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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to another action-packed Annual from *Against the Odds!* This issue, we explore several What-ifs, but primarily, Operation Roundup, the abortive attempt to invade the European Continent in 1943 instead of the historic invasion in June 1944. Given all the politics and logistics involved, could such an operation have been pulled off? We know what happened historically. Lack of transport for the projected 48 divisions, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill's belief that US troops couldn't stand up to the Wehrmacht without getting some experience elsewhere (conveniently in North Africa), and a question of whether to go after the Japanese with the full weight of US military might doomed the operation. President Franklin Roosevelt was dead set against the latter, because it would do nothing to get Soviet Premier Josef Stalin off his back about a second front. The planning was not in vain and became the genesis for the slightly (39 divisions) smaller Operation Overlord.

World War II is full of What-ifs, many of them found in the various works that came out in the 1980s to the early 2000s, primarily under the editorship of Peter Tsouras. Sealion was a popular topic, the Nazi invasion of England. I was reading a book called *Death Traps*, by Belton Cooper, a chronicle of his experiences in the vehicle recovery and maintenance section of the US Third Armored Division. Beyond the controversy of his belief that the Shermans were awful tanks vis-à-vis the Panther and Tiger, and his unproven assertion that US General George Patton deliberately pushed to delay the M26 Pershing in favor of ramping up Sherman production, he talks about the capture of a German map-making factory in early 1945.

The Ordnance Department of the US Army took it over, and after running out of paper began printing maps for the US forces on the backs of old maps. Cooper was surprised to learn that on the back of some of his maps were the plans for Sealion, showing all the beaches to be invaded. He recounted that, while in England, he accidentally stumbled on an old British map from 1940 that showed how pitiful the British defenses were and quickly burned it. Another What-if on the ash heap of history.

Speaking of controversies, the decision to drop the atomic bomb remains one of the great debates over strategy post-World War II. The standard work on Japan's surrender remains *Downfall* by Richard Frank, but I recently was sent a copy of *Road to Surrender* by Evan Thomas, which looks through the eyes of three men, US Secretary Henry Stimson, Air Force General Carl "Tooey" Spaatz, and Japanese Foreign Minister Shigenori Togo to see the awful choices facing the leaders of the United States and Japan after the defeat of Germany in 1945.

I learned a lot from this book that peeled back some of the things that What-if folks speculated about; whether it was a good idea to drop the atomic bomb and whether it was a horrible loss of life and that Japan would have surrendered anyway. It also laid to rest in my mind the speculation that the bomb was dropped on the Japanese because they weren't white. The bomb, in its construction, was always designed to be dropped on Germany first, because of 1) the Germany-first war aim and 2) the Allies knew that the Nazis were working on one also. Due to delays, the first bomb wasn't ready until after Nazi Germany surrendered.

Also, using it on Japan saved tens of thousands of Allied lives, because the Japanese had no intention of surrendering and every intention of throwing every citizen capable of picking up a stick or rock at the invading Western Allies. That is on top of however many Japanese citizens would have starved due to the blockade of the home islands or died from exposure because of how many structures had been destroyed by firebombing. It was a horrific calculus, and it was no wonder that the strain worked on Stimson and likely killed his boss, President Roosevelt.

So, now it's up to you. No matter which side you play, there is no guarantee of victory. In fact, chance could destroy either opponent. Plan your best, but you are working... Against the Odds.

Andy

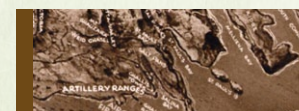
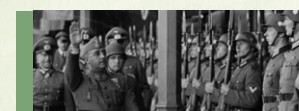


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