

# INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the 2014 *Against the Odds* Annual! Men and women with a few simple weapons versus the might of Nazi Germany is certainly a perfect situation for our magazine, and we have the perfect designer to go with it. John Prados, designer of the third wargame I ever bought (ironically the third was *Third Reich*), brings us a tense cat and mouse game as Allied Resistance defies the iron fist to *Set Europe Ablaze*.

Watching *The Longest Day* with its complement of French Resistance fighters brought my mind back to the desperation of those yearning to throw off the Occupation. Men and women alike filled the Resistance ranks, all over Europe, many dying ignominious deaths when caught, all in the name of freedom. Here, you control the brave civilian warriors against the Gestapo and other security forces, or take the Nazi side and stamp out armed resistance.

Naturally, there are several other articles within these pages beside John's examination of the War of Resistance. There is a large survey of Great Battles of the American Civil War, the Italian struggle in World War II Ethiopia, and a look at what might have happened if the Schlieffen Plan succeeded. All wrapped around our colorful and challenging *Set Europe Ablaze* simulation.

If you are not a subscriber, think about the advantages of joining the ranks of happy *ATO* buyers. Not only do you get a significant discount on each packed issue, but you are able to get our Annuals and Campaign Studies at a lower rate also. Regardless of how you came to us, we thank you for your visit and encourage you to jump from frying pan to fire and *Set Europe Ablaze*!

—Andy

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

**THE RESISTANCE WAR IN THE WEST** ..... 1  
*How Deep the German Penetrations?* ..... 17  
*Is Paris Burning?* ..... 20  
 by John Prados

### SET EUROPE ABLAZE - Rules of Play

**DESIGNING DEPTHS OF COURAGE**  
*The Attack of the H.L. Hunley* ..... 28  
 by Paul Rohrbaugh

**AFRICA ORIENTALE ITALIANA**  
*The Campaign for East Africa* ..... 30  
 by David March

**THE GERMAN ARMY ENCIRCLES PARIS**  
*What if the Schlieffen Plan had Defeated France?* ..... 36  
 by Matthew Peters

**THE CONFEDERACY WINS!**  
*Eight "Great Battles of the American Civil War"* ..... 40  
 by Lee Enderlin

**HEATING UP THE FROZEN DANUBE**  
*Additional Options for These Brave Fellows* ..... 50  
 by Andy Nunez

**ALBACORES, KAIRYŪS and TEISHIN SHUDAN**  
*Variants for Operation Cartwheel/Shōgi and Forlorn Hopes* . . 52  
 by Paul Rohrbaugh

# THE RESISTANCE WAR IN THE WEST BY JOHN PRADOS



For the Allies, 1940 was a time of agony and great anxiety. Indeed, the “first” alliance would be sundered when France got knocked out of the war, leaving Great Britain in danger of a German invasion across the English Channel. So many agonies. On both sides of the Channel. In England, standing alone, there were questions of what could be thrown together for continued defense following the disastrous French campaign and the awful retreat to Dunkirk. One of the questions was how to get at the Nazis on the continent while the homeland lay under threat. For Frenchmen and women,

suddenly under either direct occupation or a rump French successor government, the question became what relations they could have in these radically changed circumstances. These were life and death questions.

This is the story of how, from the pit of these dilemmas, a new force arose, one that acquired political—and, eventually, military power—one that came to trouble the Nazi occupiers; one, in fact, that came into its own in the D-Day Invasion. The great Allied return to the continent was importantly aided by this fresh force,

which was in truth what the Nazis had often bragged about but never really had, a “Fifth Column.” (The allusion was to a term coined in the Spanish Civil War, when in the Battle of Madrid a general had talked of attacking in four columns, or groups, with a fifth column to come from inside enemy lines.) The fifth column would have many names but one basic identity, The Resistance. It would be an artifact of hatred for the Nazis in both France and the Low Countries, a gradually growing sense that action was possible, and of Allied efforts to succor and sustain the Resistance forces.



# SET EUROPE ABLAZE

March 1941. The British 50th Infantry Division has begun to load out for Egypt. It will be the first major reserve, or “Territorial” formation sent abroad since the French campaign. Major Maurice Buckmaster, the division intelligence officer, was reluctant to go. A Francophile with perfect, fluent French but no Italian, Buckmaster felt he could contribute little in North Africa, where he expected that to be the language of interrogations (the Germans had yet to commit their Afrika Korps). He set out to convince Major General William Ramsden, the division commander, that his services would be more valuable in a billet aimed at the Continent. Ramsden took Buckmaster with him to the War Office, and they went around until the General found someone who would listen. That was General Gerald Templar, a sort of intermediary between the British Army and the secret services. Templar had headed security for the BEF, helped create the Escape & Evasion Service (soon known as MI-9), and right now happened to be looking for an officer for a new organization who had an intelligence background and knew French. Templar recruited Buckmaster for “F Section,” the French apparatus of the recently formed Special Operations Executive (SOE).

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