full of noise - anti-aircraft shells, machine-gun fire, the snarl of falling planes, the angry hornet noise of dive bombers. One could not speak normally at any time against the roar of it and the noise of our own engines. We all developed 'Dunkirk throat,' a sore hoarseness that was the hallmark of those who had been there.

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| http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/images/dunkirk2.jpg |
| Those that remained: British and French prisoners are marched into internment. |

Yet through all the noise I will always remember the voices of the young subalterns as they sent their men aboard, and I will remember, too, the astonishing discipline of the men. They had fought through three weeks of retreat, always falling back without orders, often without support. Transport had failed. They had gone sleepless. They had been without food and water. Yet they kept ranks as they came down the beaches, and they obeyed commands. . .

We stayed there until everybody else had been sent back, and then went pottering about looking for stragglers. While we were doing that, a salvo of shells got one of our troopships alongside the mole [pier]. She was hit clean in the boilers and exploded in one terrific crash. There were then, I suppose, about 1000 Frenchmen on the mole. We had seen them crowding along its narrow crest, outlined against the flames. They had gone out under shellfire to board the boat, and now they had to go back again, still being shelled. It was quite the most tragic thing I ever have seen in my life. We could do nothing with our little park dinghy. . .

Going home, the Jerry dive bombers came over us five times, but somehow left us alone though three times they took up an attacking position. A little down the coast, towards Gravelines, we picked up a boatload of Frenchmen rowing off. We took them aboard. They were very much bothered as to where our 'ship' was, said quite flatly that it was impossible to go to England in a thing like ours. Too, too horribly dangerous."

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**Inside a Nazi Death Camp, 1944**

**H**itler established the first concentration camp soon after he came to power in 1933. The system grew to include about 100 camps divided into two types: concentration camps for slave labor in nearby factories and death camps for the systematic extermination of "undesirables" including Jews, Gypsies, homosexuals, the mentally retarded and others.

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| http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/images/maidanek3.jpg |
| Slave laborers in the Buchenwald concentration camp after its liberation by US forces. April 16, 1945 |

As the allied armies raced towards final victory, advancing troops liberated the camps one-by-one, revealing the horrors of the Nazi concept of establishing a "pure" society. The first liberation came in July 1944 when Soviet troops entered Maidanek, a death camp located in Poland two miles from the city of Lublin. Alexander Werth, a correspondent for the *London Sunday Times* and the BBC, accompanied the Soviet troops and described the camp shortly after its capture.

The BBC refused to air his report of the camp as his description was so unbelievable they considered it a Soviet propaganda ploy. It was not until the later capture of Buchenwald, Dachau and other camps on the western front that his description was accepted as true.

**"It looked singularly harmless."**

*The Maidanek camp was established by the Nazis in 1941 soon after their conquest of the then Russian occupied region of Poland. The primary purpose of the facility was the speedy extermination of new arrivals (mostly Jews) transported in from various countries including Czechoslovakia, France, Austria, and Holland. The majority of victims, however, came from the immediate area. It is estimated that 1.5 million died at the camp during its three years of operation.*

Soviet troops entered the camp in July 1944. A week later, Alexander Werth joined a group of fellow reporters in a guided tour of the facility:

"My first reaction to Maidanek was a feeling of surprise. I had imagined something horrible and sinister beyond words. It was nothing like that. It looked singularly harmless from outside. 'Is *that* it?' was my first reaction when we stopped at what looked like a large workers' settlement. Behind us was the many towered skyline of Lublin. There was much dust on the road, and the grass as dull, greenish-grey colour. The camp was separated from the road by a couple of barbed-wire fences, but these did not look particularly sinister, and might have been put up outside any military or semi-military establishment. The place was large; like a whole town of barracks painted a pleasant soft green. There were many people around - soldiers and civilians. A Polish sentry opened the barbed-wire gate to let cars enter the central avenue, with large green barracks on either side. And we stopped outside a large barrack marked *Bad und Desinfektion II.* 'This,' somebody said, 'is where large numbers of those arriving at the camp were brought in.'

The inside of this barrack was made of concrete, and water taps came out of the wall, and around the room there were benches where the clothes were put down and *afterwards* collected. So this was the place into which they were driven. Or perhaps they were politely invited to 'Step this way, please?' Did any of them suspect, while washing themselves after a long journey, what would happen a few minutes later? Anyway, after the washing was over, they were asked to go into the next room; at this point even the most unsuspecting must have begun to wonder. For the "next room" was a series of large square concrete structures, each about one-quarter of the size the bath-house, and, unlike it, had no windows. The naked people (men one time, women another time, children the next) were driven or forced from the bath-house into these dark concrete boxes - about five yards square - and then, with 200 or 250 people packed into each box - and it was completely dark there, except for a small light in the ceiling and the spyhole in the door - the process of gassing began. First some hot air was pumped in from the ceiling and then the pretty pale-blue crystals of Cyclon were showered down on the people, and in the hot wet air they rapidly evaporated. In anything from two to ten minutes everybody was dead. . .

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| http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/images/maidanek1.jpg |
| German citizens of a near-by town are forced by American troops to view the horrors of a concentration camp. May 5, 1945 |

There were six concrete boxes - gas-chambers - side by side. 'Nearly two thousand people could be disposed of here simultaneously,' one of the guides said.

But what thoughts passed through these people's minds during those first few minutes while the crystals were falling; could anyone still believe that this humiliating process of being packed into a box and standing there naked, rubbing backs with other naked people, had anything to do with disinfection?

At first it was all very hard to take in, without an effort of the imagination. There were a number of very dull-looking concrete structures which, if their doors had been wider, might anywhere else have been mistaken for a row of nice little garages. But the doors - the doors! They were heavy steel doors, and each had a heavy steel bolt. And in the middle of the door was a spyhole, a circle, three inches in diameter composed of about a hundred small holes. Could the people in their death agony see the SS man's eye as he watched them? Anyway, the SS-man had nothing to fear: his eye was well protected by the steel netting over the spyhole...

...Then a touch of blue on the floor caught my eye. It was very faint, but still legible. In blue chalk someone had scribbled the word "*vergast*" and had drawn crudely above it a skull and crossbones. I had never seen this word before but it obviously meant" gassed" - and not merely "gassed" but: with, that eloquent little prefix *ver*, 'gassed out'. That's this job finished, and now for the next lot. The blue chalk came into motion when there was nothing but a heap of naked corpses inside. But what cries, what curses, what prayers perhaps, had been uttered inside that gas chamber only a few minutes before?..."

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**The Battle of Berlin, 1945**

**T**he final chapter in the destruction of Hitler's Third Reich began on April 16, 1945 when Stalin unleashed the brutal power of 20 armies, 6,300 tanks and 8,500 aircraft with the objective of crushing German resistance and capturing Berlin. By prior agreement, the Allied armies (positioned approximately 60 miles to the west) halted

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| http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/images/berlin1.jpg |
| Devastation in Berlin Soviet troops at the Brandenburg Gate |

their advance on the city in order to give the Soviets a free hand. The depleted German forces put up a stiff defense, initially repelling the attacking Russians, but ultimately succumbing to overwhelming force. By April 24 the Soviet army surrounded the city slowly tightening its stranglehold on the remaining Nazi defenders. Fighting street-to-street and house-to-house, Russian troops blasted their way towards Hitler's chancellery in the city's center.

Inside his underground bunker Hitler lived in a world of fantasy as his "Thousand Year Reich" crumbled above him. In his final hours the Fuehrer married his long-time mistress and then joined her in suicide. The Third Reich was dead.

**Beginning of the End**

*Dorothea von Schwanenfluegel was a twenty-nine-year-old wife and mother living in Berlin. She and her young daughter along with friends and neighbors huddled within their apartment building as the end neared. The city was already in ruins from Allied air raids, food was scarce, the situation desperate - the only hope that the Allies would arrive before the Russians. We join Dorothea's account as the Russians begin the final push to victory:*

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"Friday, April 20, was Hitler's fifty-sixth birthday, and the Soviets sent him a birthday present in the form of an artillery barrage right into the heart of the city, while the Western Allies joined in with a massive air raid.

The radio announced that Hitler had come out of his safe bomb-proof bunker to talk with the fourteen to sixteen year old boys who had 'volunteered' for the 'honor' to be accepted into the SS and to die for their Fuhrer in the defense of Berlin. What a cruel lie! These boys did not volunteer, but had no choice, because boys who were found hiding were hanged as traitors by the SS as a warning that, 'he who was not brave enough to fight had to die.' When trees were not available, people were strung up on lamp posts. They were hanging everywhere, military and civilian, men and women, ordinary citizens who had been executed by a small group of fanatics. It appeared that the Nazis did not want the people to survive because a lost war, by their rationale, was obviously the fault of all of us. We had not sacrificed enough and therefore, we had forfeited our right to live, as only the government was without guilt. The Volkssturm was called up again, and this time, all boys age thirteen and up, had to report as our army was reduced now to little more than children filling the ranks as soldiers."

**Encounter with a Young Soldier**

"In honor of Hitler's birthday, we received an eight-day ration allowance, plus one tiny can of vegetables, a few ounces of sugar and a half-ounce of real coffee. No one could afford to miss rations of this type and we stood in long lines at the

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| http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/images/berlin5.jpg |
| Hitler's last public appearance the Fuehrer inspects boy-soldiers defending Berlin April 20, 1945 |

grocery store patiently waiting to receive them. While standing there, we noticed a sad looking young boy across the street standing behind some bushes in a self-dug shallow trench. I went over to him and found a mere child in a uniform many sizes too large for him, with an anti-tank grenade lying beside him. Tears were running down his face, and he was obviously very frightened of everyone. I very softly asked him what he was doing there. He lost his distrust and told me that he had been ordered to lie in wait here, and when a Soviet tank approached he was to run under it and explode the grenade. I asked how that would work, but he didn't know. In fact, this frail child didn't even look capable of carrying such a grenade. It looked to me like a useless suicide assignment because the Soviets would shoot him on sight before he ever reached the tank.

By now, he was sobbing and muttering something, probably calling for his mother in despair, and there was nothing that I could do to help him. He was a picture of distress, created by our inhuman government. If I encouraged him to run away, he would be caught and hung by the SS, and if I gave him refuge in my home, everyone in the house would be shot by the SS. So, all we could do was to give him something to eat and drink from our rations. When I looked for him early next morning he was gone and so was the grenade. Hopefully, his mother found him and would keep him in hiding during these last days of a lost war."

**The Russians Arrive**

"The Soviets battled the German soldiers and drafted civilians street by street until we could hear explosions and rifle fire right in our immediate vicinity. As the noise got closer, we could even hear the horrible guttural screaming of the Soviet soldiers which sounded to us like enraged animals. Shots shattered our windows and shells exploded in our garden, and suddenly the Soviets were on our street. Shaken by the battle around us and numb with fear, we watched from behind the small cellar windows facing the street as the tanks and an endless convoy of troops rolled by...

It was a terrifying sight as they sat high upon their tanks with their rifles cocked, aiming at houses as they passed. The screaming, gun-wielding women were the worst. Half of the troops had only rags and tatters around their feet while others wore SS boots that had been looted from a conquered SS barrack in Lichterfelde. Several fleeing people had told us earlier that they kept watching different boots pass by their cellar windows. At night, the Germans in our army boots recaptured the street that the

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| http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/images/berlin2.jpg |
| A Soviet soldier raises the Hammer & Sickle atop the Reichstag |

Soviets in the SS boots had taken during the day. The boots and the voices told them who was who. Now we saw them with our own eyes, and they belonged to the wild cohorts of the advancing Soviet troops.

Facing reality was ten times worse than just hearing about it. Throughout the night, we huddled together in mortal fear, not knowing what the morning might bring. Nevertheless, we noiselessly did sneak upstairs to double check that our heavy wooden window shutters were still intact and that all outside doors were barricaded. But as I peaked out, what did I see! The porter couple in the apartment house next to ours was standing in their front yard waving to the Soviets. So our suspicion that they were Communists had been right all along, but they must have been out of their minds to openly proclaim their brotherhood like that.

As could be expected, that night a horde of Soviet soldiers returned and stormed into their apartment house. Then we heard what sounded like a terrible orgy with women screaming for help, many shrieking at the same time. The racket gave me goosebumps. Some of the Soviets trampled through our garden and banged their rifle butts on our doors in an attempt to break in. Thank goodness our sturdy wooden doors withstood their efforts. Gripped in fear, we sat in stunned silence, hoping to give the impression that this was a vacant house, but hopelessly delivered into the clutches of the long-feared Red Army. Our nerves were in shreds."

**Looting**

"The next morning, we women proceeded to make ourselves look as unattractive as possible to the Soviets by smearing our faces with coal dust and covering our heads with old rags, our make-up for the Ivan. We huddled together in the central part of the basement, shaking with fear, while some peeked through the low basement windows to see what was happening on the Soviet-controlled street. We felt paralyzed by the sight of these husky Mongolians, looking wild and frightening. At the ruin across the street from us the first Soviet orders were posted, including a curfew. Suddenly there was a shattering noise outside. Horrified, we watched the Soviets demolish the corner grocery store and throw its contents, shelving and furniture out into the street. Urgently needed bags of flour, sugar and rice were split open and spilled their contents on the bare pavement, while Soviet soldiers stood guard with their rifles so that no one would dare to pick up any of the urgently needed food. This was just unbelievable. At night, a few desperate people tried to salvage some of the spilled food from the gutter. Hunger now became a major concern because our ration cards were worthless with no hope of any supplies.

Shortly thereafter, there was another commotion outside, even worse than before, and we rushed to our lookout to see that the Soviets had broken into the bank and were looting it. They came out yelling gleefully with their hands full of German bank notes and jewelry from safe deposit boxes that had been pried open. Thank God we had withdrawn money already and had it at home."

**Surrender**

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| http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/images/berlin4.jpg |
| Field Marshall Keitel signs the surender terms at Russian headquarters, Berlin May 9, 1945 |

"The next day, General Wilding, the commander of the German troops in Berlin, finally surrendered the entire city to the Soviet army. There was no radio or newspaper, so vans with loudspeakers drove through the streets ordering us to cease all resistance. Suddenly, the shooting and bombing stopped and the unreal silence meant that one ordeal was over for us and another was about to begin. Our nightmare had become a reality. The entire three hundred square miles of what was left of Berlin were now completely under control of the Red Army. The last days of savage house to house fighting and street battles had been a human slaughter, with no prisoners being taken on either side. These final days were hell. Our last remaining and exhausted troops, primarily children and old men, stumbled into imprisonment. We were a city in ruins; almost no house remained intact."

We thank Tricor Press for granting permission to reprint this eyewitness account

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**The Bombing of Hiroshima, 1945**

**A**ugust 6, 1945 - the sun rose into a clear blue sky over the city of Hiroshima, Japan promising a warm and pleasant day. Nothing in the day's dawning indicated that this day would be any different from its predecessors. But this day would be different, very different. This day would change the

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| http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/images/hiroshima1.jpg |
| The bomb's mushroom cloud rises 20,000 feet above the city soon after the blast. |

world. On this day a single bomb dropped by a single airplane destroyed the city, leading to the end of World War II and introducing mankind to the Atomic Age.

Dr. Michihiko Hachiya lived through that day and kept a diary of his experience. He served as Director of the Hiroshima Communications Hospital and lived near the hospital approximately a mile from the explosion's epicenter. His diary was published in English in 1955

**Suddenly, a strong flash of light...**

"The hour was early; the morning still, warm, and beautiful. Shimmering leaves, reflecting sunlight from a cloudless sky, made a pleasant contrast with shadows in my garden as I gazed absently through wide-flung doors opening to the south.

Clad in drawers and undershirt, I was sprawled on the living room floor exhausted because I had just spent a sleepless night on duty as an air warden in my hospital.

Suddenly, a strong flash of light startled me - and then another. So well does one recall little things that I remember vividly how a stone lantern in the garden became brilliantly lit and I debated whether this light was caused by a magnesium flare or sparks from a passing trolley.

Garden shadows disappeared. The view where a moment before had been so bright and sunny was now dark and hazy. Through swirling dust I could barely discern a wooden column that had supported one comer of my house. It was leaning crazily and the roof sagged dangerously.

Moving instinctively, I tried to escape, but rubble and fallen timbers barred the way. By picking my way cautiously I managed to reach the *roka* [an outside hallway] and stepped down into my garden. A profound weakness overcame me, so I stopped to regain my strength. To my surprise I discovered that I was completely naked How odd! Where were my drawers and undershirt?

What had happened?

All over the right side of my body I was cut and bleeding. A large splinter was protruding from a mangled wound in my thigh, and something warm trickled into my mouth. My check was torn, I discovered as I felt it gingerly, with the lower lip laid wide open. Embedded in my neck was a sizable fragment of glass which I matter-of-factly dislodged, and with the detachment of one stunned and shocked I studied it and my blood-stained hand.

Where was my wife?

Suddenly thoroughly alarmed, I began to yell for her: 'Yaeko-san! Yaeko-san! Where are you?' Blood began to spurt. Had my carotid artery been cut? Would I bleed to death? Frightened and irrational, I called out again 'It's a five-hundred-ton bomb! Yaeko-san, where are you? A five- hundred-ton bomb has fallen!'

Yaeko-san, pale and frightened, her clothes torn and blood stained, emerged from the ruins of our house holding her elbow. Seeing her, I was reassured. My own panic assuaged, I tried to reassure her.

'We'll be all right,' I exclaimed. 'Only let's get out of here as fast as we can.'

She nodded, and I motioned for her to follow me."

**It was all a nightmare...**

*Dr. Hachiya and his wife make there way to the street. As the homes around them collapse, they realize they must move on, and begin their journey to the hospital a few hundred yards away.*

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| http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/images/hiroshima2.jpg |
| After the Blast |

"We started out, but after twenty or thirty steps I had to stop. My breath became short, my heart pounded, and my legs gave way under me. An overpowering thirst seized me and I begged Yaeko-san to find me some water. But there was no water to be found. After a little my strength somewhat returned and we were able to go on.

I was still naked, and although I did not feel the least bit of shame, I was disturbed to realize that modesty had deserted me. On rounding a corner we came upon a soldier standing idly in the street. He had a towel draped across his shoulder, and I asked if he would give it to me to cover my nakedness. The soldier surrendered the towel quite willingly but said not a word. A little later I lost the towel, and Yaeko-san took off her apron and tied it around my loins.

Our progress towards the hospital was interminably slow, until finally, my legs, stiff from drying blood, refused to carry me farther. The strength, even the will, to go on deserted me, so I told my wife, who was almost as badly hurt as I, to go on alone. This she objected to, but there was no choice. She had to go ahead and try to find someone to come back for me.

Yaeko-san looked into my face for a moment, and then, without saying a word, turned away and began running towards the hospital. Once, she looked back and waved and in a moment she was swallowed up in the gloom. It was quite dark now, and with my wife gone, a feeling of dreadful loneliness overcame me.

I must have gone out of my head lying there in the road because the next thing I recall was discovering that the clot on my thigh had been dislodged and blood was again spurting from the wound.

I pressed my hand to the bleeding area and after a while the bleeding stopped and I felt better

Could I go on?

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| http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/images/hiroshima3.jpg |
| Bombing victim: her skin is burned in a pattern corresponding to the light & dark portions of her komono. |

I tried. It was all a nightmare - my wounds, the darkness, the road ahead. My movements were ever so slow; only my mind was running at top speed.

In time I came to an open space where the houses had been removed to make a fire lane. Through the dim light I could make out ahead of me the hazy outlines of the Communications Bureau's big concrete building, and beyond it the hospital. My spirits rose because I knew that now someone would find me; and if I should die, at least my body would be found. I paused to rest. Gradually things around me came into focus. There were the shadowy forms of people, some of whom looked like walking ghosts. Others moved as though in pain, like scarecrows, their arms held out from their bodies with forearms and hands dangling. These people puzzled me until I suddenly realized that they had been burned and were holding their arms out to prevent the painful friction of raw surfaces rubbing together. A naked woman carrying a naked baby came into view. I averted my gaze. Perhaps they had been in the bath. But then I saw a naked man, and it occurred to me that, like myself, some strange thing had deprived them of their clothes. An old woman lay near me with an expression of suffering on her face; but she made no sound. Indeed, one thing was common to everyone I saw - complete silence.

All who could were moving in the direction of the hospital. I joined in the dismal parade when my strength was somewhat recovered, and at last reached the gates of the Communications Bureau."

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[[http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/images/voradsmx.gif](http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/vohiroshima.htm)](http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/vohiroshima.htm)Hear Col. Paul Tibbets describe dropping the Bomb in [*Voices of the Twentieth Century*](http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/vohiroshima.htm)

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