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History of World War II: Commemorating the Enigmatic Battle of Arnhem

By Tony Gosling
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From Wednesday 17th to Friday 26th September this year thousands of friends and relatives of the fallen and the final few who fought there 70 years ago will gather to commemorate the Battle of Arnhem.

In 1944, as the Allies were heading for Berlin, British Airborne troops were dropped in to take the Arnhem bridge, and the US 82nd Airborne the penultimate Nijmegen bridge. British tanks of XXX corps chugging up the road as reinforcements – at least that was the plan.

Known to most through the 1977 feature film, "A Bridge Too Far" (directed by the late Sir Richard Attenborough), Operation Market Garden was the biggest airborne operation in history. Over 40,000 American and British soldiers, with artillery, jeeps and light armored vehicles were dropped, by parachute and hundreds of gliders, behind German lines.

The objective was to liberate a large slice of Holland, cross the Rhine, grab a bridgehead into the industrial heartland of the Ruhr's Nazi war machine, and end the war by Christmas 1944. Instead the mission's failure brought a colossal 16,000 casualties, and left a 60-mile finger of Allied troops sticking into German-held territory leading nowhere. A disastrous "Hongerwinter" of bitter starvation followed the military failure, where an estimated 22,000 Dutch civilians starved to death under Nazi occupation.

But as both sides gather in 2014 to remember, and puzzle over, one of the most enigmatic and engaging battles of the war, the organized evil of fascism is again legitimized, active and growing in Europe. Right now the legacy of Hitler's "Crooked Cross" is a political force, notably in Greece, with the Golden Dawn party, and Ukraine, with the openly pro-Nazi Pravy Sektor party.

"Did we," many of the old soldiers will be wondering, "really finish the job in 1945?" "Have our leaders set us on the right path with their War on Terror determined to vanquish terrorism from the face of the Earth?" "Or has that enemy been deliberately 'cooked up' by the real enemy within?" "Will our children again have to confront this totalitarian menace in our midst before social justice triumphs and the cult of fascism and gangsterism is winkled out forever?"

At many of the twenty-four now mostly abandoned airfields all over the south and southeast of England from which the airborne Market forces took off, you'll find war memorials to the thousands that died trying to liberate Holland. We owe it to those 11,000 or so that never returned to expose both the mistakes in and lies about the battle. 4th Parachute Brigade commander General Sir John Hackett, in the foreword to "The Devil's Birthday," described it as "an absorbing field of study which is by no means fully exhausted." In plain talk, perhaps,

“a can of worms.”

Lions

After the success of the Normandy Invasion, back in June 1944, the hard slog to Berlin was on. US and British generals were vying for the precious ammunition, food and other supplies being shipped over the English Channel. British Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery in the north won the tussle and was granted, in Operation Market Garden, a last chance to prove that audacity and imagination might make a quick end to the war in Europe. The traditional slugger, US General George S. Patton in the south, would have to bide his time.

Major Brian Urquhart was an intelligence officer in the planning of Market Garden. When he was shown aerial reconnaissance photographs of the 9th and 10th SS Panzer divisions “resting” just outside Arnhem he demanded a total rethink. British Airborne chief “Boy” Browning, though, would have none of it and Urquhart was unceremoniously put on sick leave. After the war Brian Urquhart went on to become Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations. He blamed the failure of the operation firmly on the incompetence and vanity of those in charge.

Of all the British airborne leaders, Colonel John Frost is roundly thought of as the most able, so much so that the bridge at Arnhem is now named after him. His 2nd battalion fought their way into Arnhem and held on to the bridge for three days and nights in the face of an enormous German force.

In his 1980 autobiography, “A Drop Too Many”, Frost makes it crystal clear that the pre-drop intelligence that the German Panzer divisions were in the area was kept from him. “We had been given absolutely no inkling of this possibility,” he relates. Indeed, airborne commander Browning actually diluted what he knew into a deliberate deception for Frost. “There were said to be some SS recruits in the Arnhem area without guns or armor.”

At the Arnhem Bridge “hanging on by their fingernails” with Colonel Frost was Brigade Major Tony Hibbert, who I was privileged to interview in 2012. Like so many others in Arnhem, he felt let down by the ground army that never came. His insistent desire, though, was that the Polish General Stanisław Sosabowski, stripped of his command and scapegoated by Browning for the operation’s failure and who sadly died in poverty in 1967, should have his rank restored and be posthumously honored by the British Army.

Led by a donkey

Despite commanding all three airborne divisions, according to William F. Buckingham’s book, “Arnhem 1944”, Eton-educated General “Boy” Browning “had no operational airborne experience at all.” Instead of ferrying fighting men, he used 36 of the precious aircraft and gliders to bring in his lavish headquarters on a peripheral objective, the Groesbeek Heights, and after ordering US General Gavin to forget about his main objective, the Nijmegen bridge, instead to take up positions around his headquarters. As John Frost put it, his main objective, “Nijmegen bridge was there for the walk-over.”

Browning spent the first day cruising about in his jeeps and making a trip across the nearby German border, into the Reichswald Forest, joking that he could take the credit as the first British officer to urinate on Germany. Adopting a more serious pose, he had his photograph taken for the home press as the first British officer to set foot on German soil.

Possibly Browning's most damning act though, when the desperate fight for the Nijmegen bridge was at its height, was to turn down the aid of an entire air-landing formation waiting in England who were straining to get in on the fight. Major General Hakewell-Smith, commanding the 52nd Lowland Division, offered to come to Browning's aid but was rebuffed, as Geoffrey Powell records in his "The Devil's Birthday: The Bridges To Arnhem 1944," with the reply, "Thanks for your message but offer not repeat not required as situation better than you think."

After the war, Browning landed a top post as Comptroller of the Royal Household, that of Treasurer to both the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh. But despite the top job he remained an alcoholic throughout his two post-war decades and was forced out of his responsibilities for the Duke of Edinburgh's finances in the 1959 by a nervous breakdown.

The burning question of Market Garden though remains Captain Peter Carrington's and his great Grenadier Guards' tank break. Eyewitness 82nd Airborne Captain Moffatt T. Burriss recounts the words of General Horrocks, in charge of the tank reinforcements of XXX Corps, promising the collected Allied commanders, poised to take the penultimate Nijmegen bridge. "My tanks will be lined up in full force at the bridge, ready to go, hell-bent for Arnhem. Nothing will stop them."

Instead, once Burriss and his men had taken the bridge, Horrocks, now with a clear run to Arnhem, ordered his men to take an 18-hour break, by which time Frost's men at Arnhem Bridge had been defeated, and the battle was lost.

Historians and soldiers have argued, and will continue to argue, over why Horrocks' depleted Corps of tanks, at least 100, failed to make that final 11-mile cruise to Arnhem on the evening of Wednesday 20th September, 1944.

Not enough ammunition, we are told. Well, one tank that did make the trip on its own through Lent and out the other side was described by its commander Sergeant Robinson pumping "round after round" into a lone German assault gun, then moving further up the road to do the same into Lent church from which unholy fireball a company of SS Panzer Grenadiers were observed to scatter in disarray.

Darkness, making it impossible for anti-tank guns to sight and range, might be the perfect cover for a tank advance and Lloyd Clark reveals in his 2008 book Arnhem, "Jumping the Rhein, 1944 and 1945," that Horrocks "was a great advocate of the night tank attack." Even Colonel Frost points out how vulnerable the German soldiers were at night. According to the maestro, "They had one major weakness in that they did not relish fighting by night… then was the time to advance on them, to bypass them, to do what one wanted."

Not enough infantry is another excuse given for the halting of the tanks, but Horrocks had the crisp 130th Brigade of the 43rd Infantry Division twiddling their thumbs just south of Nijmegen, which he appears to have forgotten about. Not only that, scores of 82nd Airborne paratroopers that had taken the Nijmegen bridge were leaping up onto, and on one occasion even into, British tanks, expecting to accompany them on the 20-minute ride to Arnhem.

Then there was the "boggy terrain" of the lowlands which meant the tanks would have to stick to the mostly elevated dyke roads. No problem, according to German General Heinz Harmel, who insisted later that he had no forces to block the way and the British had made a big mistake staying put. "If they had carried on it, would have been all over for us," he told

the author of “It Never Snows In September: The German View of Market Garden,” former British Army Colonel Robert Kershaw.

Having taken the Nijmegen bridge, Captain Moffatt Burris was the first to arrive at Captain Carrington’s Sherman tank, parked triumphant but motionless by the north ramp. When urged to head north to relieve the British Airborne at Arnhem, Carrington refused to budge, saying his orders were to “stay here and wait for the infantry.”

When I interviewed Moffatt Burriss, he testified: “I cocked my tommy gun, pointed it at his head and said, ‘Get down that blankety-blank road before I blow your blankety-blank head off.” Carrington explained politely that Captain Burriss surely didn’t expect him to obey orders of a foreign officer, but then, Burriss says, Carrington “ducked into his tank and locked the hatch” so, as Burriss recalls, “I couldn’t get at him.”

Over the subsequent hour-and-a-half in-between the Nijmegen bridge and the little town of Lent that evening, a succession of ever higher-ranking American Airborne officers turned up to have a word with Captain Carrington in his tank. “Why aren’t you going?” demanded Capt. Burriss’ CO, Major Cook. Half an hour later 504 Parachute Infantry Regiment’s Colonel Tucker arrived, telling Carrington: “Your boys are hurting up there at Arnhem. You’d better go. It’s only 11 miles.” Just before dark, around 8pm, the top US officer, General Gavin himself, arrived and told Carrington: “If they were my men in Arnhem we would move tanks at night, we would move anything at night to get there.”

Carrington was after all, just following orders. His divisional commander, Major General Allan Adair, who commanded the Guards Armoured Division in which Carrington served as a captain, left only a sketchy memoir of the battle. (Adair spent much of the post-war years as Yeoman of the Guard, ceremonial bodyguard to the monarch. In the 1960s and 1970s, he took up the less ceremonial office of Deputy Grand Master of the United Grand Lodge of Freemasons.)

Tank corps commander General Brian Horrocks, who was ultimately responsible for the 18-hour halt at the crucial point in the battle, is rumored by some, including military publisher Christian Bace, to have left a letter with another military publisher Leo Cooper, only to be opened after he died. According to Leo’s wife, the novelist Jilly Cooper, Horrocks’ letter is a complete mystery. Either it was lost, or it never existed at all.

But perhaps the greatest enigma connected with Arnhem was not to take place until a decade after the battle itself. In the self-same suburb of Oosterbeek, known as the Hexenkessel, or “witches cauldron” where, surrounded by overwhelming German firepower, so many British soldiers lost their lives, NATO’s secret political lobby was inconspicuously born.

In the chair at the first-ever “Bilderberg conference” in 1954 was Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands, a former SS officer who was in on Market Garden’s planning, peering over Monty’s and Horrocks’ shoulders. Many believe he was instrumental in sabotaging the Allies’ efforts at Arnhem 10 years before.

The Prince was the British Army’s Dutch liaison officer for this planned liberation of his adopted country. Bernhard’s trusted agent for Market Garden was Christiaan Lindemans, codename “King Kong”. So why the questions about whether Prince Bernhard was actually still a Nazi? Because when he was smuggled across into German lines on Thursday 14th

September, Lindemans deliberately took everything he knew of the Dutch underground resistance network and the Market Garden plans straight to German Army intelligence. Bernhard's star player was a double agent.
Those who questioned whether it was wise to trust a former German aristocrat and SS officer, which Bernhard was, in that Dutch liaison role would have been reminded that King George VI himself had instructed Naval Intelligence officer Ian Fleming to give him security clearance. But like something from a plot which Fleming would later pen as author of the James Bond thrillers, other Allied forces, specifically the US Army and Royal Navy, refused to allow Bernhard anywhere near their secret facilities.

Another important figure in the drama of Market Garden, Peter Carrington, later Lord Carrington, also went on to chair the Bilderberg conferences. As UK Defence Secretary, Carrington was responsible for the army in Northern Ireland on Bloody Sunday in 1972, where 26 civilian demonstrators were shot by the British army, 13 of whom died of their wounds. Many point to this as the spark that ignited two-and-a-half decades of the Northern Ireland troubles. After several years as Foreign Secretary to Margaret Thatcher, Carrington resigned to become Secretary General of NATO for four years in the 1980s, moving on to chair the elite Bilderberg meetings for eight years through most of the 1990s.

Bilderberg is where the transatlantic banking, royal, media and corporate elite give our politicians their orders, and has been meeting annually in Europe or North America from 1954 to this day. Its connection to NATO is umbilical, yet often overlooked, as all Bilderberg steering group members and important attendees are from the NATO countries.
NATO's Nazi ties go right back to the supposedly defensive alliance's first meetings. Quoted in AJ Barker's "Waffen SS at War", HIAG, the SS veterans association's chief after the war, former Eastern front Panzer corps General Paul Hausser, "claimed that the foreign units of the SS were really the precursors of the NATO army."

Critics point out that, through politically motivated state terror campaigns such as Operation Gladio, which left hundreds of innocent European civilians dead, right through to liaison with Ukraine's far right paramilitaries UNA/UNSO, NATO's covert operations with fascist groups have been continuous since the end of World War II. As Italian "gladiator" Vincenzo Vinciguerra put it in a BBC Timewatch documentary: "In 1945 World War Two ended, and World War Three began."

Was Market Garden sabotaged?

The evidence has mounted over the decades to support the idea that there was not just incompetence but a conscious "lack of enthusiasm" amongst some senior British army officers for Market Garden to succeed. That evidence has led some to link the disaster at Arnhem and Nijmegen with the wider "endgame" of World War Two, and the ultimate creation of the anti-democratic European Union which Bilderberg conferences have so successfully put in place.

Though it was never admitted in German propaganda, the Nazis' defeat became obvious a few weeks before the ill-fated Falaise Gap battle of August 1944 signified the beginning of the end of the Third Reich.

The titans of German industry hastily arranged the "Red House Meeting" in Hotel Rotes Haus, Strasbourg for August 10th, setting plans in motion to "bury the Nazi treasure". They were practical men, determined to keep control of their doomed war industries and ready to

go underground, only to resurface after the war to take their cut of the Nazis' looted wealth.

Hitler had friends amongst the Allies, particularly in the United States where, in 1934, the patriarch of the Bush dynasty, Prescott Bush, attempted to overthrow the US government in a military coup which was only thwarted by plucky US Marine Colonel Smedley Butler. The unrepentant Prescott Bush was prosecuted twice during WWII under the "Trading With The Enemy Act".

Deals were done toward the end of the war through the OSS with this US Nazi faction in exchange for Hitler's war machine technology, particularly for rockets and missiles as well as uranium and plutonium for the Manhattan Project's nuclear weapons. Apart from a shared hatred for anything left-wing, particularly communism, the Germans also held bargaining chips of a massive hoard of artworks, gold and securities their armies had looted from the treasure houses of European capitals.

Operation Market Garden's failure put the conduct of the remainder of the war and arrangements for post-war Europe firmly into US hands but it would need the cooperation of some of the top Brits to throw the fight.

Failure at Arnhem also gave the Nazis a much-needed extra four months, to 1st May, 1945, in which to transport everything and everyone of value out of Germany, to hiding places in Switzerland and far-flung corners of the world such as Argentina and Indonesia.

After the war, Bush's fellow Nazi sympathizers, brothers Allen and John Foster Dulles, were busy laundering much of the Nazi loot through their New York law firm Sullivan and Cromwell. John Foster ran the State Department, and his brother the newly formed Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). The Dulles' Nazi continuity regime which Kennedy tried, and failed, to break, had set the US on an immediate aggressive foreign policy post-war.

The Dulles brothers' enthusiasm for corporate lobbyists like the Council on Foreign Relations, who they were happy to let dominate the State Department, created the climate whereby John F. Kennedy could be assassinated in 1963 with impunity, sending a clear message to all US presidents and candidates not to cross the all-powerful US military industrial complex.

British veteran Arthur Bealy (83) shows two postcards he found in 1944 in a destroyed farm in Elst, 21 September during the 63th commemoration of Operation Market Garden, the battle of Arnhem at the Airborne monument in Arnhem (AFP Photo)

British veteran Arthur Bealy (83) shows two postcards he found in 1944 in a destroyed farm in Elst, 21 September during the 63th commemoration of Operation Market Garden, the battle of Arnhem at the Airborne monument in Arnhem (AFP Photo)

'History will be kind to me. I know because I will write it.' – Winston Churchill

Just before he set off for June 2014's 70th D-Day anniversary, I was privileged to chat, off the record, to one of Britain's most respected military historians. A former senior army officer who has written the most detailed account of the crucial Nijmegen part of the Market Garden battle, told me: "Oh no. I won't be going to the Market Garden anniversary. It's got way too political."

Establishment "groupthink" historians have so massaged events at Arnhem and Nijmegen

that telling the truth would put writers and historians in the West “beyond the pale”. All except one, that is. William F. Buckingham, commissioned by Oxford University’s Hew Strachan, wrote the most damning account of Market Garden, “Arnhem 1944,” in 2002. In it, Buckingham rightly shreds what might be left of the reputation of airborne commander “Boy” Browning.

Echoing the theme of Powell and Pressburger’s 1943 film, “The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp,” that “jobs for the boys” mean failures in self-seeking, entrenched, ossified leadership, which in wartime spells disaster. Browning put General Roy Urquhart in charge of 1st Airborne Division “because he was pliable”.

“The crux of this particular problem,” Buckingham says, “was the British Army’s tendency to value personal recommendation over specialist experience or operational expertise.”

With the rise of the Bilderberg faction, that “problem” has now grown to mammoth proportions throughout Europe and America. Formalizing privilege and promotion through gentleman’s clubs and secret societies in Britain has so enforced a “them and us” culture that we are heading back to Victorian levels of preventable, beggar-thy-neighbor homelessness, hunger and deprivation. Ever widening social division, and the viciousness that comes with it, has become de rigueur.

The prosperity of a parasitic, gangster elite has become the only priority, at the expense of everyone but the favored few. Authoritarian society has spread like a cancer where politics, education, religion and the media is all being denuded, sucked dry in a stranglehold of debt.

As the last of the old soldiers gather in Nijmegen and Arnhem for this, their last decade, we owe it to those who died at and after Arnhem, and to our children, not to pussyfoot around when it comes to nailing those Nazis and their collaborators. Because the politics of racism, greed and betrayal that Hitler was so determined to impose on Europe in World War Two is now back with a vengeance.

Articles by: **Tony Gosling**