

Killing Patton Study Guide

Killing Patton by Bill O'Reilly

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Summary

Killing Patton is the story of the famous general's role in the last months of World War II. General Patton was the commander of America's Third Army. General Eisenhower, the Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, had assigned Patton to report directly to General Omar Bradley, a decision that roiled the outspoken Patton who considered Bradley inferior to him as a soldier and as a commander.

Everyone from Eisenhower to Hitler admired the courage and aggressiveness that Patton displayed. However, Patton was difficult to deal with and he had no grasp of the importance of being politically correct. He railed against the decisions made by Eisenhower and Bradley. He publicly disparaged Russia, who was an ally, and considered the spread of communism the next threat to the world.

Patton led the U.S. Third Army valiantly in famous battles including the siege on Fort Mifflin, the fight for Meuse and the race to Berlin which was dubbed the Battle of the Bulge by U.S. media. Through it all, Patton was an uplifting presence and inspiration to his men. His patriotism and love of country was only superseded by his love and admiration for his soldiers – his courageous soldiers. Nothing pulled at his heart more than seeing his men killed or wounded. Patton famously rode his open air jeep from one post to another in support of his soldiers. He visited the wounded soldiers who he considered the real heroes of the war with heavy heart.

In the final throes of the war, Patton had become an all-American hero. He was adored by soldiers and public alike. He was on the cover of Time magazine during those final days. However, the public opinion of Patton did a reversal when a reporter recounted several incidents in which Patton encountered soldiers who he deemed less than valorous; in fact, he considered them cowards. He talked with a soldier who was hospitalized because he was suffering from shot nerves and exhaustion. The medical staff was appalled when Patton slapped the soldier and ordered him to get himself back on the battlefield. He had a similar reaction to another soldier who was suffering from battle fatigue. The public demanded that he be removed from his command. Eisenhower severely reprimanded Patton for his behavior but he wasn't about to fire him. He needed Patton who was known as the most aggressive of all his commanders to assure that the U.S. and Allies were victorious.

As the war was winding down, the command of the Third Army was taken from Patton which was a devastating blow to him. While he was planning a future without war and without being part of the military, he was involved in a serious auto accident in which his legs were paralyzed. Patton didn't want to live like a vegetable and it was his need to contribute that undoubtedly led to his death a short time later. There were rumors that the Russians were conspiring with the head of the U.S. government's OSS unit to kill Patton. There was never any proof of such a conspiracy although many military and political leaders did not cry at his funeral.

Chapters 1 - 4

Summary

Twenty-one year-old explosives expert Private First Class Robert W. Holmlund was in Metz, France, on October 3, 1944. An assault on the German fortress, Driant, was just minutes old and he believed he would surely die that day. His senior commander was the stalwart General George S. Patton but he was in relative safety at twenty-five miles behind the front. Company B was halted by a wall of barbed wire. The field commander ordered that it be blown up. Two hours later, Holmlund and the other survivors of Company B had taken the fort. Four months before Patton had addressed the third company about fear, fighting and valor. He gave the men hope and inspiration.

Company E made it past the barriers during the second assault but suffered high casualties in their effort. Patton was aware that the battle for Metz was failing and that E Company was in deep trouble. It was a profound disappointment to Patton who wanted to advance across France all the way to Berlin and win the war singlehandedly. Patton was frustrated that General Dwight Eisenhower, supreme commander of the Allied forces, had taken resources from the Third Army and ordered it to halt any forward movement. Eisenhower had redirected resources to British Commander Bernard Montgomery who considered himself far superior to Patton.

Hitler had been on the verge of victory had he not invaded Russia and opened up a second front therefore spreading German forces too thin. Patton decided that the taking of Metz was within the scope of Eisenhower's orders. However, Metz could not be taken without first taking the fort at Driant. Holmlund made it to the roof of the fort and slipped a deadly explosive down a pipe the led into the fort. The defeat that was so obvious moments before was turning into a victory.

The battle for Driant became a stalemate with Company B battling Germans on the roof and Company E soldiers secreted in their foxholes for days without food or water. Patton was determined to win the battle even if it took every man of the Third Army. Captain Jack Gerrie, not a coward in the least, wrote to Patton described the dire situation and made no promises of victory. He recommended withdrawal to allow the bombers to finish the job.

Patton ignored the captain's letter for a week but finally admitted that the battle could not be won. He called off the assault and plans were laid to get those remaining American soldiers out of the battlefield to safety. He was calm in the dispatch of his orders but was seething within, blaming the defeat on internal politics. Patton's Third Army had killed more Germans than any other force. Hitler had feared and admired him. After the "October pause" as Patton called his retreat, Hitler was planned a major assault.



Hitler was secluded in his bunker which was known as “The Wolf’s Lair” in East Prussia. He had recently suffered superficial injuries from a failed assassination attempt on July 20th. He suffered from other conditions and health issues including high blood pressure and meteorism. Despite recent defeats, he still believed that he would conquer the world and succeed in his greatest ambition – the eradication of the Jews. Believing that he was a military genius, Hitler took credit for the defeat at Driant.

Hitler’s spirits were renewed because the SS had tracked down and executed those who betrayed him and attempted to assassinate him on July 20th. His favorite field marshal, Erwin Rommel, who he considered on a par with Patton was among those who betrayed him. Therefore Operation Watch on the Rhine, Hitler’s brilliant new plan that would take place in the Ardennes Forest, would have to proceed without his top man. Hitler would soon unveil the operation which would be dubbed the Battle of the Bulge by the American press.

SS Officer Otto Skorzeny took the place of Rommel as Hitler’s favorite commando. Hitler brought Skorzeny into the plans for his new campaign to prove to the world that Germany was not dead. Skorzeny would lead “Operation Grief” in which he and his men would disguise themselves as Americans and infiltrate U.S. military ranks and kidnap Eisenhower.

Eisenhower was in his headquarters office in Versailles, France, anticipating all out victory. His superior, General George Marshall, had set December 31st as the last day of the war. Eisenhower felt it was an impossible deadline. Marshall was angered by Eisenhower’s orders for Patton to retreat from Driant.

Patton was in competition with his British nemesis General Montgomery to reach Messina, Italy first. Montgomery thought he’d won the race to Messina only to arrive and find Patton there. Monty was magnanimous in his congratulations to Patton who was hailed as an American hero and graced the cover of Time Magazine.

The Russian people had suffered greatly from the Nazi war machine. German soldiers had advanced deeply into Russia only halted when they reached the outskirts of Moscow. Things turned around when the Russian army fought back and ended the battle of Leningrad. At a celebratory ballet at the Bolshoi Theater, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill emerged onto the front box the thunderous applause of a stunned audience. The prima ballerina looked for her lover, Iosif Vissarionovich, known internationally as Josef Stalin, in the box but he did not appear until late in her performance. After the performance, Churchill insists that Stalin stand with him to bask in the applause.

Stalin was a cruel murderer, responsible for the killing of millions. During World War II, Stalin ordered that his soldiers make mass executions perpetrated by the Russian military make it look like Germans were responsible. He ultimately ordered the execution of 50-60 million people far beyond what the universally reviled Hitler had been responsible for. Churchill had come to Russia to make an alliance with this monster. FDR had secretly assured Stalin that he could continue the occupation of Poland. The



Polish people would be forced to live in fear of being tortured and murdered by the Soviet police. Britain had lost a substantial amount of its empire during WWII. Churchill has come to discuss Great Britain's share of Eastern European nations that were to be sliced up by the victors. Stalin listened but had no intention of honoring the British proposal. Stalin planned to grab as much land as he could.

Analysis

The opening chapters place the reader in the midst of World War II. It was a pivotal point when there were competing plans for victory of each side – the Allies and the Axis powers. Hitler had developed a strategy for victory which he called Watch on the Rhine – known as the Battle of the Bulge in America. The American press had dubbed the event the “Bulge” because of the advances that the Germans had made into the U.S. military advances which drove them back at certain points thus making a “bulge” in their lines.

The readers are introduced to the principals of the book particularly General George Patton. He is the focus of the book and his presence in the war demonstrates that political concerns and biases were alive and well in the U.S. military during World War II and that decisions were not always made on a strictly military basis.

The Americans were pursuing another strategy part of which was led by Patton, commander of the U.S. Third Army. Patton is described as the most aggressive of the American commanders. He was greatly admired by none less than Hitler. However, he rankled the likes of his boss, General Omar Bradley and the Supreme Commander Dwight Eisenhower. He was brash and spoke his mind no matter who he offended.

Patton was enraged when Eisenhower ordered him to retreat from the Battle of Briant. It was a setback and defeat for the Allied forces. Patton was willing to take a stand there until every man, including himself, was dead. Churchill visited Stalin in an effort to engage the Russians on the final push. Germany had already invaded Russia which proved to be a mistake. By opening up two fronts, German military and resources were stretched too thin.

Vocabulary

howitzer, aquiline, consummate, decimated, audacious, furtive, largess, austerity, repudiate



Chapters 5 - 8

Summary

On November 4, 1944, at Boston Fenway's Park FDR delivered what was to be his last political speech. He had only five months to live. He stood, disguising that his legs were crippled, before the cheering crowd and was poised to be elected to his fourth term in just a matter of days. FDR was a hero to the American public – he had led the recovery of the economy and rallied the country to fight the Axis powers after the attack on Pearl Harbor by the Japanese. FDR's health was failing but the cheering audience that would not sit down or quit their applause had no idea.

When finally allowed to speak over the roaring crowd, FDR's voice was not that of a dying man it was strong and inspirational. He lauded the soldiers who were defending the nation and applauded their diversity. He stressed that Americans did not want to live under communism or a monarchy, they want to live under the constitution. However, unknown to anyone there, much of Europe would come under communist control after the war concluded. FDR had been making a number of secret arrangements with Stalin about divvying up Eastern Europe. William Donovan, head of the OSS, was appointed by FDR to solidify the details of the agreements.

Patton's top intelligence officer, Colonel Oscar Koch, thought Hitler was planning something but no one would listen to him. Patton was ready to be on the attack again. Metz had finally fallen and Patton had ordered the Third Army to advance toward Nazi Germany in Operation Tink. He was determined to launch Operation Tink on December 19th. Patton passed Koch's assessment up the chain of command where it was completely ignored.

On December 16th, young German soldiers on the front lines stood ready and eager to launch Operation Grief. Skorzeny ordered German soldiers to disguise themselves as US military to spread misinformation. At one point, Skorzeny wanted to abort the operation but Hitler insisted that it proceed. Skorzeny was worried about the fate of his men.

After Operation Grief was launched German soldiers were on the attack in Germany, Belgium and Luxembourg. The Americans were completely caught off guard. Patton could readily see that Eisenhower considered General Omar Bradley as his top commander. Bradley was much more "controllable" than was Patton. Out of what others characterized as timidity, Bradley halted the advance of the Third Army allowing many German soldiers to escape to fight again. Patton and Koch still believed that there was danger ahead.

Patton had orders to stay out of sight in advance of D-Day so that his movements would not give the assault away. The 99th Infantry was working valiantly to stop the 12th SS Panzer Division from capturing Elsenborn Ridge but was ill-prepared in terms of clothing



and equipment. The area was surrounded by thick woods that concealed the German soldiers. The Germans must hold Elsenborn Ridge in order for Operation Watch on the Rhine to be successful. It was up to the 99th to disrupt their plans. The battle lasted four days during which 133 U.S. soldiers died and many others suffered from injury and “frozen feet.” Soldiers, including some officers, went AWOL when they believed there was no hope.

The 99th was able to delay the progress that Peiper’s forces were able to make toward Meuse, their destination in Operation Watch on the Rhine. They were slowed but broke through on December 17th and were on their way to Meuse.

Eisenhower called a meeting to discuss strategy and tactics. It was Eisenhower’s belief that the Germans could not be allowed to go beyond Meuse. But Eisenhower knew they needed Patton’s aggressiveness to succeed. He assigned Patton to lead the counterattack with at least three divisions. Patton would be ready to begin the attack in two days on December 21st. The others at the meeting thought Patton was making a fool of himself. There was no way he could mobilize the 100,000 men and their weaponry and equipment in just two days.

Brigadier General Anthony McAuliffe was racing to the front lines in advance of Patton’s attack. He faced a steady stream of American units that had been defeated and decimated and were retreating from the front. McAuliffe was ordered to Werbomont where he would head the 101st Airborne Division onto the battlefield.

The breach in allied lines by the enemy was referred to as a salient in military lingo; the American press called it the “Bulge.” These retreating soldiers told McAuliffe that Hitler was far from being defeated – thousands of American soldiers had been killed in just four days. The 101st arrived in Bastogne, Belgium, to find near devastation but it was his orders to defend the hamlet. The Germans consider it an important crossroads. They called it an octopus because seven roads led out of the small village. McAuliffe’s HQ was set up in a hotel across from the train station. Despite the fact that McAuliffe was leading a force of nearly 15,000 they are at risk of being surrounded by an even larger number of German soldiers. They were dependent on General Patton and the Third Army to come to their rescue.

At the same time, the Germans were attacking Elsenborn Ridge that was being defended by the 99th. German artillery found its way into American foxholes which exploded into snow, blood and body parts. The Americans defend themselves, take out Nazis who try to approach on foot and continue to thwart the German attack for five consecutive days. If the 99th didn’t hold on to Elsenborn, it would give Germans a direct route to Bastogne crippling Patton’s chances to rescue the 101st. The town of Noville, five miles from Bastogne, was under siege by the Germans. The Third Army under the command of Major William Desobry held the town long enough for reinforcements from the 101st to arrive. During a meeting in their command post, a German tank pummeled them. Desobry was badly injured; Lt. Col LaPrade was killed. Desobry was taken captive by the Germans and placed in a prison camp. But he held Noville long enough to allow the 101st to form a perimeter around Bastogne.



The 101st was under great assault when rumors were flying that Patton was on his way with the Third Army. A group of German officers waved a white flag and approached the Americans. They offered McAuliffe the opportunity to surrender without further bloodshed. If they did not agree, Bastogne would be leveled. McAuliffe basically told them they were “nuts” to think that the 101st would surrender.

Analysis

This section describes FDR’s final days during which he played a key role in the aftermath of WWII and was elected to his unprecedented fourth term as the U.S. president. His debilitating illness was largely kept from the public who adored him for bringing the country out of the Depression and for defending America. Unknown to the public and press, FDR was making secret agreements with Stalin that would have lasting impact on Germany and Eastern Europe for decades to come.

Operation Grief was led by German SS Officer Otto Korzeny who became Hitler’s top commando after Rommel’s betrayal and ultimate suicide. Patton’s intelligence officer Colonel Oscar Koch believed that Hitler was planning an offensive but the Pentagon paid no heed to his concerns. The US military was completely caught off-guard with the launch of Operation Grief.

Due to Patton’s overbearing personality he was not chosen to lead the Allies into Berlin. That honor went to British Brigadier General Montgomery, a choice that enraged Patton. Patton was relegated to breaching the German border to the south. Eisenhower would not dismiss Patton no matter how bitterly the other commanders complained about him and no matter how many indiscriminate comments he made publicly and to the press. Eisenhower would not vocalize his need for the aggressive Patton but there was no doubt that the need existed.

Hitler’s Operation Watch on the Rhine to save Berlin was dubbed The Battle of the Bulge by the U.S. media. It referred to the breaking in ranks accomplished by the German soldiers in driving segments of the American military lines to retreat – thus causing a “bulge” in their advance.

Vocabulary

atrophied, constraints, jaunty, innocuous, parlance, euphoria, trepidation, brusque, fatuous



Chapters 9 - 12

Summary

It was rough going on the Allied side. Patton was just 33 miles south of Bastogne. The “bulge” in the American defense was 60-miles deep and 30 miles wide. Bastogne was under U.S. control but it was barely surviving in a sea of German soldiers. The snow and frigid cold was delaying the Third Army’s final advance to Bastogne. Patton visited a church ostensibly to pray for guidance; however, he instead delivers a tirade to God complaining about the weather and apparently siding with the enemy. Patton traveled up and down on the road to Bastogne, inspiring his men and being an ever-present force for them in his open-air jeep. He even stopped his jeep to help push another vehicle out of a snow bank. The men believed that Patton would not ask them to put themselves at risk unless he did as well. Patton ended his “prayer” with a plea for clear weather.

On Christmas Eve, Hitler was in Adlerhorst, his bunker in Ziegenberg, Germany. Above him were a thousand Allied bombers ready to obliterate the Fatherland. He refused to admit that Germany was losing the war. His physical condition was deteriorating making him appear like a much older man. The tremors in his hands have worsened. His bunker was protected by three-foot thick concrete walls and anti-aircraft guns.

Up to that point Hitler had been heartened by the success of Operation Watch on the Rhine. The Americans had been pushed back by Skorzeny and Operation Grief; U.S. soldiers were frightened by rumors that Germans were wearing U.S. army uniforms. Eisenhower was guarded 24 hours a day. Things turned when the Second Panzer Division could not take Meuse because they ran out of gas. Bastogne had still not fallen. Peiper and the First Panzer Division were trapped in a small village called La Gleize and under attack. Bridges were blown up preventing the division from advancing. Against direct orders from Hitler, Peiper led his men away from the stalled tanks to escape on foot. A small brigade was left behind to burn up the Panzer tanks. Even though Hitler received reports on the First Panzer Division’s desertion, he believed Germany would ultimately be victorious.

Stalin was plotting to take over the world. Although he did not celebrate Christmas in godless Russia, he was devoted to his young daughter Svetlana whose mother had committed suicide many years before. Svetlana was enthralled with a Christmas tree she saw at the British embassy. Stalin created a new holiday for Russia in which decorated trees would be part. He called the holiday Children’s New Year but stressed that it was not a celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. Alexei Kapler was sent to Siberia for ten years after Svetlana fell in love with him. Stalin was determined to be the only man in his daughter’s life. Stalin planned to invade Berlin before the Americans or the British so he could bask in the glory.



Patton privately criticized Eisenhower's decisions to move several divisions 100 miles back from the front lines as reserve units. Patton believed they should use all their fire power to go on the offensive. Progress was slow and Patton was losing a lot of men but Germans were dying in great number. Captured territory was being quickly reclaimed by German parachute units. Germany was not ceding much territory; they were holding their lines. Wounded Americans were taken to a make-shift hospital in Bastogne. A German war plane dropped a bomb near the hospital causing it to collapse on the wounded.

Patton loved war but the Battle of the Bulge was doing him in. He hated witnessing the suffering of the wounded. He could hardly sleep worried about defeat. He arranged for every soldier to have a turkey dinner on Christmas Day. After the holiday, Patton got word that some of his tank units were nearing Bastogne but were taking heavy casualties. Montgomery complained to Eisenhower that Patton's forces were too small to take Bastogne and recommended that he be ordered to retreat to Metz. Patton was angered by Monty's comments and was not ordered to retreat. Eisenhower needed him right where he was.

Lt. Col. Creighton Abrams was a tank commander who sat on a hill just a few miles outside Bastogne. He had orders from Patton to take the town of Sibret. He was aware of the dire situation U.S. soldiers were in Bastogne and asked permission to attack small villages that would open up access to Bastogne. Patton approved the change of plans. Abrams' tank division leveled Assenois. A vicious fire fight with German soldiers secreted in the hillside and forest followed and continued into the night but finally Bastogne was taken by the Americans. By January 25, 1945, the Germans retreated back to their starting position when Operation Watch on the Rhine was first launched.

Analysis

The authors depict the struggle facing the Allied forces, particularly General Patton's Third Army, in the continuing conflict referred to as the Battle of the Bulge. While the Allied forces were advancing in spits and starts, Hitler was becoming more delusional in his bunker in Ziegenberg, Germany. His physical condition, along with his mental capacity to accept reality, was deteriorating. He had been falsely heartened by some successes achieved through Operation Watch on the Rhine but those triumphs were only temporary and in no way game changing. Still Hitler expected a miracle. He could not accept that his many years of plans and efforts were literally going up in smoke and that his dreams of world domination were shattering.

While one despot was in the downward spiral of his final days, another was emulating the Fuhrer with plans to take over the world. Despite Stalin's participation in the Allied effort, he was a duplicitous and treacherous partner. It was his goal to see Communism become the dominant social and economic movement across the globe. Godless Russia could not participate in the celebration of Christmas but Stalin was savvy enough to understand the allure of such a holiday. He created Children's New Year's Day that featured a decorated tree that was suspiciously similar to another holiday tree.



Patton continued his criticism of the decisions made by his superiors. He was having a particularly tough time with the Battle of the Bulge during which his Third Army took on heavy casualties. The competition and rivalry between Patton and Britain's Montgomery raged on. Patton pushed his limits by overriding orders that ultimately led to a victory at Bastogne.

Vocabulary

ensconced, maniacally, innuendo, subterfuge, stoicism, opulence, proclivity, tyrannical, gulag, asphyxiating

Chapters 13 - 16

Summary

On January 20, 1945, in Washington, D.C., FDR was sworn in for a fourth term. In the crowd were hundreds of WWII veterans, many of them on crutches. Hopes that the war would end by the New Year had been dashed. FDR would live to serve only 83 days of the new term. Harry S. Truman, who had served in WWII, was sworn in as vice president. FDR had chosen Truman to replace his current vice president, Henry Wallace, who FDR thought was too liberal. When Truman accepted the offer, he knew he would be president. Only a small circle of people including Truman knew how ill FDR was. As FDR made his inaugural speech, he was surrounded by his beloved family. But FDR's biggest love was reserved for the American people. Together they had seen the country through its greatest challenges.

Patton was paying no attention to the celebration in Washington. After fulfilling his duties, Eisenhower benched him again. Eisenhower decided to let Monty make the final push to Berlin. The British army had largely been spared the brutality and losses in the Battle of the Bulge. They were rested and fresh and ready to finish the job. Patton was proud of his Third Army; that honor should be theirs. After the ceremony, FDR returned to his office to prepare for a trip to Yalta, Russia, where he would meet with Churchill and Stalin to discuss the future of Nazi Germany.

As Hitler lectured the German people about the evils of Judaism, he showed signs of further physical deterioration. Yet he carried on a charade that his health was good and that Germany was winning the war. But Berlin was under siege; American and British war planes were attacking in broad daylight. The Luftwaffe had been destroyed. Hitler ignored his commanders' reports that the war was lost. He planned to use the atom bomb on his enemies once German scientists developed it. Although he feared being killed in an Allied attack, he believed he would be saved.

The Soviet soldiers were focused on capturing Berlin. They had no time to waste on tending to the wounded and the suffering. Prisoners who had been liberated walked hundreds of miles to return home. They found food and shelter when and where they could. The Soviets took advantage of the departure of Jews for their homelands by taking their farms and lands.

Finally, Eisenhower unleashed Patton, allowing the Third Army to advance toward the strategically located Rhine River which was the last barrier between Allied forces and Germany. Patton and his driver cruised through Luxembourg which was dotted with destroyed Sherman tanks. He made a mental note to learn what enemy artillery had defeated them. Patton felt that another war was looming - this time with Russia which was trying to spread Communism throughout the world.



Monty was angering Patton and the U.S. military by taking credit for the victory at the Battle of the Bulge. What he omitted from his claims was the fact that the British military had only relative scant presence at the battle. His statements damaged Anglo-American relations.

Eisenhower had caved to pressure from Churchill to allow Monty to take the lead into Germany. Patton was furious. Monty was slow in launching Operation Plunder as the planned invasion of Germany was referred to. Patton saw the weakness and asked for permission to attack Germany in the south at Palatinate. It was a tactical plan that supported the overall strategy but it was also personal. Patton had been slighted and ignored too often. American armored divisions had already crossed the Rhine at Remagen.

The Third Army had captured the city of Trier a few weeks before Patton's drive thru. Patton believed that he had been on the road to Trier 2,000 years before as a great general in one of his many past lives. He was a soldier during the reigns of Alexander the Great and Napoleon. He was certain he had fought for Caesar. He was Hannibal. He had no problem reconciling his belief in reincarnation with his Protestant faith; he was convinced that he had a strong connection with the supernatural.

Patton - who at sixty was the oldest American commander - knew that this battle was probably his last. It was difficult for him to live in a world without war. He could not stay away from the action. While the world eagerly awaited the end of the war, Patton dreaded it. If he was not allowed to go on the attack in this his last hurrah, he would as soon be relieved of his duties. Eisenhower needed Patton and took his threat seriously but he had to balance that need with the reaction of other commanders. He ordered that Patton and the Third Army go on "aggressive defense" which was code words for Patton to go on the attack.

Eisenhower favored a pincer strategy, attacking Germany from the south, west and north squeezing it into submission. Monty supported a pencil thrust strategy that struck the industrial Ruhr region of northern Germany. Eisenhower caved to Monty's strategy although he believed his proposed operation was the better of the two. Eisenhower needed Patton to back up the looming failure of Monty's approach. Patton's Third Army was rolling through the German countryside with victory after victory. While Monty was assembling his forces Patton was on the attack. The German military feared him and were always concerned about where he was. While Montgomery assembled his forces, Patton had eight divisions lined up on the Rhine's western shore. All he needed was the orders to cross the river into Germany.

The Third Army wound up crossing the Rhine under cover of darkness on fragile pontoons. General Bradley was shocked but pleased to learn that the Third Army was in Germany. The Third Army's took out the small number of Luftwaffe planes that tried to turn the Americans back. The U.S. military under Patton was on the march in Germany and there was no reason to maintain radio silence. Patton led the Third Army into Germany before Monty started his operation. A temporary bridge was constructed



to allow Patton and his driver to cross the bridge in his open-air jeep. Patton channeled William the Conqueror when he stepped on German soil.

Patton's next goal was to find a way to make it to Berlin before the Russians.

Analysis

While the war was in its final throes, the man who had seen the nation through the Great Depression and defended it against the Axis powers was seeking his fourth term as U.S. president. The country adored its leader and would not let go of him. Roosevelt's health was deteriorating which he was effectively able to disguise from the public. After he gave a rousing campaign speech espousing the virtues of democracy and freedom, he prepared to leave for Yalta, Russia, to meet with the murderous Josef Stalin and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill to discuss the disposition of a defeated Germany because the defeat of the Nazis was imminent.

The authors describe the above scene to juxtapose the words of the American leader against the secretive arrangements he was making with an oppressive and brutal despot who was responsible for the murder of more innocents than Hitler.

While Roosevelt inspires Americans with talk of democracy and freedom, Hitler lectured the Germans about the evils of Judaism. Like Roosevelt, Hitler was in failing health and as the victory of the Allied Forces seemed increasingly probable, he had become delusional and still believed that Germany would emerge as the victors.

The competition and rivalry between Patton and British General Montgomery continued and grew even more contentious when Monty was angered that the U.S. military was taking credit for the victory in the Battle of the Bulge. Patton felt he had the edge in military prowess because he believed he had been incarnated from a series of military giants including Hannibal who he thought he actually was. In the race to capture Berlin, Patton beat Monty across the Rhine much to the Brit's chagrin.

Vocabulary

austerity, clandestine, laurels, disembarked, amphibious, acerbic



Chapters 17 - 20

Summary

Hitler met with his commanders on April 1, 1945, in his bunker in Berlin. Hitler attempted to lay out a strategy for victory in what everyone else in the room knew to be delusional. A bomb explodes nearby. Everyone was careful not to appear frightened. The bunker was an unpleasant place with its layers of security and machine-gun toting guards. The atmosphere was described as debilitating. The bunker was not soundproof; the sounds of round-the-clock Allied bombardments permeated through the thick concrete walls. Casualties and damage to property were massive. The city's current population was mainly female since most men were made to fight in the war.

The battle in Stalingrad proved to be a turning point in the conflict between the Russians and Germans. The battle lasted more than five months and saw a loss of more than a million Russian soldiers and civilians and 850,000 dead or wounded Germans. After the Germans ran out of supplies and food, Hitler refused to let them retreat. Subsequently, 91,000 German soldiers were arrested when the battle ended on February 2, 1943. The atrocities committed by the Germans in the Battle of Stalingrad compelled the Russian military to advance toward Germany to seek revenge.

Peiper's SS Panzer tank division was defeated; Peiper fled and was captured by the Americans. Skorzeny saw the writing on the wall and escaped to the Alps eventually surrendering to the Allies. Hitler ordered that all food, services and supplies that the enemy could use be destroyed. Hitler spent his time reading about great men – he believed he was one of them. He wept at the story of a defeated king. Hitler and his men were jubilant at the news of FDR's death. They thought it was a sign the victory was still at hand.

FDR spent his last days in Warm Springs, Georgia. The thought was that the warm climate would be a boon to his failing health. But he was exhausted after twelve hard years in office. Lucy Mercer Rutherford, his long-time mistress, stayed with him at his vacation home. They had been involved in a romantic relationship for thirty years. While an artist was painting his portrait as he sat at his desk, he collapsed from a cerebral hemorrhage and died on April 12, 1945. Eleanor broke the news to Harry Truman who had to take pause and absorb the enormity of the challenges ahead of him.

Patton got the news about FDR from a radio broadcast. Patton escorted Eisenhower, Bradley and others to tour the Merkers mine that had been discovered by the Third Army. They were lowered in a make-shift elevator to the bottom of a large cave. Stored there were the treasures of Germany – bags of gold, currency, priceless pieces of art including paintings and sculptures along with other items of value. It was the final blow to Germany. Without these riches they could not continue to wage a major war. The three generals also toured the Ohrdruf prison camp which in many ways was more



atrocious than Auschwitz. Patton wrote in his diary that Truman probably wouldn't make a very good president.

Shortly before his death, FDR had supported Donovan's plan to establish the Central Intelligence Unit. Donovan was devastated by the news the FDR had died. If Truman didn't support the formation of the CIA, the idea would die with FDR. Churchill was devastated by the news of FDR's passing; they had been exceptionally close. Under the leadership of FDR, America had been a good friend and ally to Great Britain. Churchill memorialized the U.S. President in a moving address to Parliament.

Eisenhower ordered that all Allied forces halt outside of Berlin. He determined that there was no strategic value in the taking of Berlin. General Montgomery would not take Berlin and the British people would be denied the glory of conquest. Churchill was disappointed that the Russians would now take Berlin. The orders had come from Eisenhower but Churchill knew that FDR had to approve them. Like Patton, Churchill viewed the Russians as the next big threat to the world. Despite the betrayal by FDR, Churchill told the Parliament that FDR was the greatest American friend they had known and the greatest champion of freedom on earth.

Patton knew that if he did not receive a new assignment in the Pacific, his career would be virtually over. Patton's Third Army would be heading into Berlin. He thought it was outrageous that Eisenhower was allowing the Russians to take Berlin. The decision by Eisenhower made it possible for the Soviet Union to take Eastern Europe and rule it for the next 50 years. The Germans feared the Russians causing many German soldiers to surrender. However, some POWs were refused by the allies because it was so costly to house and feed them.

Patton had been given extra divisions and orders to go on the offensive and lead the Allies to attack southern Germany. Patton learned that 300 U.S. soldiers, many of whom were officers, had been captured and were being incarcerated in the town of Hammelburg. Among those captured was Patton's son-in-law, Colonel John Waters. Patton devised a plan to rescue the soldiers. There was a lack of preparation prior to the rescue attempt which was being led by Captain Abraham Baum but Patton ordered them to proceed anyway.

John Waters was badly wounded in the rescue attempt. The bullet was removed in the surgical ward at the camp but he was in no shape to be moved. There were 1,000 POWs instead of 300 and there weren't enough vehicles to transport them away. Some had to walk while others piled on top of vehicles. The next day Germans rounded up what prisoners they could find and arrested others. Waters was taken to Frankfurt where he recuperated from his wounds. Patton was reprimanded by Eisenhower for the lack of planning behind the rescue.

Patton had a brief affair with Jean Gordon an 18-year-old woman he met in 1935. The tryst was a short one but it nearly broke his wife's heart. In 1944 she became a Red Cross volunteer in France. She and Patton became reacquainted and resumed the affair. When he learned that Jean was also seeing a younger officer, Patton had the



man transferred. Patton learned in an article in the military newspaper Stars & Stripes that Truman had recommended him for five-star general.

When traveling in a small, unmarked plane over the German countryside, a British fighter attacked but repeatedly missed the target. Either the pilot thought the plane was German or someone was trying to kill Patton.

Analysis

Hitler met with his commandos in April of 1945 in his bunker in Berlin. Everyone in the room knew that his certainty of an eventual German victory was delusional. As they sat at the meeting table, the vibrations and clatter of Allied bombs being dropped in Berlin was politely ignored by everyone so as not to rile the Fuhrer. Outside the casualties of war and the near flattening of Berlin left a population of mainly women who hoped to hold on to their lives.

The Battle of Stalingrad had been the tipping point although many defeats had led up to that conflict. His field commanders saw the riding on the wall, abandoned their posts and fled to safety in the Alps or turned themselves into the Americans rather than being at the mercy of the invading barbarian Russians. Patton's soldiers had discovered a large cache of money, art and treasures in Berlin that had been crucial for the Germans to continue their battle. Since that was confiscated by the Allied Forces, the Germans were left without resources to support the war effort.

The authors describe the very last days of the war. Hitler's delusion, Eisenhower's entry into Berlin and Patton's continued push toward victory. Prior to FDR's death, he had approved the establishment of a spy agency that would become known as the CIA. It was created because there was a fear that Russia would be the next great foe of democracy and it was crucial for America to learn what they were up to even if it took clandestine methods.

Much of this section covers the end of Patton's military career and ultimately the end of his life. Unlike most people, Patton struggled with the concept of life without war and found it depressing.

Vocabulary

impunity, placidly, surreal, emaciated, simpatico, volatile, incapacitated, incarcerated, provocatively



Chapters 21 - 23

Summary

In his final days, Hitler had a grudging recognition of reality. Eva Braun, his mistress, was playful apparently not realizing that the end was near. Most of Hitler's commanders were on the run. Only a small circle of loyalists remained with the Fuhrer. Although the Soviets were closing in, Hitler had time to escape but he rejected the notion. A miracle was still possible. He was frail and pasty white and had to be helped to bed by Eva. After Eva put Hitler to bed, she called girlfriends over to the bunker. She wanted to forget the impending doom; she wanted to party and dance and laugh. The women played music on a gramophone and did their best to ignore the bombs that shook the room. Stalin was already making plans to divvy up parts of Europe. He ordered maximum suffering for the Germans.

The Russians surrounded Berlin and outnumber the Germans three to one. Thousands of Germans fled from the city each day. Those who remained, slept in basements and bomb shelters. Gangs of SS units and Nazis banged on doors to ferret out the disloyal. There was only fear and desperation on the streets of Berlin. Shopkeepers gave their ware away. Looting was abounding. Many of the Russians invading the city were barbarians and there were unimaginable horrors in store for the Germans. As the Russians took one street after the other, the efforts by Wenck and the 12th Army had no impact on the invasion. Russians raped women; many Germans committed suicide; mothers hung their children rather than have them face the Russians.

On April 30th, Hitler bid good-bye to his small staff. He gave them permission to leave the bunker. Hitler had married Eva Braun the day before. She would be staying with him. Hitler talked about his options; there were two. He could become a Russian prisoner or he could commit suicide. Eva Braun took her cyanide pill first and was dead within minutes. Hitler took his cyanide pill and then shot himself in the temple with a handgun. He had left strict instructions about what to do with their bodies. Ten minutes later the bodies were wrapped in blankets and taken underground where they are doused with gasoline and incinerated.

Patton was assigned to be the military governor of Bavaria, a desk job that was boring him to tears despite his posh headquarters and beautiful surroundings. He was still making the argument that he should be assigned to action in the Pacific. He was still fuming over Eisenhower's orders that the Third Army not enter Czechoslovakia to again allow the Russians to take Prague. More and more people and territory was coming under Russian rule as a result of what Patton considered Eisenhower's timidity. No one in the administration took Patton's concerns about the Russians seriously.

Patton was troubled by several near death experiences. First the RAF bomber had tried to shoot his plane down. A short while after that, an oxcart smashed into his jeep that could have killed him. Army Intelligence told Patton that Russian security was



monitoring his movements. He began carrying a loaded revolver with him. A Russian officer visited him demanding that a ferry boat on the Rhine be turned over to the Russians. Patton grabbed his handgun from his drawer and told his aide to get the Russian out of his sight. He added that he would not see any more Russians.

On June 13th, he received word that his military career was over. He had fought his last battle.

President Truman was in Potsdam, Germany, in July 1945 to discuss post-war Germany with Churchill and Stalin. Stalin played the host as if the others were visiting his territory. Churchill was upset because Communism was spreading into Western Europe. Truman wanted to assert American power and leadership by telling him that the U.S. had developed the atomic bomb and would use it on Japan if they did not surrender. Stalin was undaunted. He wanted to rule the world and no American president or American General would stop him. Truman did not agree with FDR's assessment that Stalin was a friend to America. After the Potsdam Conference, Truman began taking a hard line against Communist aggression and thus started the Cold War between the U.S. and Russia which Patton and Churchill had predicted.

The U.S., Russia, France and Great Britain ruled one of the four sections that Berlin was divided into. Russia controlled surrounding areas in Germany. Patton was present at Potsdam as a conference visitor. He had grown bored and despondent over a future as a retired soldier. Patton was not a favorite of Truman. The new president found him too outspoken and boastful. Patton openly disagreed with U.S. policy that no former Nazi party member could participate in the rebuilding of Germany. He publicly stated that he preferred the German people to the Russians which didn't sit well with Stalin. The Russians complained to Omar Bradley who took their side and demanded that Patton's third army be held responsible for any German forces in the region it had occupied. Patton's phones were tapped and a Navy psychoanalyst was asked to observe Patton at a press conference to determine if he was suffering from a nervous breakdown. Eisenhower chimed in with a comment that Patton was unstable.

Bill Donovan also disliked Patton. He was working with the Russians in a cooperative effort to spy on Patton. Donovan was chiefly concerned with maintaining the CIA hoping to prove its value to the new president. He was aware that Russia had been planting spies in the OSS since 1942. Word leaked back to Donovan that there was a Russian plot to have Patton assassinated because he had defied Russian authority when he moved forward into Czechoslovakia which was by then Russian territory. Rather than investigate the intelligence, Donovan sent the source back to Russia ostensibly to silence him so that Patton had no warning about Russia's plans to take him out. There were other reports of Stalin's desire to have Patton killed.

Patton was aware of a secret policy that abandoned all U.S. POWs who were being held by Russia who were using them as leverage to have Soviets who fled Russia returned to them. Patton was outraged that Truman was allowing more than 20,000 American POWs to linger in Russia. Patton believed that the only way he could truly



speaking out in support of these soldiers was to leave the military. He knew he was a target. He told his daughters goodbye adding that he'd probably never see them again.

Analysis

This section describes the final days of Hitler. He married his long-time mistress Eva Braun the day before they both committed suicide. He had finally recognized that victory would not be his and he could not face the wrath of the world if captured. He took a cyanide pill and shot himself in the temple with a revolver. His staff had instructions to incinerate his body after he was dead. He wanted no remnants of himself left behind that the Allies could take possession of.

Berlin had fallen with the advancing Russian army that outnumbered the Germans three to one. Everyone saw the writing on the wall – many had fled Berlin to the safety of the Alps or rural Germany. Ironically, the SS was still spreading fear; they were knocking down doors trying to locate those who had been disloyal to the Fuhrer who was by then a pile of ashes.

Patton was enraged by Eisenhower's orders not to enter Czechoslovakia because it was now Russian territory. He criticized the move because he envisioned Russia becoming a serious problem in the not too distant future. He felt they were grabbing too much territory and that they would become too powerful.

In an effort to push the ambitious Stalin back on his heels a bit, Truman got him aside at the Potsdam Conference to tell him that the U.S. had developed the atom bomb and were prepared to drop it on Japan if they didn't surrender. But Truman was also sending a message to Stalin not to get too carried away with his newly acquired power.

Vocabulary

idyllic, potentates, stymied, supplicant, despondent



Chapters 24 - 28

Summary

Eisenhower summoned Patton to his office in Frankfurt. Eisenhower presented Patton with the evidence that supported his dismissal. He had been running off of the mouth to the press again saying that being a member of the Nazi party was the same as being a Republican or Democrat. The two had words and things got loud; their voices echoed throughout the other offices.

The press looking for a story had learned that there was a plot to trip Patton up with loaded questions and make him make ill-advised comments. Now Eisenhower was furious and Patton had to explain himself for using former Nazis to help rebuild Bavaria which was against Eisenhower's orders. Patton was depressed and missed the war. He fantasized about arming the Germans and attacking the Russians. Eisenhower had promised Russian general Georgy Zhukov Patton would turn over all POWs to the Russians.

Patton stood alone as the sole critic of the Russians – they were enemies of the U.S. not friends. Patton was upset when his favorite chauffeur, Mims, was being sent home. Patton was upset about the transfer. Patton did not have a “big job” waiting at home for him like many of his fellow commanders.

Eisenhower was most upset by Patton's mouth that was always running off. He told Patton that he was taking the 3rd Army away from him. To help Patton save face, Eisenhower offered him command of the U.S. 15th Army which was mainly tasked with writing a history of the war. Needless to say this assignment did not excite Patton. He was devastated by this turn of events. Patton planned to resign so that he could say whatever was on his mind. The enemy was watching him carefully. Patton had to be silenced.

Stalin's health was failing but he was able to keep his physical deterioration from world leaders, his enemies and the public. But his absence from Moscow was drawing suspicion. There were rumors that he was going to step down and be replaced by Zhukov or another commissar. Stalin dealt merciless with underlings who he felt betrayed him. Some died at the knife of an assassin or from poisoning. Stalin ordered the death of 40,000 people including political rivals, military leaders and intellectuals who disagreed with him. Stalin took note of the harsh words that the American general George Patton had for him.

On November 24, 1945, twenty former Nazi officials were brought to trial in Nuremberg for war crimes. The indictment was read before the court and was so lengthy that it took two full days to read. Hermann Goering was among the accused. He was eager to defend himself. The prosecutor was Wild Bill Donovan. He had personal vengeance on his mind – the Nazis had killed many of his spies. Donovan was under fire at the time



because of a rumor that he was having an affair with his own daughter-in-law something that was disturbing to the proper Harry Truman. Donovan denied the veracity of the rumor. He had also been charged with the mismanagement of the OSS. Worst of all, Truman closed the doors on the OSS. Donovan was sure that Truman would eventually be convinced that America needed a far-reaching spy operation. Patton was still a thorn in Donovan's side. He met with former U.S. Marine Douglas Bazata who he recruited to kill Patton.

In December 1945, Patton was still in Germany, staying in a posh estate in Bad Nauheim. He had given up his signature cigars and was trimmer and fitter than he had been in years. Patton was preparing to leave for home on a 30-day leave during which he'd spend the Christmas holidays with his family. Sergeant William Meeks, Patton's longtime orderly, arranged a hunting party for Patton and a few associates. Meeks thought it would take Patton's mind off his losing the 3rd Army and generally rally him from the boredom he was experiencing.

PFC Horace Woodring was Patton's new driver. He prepared to drive Patton and a colleague, General Gay, to the wooded area to begin the hunt. Woodring did not expect the early call and had been out partying the night before. Patton insisted that the hunting dog ride in his car. The journey to the wood area was in its third hour when the speeding car approached two 2.5 ton U.S. Army trucks that had been off on the side of the road but were slowly pulling back on. The driver of one of the trucks, Tech Sgt. Robert L. Thompson was drunk. There was speculation later that Thompson had stolen the truck and had plans to sell it on the black market.

Thompson drove his truck right in the path of Patton's approaching car. There was no way for Woodring to avoid the collision. Thompson did not try to stop his truck; in fact, he stepped on the accelerator. Patton sustained a serious head injury, broken nose and neck injury. He had no feeling in his legs and knew he had been paralyzed by the impact. Blood was oozing from his head and he was having trouble breathing. He was taken to a hospital in Mannheim. Patton was not able to survive his injuries.

Patton's body was taken to a morgue in the hospital basement. Beatrice Patton wanted no autopsy performed on her husband. She wanted him buried at West Point but it was Pentagon policy not to ship dead military personnel home for burial; it was too costly. Patton would be buried in the American military cemetery in Hamm Luxembourg. Hundreds paid their respects; Truman and Eisenhower were not among them.

Analysis

Patton had a sad ending to what was at least ostensibly a brilliant military career. He had the "blood and guts," the valor, the courage and an impressive number of important battles under his belt. But it was his mouth and his attitude that was his undoing. Finally when Eisenhower no longer needed the aggressive and outspoken Patton, he was called to his office. Eisenhower presented Patton with all the reasons and evidence for the dismissal from the military.



Eisenhower had finally been pushed too far by his abrasive general. Patton was involved in the rebuilding of Germany. There were strict orders not to allow any former Nazi party members to participate in the rebuilding. Patton felt that the Nazis should be used because they were Germans and knew what the German people needed and wanted. He compared the Nazi party with the Republican and Democratic parties in the U.S. and said there was no difference.

Eisenhower was outraged that one of his commanders would say something so inflammatory. Eisenhower removed him from his command of the Third Army and offered him the command of the 15th. It was a slap in the face of the battle-ready commander. The 15th was tasked with writing the history of the war – something that was not in Patton's wheelhouse.

Patton was looking forward to leaving the army and becoming a civilian – then he could say whatever he wanted to say without someone telling him to watch his words. He had plenty to say about the threat that Russia posed to the rest of the world. However, fate stepped in and changed everything. Patton was paralyzed in a serious auto accident and died from his injuries a short while later. The general was a field commander; he wasn't about to spend the rest of his life in a wheelchair.

Vocabulary

prehensile, commissar, atrocities, litany, autoban



Important People

General George S. Patton

General George S. Patton was a celebrated commander in World War II. He led the Third Army through many battles and victories. He was known as the most aggressive and capable of the Allied commanders. Even Hitler admired him and compared him to his top commando, Erwin Rommel, the Desert Fox. Patton also known as Old Blood and Guts was a patriot and a military man who never considered a life that did not include the military. In fact, when it was obvious that his military career was coming to an end, he was depressed to the point of despondency. He had no idea how he could survive without being in the army, how he could bear life with being engaged in warfare.

Patton's downfall was his brashness and his tendency to speak his mind even when it was impolitic. He would openly criticize decisions made by his commander, General Omar Bradley, who in Patton's mind fell far short of his own leadership skills and warfare abilities. General Dwight D. Eisenhower was the Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Europe during World War II. Eisenhower was fully aware of Patton's shortcomings but he needed Patton who was the most aggressive and fearless of his commanders. Since he could not envision an Allied victory without Patton, he turned his head and ignored behavior that would get others relieved of duty.

Patton's offensive personality and inability to temper his remarks was detrimental to his career that he loved. He was a great commander who loved his courageous soldiers more than life itself. But because of his brash manner and unyielding nature, he was not given the mission he most wanted. The attack on Berlin was assigned to British Brigadier General Montgomery which hurt and angered Patton whose Third Army had done the dirty work and "killed the most Germans."

While Patton was transitioning to civilian life, he was in a serious automobile accident which paralyzed his legs. Patton was an active man who could not survive as a cripple and died a short time later. There was speculation that the Russians and the U.S. OSS director were planning on executing him although there was no solid proof that such a conspiracy existed.

Dwight Eisenhower

Dwight Eisenhower was the Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Europe during World War II. Eisenhower and General Patton had many points of contention between them. The decision to have Patton report to General Omar Bradley, who Eisenhower and considered to be one of his top generals, roiled Patton. Patton was angered by Eisenhower's decision to place him under Bradley's command. He believed that Bradley who was younger and less experienced and inferior in military skills and expertise and was lacking in the courage and valor that Patton believed he had in spades.



Patton was angered by Eisenhower's decision to take crucial resources from Patton's 3rd Army which he ordered to halt. Patton sarcastically called that lull in combat – which he detested – as the “October pause”. Eisenhower further frustrated Patton when he redirected resources to the British Army which was being led by Brigadier General Bernard Montgomery, a Brit to whom Patton considered himself to be far superior.

Like many commanders during the WWII campaign, Eisenhower was put off by Patton's brash manner and his apparent inability to stem his tirades against the Brits, Russians and even other U.S. commanders and military decisions. Eisenhower had a love/hate relationship with Patton. He detested some elements of Patton on a personal level but he was not about to fire or suspend him. Patton was his most aggressive commander; Eisenhower needed Patton to help him win the war.

Robert W. Holmlund

It would be a lowly private – PFC Robert Holmlund, an explosives specialist, who would turn the tide in the battle of Fort Driant. Holmlund and the other survivors of Company B who made it to the roof of the fort were under heavy fire. Holmlund kicked open a protective grill covering a pipe leading down into the fort. He slid a narrow tube of nine pounds of dynamite down into the pipe. After lighting the fuse the bomb plunged down the pipe resulting in a huge explosion. Holmlund was heroic in fighting the Germans on the roof of the fort but was ultimately taken out by sniper fire.

Adolph Hitler

Adolph Hitler was the Fuhrer of the Third Reich of Germany in the lead-up to and during the Second World War. In this story, Hitler is seen in his final days. He was weak, pale and suffering from a number of physical maladies that were rendering his health in a downward spiral. Beyond the physical problems that beset him, he was delusional. Despite the signs of defeat that the other German commanders begrudgingly recognized, Hitler remained positive that the Germans would in the end be victorious, that he would conquer the world and that his most important goal – the complete eradication of the Jews – would be realized.

Hitler lived his last months without sunlight. He hid in bunkers in East Prussia, rural Germany and Berlin. While in Berlin when the end was near, he ignored the Allied bombs that shook the bunker until the very last days when even he could no longer deny reality. He married Eva Braun, his long-time mistress, the day before he took a cyanide pill and shot himself in the temple. He left instructions for his staff to burn his corpse and that of Eva Braun's who committed suicide just before Hitler did.

Erwin Rommel

Patton greatly admired the talents and abilities of German Field Marshal Rommel who was known as the Desert Fox. They had been adversaries in North Africa a few years



before. Rommel was recovering from serious wounds just a few hundred miles away from Patton's HQ. Rommel had been Hitler's top commando. He received word that he would be visited by two SS officers. Rommel was worried. He had known about the July 20th assassination plot against Hitler but said nothing which was tantamount to complicity. Believing that Hitler was not equipped to lead German to victory, Rommel was considering negotiating with the Allies.

Rommel was being accused by high treason. His house was surrounded and should he attempted to escape there were orders to kill his family. The Nazi officers brought poison with them. He was given the choice of killing himself with the poison or seeing his family assassinated. Rommel drove off with his captors and took the cyanide pill that quickly ended his life.

Otto Skorzeny

After Rommel betrayed the Fuhrer, Hitler made Otto Skorzeny his top commando. He had proven his daring and valor to Hitler on many occasions. He had orchestrated the kidnapping of the Hungarian Regent for leverage in ensuring Hungary's loyalty. He was to lead a new operation known as Operation Grief.

Omar Bradley

General Omar Bradley was General Patton's superior. Bradley was younger than Patton and considered himself Bradley's superior in commanding and leading the army. Unlike Patton, Bradley was more political than Patton and unwilling to stand up to orders that he believed to be flawed. Patton and others felt that Bradley's stopping the advance of the 3rd Army during the final throes of the siege on Berlin was made out of weakness and timidity.

Winston Churchill

Winston Churchill was the Prime Minister of Great Britain during World War II and a member of the Allied Forces. He was a long-time political fixture in Great Britain and was anxious that his nation get credit for their part in the war and that they were treated on an equal basis with the larger Allies – the United States and Russia. Churchill pressured General Eisenhower to let British General Montgomery lead the assault on Berlin, the conquest of which would be a symbolic victory for the Allies. Eisenhower caved to the Brits which angered Patton who had done all the dirty work. When FDR died, Churchill was visibly upset when addressing Parliament about the passing of FDR and the overwhelming sense of loss that he experienced.



Josef Stalin

Joseph Stalin was the lead of the Soviet Union, also known as Russia. The Soviet Union was a godless and communistic society that was led by Stalin a ruthless murder who had been responsible for the death of tens of millions of people who did not agree with him. Ironically, he was an ally of America and Great Britain and helped defeat the Germans. Following the war, it was the Soviet Union that took the place of posing the biggest threat to freedom and democracy in the world.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt

During the final days of World War II, Franklin Delano Roosevelt was elected to the U.S. presidency for a record fourth term. Never before or since has a president served as long as FDR did. In fact, after his final term Congress passed a law disallowing a president to have more than one term. But the time was unique. The Great Depression had rocked the country and the aggression of Hitler's Germany and the attack by Japan compelled FDR to lead the country into World War II.

The people loved and adored Roosevelt. He was their defender and their savior. The country just didn't want to let go of him and his leadership. His wife Eleanor was a popular First Lady. The American people had no idea that FDR and his wife had had a platonic relationship for the thirty years since she discovered he was having an affair and one that was to continue until his death. Roosevelt met with Allied leaders including Churchill and Stalin to decide the fate of a defeated Germany. FDR knew that his days were numbered and wanted his policies to continue. Before his election, he hand-picked Harry S. Truman to succeed him because his current vice president, Henry Wallace, was too liberal.

William Donovan

William Donovan worked under the Office of Strategic Services, or the OSS which was a precursor of the CIA but reported only to FDR. Donovan was referred to as "Wild Bill" Donovan because he often went off the reservation. Even Roosevelt commented that he had to rein him in. Roosevelt had to distance himself from Wild Bill when it was leaked that Donovan recommended the establishment of a Gestapo type organization. Despite FDR's public protests, Donovan was doing exactly what FDR wanted him to do – create an intelligence unit and build up the military for a possible war with Russia. The Central Intelligence Agency was created with a top priority of spying on friends and enemies.

Colonel Oscar Koch

Patton relied on his subordinate, Colonel Oscar Koch to collect intelligence, arrange for reconnaissance planes, and to have accurate maps created of the terrain his Third



Army was facing. Koch also arranged for German-speaking American soldiers to disguise themselves as peasants in order to penetrate enemy lines. Koch was concerned about the build-up and maneuvering of German soldiers. He learned of the movement of a large force of soldiers moving toward the Ardennes. He was most concerned that Germany was maintaining radio silence which generally precedes attack. Most other commanders believed that the Germans had been too weakened to launch a major offensive, but Koch's assessment was the accurate one. Koch also feared that Russia would be the next foe that America would face despite the fact they were both part of the Allied Forces.

Joachim Peiper

The First SS Panzer Division led by SS Officer Joachim Peiper was comprised of tough and seasoned soldiers and over sixty tanks along with a wide range of other weapons and artillery. These soldiers who were considered a notch above the average German soldier were disciplined and high-spirited despite the dangers that they knew they would face. Joachim Peiper, 29, was a favorite of Hitler who had appointed him to this esteemed position. Peiper was tasked with developing the doctrine of intolerance that would be the basis for the Aryan Nation that Hitler wanted to establish worldwide.

Harry S. Truman

Harry Truman was a conservative Democrat from Missouri. He was hand-picked to succeed FDR by the dying president who felt his current vice president, Henry Wallace, was too liberal. FDR wanted his successor to carry out his policies. Truman at first was reluctant to accept the position but ultimately did. He realized when he accepted the position that he would become president. When he met with Stalin on Potsdam after becoming the U.S. president, he whispered to the Russian that the U.S. had developed the atom bomb and that he was prepared to drop it on Japan unless they surrendered. He was telling the truth but he also wanted to put a little fear in the Russian.

Anne Frank

Anne Frank and her family had moved to the Netherlands when the Nazi movement began to take hold. The Gestapo was given a tip about the whereabouts of the Frank family. They were arrested and taken to Auschwitz. The horrors that European Jews were made to endure had been well known the leaders of the free world for some time. They knew there was no way to stop the atrocities short of winning the war. Otto Frank was separated from his family and did not know their fate. Anne kept a secret diary of their ordeal.

In January 1945, Otto heard the voices of his daughters shouting that they were free. Soviet officers had invaded the camp. The stoic Russian soldiers were aghast at the sight of corpses and what were essentially living corpses who were next to death. Otto



tried to find his family after their liberation. He never found them but learned of how they had all died. Anne had died of typhoid at the age of fifteen.

General Walther Wenck

General Walther Wenck, commander of the German 12th Army received a call that Hitler's chief of staff, Field Marshall Wilhelm Keitel, would be visiting him. Without his superior's knowledge, Wenck had been housing and feeding a half million refugees who had fled Berlin. Wenck planned to surrender to the Allies rather than let his men be captured by the brutal Russians. Keitel vanquished that goal when he told him that Hitler expected him to lead the 12th Army in the Battle for Berlin. Wenck had to agree to the plan or else he would be shot.



Objects/Places

Fort Driant

Fort Driant was a brutal battle that occurred in the last throes of World War II. It was an important strategically to both the Allied and Axis sides of the conflict. Several U.S. Army companies had battled for days but it was Patton's 3rd Army that was finally able to penetrate and advance toward the fortress. One of his explosives specialists gained access to the roof and tossed explosives down at pipe that led inside and turned what looked like defeat into a potential victory. However, the battle raged on and finally Eisenhower ordered Patton to retreat which didn't sit well with the general who never retreated.

Assassination Attempt on Hitler

As the war was coming to an end, a group of Nazi officers saw the writing on the wall and were all in agreement that Hitler could not lead Germany to victory. The July 20th assassination attempt left Hitler with some non-threatening injuries. The SS tracked down the officers who betrayed the Fuhrer and executed them. Hitler's top general, Erwin Rommel, was not complicit in the planning of the assassination but knew about it and remained silent. His failure to warn Hitler was tantamount to betrayal and he was tracked down by the SS. He was given the choice of watching his family be executed or taking a cyanide pill that they brought for him. He left his family compound drove off with the SS officers. He was dead shortly after he took the pill.

Operation Watch on the Rhine

Operation Watch on the Rhine was Hitler's grand plan to pull victory from the jaws of defeat. Russia was advancing toward Berlin from the North and Americans and Brits were pressing German's eastern border in what was arguably a race to Berlin. Hitler was in his bunker, delusional and still sure of victory. His plan to save Berlin and emerge victoriously was called Operation Watch on the Rhine. In essence, all efforts were to be made to keep the Allied forces from crossing the Rhine. As the Allied soldiers pushed forward, Germany forced some of the Allied lines to retreat which spurred the media to refer to these breaches as bulges which morphed the name of the conflict into the Battle of the Bulge.

Malmedy Massacre

The U.S. Army 99th was able to delay the progress that the Panzer division led by SS Officer Joachim Peiper forces in their push past Meuse and to their final destination in Berlin as part of Hitler's Operation Watch on the Rhine. The Panzer division ultimately advanced. SS soldiers executed eighteen American soldiers they caught off-guard in a



small village. Some captured soldiers were locked up in POW cages. As the Panzer division advanced they took out a number of trucks of the 285th Field Artillery Observation Battalion that had just drive through Malmedy. More than 100 soldiers from the battalion surrendered, 84 of whom were executed on the spot. Several U.S. soldiers played dead and were able to escape and tell the story of the Malmedy Massacre. U.S. commanders were outraged by these war crimes and instructed their men to not take any SS officers captive; they were to be killed.

Auschwitz

At the death camp Auschwitz in Poland, Nazis blew up the crematorium called Krema V that resulted in a raging inferno. The other crematoria at the death camp were also destroyed. It was an effort to destroy the evidence of what took place at Auschwitz and the war crimes that had been perpetrated for years. The remaining prisoners were marched to the train station not knowing if they were marching to their death. As it turned out some were marching to their deaths. The Nazis tortured and executed the prisoners at their whim. The Russian Army took Warsaw and was on their way to Berlin.

The Bridge at Remagen

While British Brigadier General Montgomery was dithering on plans to invade Germany and take Berlin, Patton was busy in southern Germany. Patton led the Third Army to victory in the taking of Palatinate. However, the first American troops to venture onto German territory were armored divisions who had crossed the Rhine on the bridge at Remagen. They were shocked to find the bridge undamaged and intact and took advantage of it.

The Battle of Stalingrad

The Battle of Stalingrad was considered the pivotal turning point in the war. After the defeat of the Germans in Stalingrad, what looked like a German victory quickly descended into almost certain defeat. Hitler's hubris led him to believe that the Germans could defeat the massive Russian Army while battling the other Allied forces to the west. It was a tactical error in his overall strategy to take the world.

The Race to Berlin

The taking of the German capital of Berlin was viewed as the symbolic defeat of the Germans. It had been the goal of the Allied leaders throughout the war. The competition was heavy to be the conquering commander in the siege of Berlin. While Patton and his Third Army had done all the dirty work and, as he put it, killed more Germans than anyone, he was bypassed for this mission. Eisenhower caved to pressure from Churchill to allow British General Montgomery to have the honors and take the credit. At the same time that the Allied forces were advancing from the east, the Russians were



advancing from the north. The Russians wanted to beat the force led by Montgomery to Berlin so Stalin would have more say in the disposition of Germany after its defeat. In the end, Eisenhower decided that no one needed to take Germany – the Germans were defeated. His decision greatly disappointed Churchill and the Brits.

Yalta

After President Roosevelt made a rousing speech in Boston about democracy and freedom during his campaign to win a fourth term as the U.S. president, he prepared to travel to Yalta, Russia, where he would discuss the fate of a defeated Nazi Germany with Churchill and Stalin.

The Potsdam Conference

After the defeat of Nazi Germany, President Truman met with Churchill and Stalin in Potsdam, Germany. The world leaders discussed how Germany and Eastern Europe would be divided up among the Allied Forces. Unfortunately, Stalin grabbed much of the territory resulting eventually in an oppressed Eastern Europe that suffered under communism and that was symbolized by the Berlin Wall.



Themes

Valor

General Patton loved his soldiers. He lauded their valor and bravery and nothing tortured him more than when his men were killed or wounded. He was famous for driving from post to post in his open-air jeep, oblivious to any danger to German snipers who considered him a top target. He visited his men to inspire and thank them with his uplifting rhetoric. He also visited his wounded soldiers. It was heartbreaking for Patton to see his soldiers who had been profoundly wounded while displaying their daring and valor on the battlefield.

What Patton couldn't stand was to see any of his soldiers compare what he believed to be weakness or cowardice. If a soldier's actions were anything less than what Patton considered acceptable and valorous, he concluded that they were cowards who shamed the uniform of the American soldier.

Nothing moved him more than heroic injured soldiers. At one point during his rounds, he encountered several soldiers who told Patton that they were suffering from nerves and battle fatigue. Patton screamed at them ordering them back on the battlefield to the horror of the medical staff. He got physical with one of them – he slapped the soldier for his lack of courage. To Patton a case of the nerves was not an excuse to be hospitalized. Such a soldier was a disgrace to the valorous soldiers who were wounded.

The incidents were reported to Eisenhower who warned him that his behavior was unacceptable. But Eisenhower didn't pursue the matter; he needed Patton. Drew Pearson an NBC radio war correspondent learned of the slapping incident. His reporting of the incident led to public outrage and calls for Patton's immediate dismissal. But Eisenhower viewed Patton's presence in the fight essential; Patton was a fighter. Patton continued to fight and win.

Aryan Nation

While Adolph Hitler was driven by a quest for world power there was an underlying matter that was even more compelling and was his utmost priority. This issue was what drove Hitler, that made him believe he would make the world better. This new world that he envisioned would be devoid of Jews and Judaism which he believed represented the evils of the world. Hitler's ultimate aim was to create an Aryan Nation in Germany and after conquering the rest of the world Germany would be used as a model for all the nations of the world. His chief objective was the eradication of all Jews around the goal. It was quite a lofty goal but he was able to murder at least six million Jews during the war years.

A point that is not as well known is that there were other ethnicities and individuals who Hitler considered a threat to the Reich. While Jews were the ultimate evil, Hitler also



wanted to eradicate Gypsies, homosexuals and those who openly opposed Nazi politics and dogma. Hitler relied on his top SS officer Heinrich Himmler a brutal man who one of his subordinates, Joachim Peiper, idolized. Himmler charged Peiper who also became a favorite of Hitler's with developing the philosophy of intolerance that was fundamental to the creation of the Aryan nation and to the defeat of the enemy. Peiper was on hand when Himmler directed the shooting of Polish intellectuals in the early phases of the war and witnessed the first gassing of Jews – men, women and children. From this “field” work, Peiper was prepared to put into words the tenet that would be the basis for domination of a world without evil – an Aryan nation that would be pure and all white and one that supported the murder of those who did not fit the prescribed model.

Egoism

There are many examples of how ego entered into the decision-making process of the Allied Forces' operation during World War II. Ego, of course, was also an issue with the leader of the opposition – Adolph Hitler – whose goal was no less than complete world domination. Without an outsized ego, such a plan would not have seen the light of day.

While many of his fellow commanders and superiors found General Patton obnoxious and overbearing, they were also envious of the credit and attention he received for his valor and courage on the battlefield. He was considered, even by Hitler, to be the top commander on the Allied side. However, he was placed under the command of the less dynamic General Omar Bradley who Patton considered to be lacking in military expertise and basic guts. By this move, Eisenhower was able to pump up Bradley's ego with this assignment and wounding that of Patton perhaps in an attempt to rein him in.

Churchill pressured Eisenhower to allow British Brigadier General Bernard Montgomery to lead the attack on Berlin. Eisenhower caved to the pressure which Churchill had waged to secure credit for England in the Allied victory as well as bolster his own ego and that of Monty's. This was another episode in which Patton was angered. He and his Third Army had done the most dirty work and had “killed the most Germans.” He felt he deserved the honor of leading the attack on Berlin.

There was a growing resentment in Washington that Patton was getting too much attention and becoming too popular with the American public. Those who were none too happy with Patton's popularity included Wild Bill Donovan who was the director of the OSS, and later was suspected of plotting with the Russians to have Patton assassinated.

The war might have gone quite differently without the intrusion of the male ego but that's something no one will ever know.

Reincarnation

General George Patton was a confident, aggressive military leader who believed his skills, military experience and intuition to be far superior to all the other commanders on



both sides of the conflict during World War II. He boasted that he was head and shoulders above other military leaders of the time including his commander, General Omar Bradley, and the Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Europe, General Dwight D. Eisenhower. He also believed that his character, value system, courage and valor surpassed his peers and commanders. Patton wasn't the only one to admire his abilities. Hitler compared the abilities of Patton to his own top commander, Erwin Rommel. Eisenhower plainly recognized Patton's value in the Allied force's fight to defeat the Germans. He had more than one reason to suspend or fire Patton because of his brashness and his violent nature which was sometimes directed at his soldiers. However, he needed Patton's know-how, fearlessness and aggressiveness so he turned his head many times and ignored Patton's shortcomings.

Patton was not actually patting himself on the back when he boasted about his abilities. He believed that he was from a long line of military men and he wasn't referring to relatives who had served in the military. His claims to legacy went far beyond modern times. Patton believed in reincarnation even though he was a devout Christian. He didn't bother to try reconciling the two tenets that directly contradicted one another.

Patton was certain that he had walked alongside Alexander on his quests and had been a soldier in Napoleon's army. He believed that he had fought for Caesar and that he actually WAS Hannibal. He therefore attributed his recognized battlefield skills, military mindset and deft instincts not to his value system or upbringing; rather, Patton believed that he was the culmination of a reincarnation process that created a blend of his experiences in other lifetimes as a legendary military leader and a part of celebrated armies of yore. Patton believed that he was special and that he had a strong connection with the supernatural.

Duplicity

Perhaps one reason that Patton had political problems during World War II was that he only knew how to say what he thought even at the most inopportune times. He openly questioned the abilities of his bosses, General Omar Bradley and Supreme Commander Dwight Eisenhower, and the decisions they made. At Eisenhower's orders, he was forced to retreat from the battle of Fort Driant. He was furious with this turn of events because "retreat" wasn't in his lexicon.

The other players in the final throes of World War II were political either naturally or as a learned characteristic. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt addressed a huge crowd in Boston just before he was elected to his fourth term. He was ill and crippled but was able to disguise his deteriorating health from his adoring audience. He lauded the benefits of democracy to those present while at the same time he was making secret deals with Stalin about the future of Germany after its defeat. Roosevelt and Churchill both beacons of liberty in their own ways were both dealing with the murderous Stalin which led in large part to the Berlin Wall and the spread of communism which was anathema to capitalism and freedom.



Eisenhower caved to pressure from Great Britain to allow British Brigadier General Bernard Montgomery to lead the attack on Berlin rather than allow General Patton that honor even though Patton had taken on the lion's share of responsibility in the lead up to the assault. While Patton and his Third Army was risking life and limb Montgomery was sitting on the sidelines. Although Eisenhower was well aware of this imbalance, he made the decision to let "Monty" lead the definitive battle so that he and the Brits would get the glory. It was easy for Eisenhower to cast Patton aside because of his strong personality that riled military leaders and politicians up and down the line. Patton had little support among the world leaders and military hierarchy despite the valiant efforts and performance of he and his soldiers.

While world leaders like Roosevelt, Truman and Churchill were trying to cater to the concerns of Stalin to gain his much-needed support, Patton was spouting off about Russia being the next big problem in the world and that the spread of communism would cause great problems and conflict between the U.S. and Russia. Even after hearing rumors that were running rampant that Russia had plans to assassinate him the celebrated WWII general wasn't silenced.



Styles

Structure

Killing Patton covers that last months of World War II, from October 1944 through May 1945 and then Patton's life post war until his death in December 1945. The first sections describe the battles that Patton led as commander of the U.S. Third Army. Patton led the battle for the fort at Driant and the battles as he pushed onward into Germany eventually able to cross the Rhine.

The story of the war is interwoven with the behind-the-scenes squabbles and political maneuvering of the military leaders and commanders of both the Allied and Axis powers. Patton's overbearing personality and tendency to tell it like it saw it, got him trouble time after time and kept him from achieving even higher positions than what he had.

The author contrasts the story of the last throes of the war with the political hurdles that Patton had to circumvent at times and deal with head-on at other times. His brash personality and his nature to criticize even his fellow commanders and world leaders would have gotten other suspended. But the authors contrast his behavior with his military expertise and demonstrates how the Supreme Commander could not do without him. The Allied Forces needed the most formidable commander they had and that was without argument George Patton.

Throughout the book there are maps depicting battlefields discussed in the book. There is also a listing of the soldiers of the Third Army which Patton led. There are also many photographs of Patton, FDR, Stalin, Churchill, Bradley, Montgomery and other principals discussed in the book.

Perspective

This book on General George Patton's latter days as the Commander of the Third Army and his days after retirement until his unusual and unexpected death. It is written in the third person omniscient and is fact-based. The authors have both have experience with writing about historical events. Bill O'Reilly is a celebrated political pundit and hosts a daily cable new show. He is the author of several other best-selling books. Martin Dugard is a New York Times reporter and contributor. He is the best-selling author of several books based on historical events. The two have collaborated in the writing of Killing Kennedy, Killing Lincoln and Killing Jesus. They continue in this tradition in the writing of Killing Patton.

The authors veer off from history when they theorize about the possibility that Patton's death was a conspiracy that included the U.S. head of the OSS that would become the CIA and the Russian military. Although there were speculation, rumors and some evidence that the Russians would sooner see Patton dead than alive because of the



frequent diatribes he publicly spewed about them, nothing has been conclusively concluded about that possibility. The reader should keep in mind that no conspiracy for Killing Patton has ever been given any real credence.

The leaders of the world who formed the Allied powers that included Churchill, Stalin and Franklin Roosevelt are shown as somewhat duplicitous in the arrangements they make post-war about the divvying up of the defeated Germany. General Dwight Eisenhower who ultimately becomes a U.S. president, is depicted to be weak and unsure of himself. There are other accounts of this part of history that do not show him in such a light. Therefore, the reader must be aware that some of what is written is conjecture and opinion and not necessarily based on fact.

Tone

The dominant tone in Killing Patton is that of a reporter providing factual accounts of some of the battles between the Allied forces and the German military during the final days of World War II. The battles are described in great detail including the challenges and struggles that faced the Allied forces in their race to Berlin the conquest of which would effectively symbolize the end of the war.

The politics that went on behind the scenes is where the authors may have been influenced by their own ideology, especially in the case of conservative pundit and cable host Bill O'Reilly. References to Eisenhower being a weak commander in the eyes of Patton go largely unchallenged. Patton is a idol to many on the conservative side of current politics due to his aggressive and militaristic leadership and his bourgeois value system. In this regard, there seems to be some bias in the depiction of the relationship between Patton and Eisenhower and other commanders and leaders that he tangled with.

The factual tone of the narrative goes slightly off the rails when it comes to a conspiracy that may or may not have existed to have Patton murdered. References are made without sourcing that the head of the US OSS, later the CIA, was complicit in the planning of Patton's assassination with the Russians. The title alone is a not-so-subtle inference that Patton was "killed." He died in an auto accident which was probably not the method of choice used by the Russians to take people out.

There are also several vague references to FDR being duplicitous in his public pronouncements about democracy and his secret dealings with the murderous Stalin. The disparaging of a Democratic president and his administration by a political pundit who professes to be conservative should be taken with more than a grain of salt.



Quotes

A real hero is the man who fights even though he's scared. Some men get over their fright in a minute under fire. For some, it takes days. But a real man will never let his fear of death overwhelm his honor, his sense of duty to his country, and his innate manhood."

-- General George S. Patton (chapter 1 paragraph 21)

Importance: The above quote was taken from a speech that Patton gave before the Third Army which was under his command during WWII. He believed that a real man overcomes fear of dying in defense of his country and his own manhood.

This war can end two ways – either the extermination of the Aryan peoples or the disappearance of Jewry from Europe."

-- Adolph Hitler (chapter 2 paragraph 7)

Importance: Despite many setbacks and signs that Germany was losing the war, this statement made in 1942 to the German parliament demonstrated how obsessed he was about eradicating the Jews.

It is Heinrich Himmler, the psychopathic leader of the SS, who preaches a philosophy that if an enemy is made to feel enough terror, there is no need for battle. He will simply quit."

-- Heinrich Himmler/Narrator (chapter 7 paragraph 55)

Importance: This quote captures the tactic of using fear to defeat the enemy -- a tactic that is often used in today's world.

Undaunted, the 101st moves ahead. Any man can break. But the advancing Americans know they don't have that luxury. Just like the Roman legions who once fought off the Germanic hordes on this same stretch of land, they hold the fate of Europe in their hands."

-- Narrator (chapter 8 paragraph 44)

Importance: This quote illustrates how crucial the participation of the American military was in WWII. It was the Americans, not the Europeans, who would determine Europe's destiny.

Sir, this is Patton talking. The past fourteen days have been straight hell. Rain, snow, more rain, more snow – and I am beginning to wonder what's going on in Your headquarters. Whose side are You on anyway?"

-- General George Patton (chapter 9 paragraph 2)

Importance: Patton wrote this poem out before he visited a church in Luxembourg. The war was not going well and Patton decided he needed to have a word with the Lord. Even when he has words with God, Patton was unable to hide his hubris.



Because there's a little ninety-year-old mother down in Grandview, Missouri, that would like to see her son become president of the United States."

-- Edward D. McKim (chapter 13 paragraph 12)

Importance: When Harry Truman was approached about become FDR's vice president, he was initially hesitant. His friend Edward McKim was sure he'd take it. He pulled on Truman's heartstrings by bringing his aging mother into the mix. The influence of one's mother is never overstated.

We have learned that we cannot live alone, at peace; that our own well-being is dependent on the well-being of other nations far away. We have learned that we must live as men, not as ostriches, nor as dogs in the manger. We can gain no lasting peace if we approach it with suspicion and mistrust or with fear. We can gain it only if we proceed with the understanding, the confidence, and the courage which flow from conviction."

-- Franklin Roosevelt (chapter 13 paragraph 49)

Importance: The quote is an excerpt from FDR's final inaugural address. This speech established a foreign policy of intervention and alliance that is still adhered to seventy years later.

Against an entire hostile world I once chose my road, according to my inner call, and strode it, as an unknown and nameless man, to final success; often they reported I was dead and always they wished I were, but in the end I remained victor in spite of all."

-- Adolph Hitler (chapter 14 paragraph 57)

Importance: These were among Hitler's last statements. He would never admit that the German army had been defeated. These words reflect his delusional nature.

Patton is convinced that he was a soldier and a great general in his many past lives. He once stood shoulder to shoulder with Alexander the Great and Napoleon. He crossed the Alps on an elephant while residing in the body of the Carthaginian conqueror Hannibal. Patton also is quite certain he once fought for the great Caesar as a Roman legionary."

-- Narrator (chapter 16 paragraph 33)

Importance: Patton felt he had a connection with the supernatural which he had no problem reconciling with his Christian religion. He believed in reincarnation and that he had become a great general in WWII because of the experiences in his many past lives.

We are the eighth wonder of the world. And I had to beg, lie and steal to get started."

-- General George Patton (chapter 16 paragraph 67)

Importance: There were political issues and pressures between the American and British that weighed on the decisions that General Eisenhower made. He allowed General Montgomery, the top British General, to lead the assault across the Rhine while Patton sat on the sidelines which infuriated Patton. However, Patton was riding



roughshod through the Germany countryside to the south while the ever-cautious Montgomery was assembling and organizing.

George Patton and Winston Churchill are simpatico. They both believe that the Soviet Union is now the biggest threat to the world and to democracy. Patton is convinced that Churchill is the only man in power who knows what the world is 'walking into.'"

-- Narrator (chapter 20 paragraph 1)

Importance: After the threat of Nazism vanished with the defeat of Germany in WWII, Patton and Churchill were among the few who feared the threat that communism and the Soviet Union presented to the world.

After long experimentation, we have developed a new bomb far more destructive than any known bomb, and we plan to use it very soon unless Japan surrenders."

-- Harry S. Truman (chapter 23 paragraph 15)

Importance: President Truman made this statement to Stalin at the Potsdam Conference after he pulled the Soviet leader away for a private talk. Truman wanted to assert America's power and signal to Stalin that America was the true power broker at the meeting. Stalin had been grabbing territory after the defeat of Germany and Truman wanted to put a stop to his aggressive ways by not so subtly letting him know who had the biggest bomb.



Topics for Discussion

1

How did PFC Robert W. Holmlund turn the Battle of Driant around for the Allied forces? What fate awaited him?

2

Why was Patton angered by General Eisenhower's decision to retreat from Fort Driant? What were the personal dynamics between Patton and Eisenhower and Bradley?

3

When FDR was campaigning for his election to a fourth term as the U.S. president, he gave a crowd-pleasing speech in Boston. What was he hiding from the his adoring public who came to see him? What arrangements was he making with other world leaders behind the scenes?

4

Why did the U.S. media refer to Operation Watch on the Rhine, Hitler's plan to defend Berlin, as the Battle of the Bulge?

5

Why was it a tactical mistake for Hitler to invade Russia? Describe the difference between a "tactic" and a "strategy" in the military lexicon.

6

Why did Roosevelt choose Harry S. Truman to replace Vice President Henry Wallace in FDR's fourth bid for the presidency? What was Truman's initial reaction to the offer and why did he finally accept the position?

7

What was Hitler's ultimate goal and underlying purpose in his drive to dominate the world? What is an Aryan nation?



8

What connection did Patton feel he had with past warriors? What potential problem did this belief cause with his religious beliefs?

9

What potential problems did Patton believe the Russians would present in the future? Was he right or wrong and why? What oppression did the divvying up of the defeated Germany lead to that was to plague Eastern Europe for decades?

10

What incidents led conspiracy theorists to believe the speculation that the Russians wanted to assassinate Patton? What role did some think William Donovan played in this reported plot? What is plausible or implausible about this speculation?