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This is a slightly reformatted version of the January 2001 version of my alternate history newsletter. The text is for the most part unchanged except for correcting a couple of spelling errors.

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## DALE COZORT'S

# ALTERNATE HISTORY NEWSLETTER

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(Six time winner of the clear cut award)

This Issue

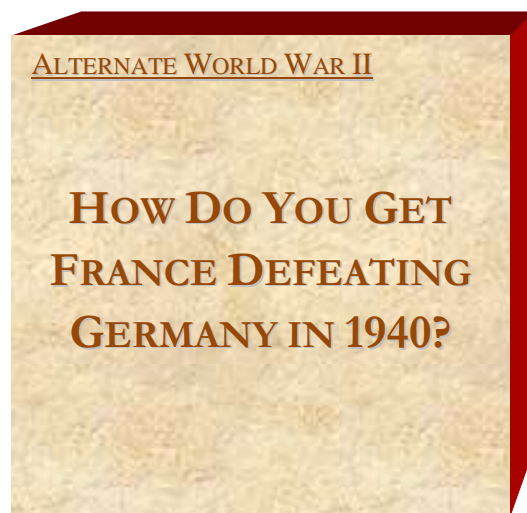
Unfortunately, this is going to be my second rather skimpy issue in a row. Between work stresses and the ongoing issues of dealing with my wife's aging and increasingly dependent parents, I simply haven't had time to do the kind of writing I would like to do. If there is a theme to the issue it's "and then I ran out of time." Not one of my four major scenarios is at a point where I wanted to leave it, but I tried to do too much and simply ran out of time on all of the scenarios. I also intended to continue at least two of last issue's scenarios, but there again I ran out of time.

There are some good things in the issue. There is fairly long scenario where I actually have the French beating the Germans in 1940. That takes some doing, but it is by no means impossible. I take on the popular question of how World War II would have gone if Hitler had not declared war on the US after Pearl Harbor. I also start a scenario where Neanderthals make it to the New World. (Yeah, I know Harry Turtledove did something similar with Homo erectus in "A Different Flesh", but Neanderthals have a rather different impact, and this is straight AH, rather than an AH story, which does make a difference.)

I also start a scenario where an Aztec/Inca-level Indian civilization develops in Eastern North America, and do a book review or two. POD members may get a

reprint on proto-agriculture systems in California, along with as much commentary as I have time to do—a respectable amount this time, though I didn't get to the commentary I didn't do for last issue.

I also didn't have time to write a review of Dean Ing's book *Flying to Pieces*, which isn't really alternate history, but is a lot of fun. I missed it when it came out in 1997, but picked it up used, and really enjoyed it. A bunch of World War II-era aviators—now in their sixties or seventies—get wind of a cache of mint-condition World War II-era Japanese warplanes. The planes would be worth millions in today's collector market, but getting them out is an adventure. I highly recommend this one.



Craig Neumier asked in the last issue of POD if it would be possible to find a divergence that led to France defeating Germany in 1940. I decided to treat that as a challenge. I chose a point of divergence in January 1940.

**What actually happened:** In our time-line in January 1940, a German officer with plans for the German invasion of Belgium and France crashed in Belgium. Belgium's army managed to capture most of the plans. In our time-line the capture of the plans actually ended up helping the Germans out. The Germans figured that their plans were probably blown and came up with their war-winning strategy of luring the French into Belgium, then cutting off the best of the French army with an offensive through the Ardennes.

In spite of the fact that the plans clearly showed that the Germans intended to violate Belgian neutrality, the Belgian government persisted in a policy of strict neutrality, though they briefly took down barriers between France and Belgium due to some crossed signals, and some fast response French divisions spent some cold hours on alert waiting to dash into Belgium as soon as they were invited. The invitation never came, and the border barriers soon went back up, as the Belgian government and especially its king clung to the illusion that neutrality was possible.

Belgian neutrality was France's greatest strategic weakness. It gave Germany the strategic initiative—letting them choose when the war

got serious. It forced the French to dash into Belgium in response to the German invasion—risking an encounter battle that the Germans were very good at and that the French really wanted to avoid.

**What might have happened:** Let's say German intelligence picks up the removal of the barriers between Belgium and France and French preparations to move into Belgium. Hitler puts those things together and gets a picture of a secret Belgian invitation and a French move into Belgium before the Germans move. As the Germans become aware of the crashed plane and the lost plans, that appears to seal it. Hitler is convinced that the French are going to move. If they do that successfully, the French will be able to dig in and they'll be much

harder to defeat. They'll also be entirely too close to vital German industrial areas for Hitler's taste, and in an area without strong defenses.

Hitler decides to pre-empt that move. Unfortunately for the Germans, that isn't as simple as pressing a button. The German army command says that they can be ready to move in 7 days. With a French move apparently imminent, Hitler orders immediate airstrikes to knock out the he Germans attack as best they can, but are starting out off-balance, in atrocious weather, and with their troops coming onto the battlefield piecemeal. The French are ready to go, and they are crossing friendly territory.

To make matters worse for the Germans, thick fog begins to blanket large parts of Belgium, making air support impossible, and making an already confused advance more difficult to coordinate. Columns of German and Belgian troops blunder into each other in the fog, and sudden firefights erupt. As French troops arrive in the battle zone, they add to the confused and deadly drama. Men fight and die in the fog and in the waist-deep snow, often lost and short on supplies.

Both sides are hampered by the weather, but the Germans are hurt much more. Their advantages in mobility and airpower are neutralized, leaving them to slug it out with the Belgians and with the French in a way much closer to the war the French expected and had prepared for than the one the Germans expected.

On the other hand, the Germans are well-trained and very capable of reacting fast in a fluid and confusing situation. Also, French commander Gamelin gambles, just as he did in our time-line. The relative weakness of the initial German attack encourages him to push deeper into Belgium than he had initially planned.

Belgium's defenses are anchored on a series of powerful fortresses and field fortifications along river lines. The Germans manage to break through the initial fortifications in a couple of places, then send the

bulk of their available armor through the gaps in an attempt to cut off the Belgian forts.

One of the German columns runs head-on into an advancing French force of a light armored division (DLM) and two motorized infantry divisions. The Germans have an advantage in number of tanks, and would normally be more mobile, but the snow and fog make the first big tank battle of World War II a sloggng match, and the French tanks have thicker armor and more firepower. Under those conditions, the French can and do win. They are helped by the fact that German logistics are falling apart.

The improvised nature of the German offensive, combined with extremely high fuel consumption needed in the extreme cold and heavy snow, quickly cause the German offensive to literally run out of gas. That puts them in a very vulnerable position, with long difficult to defend flanks. The French move up more divisions, and the Germans find themselves trying to defend two long thin fingers of territory with troops that are short of food, gas, and sometimes ammunition. The German high command wants to pull back, but Hitler issues the same kind of "hold fast" order that he was famous for in our time-line.

The French cut-off one of those fingers near its base. That isolates the bulk of three panzer divisions and several motorized infantry divisions. The German commander inside the pocket ignores Hitler's orders and stages a breakout attempt before the French consolidate their hold on the area around the pocket. The Germans manage to get over half of their men out, but they have to leave most of their heavy equipment behind. The other German column also comes under heavy pressure, but manages to hold open a corridor against increasingly fierce French and Belgian counter-attacks long enough to get most of their units out, though they also have to leave much of their heavy equipment behind.

The French and Belgians take over 30,000 prisoners. The Germans have to leave a devastating amount of heavy equipment behind. The

French and Belgians count nearly a thousand tanks, over fifteen thousand trucks, and well over 1500 artillery pieces, including anti-tank and anti-aircraft guns, among their loot. Much of the material is salvageable, abandoned after running out of gas or getting bogged down in the snow or mud. The tanks are of limited use without spare parts, but the Belgians and French are very happy to get their hands on the trucks and artillery, especially anti-aircraft guns like the famous German “88”.

The defeat jars German confidence, and also leaves them materially much weaker in relation to the French. It opens already developing wounds in the German leadership, with Hitler and the army leadership blaming each other for the fiasco. Hitler’s grip on power is nowhere near as strong as it had become in our time-line by the time he faced his first major defeat, and in this time-line that grip becomes much less secure after the defeat.

The horrendous weather forces a lull on the war front. The French are not offensive-minded enough to take advantage of German weakness, and the Germans have a lot of rebuilding to do. Small-scale clashes continue, especially in the Ardennes have pushed forward as part of the general German offensive. They are harassed by French and Belgian light partially mechanized cavalry units and hampered by deep snow.

The balance of power has shifted sharply against Germany. They lost over eight months worth of tank production, over a year of truck production, and around fifteen percent of their artillery. What’s worse is that captured German artillery goes to equip French divisions—though shortages of ammunition mean that they go primarily to “B” series infantry divisions on quiet sections of the front. In some cases like the “88” the French are impressed enough by the German weapons to start making ammunition for them. German trucks are used to motorize a couple of French divisions. The rest of the trucks are stored to be cannibalized for spare parts.

Captured German tanks are not issued to French units. There aren’t enough spare parts to make that worthwhile. They are studied closely by French tank designers, and then are used to train French tank crews until they break down. Some of them lose their turrets, which are incorporated in French defensive works. Belgium actually does use a few dozen Panzer II’s to equip a small armored unit.

Strategically, the Germans are much worse off than they were in our time-line. France’s biggest strategic weakness in our time-line was that in order to keep the industrialized areas of northern France from becoming a battleground they had to rush forward into Belgium as soon as the Germans invaded that country. With front lines stabilized deep inside Belgium, the French have a lot more options. They can hold their motorized and mechanized forces in reserve.

The war settles down into a routine of raids and artillery duels in mid-February 1940. German general have long advocated an extensive period of training and re-organization prior to any offensive in the west. They now get their wish. The army is obviously not ready for any kind of offensive action.

As in our time-line, Germany faces a number of problems in early 1940. The railroad system has been pushed hard by the demands of war, and is starting to break down. The Soviets have been dragging their feet on supplying or transshipping promised raw materials, so the Germans are suffering severe shortages of rubber, steel, and oil. In both time-lines, the Germans have actually been losing ground in terms of motorizing their army. They are producing around 1000 trucks per month, not enough to replace worn-out vehicles among the 140,000 trucks they had prior to the January 1940 fighting. Losses in that fighting have cut into German mobility significantly.

The perception of German weakness after their defeats in January makes those problems worse. The Soviets quietly squeeze the Germans a bit more, demanding more finished goods that the Germans can ill afford to give them as the price for a continued trickle of raw

material. With the end of the Winter War with Finland, the Soviets even begin suggesting that border adjustment between the German and Soviet parts of Germany may be necessary to insure continued deliveries. The Germans look at the units they have in the east versus what the Soviets have, and quietly shift 15 infantry divisions from the western part of Germany back to Poland. The Germans don't expect a Soviet attack, but they have no intention of leaving themselves open to one.

The fighting has actually strengthened France in a lot of ways in terms of material. The start of serious fighting spurs French production, especially of tanks and aircraft. In our time-line French production of several categories of tanks actually declined in early 1940 as the urgency seemed to evaporate. In this time-line production spikes in January and early February, then remains much higher than in our time-line throughout the spring. The French are especially impressed by the performance of the Somua S35 medium tank, and move to expand production of that tank.

In terms of morale, the fact that real fighting has taken place and that the French won has given French morale a huge shot in the arm. That's especially true in the French officer corp. In both time-lines, too many French generals privately considered their army soft and under-trained—no match for the Germans. The victory in January doesn't entirely erase those attitudes, but it mutes them a bit.

The German training program is hampered by the fact that they are now facing Allied troops along a much longer front, with occasional raids and artillery duels along the front lines. Skirmishing continues, especially in the Ardennes, but the Germans have not pushed into that region vigorously because their emerging concept for a new offensive requires that high quality French troops not be pulled into the area.

In April the Germans launch the invasions of Denmark and Norway essentially on schedule, but the defeat in January has made the Germans much more cautious than in our time-line. The northern and

central prongs of the offensive are rejected as too risky and the airborne component is scaled back. That cuts back German naval and airborne losses, but it give the Norwegian army time to get its act together, and for French and English forces to arrive. The campaign drags on as the Germans chew their way north against increasing opposition.

The Norwegian fighting gives the Allies a taste of what the German army can do without the handicaps imposed by fighting an improvised offensive in waist-deep snow with its airpower neutralized. The taste is sobering but instructive. The Germans have learned a lot in the Spanish Civil War and their invasion of Poland. They teach a subset of those lessons to the English and French. Both countries begin revising their fighter tactics. France quietly ups an already large order for US-built radios that they've had on the books since they registered the large number of radios among the captured German forces from the January battles. The French also have their vulnerability to German tactical airstrikes brought home very clearly to them, and work to improve their tactics to counter that vulnerability.

In our time-line the German army dragged its feet on doing an offensive against France. They are even more reluctant in this time-line. The excellent blitzkrieg weather around May 10-May 24 comes and goes without a German push on the western front. That push finally comes in mid-June.

The Germans do a somewhat modified version of the offensive that they implemented starting May 10, 1940 in our time-line. German forces surge into previously neutral Holland, with airdrops to unlock defense lines and choke points while armored forces roll across the border to link up with the airborne forces. Another offensive aims to push into Central Belgium. As in our time-line, the main push is in the Ardennes, with 6 of Germany's 10 panzer divisions and most of their motorized infantry concentrated there.

The Western Allies have planned for a German invasion of Holland. The bulk of the British Expeditionary force surges north and collides with German forces moving into Holland. The result is bloody but inconclusive. The Germans are much less mobile than they were in our time-line, and their panzer divisions are much less powerful, averaging around 60% of the number of tanks they had in our time-line.

The Luftwaffe does have an advantage in the air, but even that is considerably less than in our time-line. In our time-line, the German offensive caught the French in the middle of a major equipment change-over, with a substantial portion of their fighter wings not immediately available. In this time-line that re-equipment is considerably further along, and French fighters are much more competitive, with Dewoitine 520's replacing sluggish and under-armed Morane-Saulner 406's. The Royal Air Force is also stronger, with more Hurricanes and Spitfires available. German dive-bombers and transports prove very vulnerable to Allied fighters, just as they did in our time-line once they had to face serious opposition.

The Dutch fight very hard, just as they did in our time-line. In our time-line they held out less than a week, but inflicted heavy casualties on German airborne forces and transports. In this time-line the presence of the BEF, plus the weaker German forces give the Dutch just enough of an edge to let them eliminate most of the German airborne forces before the Panzers can link up with them. That leaves the Germans with a serious problem. Holland is horrible tank country, with swampy areas and water barriers creating a series of choke points that the airborne forces unlocked in our time-line, but fail to unlock in this one. The Dutch make matters worse by flooding strategic areas. The German offensive in Holland literally bogs down.

The German offensive in Central Belgium doesn't fare much better. Two panzer divisions run into some tough, dug-in French divisions and discover that the French way of making war is very effective when

implemented by top-of-the-line units. French artillery dominates the battlefield, making it impossible for the Germans to move forward or back without extremely high casualties. In terms of manpower the French take more casualties, but the Germans lose over forty percent of their tanks in two days of fighting and barely manage to extract themselves from the area. The French army of 1940 had a lot of problems, but it was very good at slugging it out with an enemy, as opposed to out-maneuvering that enemy.

The northern two prongs of the German offensive were basically diversions, with the real action happening in the Ardennes, just as it did in our time-line. Unfortunately for the Germans, conditions for that southern offensive are much less favorable than in our time-line. French cavalry units moved forward into the Ardennes in January, and still control part of the area. They are prepared to stage a fighting retreat in the event of a major German offensive, but they have had time to set mine-fields and various engineering obstacles to slow down any German offensive.

Also, French forces on the main French line along the Meuse River are much stronger than they were in our time-line. In our time-line the French had to send their most mobile and best-trained forces into Belgium to meet the Germans. In this time-line the French are already where they want to be in Belgium, so they can keep their mobile forces in reserve. The French reserve in the area is over twice as large as it was in our time-line, and much more mobile.

The German southern offensive pushes the French back to the Meuse, but the power of that offensive is revealed to the French as the Germans push the French cavalry out of the Ardennes. The French are rushing reinforcements to the area before the Germans reach the river.

In our time-line, the French held the German main offensive along most of the line, but the Germans managed to get across the Meuse in a couple of places, gained some maneuvering room, then rolled up the French defenses, allowing their panzer divisions to gain maneuvering

room and push all the way to the coast, trapping the best French armies and most of the British Expeditionary Force in Belgium. Poor morale among the poorly equipped and poorly trained reservists stationed on what was supposed to be a quiet front played a major role in our time-line's French defeat.

In our time-line the French figured that it would take the Germans at least a week to get heavy artillery across the Ardennes, and that without that artillery they wouldn't be able to break French defenses. In this time-line the Germans have already traveled more than half of the distance from their frontier to the Meuse. That has made the French nervous, and French units have gotten much stronger.

In spite of the stronger French defenses, the Germans do manage to get the bulk of a Panzer division across the Meuse. The French bring up reserves, including a light armored division (DLM), which actually has as many tanks, and more powerful ones than this time-line's reduced strength German panzer divisions.

This time-line's second major tank battle rages for two days. The German tanks have better layouts and divisions of crew responsibilities. The French tanks have better armor and more firepower. Tank experts will argue for at least the next 50 years about who actually wins the battle, but the key point is that the French are able to deny the Germans room to maneuver or bring more mobile forces across long enough for more French reinforcements to arrive, including a heavy armored division (DCR). A French DCR is a slow awkward beast, without a great deal of range, but the heavy B1bis tanks are very powerful for attacking specific targets like the German bridgehead across the Meuse. The Germans are forced back across the river. The excellent French artillery makes that a costly procedure. The Germans make several more attempts to cross the river, but the French have the advantage of excellent defensive terrain, and strengthening fortifications.

With the element of surprise lost, and with high quality French troops in the area, the Ardennes offensive becomes an artillery duel, and the French can win at that. Their artillery is at least as good as the Germans'—in some ways a little better.

Germany has to unlock the French defenses along the Meuse, and soon. They scrape together what's left of their airborne troops after the fiasco in Holland, and try an airborne landing behind the main French defenses, combined with very heavy and sustained air attacks and renewed attempts at a river crossing. By now the French airforce has a large part of its fighters in the area, and they challenge the Germans for control of the skies over the battlefield. German transports and dive-bombers find the area very unhealthy. The French Dewoitines are not quite a match for the latest model German Me-109 fighters, but they are more than a match for the Me-110, and they are quite capable of slashing in and destroying or scattering most of a flight of transports, which they do. The German airborne forces never really get together as a fighting force, though they do cause the French to divert a disproportionately large force to hunt them down.

The French line of the Meuse holds one more time, and the Germans have a problem. Their offensive is eating into already skimpy stocks of oil, rubber, and various stocks of ammunition at a prodigious and unsustainable rate. Germany is not prepared for a long war, especially in 1940, and the Germans were already feeling the pinch even before their latest series of offensives.

Hitler wants to continue the offensive, but the German generals have had enough and the offensive trails off. Hitler looks at his options in terms of fighting a long war. Germany desperately needs raw materials in order to function. Stalin has gotten ever more stingy with raw material shipments as Germany's perceived power fades. Shipments are well under ten percent of what Soviet/German economic agreements call for, and less than half of what they were in

our time-line. The trickle of poor quality oil that the Soviets have been shipping to the Germans now dries up completely.

Germany has some synthetic fuel plants in operation, but they are producing far less fuel than they later did in our time-line—nowhere near enough to sustain a Great Power at war. They also require enormous amounts of coal, which Germany never seems to have enough of. Hitler would like to supply Italy with large amounts of coal, to keep France and England from using coal as a tool to make Italy dependent on them, but the supply simply isn't large enough to do everything. The Romanians are willing to sell Germany oil, but not in large quantities and only at very high prices.

The Germans got much of the oil for their current offensive by selling Romania large amounts of captured Polish military equipment at below-market prices, but supplies of that equipment are running low. The Romanians have made it clear that they will thoroughly sabotage their oil fields if the Germans invade, and Hitler is very aware that they have the capacity to carry out that threat, so simply taking oil by force is not an option.

The Romanians keep a trickle of oil flowing, but now they are asking for and getting more sophisticated military equipment in exchange—Czech-built 38t tanks and German Me109 fighters that Germany desperately needs for their own armed forces. In an ironic twist, the Romanians actually resell spare parts for those tanks to the French, which allows the French to put some of their captured Czech tanks into service as stop-gap vehicles for a newly forming light armored division (DLM).

Stalin figures that he has the Germans pretty much where he wants them, and he starts turning the screws. The Soviets set up a communist-led Polish army in their portion of Poland, just as they did in the spring of 1941 in our time-line. The Soviets also become more aggressive in the Far East. They end a brief cutoff of military aid to the Nationalist Chinese and push the Chinese Communists to become

more aggressive in fighting the Japanese. The Soviets also push their demands for a more favorable division of Poland more aggressively.

Hitler's relationship with the German military is extremely bad. Hitler blames what he considers cowardice on the army's part for the January defeat, and he also blames the army for not pushing the June offensive more vigorously. Generals increasingly blame Hitler's interference for the German defeats. Hitler's new strategy brings that deep division to a head. Hitler has decided that with a long war in the offing, Germany has to take the rich coal and iron mines of Alsace/Lorraine. Unfortunately, that means that the Germans have to take on part of the Maginot line.

In our time-line Hitler almost snatched defeat from the jaws of victory in June 1940 by ordering a similar offensive after Dunkirk. The rapid French collapse kept that offensive from happening in our time-line, but in this time-line Hitler pushes a bloodied and increasingly reluctant German army toward taking on the formidable French defenses. The defeat of the second German offensive in the west has loosened Hitler's grip on power, and mounting casualties from the Alsace offensive are the last straw for elements of the German military. In late July 1940, strong elements of the German military attempt a coup. The coup fails, but Hitler is severely wounded during an assassination attempt—paralyzed from the waist down. As the coup collapses, the Nazis take a bloody revenge on the German army. Several hundred German officers are killed. Hundreds more are thrown in prison and over five hundred flee the country, mainly to Switzerland. The German intelligence effort is disrupted as the head of the Abwehr and several dozen other top people in that organization flee to Switzerland one step ahead of the Gestapo.

The German purge doesn't disrupt the army as much as Stalin's purges disrupted the Soviet army, but they take a lot of the edge off of the Germans. Ideological commitment replaces competence as the

primary value and the German tradition of initiative among junior offices for the most part goes away.

Hitler gets his offensive against Alsace/Lorraine. As predicted, it is bloody and produces only tactical victories at the cost of heavy casualties. By now the breakdown of the German economy is becoming very evident. The French have air superiority by August, simply because the Luftwaffe can't get enough planes in the air to challenge them due to lack of fuel.

Confined to a wheelchair, in constant pain, with his plans crumbling, Hitler is becoming less and less rational. He still has his gambler's instincts though, and he sees one desperate gamble that might put Germany back on track to victory. Germany desperately needs oil. There is one place within reach of Germany that has a substantial amount of oil—not enough to solve Germany's problems, but enough to keep the economy ticking over a while longer. The Soviet-held part of Poland has reasonably large oil fields. Of course getting that oil means adding another Great Power to Germany's already over-long list of enemies, but Hitler is sure that Stalin is just waiting for Germany to get weaker before the Soviets attack, so he views that as simply a matter of who gets off the first punch.

The Germans gather as much oil as they can by desperate expedients, including essentially disbanding a Panzer division and selling its Czech-built tanks to the Yugoslavs in exchange for hard currency which they use to buy oil from Romania. In late August 1940, Hitler hurls what is left of Germany's mobile forces in a surprise attack on the Soviets in the southern half of the Polish front. The offensive is even more of a surprise than the German attack on the Soviet Union in our time-line, and it catches the Soviets at a vulnerable time. In both this time-line and ours the Soviets broke up their large armored formations in late 1939, misinterpreting the lessons of their experiences in the Spanish Civil War. In our time-line the Soviets rebuilt their armored divisions after the German defeat of France

showed what the Panzer divisions could do. In this time-line the fighting in France seems to confirm the wisdom of scattering tanks among the infantry, and the Soviets have continued to do so.

The German panzer divisions break through, cut off a large number of Soviet troops, and seize the oil fields essentially intact. At that point the Germans simply don't have the logistics capability to take advantage of that victory. The Soviets launch a hastily organized counter-attack to rescue their trapped armies in the pockets, and launch their own offensives in northern Poland and through Lithuania into Eastern Prussia. The Romanians look at the possibility of a German collapse, and get much more forthcoming with oil. That puts the panzer divisions back in business, and the Germans stop the Soviet offensive, inflicting extremely high casualties but taking heavy casualties themselves.

The Soviets demand to be treated as allies by Britain and France. They also demand an immediate French offensive against Germany. The allies are cool to both ideas. They don't consider the Soviets reliable or particularly useful as allies, and a strong element of both governments would prefer to sit on the side-lines and let the two dictators fight it out. The allies demand that the Soviets release Polish prisoners of war and give back areas of Finland seized in the Winter War, among other things as the price of any aid.

The Soviets aren't interested in doing anything along those lines, at least until September, when the Panzers cut off the bulk of the Soviet forces in the north, leaving Leningrad very vulnerable. At about the same time, Soviet resistance in the remaining pockets in southern Poland collapses, freeing up German forces for a pincer movement that bags more Soviet troops in Central Poland. At that point, the Soviets allow around 60,000 of their 300,000 Polish prisoners of war to leave for Romania with their families. The allies don't have much in the way of material to reciprocate with, but the French do pass along some data on the capabilities of German tanks and aircraft.

The Germans grab the rest of the Soviet slice of Poland, and even take a small slice of the Soviet Ukraine. They also head north through the Baltics toward Leningrad. The Germans quickly run out of steam. Their army has been losing mobility all through 1940 as trucks break down, are captured, or are lost in battle. They simply don't have the capacity for large-scale deep offensives that they did in our time-line, and campaigning on the primitive roads of eastern Poland accelerates the wastage.

The Soviets have lost over 700,000 men killed so far, and over 800,000 captured—a small number compared to what they suffered in the early going in our time-line, but still a very large portion of their trained manpower. The Germans have also lost heavily—with nearly 300,000 dead on the eastern front alone.

Meanwhile, the Western Allies have been relatively quiet. The balance in the air has swung heavily against the Germans in the west. The French alone are out-producing the Germans by a substantial margin in both tanks and planes. When you add in British production and substantial numbers of American-built planes flowing to France, the odds against the Germans on the western front are becoming overwhelming. Pressure on the French and English for a major offensive is growing.

The French communist party has become extremely pro-war, and in some factories where communist influence is strong, the quantity and quality of war production has suddenly picked up. The French government isn't particularly impressed by the sudden change of heart, and even some French communists finally give up on the party after this latest evidence that it considers Soviet interests ahead of French interests.

The Allies have gone over to the offensive in Norway and to some extent in the Ardennes and southern Holland. The Allies are ponderous on the offensive, gaining ground a few miles at a time on a battlefield dominated by heavy artillery. It isn't really World War I-

style fighting. The tactics are much more sophisticated, and the growing number of Allied tanks and planes make the battle considerably more fluid, even though they are usually deployed in an infantry-support role. The French heavy armored divisions weigh in from time-to-time, using their heavy B1bis tanks to club their way forward toward a key objective.

The main action between Germany and the Western Allies is in Norway. It plays a role somewhat like that of North Africa in our time-line—an important but subsidiary theatre of war where the Germans hold off numerically superior and better equipped opponents by superior tactics, at least for a time, while inadvertently teaching those opponents how to deal with German tactics. Through the summer and fall of 1940, the Germans have taught the French and English a series of bloody lessons in Norway, but the Germans have been too busy elsewhere to take advantage of their victories. Now, as winter approaches, the Germans in Norway are being compressed into the southern tip of that country. Resupply is becoming more and more difficult. The Allies control the air, and that has allowed them to harass German convoys from Denmark to Norway, both from the air and to a lesser extent with surface vessels.

The Soviet Union in this time-line doesn't have the huge recuperative powers that it did later in our time-line. In our time-line, the Soviets spent the year between the fall of France and the German invasion of the Soviet Union preparing frantically for war. They trained officers to replace the ones killed off in the purge. They trained millions of reservists. They expanded their active army. They built masses of weapons in every category. They built new factories, many of them using German machine tools sent in exchange for raw materials.

In this time-line none of that build-up has happened. On the other hand, this time-line's Germans are nowhere near as capable or well led as the ones in our time-line, and the Soviets still have a lot of divisions that they can bring in from other parts of the country given time. The

Soviets recover enough to go on the offensive by early October. The fall muddy season quickly turns the battle zone into a giant swamp, and the two sides fight a series of bloody battles with little mobility on either side. The Soviet horsed cavalry divisions actually are more mobile than the panzer divisions in this phase of the war, though they prove terribly vulnerable to modern firepower.

The Soviets are poorly trained and led for the most part. While the Germans are nowhere near as well led as they were in our time-line, they still inflict appalling casualties on the Soviets—over a million dead in two months. The Germans kill four Soviets for every German that dies, but the Germans have still lost over half a million dead on the eastern front alone by now, and even more wounded. They started the war with a chronic manpower shortage. Now they are having a great deal of difficulty keeping an army in the field without gutting their armaments production. The Soviet prisoners of war ease that shortage somewhat, as do the Polish forced labor, but the Germans have nowhere near the manpower resources that their many conquests gave them in our time-line. The German army is shrinking as well as becoming less mobile as the war goes on.

The Soviets also have their problems. Soviet collectivization of agriculture has made their agricultural industry the most mechanized in Eastern Europe. The backbone of that mechanization is a large number of trucks and tractors that were designed with emergency military use in mind. A huge number of those trucks and tractors have been requisitioned by the military, and in many cases destroyed in the fighting. Even the ones that still exist are not available for the harvest. At the best of times, the Soviet Union has little food to spare. Now with much of the harvest spoiling in the fields, the Soviets face a long, hungry winter. They can buy food on the world market, and the Allies are even willing to extend credit on a small scale in exchange for Soviet concessions like the release of more Polish prisoners of war, but getting large quantities of food to the Soviet Union is difficult.

German U-boats are active, and neither England nor France has a great deal of shipping to spare.

Prisoners in Soviet work camps are already starving by mid-November, and almost everyone in the Soviet Union is on very short rations. It's going to be a very long, hungry winter. Germany is also having a cold, hungry fall, and is looking toward a truly nasty winter.

Making matters worse, the French and English are getting more self-confident and aggressive. The Germans are running out of options in Norway as the Allies use their growing superiority in airpower and every category of war material to methodically grind the Germans down and push them back toward the sea. The Allies have also gone on the offensive in Belgium, and they are learning. The French now have six light armored divisions (DLMs) and five heavy armored divisions (DCRs), while the English add another armored division. The Germans have two very under-strength armored divisions on the entire western front, and only a few motorized infantry divisions.

In November, the French concentrate two heavy armored divisions on a narrow front in Belgium and simply swamp the defenders with the heavy armor and firepower of those divisions. That portion of the German line collapses and the Germans are hard pressed to re-establish it. The French are not aggressive enough in following up on their initial success, and the Germans manage to retrieve the situation, but the attack brings home to the more rational elements of the German leadership how precarious Germany's situation is.

Hitler is becoming less and less rational. His injuries and the stresses of war have brought him to the point where even some of the most diehard of the Nazis no longer believe he is capable of leading. Goering is moving aggressively to control more and more of the economy and day-to-day operations of government. He is also beginning to show the beginnings of the corruption of power that in our time-line led to his loss of real power inside the German power structure. There is still a great deal of quiet discontent in the German

military, but that opposition is leaderless and not well organized. If anyone is going to overthrow Hitler, it will probably be someone in the Nazi hierarchy.

One thing Germany has going for it is that strong elements of both the French and British governments would rather see a German victory than a Soviet one on the eastern front. That is true in the United States as well, though mainly in Congress rather than in the Roosevelt administration. Elements of the Chamberlain government (which is still in power in this time-line's Britain—though Chamberlain himself is nearing death from cancer) have sent out feelers to see if the Germans would buy into a peace treaty that restored prewar Poland in exchange for an armistice. The British don't want a victory that brings Soviet power over central and Eastern Europe.

The Western Allies are making extensive use of Polish exile manpower. Polish pilots make up a substantial portion of the French airforce, and nearly 200,000 Polish exiles are now serving in several of their own divisions under the French army. The French army also has a couple of Czech exile divisions.

Czech-built 38t tanks are in a great deal of demand in the French light armored divisions—enough so that the French are actually seriously looking into producing their own copy of it. The French have had enough experience at war by now to realize that their tanks' one-man turrets put them at severe tactical disadvantage. They have several projects underway to produce more efficiently laid out tanks. Those projects won't bear fruit until at least mid-1941. In the meantime, the French are beginning to take deliveries of the new Somua S40 medium tanks, a couple of self-propelled guns based on a modified S40-type chassis, a new heavily armed and armored 16 ton infantry tank called the AMX38, a new self-propelled gun based on the B1 chassis, and some very powerful and innovative armored cars, including one with a 47mm gun in an oscillating turret.

The Germans have begun encountering a few KV-1 and KV-2 tanks, as well as a very few early model T34's with a short-barrel 76mm gun on the eastern front. They have begun up-gunning the Panzer-III with a 50mm gun to meet those threats. The French are also trying to up-gun their tanks. A higher velocity 75mm gun is under development for the B1 series tanks. A replacement for the B1 with a 75mm gun in the turret rather than the front hull is almost ready for production. The French are phasing out production of tanks armed with 37mm guns as quickly as they can in favor of more powerful tanks. The British are working toward replacing the 2-pounder (40mm) guns on its tanks with 6-pounders (57mm).

All of the combatants are feeling the financial pinch of the war. The French and English are trying hard to conserve hard currency, but if the war lasts much past the middle of 1941 they will face a crisis. Germany is very close to out of hard currency, and is relying on barter arrangements to bring in a trickle of raw material. The Soviets are somewhat better off, but they have to pay a risk premium for food shipments and shipments of things like rubber that they can't produce themselves. They have a great deal of gold that they received in exchange for shipping arms to the Republican forces in the Spanish Civil War, and a number of other sources of gold or hard currency, but that can't last forever, and when it runs out their war effort will develop significant gaps.

The Italians have stayed out of the war so far. They aren't ready to take on an intact Great Power and they know it. A few thousand Italian "volunteers" are fighting with the Germans on the eastern front, but the Italians are also selling aircraft engines to Britain and France, just as they did during the "phony war" in our time-line. The Italians are desperately short of oil, and are competing with the Germans for the limited supplies available from Romania. The western Allies have kept much oil from flowing to Italy because they are afraid it will be transshipped to Germany. The Italians don't have much hard currency to pay for oil anyway.

The war continues into winter, and as 1940 ends both Germany and the Soviet Union are facing bleak days as the lack of vital raw materials starts to shut down parts of their economies. The Soviet Union is far more self-sufficient than Germany, but it still finds itself short of food, rubber, aluminum, and some types of specialty petroleum products.

In the Far East, Japan is facing the prospect of another year of war with China with no clear way out. Soviet aid to the Nationalists has slowed to a trickle as the Soviets try to rebuild their armies, but the Western Allies and the United States have stepped up arms shipments to the Chinese as the crisis in Europe seems to ease.

And that's about it for this issue. What do you think? I know it's hard for most people to visualize the French stopping the Germans in 1940, but that was by no means an impossible outcome. The French put a lot of money into their army in the years immediately before World War II. A lot of it was wasted, but not all of it. The French had a lot of tanks, a lot of artillery, and a lot of manpower. The French army fought rather unevenly in our time-line. In the south it panicked and fell apart in places, especially the poorly equipped, poorly trained "B-

series" divisions. In the north it fought much more effectively, even the "B-Series" divisions.

The author of the book *Strange Victory* says that he had someone feed information on the two armies into a very sophisticated simulator. They found it almost impossible to come up with a German victory. In our time-line the Germans struck at the perfect time. The French premier had just resigned in a dispute over who would command the French army. The Chamberlain government had just fallen in England. Close to a third of the French fighter airforce was in the process of re-equipping, and wasn't immediately available for the battle. The Germans had spent the last four months intensely training for the offensive, and had studied every aspect of its logistics—and they got lucky.

So where does this time-line go from here? It looks like the Germans are going to go down hard in 1941, and the French/British on the one hand and the Soviets on the other are going to partition Germany, or impose a government on it. Of course appearances can be deceiving.



## NEANDERTHALS IN THE NEW WORLD

The Neanderthals were a cold-adapted sub-species of humans, very different from us. If Europeans had found Neanderthals instead of Indians in the New World, how would they have reacted?

Let's say that somehow—and to be honest I don't have the slightest idea how—a breeding population of Neanderthals reach North America. Time: sometime between 100,000 and 300,000 years ago. I initially visualized a hop from Europe to the Eastern US, but crossing Asia actually makes more sense. Some ecological barrier apparently kept Neanderthals from spreading across northern Asia to Siberia and from there to North America in our time-line, but if they somehow got past that barrier they could easily enough spread to the New World.

Neanderthals were a cold-adapted subspecies (or possibly species) of humanity. Think Eskimos but with less technology and more extreme physical adaptations to make up for the missing technology and you won't be too far off.

Where do we go from there? The Neanderthals initially spread through the coldest parts of North America, areas that they are already adapted to. They find the hunting easy, because North American animals haven't had a chance to adapt to human predators. In our time-line, the first Indians may have killed off 70% of the large animals of North and South America, either directly through hunting

or indirectly by modifying the habitat or competing for scarce resources like water or sheltered areas for the winter. (That's very controversial, with paleontologists splitting fairly evenly between a camp that blames climate change and one that blames the Indians for the die-off. I lean toward the Indians as the cause.)

In any case, Neanderthals are less technologically advanced than our Indians and somewhat less destructive. As they spread, they still change ecological balances in hundreds of subtle ways, just as the Indians did when they arrived in North America in our time-line. Large species quickly become rare as Neanderthals move into an area, and a few species that are already on their way out get pushed over the edge by the new elements in the environment. For the most part though, the Neanderthals have more subtle, long-term impacts on their new environment. The balance between slow but powerful animals like Ground Sloths and fast animals like horses and antelopes shifts in favor of fast animals.

The Neanderthal occupation of the Americas is much slower and less complete than the Indian occupation was in our time-line. The Neanderthals simply don't have as flexible or advanced a tool-chest as

the Indians did, so it takes them longer to adapt to new climates and new prey species. Ecological frontiers stop or reroute their expansion for generations, especially as they reach warmer climates. It takes them thousands of years to reach the southern tip of South America, and large parts of both North and South America remain uninhabited for even longer.

As the centuries pass, the American Neanderthals gradually diverge from their European cousins. They also diverge from one another. They have to adapt to their environment physically more than the Indians did, because they don't have as much technology to do the adapting for them. Branches of the American Neanderthals quickly come to differ from each other physically more than any existing human races differ. That's especially true in Alaska and Beringia, where a branch of the Neanderthals are isolated from the rest by glaciers for tens of thousands of years.

Events in the Old World continue pretty much along the same path as they took in our time-line. For reasons that are still controversial, modern humanity comes to dominate Eurasia and Africa. European Neanderthals are either absorbed or exterminated by our ancestors, with the process starting around 40,000 years ago and with the last few identifiable European Neanderthals vanishing 10 to 15 thousand years later.

Neanderthals in Siberia begin feeling the pressure of modern humanity's expansion about the same time Europe's do, though the process is somewhat slower there. Modern humanity comes to North America via a coastal route. The inland route is more difficult than in our time-line because the proto-Indians are not expanding into territory empty of humans. The big-game hunters that in our time became a significant part of the ancestry of American Indians don't make it across the Bering land-bridge before the land-bridge floods. The timing was pretty close in our time-line and the Neanderthals slow the advance down by several thousand years.

We're now at around 9,000 years before the present. North and South America are for the most part isolated again. As the glaciers quickly retreat, the two continents start to take on the shape and climate they will keep until the present.

In terms of geography and climate, North and South America look pretty much the same as they do in our time-line. In terms of humans and animals, they look very different. The animals of both continents look more like our time-line's Africa than they do in our time-line. Some of the ice age North American animals simply can't survive in a human-dominated landscape. Glyptodonts become extinct. Saber-tooth tigers become very rare and are probably headed for extinction. Some large species of Ground Sloths die out or become rare. Other animals that died out in our time-line survive and even thrive in this one. Mammoths adapt to human predation and maintain healthy populations, just as the elephants of Africa and Asia did in our time-line. Their ranges do shrink, and individual animals get somewhat smaller, but they show no signs of becoming extinct.

The horses of North and South America also thrive, as do antelopes, North and Central American camels and llamas, peccaries and the North American Lion. The highly carnivorous ice age North American bear becomes rare, and smaller, but survives, as does the North American ice-age cheetah.

The Neanderthals of the New World gradually develop more advanced technology, or it diffuses to them from modern humans they are in contact with, just as the late Neanderthals in Europe adopted a more advanced toolkit in response to the incursion of modern humans into their territory. For the next several thousand years, modern humans and Neanderthals co-exist uneasily in the New World. Let's call the modern humans Indians, though they only represent part of the ancestry of our time-line's Indians. Indians are in sporadic contact with Asia across the Bering Strait, and new technology diffuses across the strait from time-to-time. That gives modern humans an edge. On

the other hand, Neanderthals have been in the New World long enough that they've developed their own unique group of diseases, and those diseases give them an advantage over Indians trying to encroach on their territory. Neanderthal physical strength is another advantage. They are simply stronger than Indians, which gives them a major advantage in any hand-to-hand combat.

The two kinds of humanity don't mix very much. It isn't physically impossible, but there are social and behavioral barriers far greater than the barriers between modern human races. Neanderthals and modern humans just don't smell right, act right, talk right, or look right to each other. Also, relationships between the two types are somewhat more likely to produce still-born children, infertile kids, or a mother dead or sterile from complications of childbirth. There is some gene-flow between populations in direct contact with one another, but much less than between human races, and the genes tend not to spread much beyond areas of direct contact.

The New World Neanderthals have now been isolated from their European cousins for hundreds of thousands of years. They haven't stopped changing in those years. They are different genetically, socially, and technologically than their now extinct cousins were. They are quite capable of borrowing technology from the neighboring modern humans and adapting it to their lifestyle. They seem somewhat less able than modern humans to innovate, but that may be cultural rather than genetic.

Neanderthals dominate the plains, and mountainous areas, while modern humans are common along seacoasts and infiltrate the interior of the continent along the major river valleys.

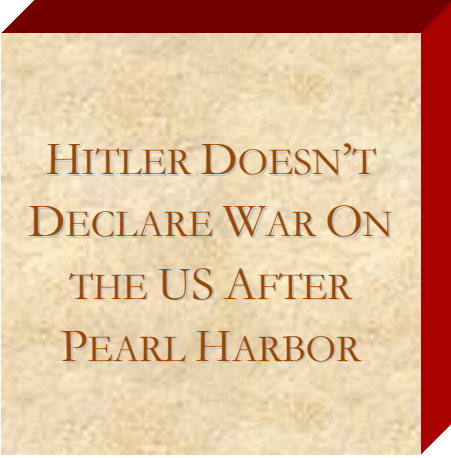
In South America, small races of Neanderthals specifically adapted to the rainforest are common. They live along-side and compete to some extent with at least two kinds of very large spider monkeys that play ecological roles similar to the African and Asian Great Apes. Both

species of monkey became extinct in our time-line. In the mountains of North and South America, other races of Neanderthals become adapted to a high-altitude life-style. At some point, Neanderthals have reached some of the larger West Indies islands and have developed some very odd forms there.

The Neanderthals have a couple of opposite impacts on technology. On the one hand, they don't tend to develop much in the way of innovations. On the other hand, in the hundreds of thousands of years they have been in the New World they have gradually developed a very sophisticated knowledge of which plants are and aren't useful. They have also had an impact on how those plants have developed. They have used sophisticated burning practices and other ways of altering the environment for over ten thousand years. Indians copy that plant knowledge and those techniques, giving them a head start toward agriculture, though they have fewer places to invent it due to the fact that Neanderthals control much of the continent

And that's where I ran out of time. What happens next? Are Neanderthals still around to greet the first Europeans? (And yes, I know that there are serious questions as to whether our set of European nations and individuals would exist in this time-line.) If the Europeans in this time-line were anything like the ones in ours, how would they react? Would the Neanderthals be treated even worse than the Indians were? Would any of them even survive the colonial era? How would the Church react to them? How would they be explained? Europeans debated whether or not Indians had souls in our time-line. That debate would undoubtedly be much more intense in this time-line.

Would this time-line develop a Darwin in the 1500's? Probably not. Neanderthals were very different from Europeans, but from a European perspective so were Indians, Africans, and even Eskimos. They would probably develop a contempt for the Neanderthals, but probably not excessively more of a contempt than they felt for other races of mankind.



HITLER DOESN'T  
DECLARE WAR ON  
THE US AFTER  
PEARL HARBOR

In the short term he loses out big-time. In the long-term, well—we'll see.

Every so often I like to take a fairly standard what-if and see if I can provide any new insight on it. I actually started out with

two scenarios here, but I realized that while neither one of them really made too much sense alone they made perfect sense together. The first scenario had the US airforce in the Philippines striking at the Japanese airbases in Taiwan shortly after they received word of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor rather than dithering for several hours and then having the core of their airforce caught on the ground. That one didn't work well because it didn't have that much long-term impact in and of itself. The second scenario had Hitler deciding not to declare war on the US after Pearl Harbor. The problem with that scenario is that as we will see in a bit, Hitler had a lot of very good reasons to declare war on the US at a time when a goodly amount of US naval power was tied up against Japan. I decided to combined the two scenarios, with the US success in the Philippines causing Hitler not to declare war on the US. I'll develop that more later.

What actually happened: Hitler encouraged the Japanese to move against the United States not as part of some overall Axis grand design, but primarily to shift America's main focus to the Pacific long enough for the Germans to knock the Soviet Union out of the war and

consolidate power in Europe. He declared war on the United States because:

1. He didn't realize how quickly and to what extent the US could mobilize industry and train large armies.
2. It gave the German navy a great deal more freedom to go after US shipping.
3. Least important, he had essentially promised the Japanese that he would.

What might have happened: Instead of getting caught on the ground, the US airforce launches a heavy raid on Japanese airbases on the Philippines. As in our time-line, the Japanese have not been able to take off yet for their intended raid on the Philippines because of ground fog. The US raid is moderately successful. It destroys 20 to 25 Japanese warplanes on the ground, damages a few more, kills some pilots in their planes, and causes enough damage to the bases to delay any immediate Japanese counter-attack.

US pilots think they've done a lot more damage than they have, and their reports are further exaggerated by the Roosevelt administration, which bills their attack as payback for Pearl Harbor. Hitler isn't so much fooled by the US account of the attack as made more cautious by

them. It brings back memories of the pre-war expectations of Italian military performance, mixes with his racism to create enough doubt as to whether or not the “little yellow men” can take on a real Great Power that he decides to await further developments—to see if the Japanese are capable of taking on the US.

Until Pearl Harbor, Hitler had been very careful to avoid any incident that would allow Roosevelt to get the US into the war for over two years. He wasn't totally unaware of the potential power of the US, though he did underestimate the amount of time it would take for that power to be mobilized. As December 1941 wears on Hitler becomes aware of the scope of the Soviet winter offensive. He also becomes upset because the Japanese didn't warn him that the Soviets were pulling large numbers of experienced divisions out of the Soviet Far East for that Soviet winter offensive, even though the Japanese knew it was happening. As December goes on, Hitler decides that any war with the US should wait until the crisis on the eastern front has eased, and until the Japanese have done more to prove themselves against the US.

The US also becomes more anxious to avoid war with Germany as December goes on. Roosevelt still considers Germany the main enemy, but the Japanese are proving unexpectedly strong, and fighting the Germans at the same time doesn't seem like as great of an idea as it did before the fighting with Japan started. The US becomes a little less aggressive in the Atlantic, at least for a few months. That makes the issue of war with the United States a little less pressing for Hitler.

So the Germans and Italians decide to wait a while before declaring war on the US. The consequences of that are on balance very negative for the Axis through about the middle of 1942. After that the balance of consequences may swing toward the Axis, depending on how much advantage the US takes advantage of their enhanced opportunities in the Pacific.

No German declaration of war has immediate negative consequences for Germany. The Germans can't take advantage of the temporary US naval weakness to devastate US shipping. That means that larger amounts of shipping are available to move war materials to Britain and to some extent the Soviet Union. On the other hand, it becomes politically much more difficult for the US to send war materials to the European Allies and especially the Soviet Union. American soldiers are besieged in the Philippines, fighting with inadequate weapons, little food and without vitally needed medicine. It is difficult to justify sending weapons to people fighting enemies we aren't even at war with while we are at risk of losing battles in Asia.

The German decision makes attempting to link back up with American forces in the Philippines much more politically necessary to the US. In order to do that, the US has to shift shipping and munitions from the Atlantic to build up forces to defend the Dutch East Indies and hopefully Malaya and Singapore. If they can do that, they can then build up air and sea power in the area, then go on the offensive. The US has been running the Japanese blockade of the Philippines on a small scale at night. More shipping available could translate into more supplies for the Philippines, prolonging resistance there.

Roosevelt doesn't really want to give rescuing forces in the Philippines top priority, and the navy is even less enthusiastic about doing so. Without a German declaration of war it becomes politically much harder not to, especially after the Roosevelt administration's trumpeting of the initial US victory. Also, if the US is more aggressive in the Pacific that may allow the British to shift forces from the Far East to the Middle East, or at least not be forced to shift forces to the Far East.

In our time-line, the German U-boats devastated unescorted US shipping in late 1941 and through July or August of 1942, making it much more difficult for the US to translate rapidly increasing arms production into military power. In our time-line, through at least mid-

1943 shortages of shipping was a constant constraint on US and British options. The U-boats sunk over 400 ships totaling over 2 million tons before the US got its act together and instituted effective convoy systems by August 1942. Peter Padfield, in his book “War Beneath the Sea” calls these losses “a disaster of infinitely greater magnitude than the more dramatic loss of slow ageing battleships from the Japanese strike on Pearl Harbor...” Padfield goes on the call “the loss of raw materials and the setback to production incalculable.”

Roosevelt still considers Hitler the main enemy, and is disappointed that the Germans haven't declared war. At the same time, forces built up for the war against Japan will eventually be usable against Germany to some extent, and certainly the US will be in much better position to fight Germany if Japan has been defeated or at least forced on the defensive. There is another advantage to going all-out against Japan early. If the US moves substantial naval power from the Atlantic to the Pacific it may make the temptation to strike at US shipping overwhelming for the Germans.

So without a German declaration of war, the US is able to ramp up production a little faster than it did in our time-line, and get that production to the battlefields much faster. It is also able to shift significant naval power from the Atlantic to the Pacific, primarily cruisers and destroyers. That transfer takes some time, but by mid-January the impact is being felt in Pacific battlefields.

The course of events on those Pacific battlefields has not yet diverged too far from our time-line so far. The Japanese invasion of Malaya goes on pretty much as scheduled. In the Philippines, it takes the Japanese about twelve days longer to establish air superiority and chase the US Asiatic Fleet out of the Philippines. They lose a few more pilots in the process, but by December 24, 1941 the remaining US planes give up challenging the Japanese in the air and are either transferred south in the case of the surviving B17s or are reserved for reconnaissance in the case of the surviving P40 fighters. The remnants

of the US Asiatic Fleet pull out on New Years Eve and heads to Java. The main Japanese invasion of Luzon is delayed just one week—to December 29. The extra week isn't enough to make a great deal of difference in terms of making the Philippines more defensible. Much of the Philippine portion of the army has only 3 months worth of training, so the extra week helps a little, but not enough to make much difference. The Japanese have somewhat less airpower to throw into the battle, and have to worry a bit more about US submarine attacks on their transports. The US is able to get a small amount of additional supplies into the Philippines before the Japanese are able to impose a blockade.

It takes the Japanese 20 days to drive the US/Philippine forces back into the Bataan peninsula rather than the 15 it took in our time-line. That brings it to January 18 rather than January 6, 1942. Now the Japanese have to make a choice. In our time-line they moved up the time-table for capturing Java by a month by moving the best units from the Philippines south. That made the conquest of the Philippines a much longer and more difficult process, but did make the conquest of the Dutch East Indies much quicker. They make the same choice in this time-line, but the forces become available almost two weeks later than in our time-line.

The Japanese attacks on the East Indies are delayed by a week at some points and two weeks at others. That is just enough time for the impact of more Allied shipping availability and naval power shifted from the Atlantic to start to be felt. As the Japanese invasion of the Netherlands East Indies starts, the US starts to weigh in. In our time-line some US cruisers and destroyers participated in the defense of the Dutch colony, but no American land forces. In this time-line, the US is able to add considerably more sea power, a marine brigade, and land-based fighters to a buildup that Roosevelt hopes will deny Japan access to the East Indies oil fields and set the stage for linking up with US forces in the Philippines.

Increased US power compounds itself. In our time-line, lack of enough destroyer escorts made it easier for Japanese submarines to take out larger American warships. For example, a Japanese submarine torpedoed and sunk an old US seaplane carrier that was ferrying thirty-five P40 fighters to help defend Java. In this time-line, a stronger destroyer escort foils that attack, and the P40's become operational over Java.

That in turn makes the task of the fleet defending the East Indies a little more doable. In our time-line the Japanese had undisputed control of the air around Java, and used it to destroy the small Dutch and American fleets in the area. In this time-line, the Japanese still win the initial battles in the area, and land in Java. The US actually loses more ships and men than they did in our time-line, but it has a lot more ships to lose than it did in our time-line. The Japanese lose more ships than in our time-line too, along with scarce pilots and destroyer crews. The battle for Java turns into something resembling the battle for Guadalcanal—with both sides building up and fighting a war of attrition on the land and the sea and air around it.

The US has a lot more to learn about fighting a naval war than the Japanese do, and initially loses a series of lopsided battles in the seas around Java, but as in our time-line the Americans learn fast, and they manage to do some damage too. The Marines are tough and well-trained, and they give the Japanese an unpleasant taste of what they are going to be up against as more American troops enter the fighting. The US is also fighting an ongoing small-scale campaign to sneak supplies into the Philippines.

There has been little impact on fighting in North Africa or in the Soviet Union. The increased shipping available comes very close to counterbalancing the increased American commitment to the Pacific through about mid-1942. After that though, Germany starts to get stronger compared to our time-line. Without the US buildup in Britain, Germany can concentrate a larger percentage of its forces against the

Soviet Union in the second half of 1942. Also, there is little reason for the Germans to allocate scarce manpower to building the “Atlantic Wall” defenses. That eases a bottleneck in the German economy and translates into higher production of tanks, artillery, and aircraft.

Without the American bomber offensive, Germany has more planes and more flak guns for the Russian front. That starts out as a relatively small difference, but gradually grows more important as the second half of 1942 wears on.

Also, the Germans do find a use for the submarines that in our time-line were devastating US shipping. The British find the going a bit tougher in the Atlantic as the US withdraws naval power to fight in the Pacific. The British have been fighting the naval war for over two years though, and they have an effective convoy system in place. They lose more ships than in our time-line, but nowhere near the amounts that the US would have.

And that's when I ran out of time. So where does this go from here? Do the Japanese take the East Indies anyway? Do the Soviets still hold out through 1942? Obviously if a battle of Midway happens it won't happen exactly the way it happened in our time-line. What are the consequences of that? What happens in 1943 and 1944 as the Soviets continue to face close to the entire might of the Germans? Does the US eventually enter the war against Germany?

**A GREAT  
INDIAN  
CIVILIZATION  
IN EASTERN  
NORTH  
AMERICA?**

Could a civilization equivalent to the Aztecs and Incas have developed in eastern North America? If so would it have shared the fate of the Aztecs and Incas?

What actually happened: North America got a late start in the agriculture game. Indians along some of the major rivers in the interior of casually cultivated little gardens of small-seeded sunflowers, squash and a couple of other crops around their settlements by around 2500 BC. That's about 1000 years after agriculture started in Mexico and Peru. Cities and civilizations were already thousands of years old in the Middle East, China, Egypt, and India. Empires and kingdoms had already been rising and falling. Conquerors had already spread their power across goodly hunks of the world, then died and had their deeds and even their names forgotten. The primitive farmers of interior North America weren't conquerors. As a matter of fact their agricultural system failed to spread to their neighbors, who remained happy enough to stay hunter-gatherers. Agriculture didn't become a major factor in the diets of eastern North America until around 300 BC—not much before the Punic Wars in Europe. By around 800 AD, eastern North America's Indians were on a trajectory that might eventually have led to an Inca/Aztec-level civilization. The Mississippian Mound Builders certainly had some of the characteristics that in other areas eventually led to more sophisticated cultures. They were still at least a thousand years behind the Aztecs

and Incas though—maybe more. European diseases and other disturbances ended any chance that they would catch up.

What might have happened: While they got a late start, the early farmers of eastern North America weren't irretrievably behind by 1000 BC. They still had roughly 2500 years to catch up. Let's say that something puts them on a slightly faster trajectory toward a farming-oriented life-style. It could be something as simple as someone important noticing that if you save larger seeds and plant them, next year's crops will tend to bear larger seeds. Cultivated plants tend to get larger seeds as a natural part of their development, but deliberate selection by humans speeds that process up quite a bit. In our time-line the shift to deliberate selection may have taken place around 2-300 AD for one of the now-extinct early Indian crops and around 6-700 AD for sunflowers. At least that's when seed-size growth skyrocketed for the two crops.

Let's say that the shift to deliberate selection comes about 7-800 years earlier in this time-line—around 400 BC. The improvement to their crops quickly increases the productivity of the little gardens, and those gardens take on a greater role in people's lives. The little gardens now require more attention, but also repay that attention with more productivity. The increased productivity of their crops makes the transition to dependence on agriculture quicker than in our time-line.

The cultures that quickly develop are not exactly the same as the classic Adena and Hopewell mound-builders of our time-line, but they are close enough that it would take an anthropologist to tell the difference. The major change is that this time-line's Mound Builders reach a given milestone several hundred years before their near-equivalents in our time-line did.

Shifting the trajectory of Indian agriculture back 800 years has some interesting consequences. When corn reaches the area for the first time around 200 AD, the gardens around the littler Mound-builder hamlets have gotten big enough that corn is accepted as a minor crop, though it initially doesn't offer a big enough advantage over local crops to dominate them.

In this time-line, agriculture goes into major expansion mode around 200 BC. Populations have grown enough that resources, including good cropland are getting scarce. Warfare becomes more common and it forces populations to consolidate. Instead of littler hamlets with an extended family or two, villages of several hundred people become the norm. In the environment of increased warfare, settlements have to get larger, or they will simply be looted or destroyed by their larger neighbors. While raids had not been unknown before, the economic motives make them more common and deadly.

Increased use of corn drives the process faster, once corn is adopted. Corn rapidly leaches nutrients out of the soil, and it takes many years for fertility to recover. Farming on floodplains helps some because the frequent floods help replenish nutrients, but even there soil exhaustion eventually occurs. Wild game and even firewood become scarce around the villages too. A pattern of larger settlements further apart from one another develops. Villages move frequently within their territories as resources become locally depleted.

The culture that emerges by about 300 AD is not really Hopewell or Mississippian as they existed in our time-line. Artistically it is much like a more sophisticated Hopewell. Settlement structures and

population levels are more like Mississippian, and warfare is much more common than in our time-line's Hopewell.

That increased warfare moves the wide-spread adoption of bows and arrows forward a few hundred years to around 300 AD. That in turn makes warfare more deadly.

In our time-line, agriculture remained pretty much restricted to the central river valleys of North America until around 700-800 AD, or possibly a little earlier. When agriculture did spread, it was usually dominated by corn. In this time-line, the native crops become productive enough to spread out of the central river valley around 100 BC. In our time-line the Hopewell mound-builders had a trade network that stretched from the Atlantic Coast to the Rocky Mountains. In this time-line, a similar network exists, and it promotes the rapid spread of a subset of the native North American crops.

As agriculture spreads, new centers of farming cultures develop, taking some of the already developed crops, adding in a few local food plants that can adapt to agriculture, and making their own unique style of agriculture. By 500 AD, new centers of agriculture have developed along the mid-Atlantic coast between North Carolina and New Jersey, in southern New England, and among the proto-Iroquois tribes from Northern Ohio through upstate New York and southern Canada. Little patches of sunflowers are being grown as far west as California, where they offer a low-risk supplement to the sophisticated hunter-gatherer cultures there. A secondary agricultural center based on a few eastern crops plus several native food plants develops along the Colorado river.

The process of development in eastern North America is not linear. Cultures rise and fall. Populations rise, hit limits, then fall back, at least locally. On the whole though, cultures are becoming more complex and technologically advanced throughout most of North America. As that happens, links between the various cultures grow stronger. By 800 AD, regular trade between the American southwest and the eastern US is enriching both cultures. It is also making both

cultures more attractive sources of trade for northern Mexican cultures. That increases the flow of ideas between the 3 cultures.

Eastern North America still has its own unique group of crops, though corn does play a role in agriculture throughout the area, and unique strains of corn have been developed in several areas. The unique crops of eastern North America are now making their own contribution to tightening the links between the southwest, eastern North America, and Mexico. Some of those crops can grow in areas where corn simply can't, and they extend the reach of agriculture, not eliminating the gaps between agricultural groups, but making those gaps smaller.

Eastern North America is still adding new food crops, though at a much slower rate than before. Domestic varieties of eastern North America's small, originally rather bitter wild apples add variety to diets. They also become the basis for a variety of weakly fermented drinks that become part of the region's religious ceremonies.

By 1000 AD, both California and the Colorado river valley have become important secondary centers of crop development, though California diets are still dominated by increasingly sophisticated hunting and gathering. In California, the lines between agriculture and wild food gathering are frequently blurry, with the Indians promoting growth of a variety of food plants without technically domesticating them.

In eastern North America, increasingly productive agriculture has allowed craft specialists to develop. Stone and wood carvings become more and more elaborate. Metal working becomes more sophisticated, though it still involves heating and forming objects of nearly pure metal rather than extracting metal from ore until around 1200 AD, when more sophisticated techniques diffuse from Northeastern Mexico. Cotton spreads from the southwest to some areas of the southeastern US at about the same time, and cotton goods become major items of trade. Increasingly sophisticated political and economic systems increasingly require record-keeping, and systems of record-keeping

develop into primitive writing gradually over the period between 1100 and 1400 AD.

Indians have maintained their Mound-building traditions over the centuries, but mound-building has taken on different meanings for different cultures in the area. Along the Mississippi mounds are topped by temples or houses of government. In other areas, they mark the burial spots of society's elite members.

In several places, Indians develop reasonably elaborate boat-building traditions. That's especially true along the Mississippi river, in Northern New England, and along the coasts of Georgia and Florida. The New England designs are influenced to some extent by the example of Viking trade ships that venture into the extreme northern part of the area on a very sporadic basis from around 900 to 1400 AD. A small-scale indirect trade develops between the Greenland Vikings and some of the tribes north of New England. Norse metal goods and textiles find their way into North American trade networks in very small quantities. Their scarcity gives them great value. Indian metalworkers imitate some of the Norse metal goods in copper. The results are often not particularly useful, but they do stimulate use of copper in tools rather than ornaments.

Indian grains and tobacco flow north in small amounts to the Greenland Vikings. The tobacco actually provides the main incentive for the Vikings to keep coming back once its use catches on in Greenland. Small quantities of tobacco reach Iceland starting around 1250 AD and fuel an upturn in voyages from Iceland to Greenland from 1250 AD until the mid-1300's. After that, the cooling climate makes voyages to and from Greenland very difficult, and the trade dwindles to a trickle, though it never entirely stops.

The Vikings have tried to establish settlements or trading posts on the North American coast from time-to-time, but those settlements are short-lived. There is a small amount of gene-flow from the Norse to

the Indians, and in a couple of places herds of feral cattle or horses survive and spread after their masters leave.

The tobacco and grain trade does allow the Greenland Vikings to survive a bit longer than they did in our time-line. Both the eastern and western colonies survive long enough to be ravaged in a smallpox epidemic that spreads from Ireland in the 1460's. The epidemic spreads to Eskimos that come to trade with the Vikings in West Greenland colony. From there it spreads to neighboring Indians and then sweeps through most of eastern North America before burning itself out. Around 30 percent of the Indian population of eastern North America dies. That makes it equivalent to an Indian version of Europe's Black Death.

North America's Indian civilization falters a bit, but is well on its way to recovery when Spanish explorers begin probing the area roughly 50 years later. (This assumes that European history has gone on about as it did in our time-line—not necessarily true, but I'll assume that it has for now and deal with the issue later.)

In the years between the epidemic and Spanish contact, cotton becomes common throughout much of the region. Indian metallurgists learn how to make bronze from this time-line's version of the Huastecs of northeastern Mexico. Power relationships are reshuffled as Indian kingdoms that escaped relatively lightly from the epidemic are suddenly much more powerful compared to hard-hit ones.

And then the Spanish come. The higher level of civilization and higher populations make the southern coast of North America much more attractive to the Spanish than they were in our time-line. There isn't a lot of gold in the area, but there is some from North American sources and a little more is brought into the area by trade with Mexico.

In both time-lines, Florida was actually discovered before the high culture areas of Mexico. In this time-line, Florida becomes the target of a Spanish attempt at conquest starting in 1516. Panfilo Narvaez

leads an expedition from Cuba, with Hernando Cortes as one of his lieutenants.

Unfortunately for the Indians, their higher level of civilization makes them more susceptible to Spanish conquest. While there is no single North American empire to be conquered, there are substantial kingdoms whose machinery of government the Spanish can seize and force to do their bidding. The Spanish seize one such kingdom in 1516 and are able to dominate most of central Florida through it for a while.

Eastern North America gets its second taste of smallpox in 1519, as the disease spread to the West Indies, then to the new Florida colony. Smallpox also spreads to Panama and eventually up Central America to Mexico and south to Peru. North America's second epidemic isn't quite as bad as the first one. A few oldsters are partially immune, and descendants of the people who survived the first epidemic are a little less susceptible than a population which had never faced the disease would have been.

The chaos left by the second epidemic allows the Spanish to extend their control to northern Florida, to the people who in our time-line would have become the Apalachee tribe. The Spanish are also able to command tribute from kingdoms even further north, though control there is tenuous. Cortes commands the expedition to Northern Florida, and establishes himself as a quasi-independent power in that area.

The North American colonies are the place for ambitious Spaniards to be from 1516 to around 1522, when Spanish expeditions moving north from Panama discover the high-culture areas of Mexico. The Florida colonies, along with the Spanish colonies in the West Indies, lose a large part of their populations as ambitious Spaniards converge on Mexico from throughout the area. The remaining Spaniards in Florida split into bitter factions, with Cortes maneuvering to sever his dependence on Narvaez. Narvaez is determined to retain his control of northern Florida, at least partly because his misrule of the central area

has driven away or killed enough Indians that the remainder can't support even the remaining Spaniards in the area at the level they have become accustomed to. Spanish in the two areas wage a cold war that sometimes even involves slave raids on Indians loyal to the other faction.

Friction between the two factions is a major factor in an Indian revolt in 1524 that kills a couple of hundred Spaniards, including Narvaez and reduces central Florida to an impoverished backwater. Thousands of rebel Indians flee to still unconquered areas of South Florida, hiding out in the swamps and waging guerrilla war on the remaining Spaniards. Northern Florida fares better, but the Spaniards do lose control over tributary groups to their north, and several thousand Indian rebels from the more settled areas flee north, taking looted Spanish goods and knowledge of Spanish ways with them.

The Indians the Spanish have encountered so far in North America are somewhat intimidated by the Spanish, but they are by no means easy to conquer or to retain control of. The Indians are excellent archers. They build formidable fortifications. They quickly figure out how to use terrain to minimize the impact of cavalry.

A large Indian kingdom roughly analogous to our time-line's lower Creeks in Central Georgia has been a prize just outside Spanish control since 1519. They pay nominal tribute and acknowledge Spanish rule from 1519 to 1522, then become increasingly assertive from 1522 to 1524, and play a major role in the revolt of 1524.

Cortes is trying to put together an expedition to put an end to that assertiveness shortly after the revolt in Florida is put down. At that point, he is called back to Spain to face accusations of fomenting the revolt that killed Narvaez. He becomes embroiled in court politics and is imprisoned for a couple of years.

The two sections of Florida stagnate, as Spanish factions feud over a dwindling supply of Indians in the conquered areas. Aggressive and

ambitious Spaniards drift away to the easier, richer pickings in Central and South America. Cortes returns to the New World in time to lead a Spanish expedition to conquer this time-line's version of the Incas in 1530. Florida remains a backwater until the 1540's. There are easier and richer pickings elsewhere. Still unconquered Indians in southern Florida become major raiders of the cattle ranches that begin springing up where climate allows it in central Florida. Spanish slave raids into unconquered areas of the southeast keep Indians hostile.

As in our time-line, the French explore the coast of eastern North America and make some abortive attempts to settle. Those attempts fail because of Indian hostility, and the lack of easily portable wealth. Ships of all European nations explore, trade, fish, and/or loot along the coast. As in our time-line, hundreds—maybe even thousands of Indians are kidnapped or tricked into going with the Europeans for various reasons—as slaves, as curiosities, to be converted, or to be used as interpreters. In this time-line, those Indians are somewhat more hardened to European disease, and more of them make it back to their homelands where they bring with them more sophisticated understanding of European motives and technology.

There is a constant trickle of fugitives from conquered areas to the still unconquered areas—some of them escaped slaves, some of them locals fed up with Spanish rule. Some of those fugitives take Spanish tools, crops and techniques north with them. Florida doesn't attract Spanish craftsmen to any great extent, so the Spanish are dependent on Indian craftsmen to supply many of the things they need to maintain a Spanish lifestyle. That means that Indians learn a subset of Spanish building, metallurgy, and many other techniques. Some of those Indian craftsmen then find their way to still independent Indian states, where their skills are in great demand. Primitive iron-working becomes common in some parts of the southeast. Indian-made iron axes and knives become sought-after commodities—not as prestigious as European-made ones, but more useful to the Indians because they are common enough to actually be used rather than just hoarded.

Crops head north too, especially easy ones like peach trees and watermelons. Horses strayed or stolen from Spanish Florida become rare but valuable status symbols for Indian rulers. Feral herds left over from the Viking settlements in the Northeast become a secondary source of horses for those rulers. Herds of pigs become common around Indian towns and villages through most of Eastern North America.

Diseases keep spreading into the area—measles, mumps, malaria, and new smallpox epidemics. The denser populations and better communications in this time-line mean that diseases spread all the way to New England and deep into the plains once they get a foothold. By the 1540's, eastern North America has already had 80-odd years of exposure to New World diseases, and while those diseases are still deadly, Indian populations are already starting to bottom out in some places. The diversity of their agricultural base makes the Indians of this time-line somewhat less susceptible to famines following epidemics. Crops mature at different times so missing a harvest or planting time due to an epidemic is not quite as deadly as it was in our time-line. The more diverse diet also means that this time-line's Indians are somewhat better off nutritionally than ours were, and that translates into somewhat better survival rates in an epidemic. Even

with all of those advantages, the Indian population still shrinks to a little less than half of what it was prior to the first epidemic—with areas closest to Florida down to around thirty percent of their original population. That reduced population is still a little higher than our time-line's Indian population of 1492.

By now, European fishermen are trading with Indians in northeastern North America, and there is a trickle of trade from the Spanish settlements north into unconquered territory. Indian craftsmen are advanced enough to imitate many of the trade goods, but the European goods tend to influence styles even in remote areas of eastern North America.

And that is where I ran out of time. Where do we go from here? Do the Spanish renew their push for conquests in North America? Large settled populations do attract them. Do England, France, and Holland try to colonize the area? If so, how do they deal with a larger, more technologically advanced population that by 1600 will already have reached it's low point from introduced diseases and started back up?

## Book Review:

Hitler's Italian Allies:  
Royal Armed Forces,  
Fascist Regime, and  
the War of 1940-1943  
– By: MacGregor  
Knox

Were the Italians really as bad as they looked? If so, why?

Some striking things I brought from this book:

1) In spite of the bombast, Mussolini's political power in Italy was in reality very limited. He could move generals and admirals from position to position, and even sack them for extremely obvious incompetence, but he couldn't bring in new blood from outside the top ranks of the armed forces. The fascist regime sometimes beat up its political enemies, or exiled them to unpleasant places. It very rarely killed them, not because of any moral qualms but because it paid too high a political price when it did so. The Fascists also failed to demand the kind of sacrifices that the other major powers did, probably out of fear of a political backlash. Through most of the war, the military's share of gross domestic product remained low compared to every other major power. While the Fascists nationalized much of Italian industry, they didn't exercise much control over the nationalized companies. Nationalized companies no longer had to worry about bankruptcy or remaining competitive, but in other ways they acted as almost totally independent kingdoms. The combination of freedom from bankruptcy and little government control led to very

high prices. Making steel in Italy cost four times what importing it would have. An Italian battleship cost twice as much to build as it would have in a French shipyard. In some cases, companies were given a monopoly on building classes of weapons, and held onto that monopoly in spite of providing poorly designed models throughout the war. A joint venture of Fiat and Ansaldo designed all of Italy's tanks and armored cars. That joint venture put design in the hands of one person throughout the war. The monopoly remained intact in spite of providing mediocre designs throughout the war. The Italians were offered a Czech medium tank design by the Germans early on, and designs and even machine tools for Panzer III's and IV's later. The Italians got an intact Soviet T34 to study early on, but apparently never attempted to copy it.

2) The Italian military was very resistant to innovations. Part of that was structural, part of it was due to the individuals involved. The book cites a case where it took a week to design a Molotov cocktail, and 6 months to get it approved for production by all of the bureaucracies that had to sign off on it. In another case, an innovative little corner of the naval establishment created a series of increasingly effective radar sets and repeatedly tried to get the navy to test the

prototypes on ships. From 1936 to 1941, the navy refused to try those prototypes out. They finally got a taste of what radar could do from the British, and tried to get their radar into production. The bureaucracies tied up production long enough that the Italians had to get radar units from the Germans. Remarkably, the Italian units were still in many ways more effective than either British or German radar as late as 1943.

3) In spite of Mussolini's warlike talk, the Italians were very poorly prepared for war in a multitude of ways. The Italian army really was a paper tiger. It had over 90 divisions, but those divisions were small and poorly equipped. An Italian division had roughly half the manpower of a British one for example. The Italian army had an inordinate number of officers, but far too few non-commissioned officers for its size. It was also deficient in most of the inconspicuous little things like trucks, radios, and training that make an army effective. The Italian mobilization process tried to work at nation-building by putting people from throughout Italy in the same unit. Unfortunately, the process just reduced unit cohesion and made mobilization cumbersome. Italian logistics organization was so bad it could barely keep an immobile division supplied, and a war of movement made matters worse. Italian production of war materials would have kept around twenty divisions supplied with adequate quantities of mediocre weapons. Italian industry simply wasn't up to the task of equipping 90+ divisions with war material. Italy's shortage of every kind of fuel made it impossible to expand production.

4) The Italian army and regime was capable of learning to some extent. As the war went on, training improved. Tactics improved. Weapons design improved, especially aircraft design. By 1943 the Italians were producing small quantities of fighter aircraft competitive with the best Germany could offer, though by that time the Italian economy was falling apart and production was far too low.

5) Given all of the handicaps they had to overcome, the average Italian soldier actually fought rather well, at least on the defensive. Most mass surrenders happened when units were cut off and really were in a hopeless position. Italian troops tended to end up in hopeless positions much more often than they should have due to stupid decisions on the part of Italian or in some cases German leadership, but that wasn't the fault of the average soldier. Putting elite but lightly armed mountain divisions up against T34s on the plains around Stalingrad was simply stupid. Attacking Greece with winter coming on, with no logistical preparations, and after having just demobilized 600,000 troops (out of 1.2 million men under arms in Italy) was just stupid. Putting masses of foot-borne infantry out on the North African deserts was stupid.

This is a good book—full of insights, facts, and reasons why things happened. I didn't get many good what-ifs out of it though. The Italian armed forces performed poorly for so many reasons and for such intertwining reasons that it is hard to visualize a point of divergence that leads to Italy doing well in World War II.



POD MEMBER  
COMMENTS

## I comment on the last issue of POD.

**Robert Alley:** Again I'm very impressed by the quantity and quality of your commentary. Thirty-nine pages of commentary adds a lot to the issue.

Your comments to Luke: I have to agree with most of your critique of the India revolt scenario. The Europeans conquered and held their colonies because of divisions within the conquered, a large technology gap, and because they were able to co-opt the most effective leaders in the colonies. All of those factors gradually broke down by the 1940's or 50's, but in 1915 they were still strong enough to make successful revolts rather difficult.

Your response to Freitag: Yeah, it was by no means a done deal that British intervention would have meant a Confederate victory. I wonder what a successful British blockade of the north would have meant to the development of northern industry. Presumably it would have stimulated at least some industries. On the other hand, capital flows would have stopped for the duration.

Your response to Gill: In the late 80's or early 90's an anthology came out called something like "War of the Worlds—Global Dispatches". It did a fairly good job of imagining what was going on in the rest of the world during the invasion of England. As I recall, there was even a Burroughs Mars/War of the Worlds Mars cross-over of sorts. As I recall it the anthology seemed like a fun read.

Your response to Montgomerie: Yeah, I could see a compromise where children of slaves were born free. I could even see that being proposed on a geographically limited basis—say as a compromise in a disputed border territory like Kansas. Of course that would make it somewhat less likely that slave owners would end up in those territories.

Unfortunately for the country, slavery had become a good versus evil moral issue for both halves of the country. From a moral standpoint, it needed to become that. It was an evil institution that needed to be abolished. From a practical standpoint, the good versus evil couching of the issue made it difficult to craft ways to get the south out of the slavery dead-end without ruining its economy. If people on both sides had been more open to compromise they might have been able to find ways of gradually reducing the number of slaves that the south could have lived with, and maybe even embraced. For example, slaves that were obvious partly or mainly white in ancestry had to have been an embarrassment to the southern racial ideology. In a different political climate it might have been possible to institute a program of freeing them and giving them land somewhere in the west.

Your comments to me: I do need to get back and finish the Operation Torch scenario, don't I? You make a good point about US isolationism being primarily directed at Europe. There was a good reason for that. The World War I allies cheerfully took American

soldiers and money during the war, but then from an American point of view they essentially froze the US out of meaningful participation in shaping the peace, then in many cases defaulted on their debts to the US in the 1930's. Many people in the US felt that the US had been conned into helping one side in what was just another one of those petty fights over colonies and scraps of territory that had been going on in Europe for the last thousand or so years.

On the 'No T34' scenario, I see one problem with your analysis. The occupation boundaries in Europe were set based partly on where the powers thought they could get to at the time the boundaries were set. If the Soviets advanced more slowly, they would almost certainly get a smaller slice of territory to occupy.

On Winston: Thanks for the nitpick about Wayne not putting the perfume on Gene's head. I'll have to take care of that.

On the 1939 atlas: I believe this was an updated edition of something originally published a number of years earlier, which may account for some of the anachronisms.

One of the things that would have made it risky for the Japanese to bypass the Philippines was the buildup of heavy bombers there. The US already had a number of B17's based in the Philippines, and a lot more were headed that way. The idea is that in combination with the growing number of modern US fighters on the island, they would be able to dominate the seas around the Philippines. The US was really building up in the Philippines—shipping in more marine, building up the Philippine army, and building up a reasonably formidable airforce. Of course a major hunk of that airforce was caught on the ground in a still somewhat mysterious set of circumstances.

If the Japanese had attacked the British and Dutch, but not the US, the US would have at least accelerated the Philippines buildup. In our time-line the US had shipped a thousand planes and over a hundred thousand soldiers to Pacific War fronts by the end of April 1942, and

that was in the face of German U-boat raids that cut deeply into US shipping, and Japanese raids that destroyed hundreds of US planes on the ground at Pearl Harbor and in the Philippines. Given time, the US would have built the Philippines into a very formidable base sitting right across Japanese supply routes.

In terms of paradoxical consequences, I would say that an interesting one would have been to have the US be warned about the Pearl Harbor attack in time to have the battleships powered up and everyone at battle stations—with fighters scrambled to provide air cover instead of sitting wingtip to wingtip on their fields. Say someone takes the radar warnings of incoming aircraft seriously. If the fighters get up, chances are that they shoot down a few Japanese planes, but lose a lot more planes and at least some pilots—harder to replace than soon to be obsolete planes. More battleships are ready to go at Pearl, which could lead to them being used and sunk along with their crews at some place where they couldn't be raised and repaired like the battleships sunk at Pearl Harbor quickly were.

I enjoyed the first part of your VENONA project scenario, but I suspect that you are perhaps a bit too optimistic on the longer-term consequences. I doubt that anti-communism in the United States would actually get weaker in the US given evidence of what the US would see as betrayal by a wartime ally and a dangerous ability to penetrate the US government. Also, there were too many US entities with a stake in there being an enemy to fear for the red threat to simply fade away, or even be significantly less virulent than it was in our time-line.

On your Koxinga scenario: I think one where he takes the Philippines has more potential, but the route you took may be more realistic, and it still has some reasonably interesting consequences.

**Dale Cozort:** I really wish I could have continued the Croatian revolt scenario this issue. It was starting to shape up as an interesting little divergence. I also wanted to actually do something major on the

Koxinga divergence. I simply ran out of time on both of those projects. Maybe next issue. I still didn't get back to the stuff I missed commenting on from last issue. Sorry about that. Maybe I'll have more time next issue.

**Tom Cron:** As usual I enjoyed your "obscure short works corner". As usual I am a bit frustrated that I have no way of getting any of them. The rest of the submission: RAEBNC.

**Anthony Docimo:** I have to admit that your formatting makes reading your zine a tad 'interesting'. I'm a big fan of "Sliding Doors" too. Interesting speculations on what types of animals can become intelligent. I suspect, though that most aliens in SF films are portrayed as humanoid because of the difficulty and expense of portraying them any other way. That is changing as CGI becomes more common and less expensive. On the Fantasy Island episode: the Canary Islands were already very firmly in Spanish hands by the time the Pilgrims sailed. Also, from the Indian point of view the Pilgrims were small potatoes. The later Puritan migration was the one that really did them in (at least in New England). I'm glad you liked my "roo-lemurs".

**Mark Ford:** Your idea of going back in time and grabbing the rights to famous songs is a sneaky one. I don't recall hearing that one before. Good point about Churchill possibly using discovery of a Soviet spy ring to prevent a second front in France.

**Robert Gill:** Aztecs as a world-spanning empire? Does sound nasty. Getting to that with a plausible AH would take some doing. Someday when I have more time I may try to do it, just for the sheer challenge of it.

Your "Bush gets flattened" divergence: Pretty plausible. It's hard for me to visualize Gore winning, in spite of the closeness of the actual race. McCain seems a plausible enough candidate. I didn't do anything on this one because I class it as "alternate current events" rather than alternate history. I toyed with the idea of doing a scenario

where Jeb Bush took up his fallen brother's fallen mantle and scored lopsided wins in the primaries and general elections on a sympathy vote, but to be honest I couldn't muster enough interest.

Frankly I find it hard to find much of interest in the current political scene. In spite of its uniqueness, the ending of this past election struck me as more grubby than historical.

I'll be interested in how Clinton is looked at once distance adds some perspective to our views of him. Conan O'Brien (late night talk show host) says that Clinton's our first cartoon president—kind of like Wile E. Coyote or Daffy Duck in that he's always doing something that absolutely blows up in his face. You see him singed or flattened, and with a few feathers missing, then there's a little cut to commercial, and when we come back he's back strutting around getting ready to have something else blow up in his face or fall on him.

Some controversial presidents stay controversial—Franklin Roosevelt and to a lesser extent John F. Kennedy come to mind. Others seem to find something approaching a consensus niche in history—Nixon seems to be headed for that, as does Herbert Hoover.

Your early decryption scenario was about as cheery as an AH can get and remain even sort of plausible. I could nitpick individual aspects of it, but I won't. It's sometimes fun to visualize a better world. The Western Allies could plausibly take most of the Czech part of Czechoslovakia. They might, if they were unwise, move into northern Yugoslavia and get involved in the ethnic struggles of the Croats and Slovenes. One complicating factor in this world would be the presence in the west of hundreds of thousands if not millions of Soviet citizens, many of whom had fought in the German army or collaborated in various ways. In our time-line many if not most them got sent back to the Soviet Union or the other eastern bloc countries. In this time-line they would be a constant destabilizing factor. Expect a lot of exile organizations and a lot of intrigue between them and Soviet infiltrators.

Your comments to me: You are right about his native environment not being a paradise for Winston of course. As you noted, I have the A-bomb delay in the Torch time-line much shorter than yours, but that's not something I have a very strong opinion about. Six months may be more realistic. I'm glad you enjoy my Indian time-lines. I should have a new one this issue if all goes well.

**David Johnson:** Yeah, the Darien colony had a major potential impact. I like the idea of English (or Scottish) challenges to Spanish rule on the mainland of South and Central America—as you may have figured out from my Drake AH. I've thought about doing one where the Puritan colony of New Providence (off the coast of Nicaragua) survives.

Your comments to me: Yeah, the Spanish were extremely lucky in Mexico. Among the many other things that helped them out:

- They launched their initial advance on the Aztec capital at a time when the Aztecs were busy with agricultural activities, and would have found it very difficult to put together an army to oppose them. That had never been a problem before because all Mexican societies shared the same vulnerability.
- Smallpox showed up at exactly the right time. Much earlier and the Aztecs might have either recovered a bit from the shock or fallen apart badly enough that there wouldn't have been an empire to conquer. A bunch of independent city-states and petty kingdoms would probably have taken a lot longer to conquer.
- The Spanish were able to communicate with Mexican political groups a lot sooner than they otherwise would have because they barely managed to contact a Spanish shipwreck survivor. Another such survivor who had gone native among one of the petty Mayan kingdoms could have caused the Spanish a great deal of trouble but died in an early battle or in its aftermath.

- Then of course there was the shipbuilder who happened to be on the expedition and survived when he could easily have died in one of the Spanish defeats. The gunboats he built were the key to the eventual Spanish conquest of the Aztecs.

Thanks for the nitpicks on Winston. That's one of the things that I find most useful in being part of this group. You were right about the date of the "mystery map" by the way. And yes, I will add some info on how people may have known about the exchange coming to Ashburn.

I enjoyed this section of "TrolleyWorld". The bit about the other time-lines discovering the 'portal' adds a nice little complication. Keep it coming.

**Keller:** I enjoyed the reprint on Genoa discovering the New World. I doubt that the results would have been as described. The Portuguese tried the trade without conquest model in Brazil, but found that it didn't work very well. I guess that could have been due to the level the Brazilian tribes were at, but the Indian response might make profitable trade difficult.

**Ian Moore:** Nice to know more about you. I think that being interested enough in alternate history to join an organization like POD establishes your 'nerd' credentials adequately without the other stuff. I certainly wear the title without serious question. Living in the United States, I find it hard to visualize not driving, though I did try it for a while back in my college days when my car was dieseling for five minutes, then expiring in a puff of blue smoke every time I turned it off. I walked a LOT, and spent a lot of time trying to negotiate Rockford's extremely inadequate mass transit system and dealing with the odd denizens of it—the lady with blue hair whose head wobbled constantly, and the guy who claimed to be the Shah of Iran. I found out later that the "Shah of Iran" had once been a brilliant engineer. He had some sort of attack that cut off blood flow to his brain long

enough that it never completely recovered. He spent his days riding the bus and striking up unnerving conversations with total strangers.

Vikings do have a much better press over here, probably partly because a lot of people from the Scandinavian countries settled here and also because they did not come over and smash things up over here—at least not to any great extent.

Your response to Lodi-Ribiero: From what I've read, it took well over ten thousand years for modern man to totally replace the Neanderthals in Europe. The last pockets of Neanderthals appear to have lived in southern Spain and Croatia if I recall correctly. Hopefully you'll enjoy my Neanderthals in the New World scenario in this issue.

Your response to Robert Gill: The Vietnam war, or at least the way it was fought, did have critics on the right, especially during the Johnson administration. Conservatives looked at the process of gradual escalation that McNamara and his brain trust promoted and thought it was stupid—and a way to get American kids killed unnecessarily. The attitude was 'do what it takes to get it over with and get the kids home'—which of course was way too unsophisticated for the crowd that was running things at that point. They had it all figured out from thousands of miles away, and they could calibrate exactly how much pressure the US needed to put on the North Vietnamese to get them to the peace table. Yes, I'm being sarcastic. The Vietnam war under Johnson was run by accountants who thought they were also great military leaders. The two professions don't usually see much overlap, to say the least. They wasted a lot of money and a lot of lives, and the ones who are still alive still don't seem to realize what they did to the country.

I'm not sure when slavery died out in New England. It almost had to have been in the very late 1600's or very early 1700's. Slavery didn't take off in New England partly because the slaves tended to die of respiratory ailments. New England got its involuntary labor through

indentured servants. Their lot was pretty bad, but at least there was an end to the period where they were essentially owned.

Interesting stuff about Ireland's pro-British 'neutrality' in World War II. The details of the rules for our electoral college are determined by the states. Most are winner-take-all, but one or two have more complex rules. If a state wanted to they could go proportional, as far as I know. The problem is that then that state would have less influence because winning or losing would yield fewer Electoral College votes.

I recall reading somewhere that if we went to a proportional election system and got rid of all the little advantages that the Republicans and Democrats have voted themselves, the two major parties combined would get somewhere between 20 and 40 percent of the vote. I certainly would almost never vote for either party, at least not at the presidential level. I mean really, Bush Senior versus Clinton? Clinton versus Dole? Bush junior versus Gore? Who actually wanted to see any of those guys elected president? I've never met anyone who did. I've met people who were very vehement in their rejection of one or more of these guys, and who strongly supported one of the candidates to keep the other guy from being elected. I've never met anyone who actually thought any one of those 6 people would make a great president.

Your comments to me: Yeah, the Nationalists did get aid from a lot of different sources, though not at the same time. The Soviets got involved the first time because they thought the Nationalists could be taken over from within, or at least become valuable anti-imperialist allies. Germany got involved initially because the Nationalists had kicked out the Soviet advisors, and Germany had a lot of spare military men, who could use China's many battles to test out theories of how warfare worked. The Italians got involved because the Nationalists foolishly paid good money to have them train and equip a Nationalist airforce. The Germans and Italians pulled out when the

Sino-Japanese War started (with a few German exceptions). The Soviets and Americans got involved at that point because they saw the Nationalists as a counterbalance to Japanese power. The French and British did do some things to help the Nationalists, but not too much. Both powers suspected (probably rightly) that the Nationalists would become a threat to their colonial interests in the area if they got too strong.

On the issue of displacing cultures back in time and how they would develop: I have to disagree on two points. First, the Australian aborigines were not the steady state society that they often been portrayed as. In the southeastern part of the continent, populations were rising and societies were becoming more complex prior to settlement. On page 155 of *Guns, Germs and Steel*, Desmond says: “In southeastern Australia, the well-watered part of the continent most suitable for food production, Aboriginal societies in recent millennia appear to have been evolving on a trajectory that would eventually have led to indigenous food production. (...)Had Europeans not colonized Australia in 1788 and aborted that independent trajectory, Aboriginal Australians might within a few thousand years have become food producers, tending ponds of domesticated fish and growing domesticated Australian yams and small-seeded grasses.”

Second, on the Aztecs, I think you may be confusing the Aztec control over much of Mexico with the fate of the societies they dominated. I don't think their problem was so much that the base society was unsustainable as that Aztec control over it was too fragile to be sustained long. The Aztec 'empire' could and probably would have fallen apart in a few hundred years or less. The people in the city-states that paid them tribute would have simply gone on with their lives—a little richer until the next set of rulers managed to take them over.

You are right that I should have left out the bit about alternate history in “Songbird”.

**Craig Neumeier:** I mentioned a few issues ago that I felt that an earlier fall of the Roman empire might have led to a series of independent Roman successor states that would have been more dynamic and capable of innovation than the empire was. On other inversions: how about one where the American Revolution leads to a more decisive British defeat—loss of Canada, maybe even Ireland and some of the territories in India. Loss of Canada and Ireland would certainly be feasible. Inversion of the typical Civil War AH might involve a Union victory and taking of Richmond in the first campaign of the war. Another option would be to have Buchanan move more aggressively to protect federal assets in the time between succession and Lincoln's inauguration. Another option would be to have the time between the election and the inauguration reduced for some reason before the election of Lincoln, giving the south less time to gear up before decisive action can be taken. Yet another option would be for Lincoln to somehow manage to isolate the deep south states more effectively—keeping Virginia from seceding for example. That would have some interesting consequences in terms of making the war more difficult to prosecute.

Still another option would be for Lincoln to move less adroitly and have the border states secede along with the states that actually seceded. Adding Kentucky, Missouri, and Maryland solidly to the confederacy would make the position of the Union much more precarious. Lincoln could even fail to rally sentiment in the north for an attempt to force the southern states back into the Union. Getting Americans to fight other Americans wasn't an easy task. A serious enough political misstep on Lincoln's part might have made that impossible.

I did a rather large but not quite finished scenario on your World War II inversion—France defeats Germany in World War II. That one isn't particularly hard. As a matter of fact it actually is rather difficult to feed the actual forces involved into a reasonably sophisticated simulation and get a German victory.

I'm glad you liked the Chimu scenario. You're right that the Tarascans would make a better "best of" culture than the Aztecs. The Aztecs were a truly nasty bunch. I'll have to think about your reactions to my comments about access to other cultures causing the great transition.

Your comments to Docimo: I strongly second your comments on how difficult the formatting makes his zine to follow.

I enjoyed your Koxinga alternative. I feel bad because I suggested the divergence and I wasn't able to give it much thought or research. You did a very good job of thinking through the alternatives.

**Michael Pratt:** You have a good point about the Nazis being essentially what happens when organized crime takes over a country. I actually toyed with the idea of having organized crime take over the US government in the 1930's. My problem was that the more I thought about it, the more I realized that if they were smart enough to do that, they might be smart enough to run it in such a way that the changes would be very subtle—and if I did it realistically the results would not be easily traceable to such a takeover.

Your comments to me: Actually Chiang did manage to evacuate a considerable amount of industry from Shanghai—not enough to fight the war effectively, but one author claims that the evacuation was noted with interest by the Soviets, who may have learned some lessons that they used in their successful evacuation of industry from the western USSR in 1941. That's an arguable point. The Nationalist Chinese did manage to manufacture a fairly respectable amount of war material with the resources they had—though obviously nowhere near enough. Between 1942 and 1944 the Nationalists produced 800,000 rifles, 87,000 machine guns, and 12,000 light mortars, according to Dunnigan and Nofi's Pacific War Encyclopedia. By the way, that book has an interesting chart on the growth of the Chinese communist armies. They had 92,000 men in 1937, grew to 500,000 by 1940, then leveled off and even declined a little, to 475,000 in 1944. They almost

doubled to 910,000 in 1945—probably arming the new men with captured Japanese arms.

**Rich Rostrom:** Oh boy, this again. If you want to stop talking about the Buchanan thing, just say so, then stop talking about it. I'll stop too. Not everything has to be deeply researched or thought out, and I don't want to make anyone in the APA feel that they are going to get blown out of the water unless they meet some extremely high standard.

At the same time, you said some things in your response that I find hard to just let go by. For example,

1) I don't consider explaining how the Soviets successfully invade an island nation that has not been successfully invaded from the Asian mainland in the entirety of recorded history a pointless detail—especially when Japan had an intact world-class fleet, and the Soviets didn't. That's sort of like a European what-if that says, "Then Hitler invaded and conquered England..." and goes on without any further explanation. I think that just about anyone would be interested in finding out how that could have happened—and would regard it as vital to the scenario.

2) Other 'pointless details' include unconvincing explanations of why the rest of the world would sit back fat dumb and happy and let a threatening colossus like your time-line's Soviet Union build an A-bomb without doing significant research of their own, and many others.

Those details make this piece really not work for me—and I'm by no means a fan of Buchanan or of his ideas on World War II (which, by the way were that the US, not the Western Allies should have stayed out of World War II).

I think we've already beat this into the ground far more than it is worth, and I don't really want to get sucked into more exchanges on it. On the other hand, accusing me of grossly misrepresenting something is pretty much guaranteed to get a response.

I grossly misrepresented the first partition of Poland? Well, actually I was attempting a bit of tongue-in-cheek, which obviously didn't come across. No, the first partition of Poland wasn't "Just a little around the edges", but as I've pointed out repeatedly, neither was the one you have them accepting. While the amount of territory you have them giving up is small, it was vital to Poland's economic independence and well-being. And even if Hitler really meant it this time when he said that what he was demanding was all he wanted, the Poles couldn't possibly have known that. As a matter of fact, if you reread your scenario you'll notice that Hitler does later take another slice out of Poland in it.

If you actually read about what the Polish leadership was thinking during the period leading up to World War II, you'll find that they were more afraid of that kind of salami tactics than of a full-scale invasion. After all, they had just seen Hitler conquer Czechoslovakia using those tactics.

Since I seemed to have gotten sucked into this thing again, I'm going to try to use it to illustrate what I consider two important points. First, what distinguishes a good AH scenario from a poorly thought out one in many cases is that the good one tries to understand what the leaders involved actually knew and what they thought.

The example of the Polish leadership in this situation illustrates the point.

1) They didn't—couldn't know that Hitler really meant it this time when he said that all he wanted was "a little around the edges". Hitler's actual motives are irrelevant to the Polish reaction. Only what they could know about his motives could influence their actions.

2) The Polish leadership didn't—couldn't know that Germany's possession of 3000 tanks to Poland's 300 or 600 (depending on what you do or don't count) meant that they were doomed to a quick defeat. Tanks had not yet proven themselves as a decisive weapon. As a

matter of fact, the experience of Spain seemed to prove that tanks were not a decisive weapon. It is easy to prove that the Polish leadership did not consider tanks the decisive factor that we do. Just look at the Polish military budget. How much of it went to purchasing armor versus maintaining horses?

Even if tanks had proven themselves in Spain, the Poles could have been excused for not being intimidated by the ones the Germans had. In September 1939, the German tank force was overwhelmingly composed of Panzer Is & II's—a training tank and a tin can with a popgun, even by the standards of 1939. In September 1939 the Germans had 299 tanks with a 37mm or larger guns. (98 Panzer III and 211 Panzer IV). They had access to some Czech tanks but had apparently not incorporated them into the order of battle yet. The surprising weakness of the German tank force is a sidelight. The main point is that the Poles demonstrably did not consider tanks (or airplanes) decisive. If they did, they would have spent a much larger percentage of available funds on tanks and airplanes. Since the Poles did not consider tanks and planes decisive, comparisons between Polish and German inventories of those weapons would not have much impact on the thinking of Polish leadership.

In other words,

- It isn't enough to prove that the Poles were in a hopeless position. You need to prove that they knew they were in a hopeless position. That the Poles understood their military inferiority compared to the Germans.
- It isn't enough to prove that the Poles knew they were hopelessly inferior in one or more categories that we consider decisive (such as tanks or aircraft). You need to prove that they considered those categories decisive, as opposed to simply nice to have.

Based on the experience of World War I, the Polish/Soviet War, and the Spanish Civil War, the Polish leadership considered tanks useful,

but not decisive. Number of divisions that could be mobilized, number of well-trained NCO's, number and quality of artillery—those were the things that the Poles perceived as the arbitrators of power among nations. Poland had been training and equipping its army continually since 1919. The Germans had had 6 years of open rearmament to catch up. During that time they had to train masses of people, retool industry to build tanks and artillery, get enough high-quality non-commissioned officers ready so that their army didn't fall apart at the first surprise. The Poles were skeptical that the Germans could have done all of that in 6 years without leaving significant gaps.

The Poles were actually right. The Germans did leave significant gaps. Too much of their emphasis was on the big, visible weapons. They were not equipped logistically for a war that lasted more than a few weeks. The Germans had used 60% of their bombs and had used up their supply of aviation gas by the end of the Polish campaign. They were able to keep flying by using captured Polish stocks.

Long war versus short war matters a great deal in the case of Germany. All of those German tanks and planes become irrelevant in very short order if the Germans don't have fuel to fly or run them, and they don't have bombs and bullets to use in them.

The German weakness in terms of oil supplies was common knowledge. Some time ago I came across a Reader's Digest from late 1938 or early 1939 that said that the Axis powers were bluffing when they threatened war because they didn't have the oil reserves or the access to oil to fight a war. Poland just had to hold out long enough for the Germans to exhaust their oil supplies and the German tanks and planes were no longer significant. Based on the time-scales of World War I, the Poles certainly had every reason to believe that they could hold out long enough to make that happen.

Yeah, in hindsight the Poles didn't have a chance. The thing is, they didn't know it. And for your scenario to work, they had to know it.

The second point I think this scenario illustrates is that it is important not to assume capabilities in an alternate time-line just because they existed at some point in our time-line. For example: In our time-line the Soviets had a great deal of offensive capability by the end of 1941, and if they hadn't been caught by surprise they might have shown a considerable amount of offensive capability earlier in 1941. They did not have a comparable capacity in June 1940, and would not have in your time-line. Based on their experience in Spain, they dismantled their armored divisions in November 1939, and did not reconstitute them until the fall of France showed what tank divisions could do. That being the case, the only mobile divisions the Soviets could have used to do the massive surrounds you have them doing would have been horsed cavalry divisions (partly mechanized, but tied to the speed of the horse). The Germans had enough machine guns and artillery to shoot those divisions to pieces, and they would have.

I hate to say this, but after reading your scenario I came away convinced that staying out of the war might have been a good idea for the west. If the west had stayed out of the conflict between Germany and Poland, the Germans probably would have then tackled the Soviets. The west could and probably would have sat on the center of the proverbial teeter-totter and shifted their weight back and forth just enough to keep either side from getting too far up or too far down.

Germany is in trouble? Nothing that easy credit terms on trucks, radios, and oil can't fix. The Soviets are on the ropes? Nothing some shipments of trucks, radios, aviation gas, food, and rubber can't fix. It worked in the Iran/Iraq war. It might well have worked here. Granted, it would be an extremely dangerous game, especially played on Stalin and Hitler, but then again opposing Hitler meant that France and England lost their empires and their status as Great Powers. They would have probably lost both eventually anyway, but who knows? Push the colonial era forward into a time when the colonial powers were getting nuclear weapons, and to be blunt the colonial powers would never really absolutely have to lose a conventional battle. It

would make a pretty lousy AH if the colonial powers started using nukes against the like of the Viet Minh, but that is not impossible.

As to the consequences of the west standing by and letting the Germans and Soviets duke it out, at least the possibility deserves a thoughtful, well-researched exploration. I suspect that something like that was the ultimate aim of at least some of the British appeasers. I don't know if they would have been able to pull it off.

By the way: Something I didn't know until just recently: in spite of his reputation as an appeaser, Lord Halifax was actually the one that pushed for an English guarantee to the Poles. Chamberlain was originally not inclined to do anything that forceful, but got talked into it. The guarantee was a British initiative, not something the Poles asked for, at least not at that time.

Also the professional diplomats in Britain were appalled when they heard about the guarantee. A British guarantee without the Soviets on-board was stupid. It meant that Stalin could play the kind of games that he actually played. Until the British guaranteed Poland's borders, Stalin had to know that if he allowed Hitler to munch Poland he was next on the menu, so a deal that partitioned Poland was much less attractive to him. He probably would not have gone for such a deal except for the fact that the guarantee meant that Hitler had to turn West after conquering Poland.

Finally, if you decide to tweak this scenario by having Hitler incite the Ruthenians (or Ukrainians), you might want to read my two-part "Ukrainian Option" scenario from a few issues ago. It explores the potential and pitfalls of that approach rather thoroughly.

**Luke Schleusener:** In general, I enjoyed your reality seeds, but I do have a few quibbles: Napoleon's go at a New World empire happened after the successful slave revolt in Haiti if I recall correctly. He sent several thousand troops to retake the area, but most of them quickly died of yellow fever. His plans could not have survived renewed war

with England anyway, which is why Napoleon sold Louisiana to the US. It would have been interesting if he had tried to hold onto Louisiana and it had become a theatre of English/French warfare once the Napoleonic Wars resumed after the brief period of peace that made Napoleon's New World ventures possible. On the Martian scenario, I'm not sure the technology of the 1950's was up to determining that the Mars rocks were (a) from Mars, (b) contained life, and (c) were free of contamination by terrestrial life.

I like the idea of an earlier German takeout of the Russians in World War I. They might follow that up with an attempt to take out the Italians, though an offensive on the Western Front is somewhat more likely. One question: why would taking Venice allow German trade with the New World? England would still control the chokepoints at both ends of the Mediterranean, not to mention the Atlantic Ocean.

Please don't take this personally, but to be honest, I had a considerable amount of difficulty following your Spanish Civil War scenario—enough that I eventually gave up on it even though the Spanish Civil War is one of the most interesting pieces of history to me. Events just seemed to happen with the causal relationships between them and the initial POD not clearly explained. I think there is a good concept in there somewhere, but the piece doesn't really communicate it as currently written—at least not to me.

Your comments to me: In the long term I may be wrong about this, but it seems to me that the United Nations has so far only been effective when the Great Powers decide that a squabble between minor powers is not in the interest of any of the Great Powers. (The one exception to that is the Korean War, which was a one-of-a-kind situation.) In other words, rightly or wrongly I don't consider the United Nations to be a significant factor in world politics.

**Andrew C. Schneider:** Your Dewey administration material sounds fascinating. I'd be interested in seeing it in a future issue. I also appreciate the review of "America Afire". The first transfer of power

from one party to another set a lot of precedents. If it gotten nasty it could have set the country on a very different course. I'll have to check that one out.

**Kurt Sidaway:** I wish I had the background in English history to appreciate your English AH's. Unfortunately, the period before about the mid-1500's is almost a blank to me. I'll have to dig into the early periods at some point. They sound fascinating. I'm glad you enjoyed the Chimu bit.

**Dale Speirs:** Interesting bits on alternate bombs. The 'seen in the literature' bits are interesting. I don't buy the bit about the development of language being what turned the tide against the Neanderthals. Maybe we developed more sophisticated language than Neanderthals had, but I'm reasonably sure that language development was much older and much more gradual than the transition between Neanderthals and modern humans in Europe. You may be interested in my "Neanderthals in the New World scenario in this issue. I did enjoy the bits about flooding in various coastlines around the world.

**Jon Ziegler:** Your forthcoming Steve Jackson Games book(s) sound fascinating. I'm finding the GURPS books very useful and very well researched. The Poul Anderson essay sounds like a lot of fun. I'll have to see if I can find it. I like the idea of your James Bond in space universe. You may be right that playing with the laws of physics is the only way to get there, but you've started me thinking. It would be better from an AH point of view if you could get there with a point of divergence and a clever combination of existing or safely projected technology.