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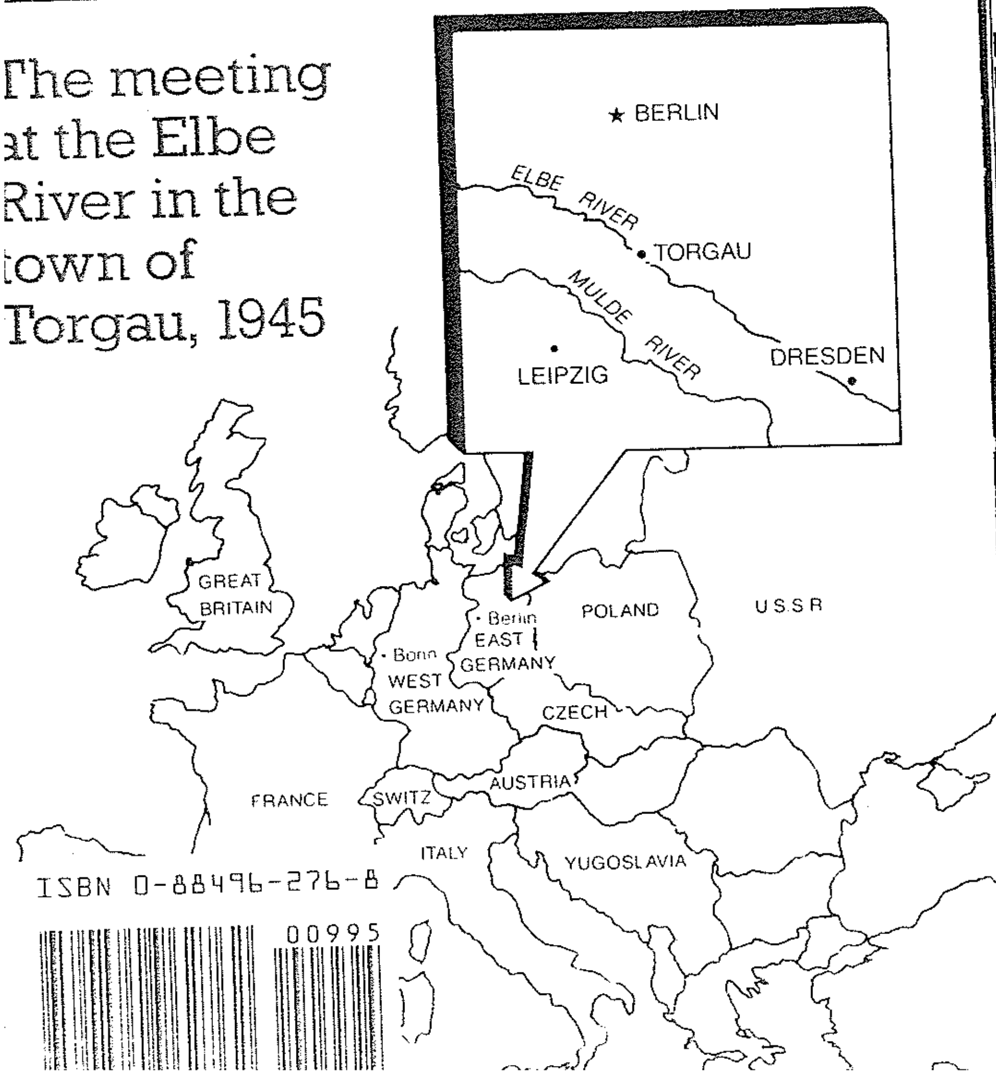
"We were all on the same side. Everybody was a friend. There were no differences." —Art Long

"Whenever an American approached a group of Russians they smiled broadly, saluted and shook hands. Some of the more enthusiastic ones, who had liberated stores of German champagne and cognac, elaborated on this greeting with a great hug that cracked the ribs." —Andy Rooney

"We drank toasts in cognac. Then wine. Then Schnapps. Then vodka. Then another liquor which I couldn't quite identify, although it tasted much like grain alcohol." —Ann Stringer

The meeting at the Elbe River in the town of Torgau, 1945



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SCOTT

YANKS MEET REDS

"An indelible portrait of the key moment in World War II when GI Joe meets Ivan." —Studs Terkel

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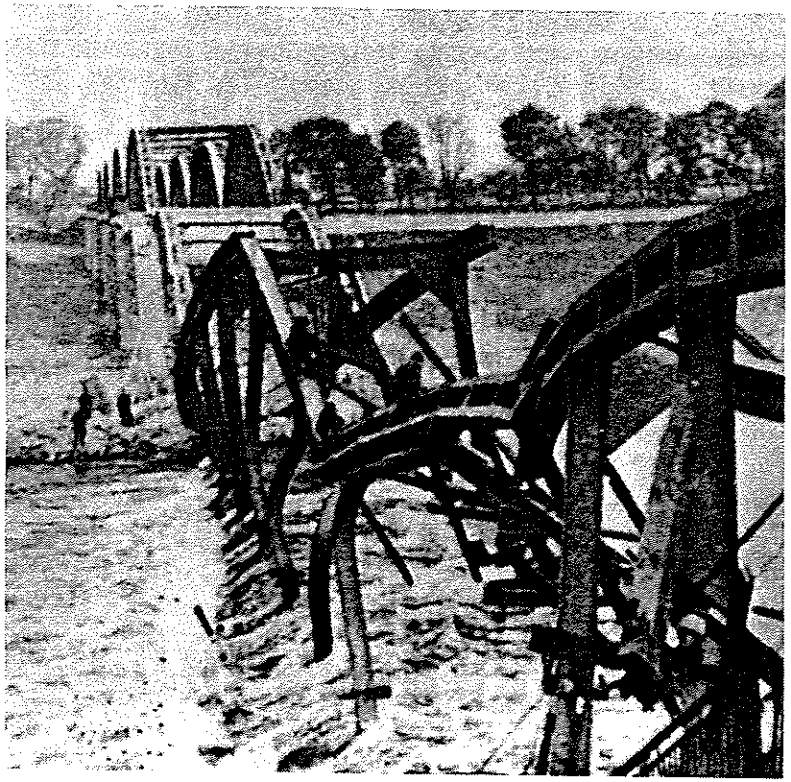
Recollections of U.S. and Soviet Vets from the Linkup in World War II

Edited by
MARK SCOTT
and SEMYON KRASILSHCHIK



Robertson meeting Andreyev on the brokenTorgau roadbridge at 4:00 p.m., April 25, 1945. Ensign George Peck, then Pfc. Frank Huff are sliding down the "V" of the girder behind Robertson. (*Photo by Paul Staub*)

ВСТРЕЧА НА ЭЛЬБЕ

ВОСПОМИНАНИЯ СОВЕТСКИХ И АМЕРИКАНСКИХ УЧАСТНИКОВ ВТОРОЙ МИРОВОЙ ВОЙНЫ

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CAPRA PRESS
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1988

6. Bill Robertson

"About halfway across the Elbe, the Russian soldier and I slid down a huge 'V' formed by the bent girder."

(Photo courtesy Bill Robertson)

An exhausted Bill Robertson being interviewed on the morning of April 26, 1945.

After the Sixty-ninth Division captured Leipzig in April 1945, it continued to advance eastward. My own regiment, the 273rd, reached the Mulde River on about April 20. Every GI knew that the Russians were headed in our direction. We knew the ultimate defeat of Nazi Germany was now certain. But when that would happen, how many of us would survive—these were the pressing questions.

Our orders were to stop at the Mulde. No reconnaissance missions were to be made east of the river. Higher authority then decided that American patrols could go east of the Mulde, but no farther than five miles.

I was a Second Lt., S-2 (Reconnaissance) officer of our battalion. I commanded a small squad. Our regiment was bivouacked on the Mulde just across from the town of Wurzen. On April 24, the *bürgermeister* crossed to the west bank of the river and surrendered to us. We subsequently moved into Wurzen. My own squad was very busy that night setting up a POW enclosure and checking the area.

By that time, the possibility of meeting the Soviet army had become the sole topic of conversation. All of us were filled with curiosity and anticipation. We wondered what the Russians were doing. Who were they? We knew that they had fought all the way from Stalingrad, from Moscow, that they were tough soldiers. But what were they *really* like? How did they act? Were they friendly or not? All we knew was that they were in front of us—out there somewhere. And we realized that it would be a great honor for the Sixty-ninth Division to be the first unit of the Western front to link up with the Eastern front.

Soon after we entered Wurzen, we discovered a *stalag* (POW camp) just four miles east of the town. Some four thousand ex-POWs straggled in from the camp. Although weak and emaciated, they greeted us with joy shining in their eyes. I was impressed by how much they personified the global aspect of the war. Some had been captured in the North African Campaign. Many were Russians, Poles, Frenchmen, Englishmen, Canadians, Indians, Australians, as well as Americans. Their happiness was indescribable—their eyes followed us as if they couldn't get enough.

The liberated POWs entering Wurzen were soon joined by hundreds of refugees and forced laborers newly freed. There were Poles, Serbs, Czechs, Frenchmen, and other nationalities. Growing numbers of German civilians began arriving on foot, on bicycles, pushing or pulling carts piled high with belongings.

Even though the morning of April 25 was clear, our own situation was not. The Sixty-ninth was setting up tents and field kitchens on the west bank of the Mulde for the ex-POWs and the refugees. German soldiers began surrendering, entering the town in both small and large groups. The crew of a self-propelled 88 millimeter gun mounted on a Panther tank chassis surrendered the weapon to us intact.

On that morning, I was given a mission by Battalion Headquarters. My instructions were to survey the roads leading into Wurzen to get a rough idea of how many refugees were coming into town. This would enable the Sixty-ninth to make adequate provisions for food and shelter. I was further instructed to plan and guard POW enclosures. I picked three men of our Recon section: Cpl. James McDonnell of Peabody, Massachusetts; Pfc. Frank Huff of Washington, Virginia; and Pfc. Paul Staub of the Bronx, New York (Paul spoke German).

The four of us got into our jeep, equipped with a machine gun. But we had neither flares nor a radio. The patrol drove east a couple of miles, saw only a few refugees, and urged them on to Wurzen. We returned to town, and at about 10:00 A.M. took another road leading northeast. On this road we found many refugees whom we again urged to hurry along. We continued to move up the road.

This, then, was the beginning of the patrol that eventually ended up some twenty miles away in Torgau, the patrol which was the second one to contact the Soviet army. When we first left Wurzen, we had no intention of going to Torgau, located quite a distance from us in enemy territory. We had no intention of meeting the Russians. Although armed with a machine gun, we were only one jeep strong—certainly no "motorized patrol."

Driving northeast, the four of us accepted the surrender of a German rifle company of about three hundred men plus officers. I had them stack their rifles and break the stocks. We confiscated their side arms, and wrote out a "safe-conduct" pass to Wurzen. We then chased and stopped a German staff car, found it full of medical officers, and sent them back to Wurzen.

The patrol proceeded carefully because I felt that at some point we would encounter rear-echelon German troops—a quartermaster supply depot, field hospital, kitchens, or whatever. We captured two SS men who offered minor resistance, disarmed them, and seated them on the hood of the jeep.

Nearing Torgau, the patrol came upon a small group of English POWs who had escaped from the town and were making their way for the American lines. They told us of some wounded Yanks in a Torgau prison camp. At that point, I decided to continue to Torgau if we could. Up until then, we had encountered no fire except for shots from the SS men, who now sat sullenly on the hood of the jeep.

Approaching Torgau, we saw smoke coming from a few fires presumably caused by previous Russian artillery barrage. We reconnoitered the southern outskirts of the town. The four of us now felt quite exposed, as we had no means of identification except our uniforms. We didn't have any green flares—the prearranged signal of the Americans to the Russians. So we confiscated a white bed sheet from a German civilian we met on the road, tore out about a five-by-eight foot section, tied it to a stick, rolled it up,

and tossed it into the back of the jeep. We thought the Russians might not shoot at us if we met them waving a white flag.

When our patrol reached Torgau at 1:30 P.M., it was a ghost town. I don't believe I saw more than forty German civilians the whole time we were there. In Torgau, we came across the small prison camp at Fort Zinna the Tommies had told us about. It held about forty men, all sentenced to death for espionage. We found two wounded GIs who had been captured only a few days earlier. They were being treated by a Yugoslav doctor. We promised help soon.

Small-arms fire sounded to the east, toward the Elbe. Leaving the two SS men at the prison camp, we drove in the direction of the firing. Our patrol soon met a German civilian, who told Paul that the Soviet army was on the other side of the river.

We decided to attempt contact. The time was about 2:00 P.M.

The patrol then encountered some sniper fire in town. We left the jeep, spread out, and detoured around the snipers. By now, the two Americans from the prison camp had joined us. We were a patrol of six.

Because we were planning to contact the Russians who were on the other side of the Elbe, I felt we needed better identification. The six of us broke into the first drug store (apothecary) we saw and found some colored powders—red and blue. We mixed the powders with water, and painted our bed sheet with five horizontal red stripes and a field of blue in the upper left corner. The time was 3:00 P.M.

We moved cautiously toward the river. I looked for some tall building or tower from which to wave the flag. Then we saw Hartenfels Castle. It had a magnificent tower very close to the west bank of the Elbe.

The castle had one entrance through a walled courtyard. I went in with Jim McDonnell, Paul Staub, and Ensign George Peck—one of the two liberated American POWs. I left Frank Huff and the other ex-POW with the jeep.

The four of us climbed the circular staircase inside the tower. Leaving the three men on the upper landing, I crawled out at roof level, waved the flag so that the Russians could see it, and began shouting "*Amerikanski*" and "*Tovarisch.*" The time was about 3:30.

The firing stopped.

Russian soldiers were about five to six hundred yards away—

across the river, then some two hundred yards beyond on a sloping grass embankment. They were moving about in the cover of trees at the edge of some woods.

They shouted. I could not understand.

I shouted. They could not understand.

They then fired two *green* flares (not *red!*). I couldn't respond, since we didn't have any flares. They then opened fire again, this time not just at the tower, but at the whole town as well. While this was going on, German snipers were firing at me from the rear.

I then waved our American flag, trying to stay under cover as much as possible. I shouted *"Amerikanski"* and *"Tovarisch"* over and over, explaining in English that we were an American patrol.

They ceased firing and started shouting again. I hung the flag pole out of the tower at a right angle so that they could easily see the stripes. By this time, I had sent the jeep back to the prison camp to find a Russian POW who could speak German.

The Russians resumed firing. This time, though, an anti-tank gun coughed from the left side of the woods (I could see the smoke). The round hit the tower about five to six feet from me.

Again, they stopped firing.

The jeep brought a liberated Russian POW from the prison camp. Paul hurriedly explained to him in German what to tell his countrymen across the river. The Russian leaned out of the tower and shouted a few sentences.

All firing ceased.

A small group of Russian soldiers started walking toward the river bank.

We left the tower, ran through the courtyard, and raced to the river. A road bridge stood near the castle. It had been blown up, probably by the retreating German army. Although the girders were bent and twisted, one of them was still above water level. We could see no boats on our side of the Elbe.

I started for the bridge, but the liberated Russian POW got there first. He started across the girder. A Russian soldier on the east bank began crawling on the girder toward us. Following the Russian POW, I climbed, then slid along the girder. Right behind me were Ensign Peck and Frank Huff. The rest of the patrol remained with the jeep. Paul was even taking pictures of us.

The POW met the soldier, passed him, and continued to the east bank while his countryman continued toward us. About halfway

across the Elbe, the Russian soldier and I slid down a limb of a huge "V" formed by the bent girder. The symbolism is interesting, since "V" was the sign for Victory. But we didn't think of that at the time.

The Russian was Sgt. Nikolai Andreyev. We shook hands and carefully pounded each other on the shoulder, trying not to fall into the swift current below. The time was four o'clock.

The Russian continued moving along the girder to the west bank. We continued to the east, where we were met by soldiers greeting us with happy yells. More soldiers were arriving by the minute.

The time was 4:45. We three Americans were standing with the Russians on the river bank laughing, shouting, pounding each other on the back, shaking hands with everyone. Frank, George, and I were shouting in English, our hosts in Russian. Neither understood the other's words, but the commonality of feeling was unmistakable. We were all soldiers, comrades in arms. We had vanquished a common enemy. The war was over, peace was near. All of us would live for another hour, another day.

The celebration continued as more Russians arrived. One produced a box of captured rations—sardines, biscuits, canned meat, chocolate. Wine and schnapps appeared. We toasted each other. We toasted the end of the war. We toasted the United States, the Soviet Union, and our Allies. We toasted our commanders and national leaders.

We gazed at each other with open curiosity. The Russian soldiers seemed quite young, but I guess we were too. They looked like any other combat soldier I'd ever seen, but were cleaner than many. They wore their decorations on their combat uniforms, but didn't wear steel helmets—I don't know why. Several had continued fighting at the front in spite of bandages on their wounds. I was surprised to see such a motley group of pleasant-faced, jolly fellows. We traded souvenirs such as cap ornaments and insignia. I traded wrist watches with a Russian captain who had been wounded five times since Stalingrad. One soldier gave me his gold wedding band.

A Russian major who spoke English then arrived. I suggested we should make arrangements for our respective regimental and division commanders to meet at Torgau the following day at 10:00 A.M. I told him I had to return to our lines. The Major informed me

that our patrol had made contact with elements of the Fifty-eighth "Garde" Division of the First Ukrainian Army, commanded by Marshal Konyev. "Garde" meant that it was a "crack" division cited for bravery in the Battle of Stalingrad.

It was getting late, and I wanted to return to Wurzen before dark. I asked for a liaison group to go with us. Four Russians volunteered. They were Maj. Anafim Larionov, Capt. Vasily Nyeda, Lt. Alexander Silvashko (commander of the platoon at the bridge), and Sgt. Nikolai Andreyev, whom I had met first on the Torgau bridge.

At five o'clock, we re-crossed the Elbe in a racing shell the Russians had found. The eight of us climbed into the jeep and retraced our route. By dusk, we had arrived without incident in Wurzen. At First Battalion HQ, there was more handshaking, celebrating, and toasting when it was announced that these were Russian troops, that a linkup had occurred. Photographers were there taking pictures of all of us standing on the steps of the CP.

Suddenly, a shot rang out.

A German civilian who had been standing nearby fell to the ground—the top of his head blown off. As blood spurted from the severed carotid arteries, he lay on the sidewalk kicking.

What had happened? We were told that he had been picked up earlier on suspicion of being a leader of the Werewolf organization and of serving as a prison guard at Fort Zinna. He had not as yet been checked by his American captors. But when he saw the four Russians at the CP, he thought his time had come. As everyone was celebrating, he had grabbed an M1 from the shoulder of a GI, put the muzzle under his chin, and pulled the trigger.

Not long after this incident, we proceeded to Regimental CP at Trebsen. Regiment had already been notified of the linkup. Col. Charles Adams, commander of the 273rd, welcomed the Russian delegation. The reception for my own patrol was a lot less certain, since we had ventured well beyond the five-mile limit. Although we didn't know it at the time, Col. Adams had two other patrols out beyond the limit. The Colonel had already been chewed out at Division by Gen. Reinhardt, commander of the 69th.

A much larger party then joined us as we drove to Division HQ at Naunhof. Gen. Reinhardt welcomed the Russians, but ordered the Robertson Patrol to be locked up in the G-3's office. There was

talk of court-martialing us, since we had disobeyed orders by going far beyond the five-mile limit. We were in hot water.

But the Power and Presence of the Press are remarkable. Word had gotten around the First Army's Press Camp that the Sixty-ninth Division, at the leading edge of the First Army's lines, might soon make contact with the Russian front. Correspondents and news photographers were thick around Division HQ. They *knew* something was happening.

Reinhardt notified Gen. Huebner of V Corps of our linkup. Gen. Huebner berated Gen. Reinhardt, then notified Gen. Hodges of the First Army. Gen. Hodges was awakened at about midnight with the report that the Robertson Patrol had met the Russians and that a Russian delegation was right then at Division CP.

What was Gen. Hodges's reaction? He said he was "delighted" with the news. He told Gen. Huebner to *congratulate* Gen. Reinhardt. All was forgiven.

The Robertson Patrol and the Russians were then introduced to a mob of reporters. The news was out. Pictures were taken, including the AP photo of Lt. Silvashko and me which appeared on the front pages of newspapers around the world. The Press then left to file their stories and return for the next day's meetings.

By then, it was past midnight. The date was April 26. Our patrol was very tired, having gotten little sleep the night before. The Russians had to get back to their lines. We had made arrangements for our COs to meet at ten o'clock that morning in Torgau. So back we went to Regiment to organize a fourteen-jeep patrol.

Since the four of us already knew the way to Torgau, our jeep led the convoy. This patrol, accompanied by Col. Adams, arrived in Torgau at dawn. The Press also arrived. It was on the 26th that most of the picture of the Torgau linkup were taken, including the movie footage.

On the 26th, we learned that Lt. Albert Kotzebue's twenty-eight man jeep patrol from our 273rd Regiment had actually been the first to meet the Russians. Buck Kotzebue's patrol had also met part of the Fifty-eighth "Garde" Division. They made contact the previous day at Strehla, located on the Elbe about sixteen miles south of Torgau. Kotzebue had met the Russians at 12:30 P.M.—three and a half hours before we did. The Kotzebue Patrol therefore deserves credit for being the *first* American unit to link up with the Russians.

When the Robertson Patrol returned with the Russian delegation to the U.S. lines on the evening of April 25, we had met the Press without much delay. The news was flashed to the world. We got most of the publicity, as well as the credit for the first "official" linkup, the linkup in Torgau. In the meantime, however, Buck and his men remained in the Russian lines overnight. He was not able to make contact with Division, let alone the Press, until after the "official" meetings at Torgau.

DR. WILLIAM D. ROBERTSON returned from the war to pursue medical studies in California. After completion of Neurological Residency in Great Britain and the United States, Dr. Robertson practiced neurosurgery in the Los Angeles area. He retired in 1984.

(National Archives)

Robertson and Huff with their replica of the American flag, in Torgau, Germany. George Peck had earlier torn the right corner from the flag to prove in later years "that this whole experience was not a dream."

(Source: Bill Robertson)

Col. Charles Adams, commander of the US 273rd Regiment, leads American and Soviet soldiers in a victory toast at regimental headquarters at Trebsen. *From left:* Lt. Alexander Silvashko, Maj. Anafim Larionov, Col. Adams, Sgt. Nikolai Andreyev (whom Robertson first met on the Torgau roadbridge), and Robertson.

(Paul Staub)

Robertson Patrol at the Elbe River on the afternoon of April 25, 1945. *From left:* Pfc. Frank Huff, Cpl. James McDonnell, Lt. Bill Robertson, and Pfc. Paul Staub.

7. George Peck

"We waved frantically and started running for the bridge."

On the afternoon of April 25, 1945, Sgt. Victor Berruti and I were sitting by the side of a road near Torgau, not far from Fort Zinna. Looking down the road, we caught a glimpse of a lone jeep disappearing around a bend.

"Looks like they're going away, Lieutenant," Victor remarked.

"Maybe they'll come back," I replied. "Let's sit here and wait for them."

Victor and I were liberated on that April day. On October 13, 1944, five of us Americans from the OSS had been captured near Turin, Italy, after a day long shoot-out high in the Alps. My German captors had found it hard to understand what I, a naval ensign, was doing at an altitude of nine thousand feet. But when they found out that we were in the intelligence service, they got the picture.

Our group was shipped off to Germany—well out of reach of the Italian partisans who had tried to free us. On November 9, I escaped from jail in the Bavarian town of Moosburg, only to be recaptured four days later. This escapade did little to endear me to my captors. It led to my being confined to solitary for almost five months—a lesson in patience. On about April 1, my companions and I were transferred to Fort Zinna. At that time, it was the only large military prison still operating in Nazi Germany. There, we were to stand trial as spies.

When we arrived at Fort Zinna, the Germans took us to a sort of outer office, where we were processed. A trusty of doubtful appearance stealthily approached us. He pointed to a stack of

folders lying on a counter top. Each was marked with a large "T". Those, he said, were our dossiers, and added:

"*'T' meint Tod!*" ("'D' means death!")

Fear fell upon us.

I was again separated from my companions. That evening, at nightfall, I could hear sounds coming from across the fields, sounds resembling small sticks being snapped in half. I heard them again, then realized that the firing squad was at work—a nightly event at Fort Zinna. Meditating in the gathering gloom, I realized that if God meant me to continue on earth, that would be all right too. A great sense of peacefulness came over me as I thought, "Thou preservest him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee."

About an hour later, I had a visitor. André Levacher, a French captain, seemed an angel of mercy. He said he knew all about our case. André told me not to worry, predicting that the Nazi military judges would not press the charges of espionage against us when they themselves were likely to be in the dock in the near future. And so indeed it turned out.

As he left my cell, André asked if I would like to be transferred to his cell, which he shared with Bertelsen, the Danish ex-Consul General. Would I! The next day, I moved in with them; we talked non-stop for twelve hours. André lived in Châlons-sur-Marne, and had seen his home destroyed twice—in 1914 and 1940. His crime was that after having been captured with the whole army on the Maginot Line, he had operated an underground railroad for escaped French POWs. Bertelsen was reticent about his own connections with the British underground, as his case was still pending. His contributions to the conversation consisted of witty good humor and the passing on of many goodies sent down from Berlin by the Danish Foreign Office. He gave me four hundred cigarettes with which I bought an excellent Swiss-made German army watch.

One prominent German prisoner who frequently visited our cell was Gen. Oskar Ritter von Niedermayer, a scion of the Bavarian nobility and former chief of the *Wehrpolitisches Institut* in Berlin. As the American and Russian armies were advancing toward us from opposite directions, the General gladly shared his expert knowledge of military strategy with André, who in some ways was becoming the unofficial head of the prison.

Like von Niedermayer, most of the two thousand or so prisoners

bulletins in the *Völkischer Beobachter,* we knew by April 20 that the Russians were stalled two miles east of us across the Elbe, and the Americans twenty or so miles to the west on the banks of the Mulde.

When the front drew near, a field hospital moved in, filling the cellars of the fort with wounded soldiers. On April 23, orders came through to evacuate the fort. All were to withdraw with the remaining German forces to Bavaria, where the Nazis were to make a last stand in the so-called *Festung Europa.* The next day, André told the prison authorities that they could do what they pleased with the German prisoners, but that the Allied POWs and wounded would not leave. To my surprise, the authorities agreed. The German prisoners departed on the evening of the 24th, leaving the fort in the hands of the French, British, Russians, Italians, and us.

April 25, the great day, dawned in a cold drizzle. Up betimes to test our new freedom, we gathered in the front courtyard of the prison. There we witnessed a heart-rending scene which might have come straight out of the Thirty Years War—that other great German tragedy.

The Nazis were evacuating the field hospital. Ambulatory patients were hobbling along, some scantily clad and wrapped in blankets, others practically barefooted. The more seriously-wounded were riding in commandeered farm wagons, the kind usually used to cart potatoes or manure. The wounded lying in the wagons were mercilessly joggled as the horses pulled the carts over the cobblestones.

Several of us approached the Nazi medical officer-in-charge and asked him to leave the badly-wounded Germans behind as an act of mercy. Of course, his job was to repair the broken bodies so that they could again serve as *Kannonenfutter,* but that was not his answer. He turned violently on us and launched into an invective which ended with the prediction, "In two months, we will push you Americans back into the North Sea!"

We thought he was crazy. Finally, the last cart passed through the gate of the ancient fortress. On its tailgate sat a Red Cross nurse with her feet dangling over the board. I saw tears streaming down her plain, German face.

André was in charge of the fort now. One of the first things he did was post a guard at the wine cellar of the fortress. He

with her feet dangling over the board. I saw tears streaming down her plain, German face.

André was in charge of the fort now. One of the first things he did was post a guard at the wine cellar of the fortress. He maintained that the wine, most of which was French, was by right ours. However, he didn't act fast enough to frustrate a very large and very wild Irishman in the British service, who got a skinfull by 8:00 A.M. Paddy started breaking up the furniture and making a great row. We didn't know what to do until our staunch American sergeant, Victor Berruti, showed up. Victor never let us down in a pinch. He wheedled Paddy toward the entrance of Cell Block D, threw open the gate, and offered him any room in the house. Soothed by his amiable ruse, Paddy progressed into the lachrymose stage and submitted to being led to a bunk to sleep it off.

Like Paddy, each of us explored the joys of freedom in his own way. In addition to running the fortress, André led the French contingent in the preparation of a glorious celebration feast. The Russian lieutenant—the pilot Titov—had worked in the poultry yard up until our liberation; he contributed dozens of eggs and a supply of young spring chickens. The English captain, Lewis Lee-Graham, had miraculously survived years of severe malnutrition, pneumonia, and the bombing of his prison; he wanted a good, long, hot bath—and got it. The Italian colonel reasserted his tarnished authority by having his enlisted men black his boots.

As for me, I was seized by a fear of anarchy. Because the Germans had left a vacuum in authority, I felt called upon to fill it. I asked André if I could see to the comfort of the Allied wounded. Readily agreeing, he lent me a smartly-cut French jacket to replace my worn GI overcoat. I now looked more like an officer. Victor found a silver bar to pin on my overseas cap. The illusion was effective, if perhaps confusing. The wounded—forty or so Russians and a handful of Americans—were carefully brought up from the cellar and installed in clean beds in an airy barracks.

Shortly after noon, someone rushed into the fortress with the electrifying news, "The Americans are here!" But it was a false report. Victor and I became impatient, and so went out at about three o'clock to look for the Americans. A warm sun had come out by the time we sat down by the road. The chestnut trees were just coming into bloom. And we were glad to be out on our own.

We sat down on the side of the road. It was long, straight, flat.

It led across the plain to the west and—we hoped—to the Americans. We waited.

At 3:15 P.M., we spotted a tiny vehicle at the point where the road centered its lines of perspective on the horizon. As the spot grew larger, we saw that it was a jeep. The back seat was full of small arms. On the pile perched a GI corporal.

"Hiya, fellas!" he called out. Never have the accents of my native New York sounded sweeter. Like Victor, he was from the East Bronx. The two were soon in deep conversation about home addresses, delicatessens, and restaurants—food was an obsession with both POWs and GIs.

The commander of the patrol was Second Lt. William Robertson, who introduced himself as "Bill." He was from Los Angeles, and right now had more serious concerns on his mind.

"Are there any Germans in Torgau?" he asked.

"No," I answered, eager to be of service. "They pulled out this morning at about seven. But there may be a few *Volkssturm* around." The *Volkssturm* was that pitiable militia of old men and boys who were supposed to defend their homes.

"Where are the Russians?" Bill asked.

"At Brückenkopf, just across the river," we answered. "They came about two days ago and have stayed there."

"Let's see if we can find them!" Bill said.

Robertson admitted that he was not supposed to be there at all. His patrol had run ahead of the American lines, enticed by the great number of Germans who were anxious to give up their arms to the Americans instead of to the dreaded Russians. Hence, the pile of pistols, machine pistols, and tommy guns on the back seat of the jeep.

Bill gave us our pick of weapons, and invited us to join the patrol. The six of us drove on into Torgau itself. Bill then got out of the jeep and led four of us in echelon formation on each side of the street; Victor followed in the jeep. Here and there, a house was quietly on fire. No one took notice.

We came out onto the marketplace. Bill had a large white sheet which he planned to use as a flag whenever we got to the Russians. Victor and I said that this was not such a good idea, as the Germans had been overdoing that tactic recently, and the Russians would certainly take us for Germans. Someone said, "Let's paint it so it will look like an American flag."

This said, Bill went up to a hardware store, shot out the lock and pane of glass with his machine gun, and reached through to undo the latch. We found dry water paint, mixed up the colors, made three broad red stripes across the sheet, and painted a blue field in one corner. The spots where the blue paint didn't stick were meant to be stars. It was quite a flag; I had taken the precaution of tearing a corner from it to show doubting persons as proof that this whole experience was not a dream. Later, we heard, Bill gave it to Gen. Eisenhower, who is said to have passed it on to the Smithsonian—the nation's attic.

Coming out of the store, we found our way to Hartenfels Castle, right across the river from the Russian lines. The castle was a fortress built by Frederick the Great of Prussia in the 1740s after his victory over Saxony and Austria. It had a watchtower with a platform surmounted by a crown-shaped dome.

Having driven through the courtyard entrance to the castle, we raced up the stairs and came out high above the river, swirling below. The bridge had been blown up; the roadway was totally destroyed, with only the twisted girders of the superstructure remaining. On the far side of the Elbe—about five hundred yards away—were the Russian lines. They had erected a series of earthworks running in front of the small military prison of Brückenkopf. A Russian armored truck stood in the lee of one of the few houses. Lying between the Russians and us were a wide, green field, the river with two web-like bridges spanning it, and the Torgau embankment.

We could see figures walking around behind the earthworks.

Briefly surveying the situation, Bill clambered up a rickety ladder in the belfry through a trap door to the open space under the dome. He climbed up over the platform onto the dome—more than a hundred feet above the Elbe—and began precariously waving the flag at the Russians.

No response.

I called up, "Shout *Amerikanskii soldatui!*" I had dreamed many times in the prison of being liberated by the Russians, and had got hold of a German Russian Soldier's Dictionary. I had learned all the expressions in the front of the book, especially words such as *drug* ("friend"), *daitye mnye khlyeb* ("give me bread"), *gyde . . .?* (where is . . . ?"), etc.

Robertson was getting results. We could see heads peep out from behind the earthworks.

Then a red flare went up.

"Damn it!" Bill shouted, "I forgot the flare." (American patrols were supposed to carry answering green flares in case they met the Russians.)

From our side of the Elbe, scattered *Volkssturm* fired a few sniper shots. This was enough for the Russians. They opened fire.

It was very impressive. The entire line blossomed with flashes of flame. From where we were, it looked like striking flints. The sparks mushroomed out; I could look down the middle to see the bullet coming.

We all ducked. But not Bill. He kept waving the flag. After a while, he got tired, and came down to the platform.

"Look," I told him, "I've got a friend at the fort, a Lt. Titov, who's a Russian pilot shot down over Stalingrad. He can talk to them in Russian."

Bill yelled down to Victor—still in the jeep—to high-tail it back to Fort Zinna and bring back the Russian lieutenant. After an interminable wait, the jeep reappeared, and Titov came puffing up the stairs. I began explaining the situation to him in German, which he did not understand very well. But Victor must have gotten the message across to him, for the pilot sprang into the belfry and began yelling at the top of his large lungs in Russian, drawing out his syllables in long, mournful cries. I thanked our lucky stars that he was a husky fellow—in civilian life a hunter from Vladivostok—because he must have had to bellow for five minutes.

A few heads reappeared on the east bank. Soldiers began coming out from behind trees, out of shallow trenches. Titov must have been asking them to come down to the river. A few jumped over the earthworks.

Bill shouted, "Let's go!" and we all scrambled down the stairs, jumped into the jeep, and sped up onto the embankment.

The opposite fields were filling up with soldiers. We waved frantically and started running for the bridge. I asked Bill if I might come along with him, since I knew German and they might not have someone who knew English.

But Bill was already crawling on the twisted girders of the bridge. I followed close behind. A Russian sergeant had already got a good start toward us from the other bank. He met Bill, and

And then I edged by. The girder was not wide; it was not easy to manage without falling into the rushing river below. But we made our way to the east bank, where we were greeted by a group of Russians. All of us were jabbering, shaking hands, and slapping each other on the backs.

We asked the Russians where they had come from, and they answered, "Stalingrad." Theirs was a unit of the Ukrainian army; they looked as though they had walked the whole way. There were almost no vehicles anywhere, except one truck and a few liberated horse wagons—so different from our own highly-mechanized forces. I was also surprised by their uniforms. Although ours were not exactly colorful, theirs seemed drab. They all wore frayed outfits, all but the commanding officer—a smartly uniformed major. A tall blond, he looked like Alexander Nevsky—the real one, not the actor who played the part in the Eisenstein film.

Bill and the Major sat down to exchange credentials and talk. I offered to serve as interpreter, since the *lingua franca* in this part of Europe was not English—as it is now—but German. The Major fixed a hard stare on me and barked, *"Nyet!"* I had forgotten the Russian attitude, which was that any POW was considered a treacherous deserter until proven otherwise.

As the two talked, I noticed another important difference between our armies—there were a number of women here dressed just like the men. They were paramedics. I had once known a Russian paramedic just like them who had been taken prisoner by the Germans. The job of these women was to administer first aid, no matter how hazardous the fighting. Many were killed in battle. I found out later that the proportion of battle-wounded who were saved was higher in the Russian army than in any other, including our own.

By this time, the celebration had gotten under way. One Russian soldier was firing a German bazooka into the river; the missile made a big splash and satisfying bang. The Russians passed around German schnapps, as well as German cheese, sausage, bread, and chocolate. In the absence of much verbal communication, there was a lot of hugging and backslapping.

A Russian captain befriended me. His chest was covered with well-worn medals—not just the ribbons, but the whole medals. This heroic figure gave me a big hug, but it developed that he was not especially attracted to me, but to my 400-cigarette watch. The

historic occasion, he said, should be memorialized by our exchanging watches, and he offered me a woman's brass watch that was no longer working. He said my wife would like it, I was so astonished that I reluctantly agreed, and was left with the thought that this shrewd fellow enjoyed historic occasions to his own advantage.

Sitting there in the light of the westering sun, I had time for reflection. This was indeed an historic occasion. For another person, I suppose, this mood would have seemed incongruous amid all the rejoicing. But I was an historian, one who had been deeply involved in political intelligence for several years. That afternoon, sitting on the banks of the Elbe, I remembered that the Spanish Civil War, in which other "premature anti-fascists" like me had fought, had started nearly ten years earlier. The long struggle against the fascist dictatorships was finally coming to a close. Britain was saved. So too were France and Italy, though starved and battered. Jewish survivors of the death camps were being freed.

I was suddenly flooded with a warm surge of hope. That same day, the United Nations was being formed in San Francisco. The peace of the world was to be founded upon the friendship of our two great nations—the United States and Soviet Union.

Bill and the Major concluded their business; they arranged a meeting between their commanding officers, a meeting which took place the next day on a bridge farther down the river. "I've got to get back to the Mulde before sundown," Bill suddenly said. "It's nearly five. Let's get going!"

A Russian soldier discovered an abandoned motor launch by the river and jumped in. But because the motor wouldn't start, another soldier found a rowboat to ferry us across. On the west bank, we were joined by a Russian medical contingent, which followed us to Fort Zinna. They immediately evacuated the Russian wounded, leaving the Americans with us. Bill left Victor and me there, saying he would report our whereabouts. Help would arrive by morning, which it did.

The Russians didn't leave us right away. One of them came up to André and pointed to a seventeen-year-old German boy wearing an SS uniform. The Russian indicated by sign language that he wanted to shoot him. André well knew of the horrors of National Socialism. He knew the barbarous acts committed by the SS not only in the Soviet Union, but also in his own country. Yet he

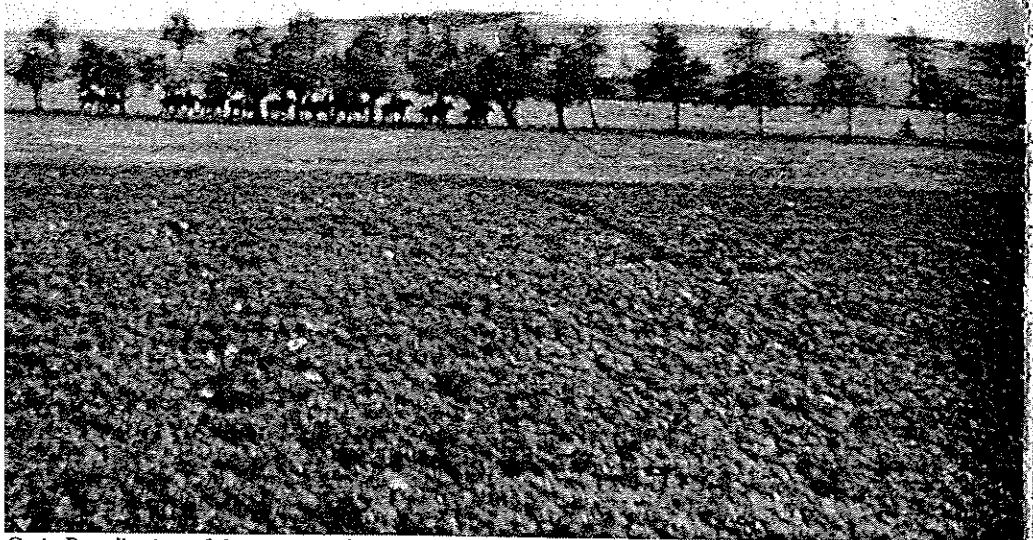
refused to surrender the young German. Instead, he sent the boy home—to his mother.

The sun was now setting. The feast prepared by the French residents of Fort Zinna was laid out on long trestle tables. We all sat down higgledy-piggledy, officers and enlisted men, French, British, Italian, and American. Our conversation was in French, which most of the men understood and some spoke. We drank our victory toasts in the wine of André's home region, Champagne. Our cooks and waiters had worked several seasons at Trouville, St. Malô, and the like. And so our celebration feast was a gourmet's delight—broiled spring chicken, fresh asparagus, and new potatoes, all washed down with vintage Barsac. Dessert was apples—the first fresh fruit many of us had had for months—cheese, black bread, and more champagne.

But before joining that memorable celebration, I lay down on my bunk to rest. It was the first time I had really rested since morning, when I undertook the task of fighting my own fear of anarchy by burying the dead, comforting the sick, pacifying the drunks, and keeping the pillaging within bounds. The day had finally hit me. I began shaking violently, uncontrollably. My nervous system, which had lain quiet for so long, had endured too much.

André came over to say something. He looked intently at me, turned, and silently walked away. André was a civilized man.

After returning from the war, GEORGE T. PECK taught history at Lehigh University and then became Vice President and Sales Promotion Manager at the New York clothiers, Peck & Peck. He returned to college teaching in 1970 at Sarah Lawrence College and SUNY Purchase and retired in 1980.



Craig Patrol's view of the Soviet column traveling along the road from Zausswitz. (*Igor Belousovitch*)

Robertson Patrol presents its American flag to Gen. Eisenhower. (*Bill Robertson*)

8. Bill Fox

"The horsemen started galloping toward the Americans."

(*Igor Belousovitch*)

April 25, 1945. The dawn was still young, the air cold as six jeeps from E and H Companies rendezvoused with the other two jeeps. The first was the radio jeep from Regiment headquarters, the second from V Corps headquarters.

The scene: the narrow, rickety wooden bridge crossing the Mulde River at Trebsen. The objective: contact the Russian forces approaching from the east through German-held territory.

There were fifty-one men in the patrol. Our eastward advance was limited to five miles beyond the stream. Yet the general feeling among the patrol members was that we were going to keep on until we met the Russians. It was a spirit of eagerness, aggressiveness, and a plain hell-raising desire to make contact. I myself was determined to meet the Russians that day—orders or no orders.

At 4:45 A.M., our patrol left the CP at Trebsen and remained at the bridge. Waiting there in the sharp morning air was unpleasant, but the distant boom of artillery—maybe Russian, maybe German—promised adventure.

Finally, another patrol from the I & R Platoon[1] rattled its way over the old timbers of the Trebsen Bridge and crossed to the east bank. At 5:35, both groups drove east together. Ten minutes later, after parting from the I & R Platoon, our patrol passed through the last outpost and on into the cold dawn fog.

We were theoretically under the command of Second Lt. Thomas P. Howard of Company E. But the patrol was actually directed by Maj. Fred W. Craig, Second Battalion Executive and senior officer present. Capt. George J. Morey, Assistant S-2, had been detailed to represent the Regimental commander, while I had been assigned to cover the story of the Russian-American linkup. I had chosen this patrol as the one most likely to make contact on the Corps front.

The patrol followed a circuitous, sweeping route up and down side roads and main roads through Gornewitz, Denwitz, and Fremdiswalde to Roda. Approaching each town, we slowed down and cautiously reconnoitered before driving in. Small, peasant communities, these towns were for the most part still asleep when our jeeps passed through. Other American patrols had already scouted some of these villages; desultory white flags hung from most of the houses. Here and there, an inquisitive youngster stuck his head out of an upstairs window. Small groups of impassive villagers watched the Americans move silently through the streets. There was no resistance. It was an unreal silence. On that early April morning, war seemed far away in these gray houses and on the lonely, winding roads.

The weather remained cold, the mist persisted. The patrol advanced slowly, carefully, alert to everything around it. After leaving Roda, Maj. Craig decided to go into Wermsdorf. From the distance, we could see a huge red cross glistening from the roof of what appeared to be a big hospital in the town.

We reached Wermsdorf at 9:15 A.M. Driving into the main portion of town, some elements of the patrol went directly to the hospital, while others searched out the area. A number of French, Belgian, Russian, and Polish slave laborers who had been turned into farm workers showed up. Eager to help us, they pointed out German soldiers in hiding. Most of them had simply quit the army.

Patrol members hauled the *bürgermeister* down the center of town. Through an interpreter, Maj. Craig instructed him to tell the population to hang white flags from all houses. All German soldiers were to turn themselves in at the hospital by 3:00 P.M. Any German soldiers seen outside the hospital grounds after that hour would be shot on sight. If any untoward incident occurred, Maj. Craig warned, the *bürgermeister* would be shot and the town leveled by artillery.

Craig Patrol links up amid confusion with Soviet troops near Clanzschwitz. (*Igor Belousovitch*)

Maj. Gen Valdimir Rusakov greets the Craig Patrol on the east bank of the Elbe River near Kreinitz. (*Igor Belousovitch*)

The *bürgermeister* mounted one of the jeeps and repeated these orders to the people who had clustered around in crowds, including freed Allied forced laborers, who looked somewhat puzzled—yet happy—with their new-found liberty. Craig had wisely omitted the fact that he had no artillery to enforce his threat—our handful of men was the entire American army in the area.

We were still within our authorized reconnaissance zone. Wermsdorf was just short of the boundary line set by Regiment. When the patrol had earlier sent a position report, Regiment replied:

> Hold patrol in vicinity you are now in. Do not proceed any further. Search that area.

After the patrol reported capturing the hospital in Wermsdorf, Regiment gave the go-ahead to proceed to the north:

> Have your patrol proceed to vicinity of (636166) [the town of Deutsch-Luppa-Wendisch]. Search area and report.

At around 11:00 A.M., the patrol pulled out of Wermsdorf and headed up through the central wood which joins the Forsten Wermsdorf and Hubertusburg. Our column went into the forest and stopped at its northern fringe. There we took an entire German sanitary company without trouble. But this caused further delay. By this time, many of us were feeling increasingly eager to meet the Russian forces as soon as possible.

Shortly before noon, we encountered two Russian displaced persons who told us that the Russians had a pontoon bridge across the Elbe at Strehla, that they had patrols in Oschatz during the morning, but that they had withdrawn to Strehla. If the Russians were that far away, it meant that we would have to go beyond our limiting zone to meet them. Yet after having received a clarification of Craig's's report on the capture of the Wermsdorf hospital, Regiment reiterated:

> Repeat instructions, you do not proceed beyond new area.

Realizing this, I told Maj. Craig that if his orders precluded such a distant mission, I myself would go on and contact the Russians, providing that he lend me a jeep and his Russian interpreter.

As instructed, the patrol continued on into Deutsch-Luppa-Wendisch. At 1:05 P.M., Craig received another "stay" order. The

patrol members were getting more eager to go farther. I repeated my desire to go on.

At three o'clock, our jeeps moved out of Calbitz. All along the route were streams of freed slave laborers and Allied POWs. Some were drunk, others looting. All waved at us and saluted and cheered. They were the flotsam of Europe at that moment—and they were free. Caught in the cataclysm were a number of German civilians who had panicked in the face of defeat. They were on the road in carts, wagons, sulkies, and in anything else which could carry them. They were fleeing—the very old and the very young, the sick and the crippled. They had been caught in the whirlpool of their own nation's collapse, and had now started to join the other wanderers of Europe.

Sometime around four o'clock, the patrol headed for Terpitz. Not far from the Elbe River we stopped on a hilltop to survey the area. We thought we might be able to see the Russian bridgehead from here.

Everyone was suddenly filled with excitement. Through field glasses, we could see several columns of troops moving north over the gentle hill beyond Liebschütz. We questioned a couple of German soldier strays. The troops were German, not Russian, retreating to the north.

We moved east into Clanzschwitz. By then, the roads were very dusty. The air had grown warm, though there was still a chill wind. Moving through the village, the patrol was overtaken by several speeding jeeps. The column halted. The men in the jeeps were from Lt. Kotzebue's patrol. They conveyed the startling news that Kotzebue had made first contact with the Russians in the morning, that he was now on the east bank of the Elbe—not far away.

Craig immediately gave the signal to take off. The jeeps leaped forward, speeding out of town, heading for Leckwitz and the Elbe. After all the jeeps had cleared the last house and the lead vehicle was about 150 yards east of the city limits, the column ground to a halt in a typhoon of dust. Everyone looked to his right with an open-mouthed stare. There, on the tree-lined parallel road leading from Zausswitz, was a column of horsemen moving west. One word came from every amazed mouth: "Russians!"

The horsemen apparently saw the jeeps at the same time, for they wheeled to their right and started galloping toward the Americans. Among the cavalrymen were several soldiers on bicy-

cles and motorcycles. All of us piled out of our jeeps. Time stood still as the first Russian approached.

"I thought the first guy would never get there," one GI later told me. "My eyes were glued to his bike. He seemed to get bigger and bigger as he came slower and slower toward us. He reached a point a few yards away, tumbled off his bike, saluted, grinned, and stuck out his hand. Then they all arrived."

This was the contact. The time was 4:45 P.M. The sun was waning. The day was clear. Everyone grinned. No one could think of anything fancy to say. The Americans said, *"Amerikanski,"* the Russians said, *"Russki."* That was it. It was an historic moment, and everyone knew it. But no one could think of any deathless phrases. The only thing that sounded eloquent was the set speech of Pfc. Igor N. Belousovitch of Company E. Born of a Russian family in Shanghai, China, Belousovitch had come along on the patrol as interpreter. To the Russian senior lieutenant who first came up, he said:

> I greet you in the name of the American army and our commanders on this historic occasion. It is a privilege and an honor to be here.

The Russian—equally eloquent—replied:

> This is an historic occasion. It's a moment for which both our armies have been fighting. It's a great honor for me to be here. It is wonderful that we have met in this place. It is a moment which will go down in history.

But those were the only bits of eloquence. For the most part, there was a wholehearted sense of friendship between the two groups. The most elegant thing the majority could do was simply grin and say, *"Tovarisch."* Cameras were out. Pictures were taken. Cigarettes were exchanged. One GI climbed up on one of the Russians' horses and pranced around. Everyone grinned and felt foolish because he couldn't say much. Everyone cursed the language barrier.

The meeting was brief and kaleidoscopic. The Russians, who were troop-size, were attached to the First Guards Zhitomir Cavalry Regiment. They said they were on their way to Dresden and had to hurry. Much had happened, yet nothing had happened.

In little more than three minutes, both groups were on their way. The meeting was over. The time was just past 4:48 P.M.

After making contact, we took off for Strehla, riding furiously in a cloud of dust to join Kotzebue's men at the scene of the original crossing. We found nothing there, backed off, and sped north through Gorzig and across the open stretch of plain to the river bank opposite Kreinitz. On the east shore was another group of Russians. A hand-drawn, crude pontoon ferry stretched across the river.

A few of the Russians immediately started pulling themselves across. When they reached the west side, they drew themselves up, saluted, and leaped ashore. There was more general grinning and handshaking, no one knowing what to say. The command group and a number of the men of our patrol pulled themselves across the swiftly-flowing Elbe to the eastern bank. There, the inevitable Russian cameramen were grinding away.

Coming off the ferry, we swiftly clambered up the sides of the sloping, cobbled bank to the Russian group which clustered around a stocky, firm-faced, small man. We exchanged salutes, at first with a certain reserve. Through Belousovitch, the small man was introduced to us as Maj. Gen. Vladimir Rusakov, commanding general of the Fifty-eighth Guards Infantry Division. The General was cautious at first, asking for identification before he continued.

Gen. Rusakov told us through Belousovitch that his division was part of the First Ukrainian Army, under Col. Gen. Zhadov, and was part of the Army group of Marshal Konyev. They had fought from Stalingrad to the Elbe. The General was, he said, "proud to have my division as the first one to meet the Americans." He was aware of the "historic moment."

But he wanted to know where the rest of the American army was. When was it coming to the Elbe? How much armor was with the infantry? How many Panzers were near? A patrol of a few jeeps just wasn't in the book. His orders, he said, were not to go beyond the Elbe. He was puzzled when we told him that our orders were not to go beyond the Mulde.

Then Gen. Rusakov said something about the Germans running away from the Russians so that they could surrender to the Americans. He was promptly told that the American army had fought hard and well and was not being foolishly soft-hearted with the enemy. That seemed to please him. He hastened to add that he

had deep admiration for the American army. Now that we had joined, he said, we would quickly end the war together.

Finally, the exchange of amenities on the river bank was finished. Rusakov said that the members of the Kotzebue Patrol were "being entertained elsewhere." He said the men of our patrol would be taken care of, and then led us officers into a nearby house, where we joined in toasting.

The table was set. Liquor flowed freely. In addition to myself, the officers present were Craig, Morey, Howard, Rusakov, a colonel who was the General's adjutant, and Lt. Col. Alexander Gordeyev, to whom Rusakov pointed with pride and said, "He's my best regimental commander!" Belousovitch interpreted for the group.

We toasted the heads of Russia, Great Britain, and the United States. We toasted the health of every commander and private in both armies. It was "bottoms up" each time—the going got rocky before long. A solemn moment came when we drank a toast to the late President Roosevelt, whom every Russian seemed to know of and for whom they had the greatest respect and affection.

While this military and diplomatic protocol was being taken care of, our radio operator notified Regiment of our linkup. Division proposed sending two planes to the scene. The Russians made preparations for a landing strip. Our patrol leaders sought to arrange a meeting between Col. Charles Adams and Gen. Rusakov. The General said, however, that his instructions were not to go beyond the Elbe; any emissaries would have to come to him.

When the amenities were finished, the Russians offered to take us to an Allied POW camp which had been liberated several days earlier. We accepted, and shortly before dark took off for Oflg IV-B near Mühlberg; the camp was located just north of Kreinitz. A lieutenant colonel—one of Col. Gordeyev's staff officers—served as our guide.

When the jeeps rolled into the entrance of the camp, it was almost dark, but not too dark to conceal the fact that we were Americans. The reaction was like a tidal wave. The first amazed onlookers exclaimed, "My God! Yanks!" As the jeeps made their way along the streets of the camp, the welcome rose—then roared like thunder. Americans, Britains, French, Yugoslavs, Allied officers and enlisted men of all nations cheered us, screaming and crying their joy. We were just a handful of Americans—no great force.

The camp inmates had already been liberated for several days. Yet the jeeps and American uniforms were symbols of something far closer to them. They stormed our jeeps, taking over the job of driving. As many as could squeeze themselves into a few square inches piled aboard the vehicles and rode around the camp. They were eager just to say hello and shake hands and simply touch these men from the States.

One POW ran alongside a jeep tearing frantically at a Sixty-ninth-Division shoulder patch, trying to get it off the soldier. Finally, he ripped it off with his teeth. "Just a souvenir," he grinned, and kissed it before stuffing it into his pocket. During those minutes, the prisoners were just heartsick guys who had tangible evidence of home after months and years of confinement.

"Where you from?"

"They got me in the Bulge!"

"Bloody bastards took me at Dunkirk!"

"Got me in the Siegfried Line last September!"

"Caught me in Normandy!"

"Shot me down over Bremen!"

"I'm from New York!"

"I'm from London!"

"I'm from San Francisco!"

"I'm from Paris!"

"Parlez-vous français? Je suis belgique!"

These were some of the things they said in wild, confused, enthusiastic outpourings of emotion. But the magnitude of what they left unsaid, of their happiness of at last being free men, was greater than any words could describe. They took us inside the camp and plied us with coffee and talk. More than anything, they wanted to talk, they wanted to ask questions:

"Is it true about Roosevelt's death?"

"Yea, the Jerries treated us better towards the end, even gave us a radio. But the black-souled bastards of SS men were hard and mean."

"Ever stand by helplessly, buddy, and watch another American die in the street after a Nazi rat's shot him? We have. It's not a pleasant sight. We've got no love for those guys."

"Sure, we know you fellas are only a patrol. The rest are back at the Mulde? That's a hell of a place to leave 'em! High command stuff? Well, it won't be long now!"

"Will you autograph this? Okay, I know you're not a celebrity, but you're important as hell to us. Thanks!"

"Have some more coffee. It's not much, but it's all we've got right now."

"Gotta leave? That's too bad. Oh, okay. Sure, sure, we understand. Good luck. So long, boys! Good show, mates! It's almost over now!"

That's what they talked about. That's the way they acted. It was nothing, it was everything. As we left the camp, we were humble men. Though we had done nothing, we were the symbols which those men believed in through long days of prison. We felt proud of our uniforms and our cause.

WILLIAM J. FOX, First Army combat historian, served with the Second Information and Historical Service of V Corps. After the war, he was a news correspondent for United Press International and the *Los Angeles Times*. It was an incredible coincidence that Fox died of natural causes on Elbe Day, April 25, 1986.

1. I & R is an abbreviation for Intelligence and Reconnaissance.

Members of the Craig Patrol and Soviet Soviet soldiers visit the liberated POW camp near Muhlberg, April 25, 1945. (*Alexander Ustinov*)