

Morality and Ethics of Command: Three Examples of Leadership and Gallantry in Enemy
Commanders

Julian Ungar-Sargon MD PhD,
IGR MEDCOM
OCS

APRIL 2016



“Arms are instruments of ill omen, not the instruments of the gentleman. When one is compelled to use them, it is best to do so without relish. There is no glory in victory, and so to glorify it despite this is to exult in the killing of men. One who exults in the killing of men will never have his way in the empire. On occasions of rejoicing precedence is given to the left; On occasions of mourning precedence is given to the right. A lieutenant’s place is on the left; The general’s place is on the right. This means that it is mourning rites that are observed. When great numbers of people are killed, one should weep over them with sorrow. When victorious in war, one should observe the rites of mourning.”

— Lao Tzu, Tao Te Ching, 31, circa 6th century B.C.E. (translated by D.C. Lau)

Suffering lifts its victim above normal values. While suffering endures there is neither good nor bad, valuable nor invaluable, enemy nor friends. The victim has passed to a region beyond human classification or moral judgments and his suffering is a sufficient claim.

Florence Nightingale

We have long since made clear that a state of war is not a blank check for the President when it comes to the rights of the Nation’s citizens. ... Whatever power the United States Constitution envisions for the Executive in its exchanges with other nations or with enemy organizations in times of conflict, it most assuredly envisions a role for all three branches when individual liberties are at stake.

Supreme Court Justice O’Connor¹

¹ Hamdi et al. v. Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defense, et al., No. 03-6696; Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defense v. Padilla et al., No. 03-1027; Rasul et al. v. Bush, President of the United States, et al., Nos. 03-334 and 03-343; all decided June 28, 2004. http://www.jenner.com/news/news_item.asp?id=000012520724

Born five years after WWII to a survivor from the Holocaust and a mother who endured the Blitz over London's skies, I was fascinated in childhood with stories of bravery during WWII and the gallant fighters facing the odds against the superior German Army and Luftwaffe. I read all the comics eagerly standing at the front door on Saturdays for the latest copy of the Victor, or all the books about "Biggles" the British Air force pilot who singlehandedly aced the Messerschmitt planes with his single engine plane.

With the onset of adolescence, the full impact of the Holocaust became apparent especially after watching the film "Justice at Nuremberg" in 1966. I became obsessed with the Holocaust, reading most scholarly literature on the subject adding to my adolescent confusion between the doctrines provided in my parochial religious schooling and the facts of genocide and its profound challenge to theology.

My writings since then have been in understanding the implications of genocide and theodicy and its impact on both Christian and Jewish thinkers. My PhD thesis ultimately dealt with the issue of theodicy in the late antique period. (PhD completed in 2000, Brandeis University²).

My training in OCS, however has forced me to rethink the easy definitions of good vs. evil as professed by those religious traditions, and popular culture. My rethinking began with a talk on Just War Theory to a group of ex Navy intelligence officers in 2014. In preparation for the talk I came across numerous examples of unethical behavior perpetrated by the Allies, and the double standards applied to the Nuremberg defendants, after the indiscriminate bombing of civilian population centers, including Dresden and Tokyo, the treatment of prisoners of war and of course the nuclear detonation o Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

This then led me to a more nuanced view of Western Values and the possibility for their corruption. This was reinforced by reading Jim Frederick's *Black Hearts: One Platoon's Decent into Madness in Iraq's Triangle of Death*,³ a gripping account of a single incident

² <http://www.brandeis.edu/departments/nejs/doctoral/placement.html>

³ http://www.amazon.com/Black-Hearts-Platoons-Descent-Triangle/dp/0307450767/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1459783616&sr=8-1&keywords=fredericks+black+hearts

involving some of the most despicable actions by U.S. Soldiers since the My Lai Massacre in Vietnam. (On 12 March 2006, four members of 1st Platoon, Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 502d Infantry, 101st Airmobile Division, planned and committed the brutal rape and murder of a 14-year-old Iraqi girl and the cold-blooded execution and mutilation of her and her family, to include her 6-year-old sister. After cover-up by the four perpetrators and at least one member of their chain of command for several months, a private first class from the platoon overheard an off-hand remark implicating one of the perpetrators and reported his suspicions to his chain of command. Subsequently, all four of the men were charged and convicted.)

While a single horrendous event is at the core of Frederick's narrative, *Black Hearts* is more than just a thorough, detailed, well-researched, journalistic investigation into the criminal actions of a few men. **Black Hearts is a study in leadership—mostly bad leadership.** Against a documented background of grueling combat conditions, which places the effects of leadership—both good and bad—into vivid relief, where we watch as the effects of a pattern of poor leadership behavior and irresponsible decisions compound over time, and we cringe as the battalion and its Soldiers are dragged into a dark, valueless abyss. In the final analysis, a profoundly chilling study of military leadership gone bad, and bad leadership in combat makes for a disaster. As a journalist, Frederick does not make recommendations regarding effective and ineffective leadership behaviors, but rather describes the behaviors of various leaders, and then, through interviews, provides reports from the mouths of subordinates on the impact various actions had on morale, unit cohesion, and mission accomplishment. From the mouths of subordinates on the impact various actions had on morale, unit cohesion, and mission accomplishment.⁴

This book forced me to look differently on the idea and concept of leadership and how bad leadership trickles down all the way to the morale of the basic soldier under the command. As a combat soldier from that platoon recorded in a review:

⁴ For more on this see *The Army Ethic 2010: MILITARY REVIEW*

The book is powerful because it deftly tells the story of an infantry platoon that seemed set up for failure from the get-go. It reveals that the men and women of our military are not infallible, and that yes, the ranks are seeded with those who lack the morals and values that we as Americans expect from our warriors. And while 1st Platoon, Bravo Company, 1-502d had its bad apples, Frederick also brings out the stories of those soldiers who were there and did their level best in a tough situation.

Unfortunately, I disagree with the notion of a “few bad apples”. Reading the book, what became crystal clear was the failure of leadership.... moral leadership.

In this essay I attempt to collect my thoughts that have been brewing for the last couple of years into some sort coherence in which I hope to present a moral argument.



The basis of a "just war" is now up for review.

Weapons, strategies, ethics, and humanitarian impact - all in one seminar's discussions.

Saturday - February 1st, 2014

Purdue Memorial Union, Faculty Lounge, second floor

Registration: 10 AM Luncheon 11 AM with speakers

Featured speaker: Lt Gen David Deptula USAF (ret) strategy of air power – modern use of drone warfare.

Discussion panel: Moderator: Brig General James Bauerle, AUS (retired Army)

- Dr Thomas Ryba, Purdue – Theologian In Residence, St Thomas Aquinas Center, Purdue
- Professor Emeritus Don Mitchell, retired – Philosophy Department, Purdue
- Brig Gen Patrick Rea, AUS (retired Army) – leader of a 5000 member humanitarian organization
- Rabbi Julian Ungar, MD – Jewish perspective
- Mr. Robert Feidler – current international developments as seen in Washington
- Maj Charles Anklam, USMC Instructor, Purdue NROTC - recent veteran of current Mideast wars.
- Director Zeki Sartitoprane, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi Chair in Islamic Studies, John Carroll University and Member of Advisory Board, Niagara Foundation

So, in choosing a military figure who represents an ideal of leadership, I wanted to avoid the easy figures of generals and high ranking officers, the stuff of legend whose lives have been well documented in the press and media, the movies and in popular culture. I wished to choose a more nuanced even ambivalent kind of character, in order to focus on the very need for character and morals that transcend enemy sides, even the paradigm of evil.... the Nazi war machine.

I found an example in the earliest months of WWII where chivalry and respect for enemy combatants still seem to pervade the German Navy officer corps, where the older ideals of the Prussian Military corps or the Japanese imperial army/navy influenced the decision making of the leaders outlined below. Here I found a good example, despite and in the face of the obvious evil nature of their respective commanders in chief.

The principles of the Geneva Conventions were the product of a cultural **'Western warrior ethos.'** The basic principles of the Geneva Conventions, which were only modified by later Conventions in the 1970s, were thus the product of this so called 'Western warrior ethos' as it had developed up to the point of the Conventions."⁵ On the other hand, today, terrorists fight in very different ways from those that generated the ethic of the Geneva Conventions. Indeed, it is precisely because terrorists, who are far more willing to die than troops in Western armies, are viewed by troops in those armies as "an other that represents everything the West is not;" they are "simply not legitimate actors....[they are] outside the standards of civilization."⁶

But it is not so simple nor so black and white. Below I will demonstrate three instances where enemy leaders expressed moral courage in their humane treatment of their own and enemy combatants revealing the warrior ethos to be cross cultural.

In a memorandum dated June 28, 2006 reporting on his visit to the detention facility at Guantanamo, General Barry McCaffrey, US Army (ret.) described the Detention Center

⁵ Mikket Vedby Rasmussen. "The Prisoner's Reflection: Identity and Detainees in the 'War on Terrorism,'" in Bertil Heurlin, Kristian Soby Kristensen, Mikkel Vedby Rasmussen & Sten Rynning, eds., *New Roles of Military Forces: Global and Local Implications of the Revolution in Military Affairs* (Copenhagen: Danish Institute for International Affairs, 2003), pp. 220- 221.

⁶ Gilles Adreani, "The 'War on Terror': Good Cause, Wrong Concept," *Survival* 46 (Winter 2004-2005), p. 35.

as “the most professional, firm, humane and carefully supervised confinement operation” that he had ever visited. Nevertheless the abuses that took place in the first 18 months of the war on terror not only led to widespread condemnation, but also “caused enormous damage to U.S. military operations and created significant and enduring damage to U.S. international standing...Most of these abuses...**were a clear departure from our former commitment to the rule of law and the strong U.S. military belief that treatment of those under our control should mirror the expectations we would have for our U.S. personnel** under similar conditions of vulnerability. Finally, we actually wanted to be better than those we opposed.”⁷ It is noteworthy that General McCaffery is a retired four-star general who held the highest attainable military rank since the retirement of the five-star officers who served in World War II. Indeed, McCaffery is not alone among senior officers to hold this view.⁸ The whole notion of a more “thoughtful” chain of command that might permit prisoner abuse flies in the face of American military reality, where significant and increasing command authority has devolved to field and even company-grade officers. General McCaffery’s views demonstrate that **torture and abuses are as deadly, if not more so, for those who perpetrate them than for those who suffer from them.** Such abuses are operationally and morally deleterious. As R. Arnold Resnikoff, a former Navy chaplain who currently serves as advisor to the Secretary of the Air Force wrote in the after-math of 9/11: *“in the rivers of Vietnam, I learned to value outrage, because it reminded me I was still human, not yet numb to pain and horror. Rage was what I feared, for it could destroy the humanity I still cherished. Rage destroys our moral compass—and allows us to be manipulated by those who want us to lose our way.”*⁹

⁷ Barry R. McCaffrey, General, USA (ret.), “Academic Report-Trip to JTF Guantanamo, Sunday June 18-Monday June 19, 2006,” (June 28, 2006).

⁸ Other senior officers who protested the use of torture and opposed any relaxation or redefinition of Senator McCain’s legislation included John W. Vessey, USA (ret.), former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (letter to Senator McCain, September 12, 2006), General Colin L. Powell, former Secretary of State and like Vessey, a former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs (letter to McCain, September 13, 2006) as well as nearly three dozen other retired senior officers from all four branches of the military (letter from General Joseph Hoar, USMC (ret.) et. al. to The Honorable John Warner, Chairman and the Honorable Carl Levin, Ranking Member, Senate Armed Services Committee, September 12, 2006). See also William H. Taft IV, “A View from the Top: American Perspectives on International Law after the Cold War,” *The Yale Journal of International Law* 31 (Summer 2006), especially pp. 506-508. Mr. Taft was General Counsel, and later Deputy Secretary of Defense and Acting Secretary of Defense, in the Reagan Administration, as well as Legal Advisor to the State Department, 2001-2005.

⁹ Arnold E. Resnikoff, “Rules for Our Sake, Not Our Enemies,” *Living Words IV: A Spiritual Source Book for an Age of Terror* (Sh`ma/JFL, 2002), p. 17.

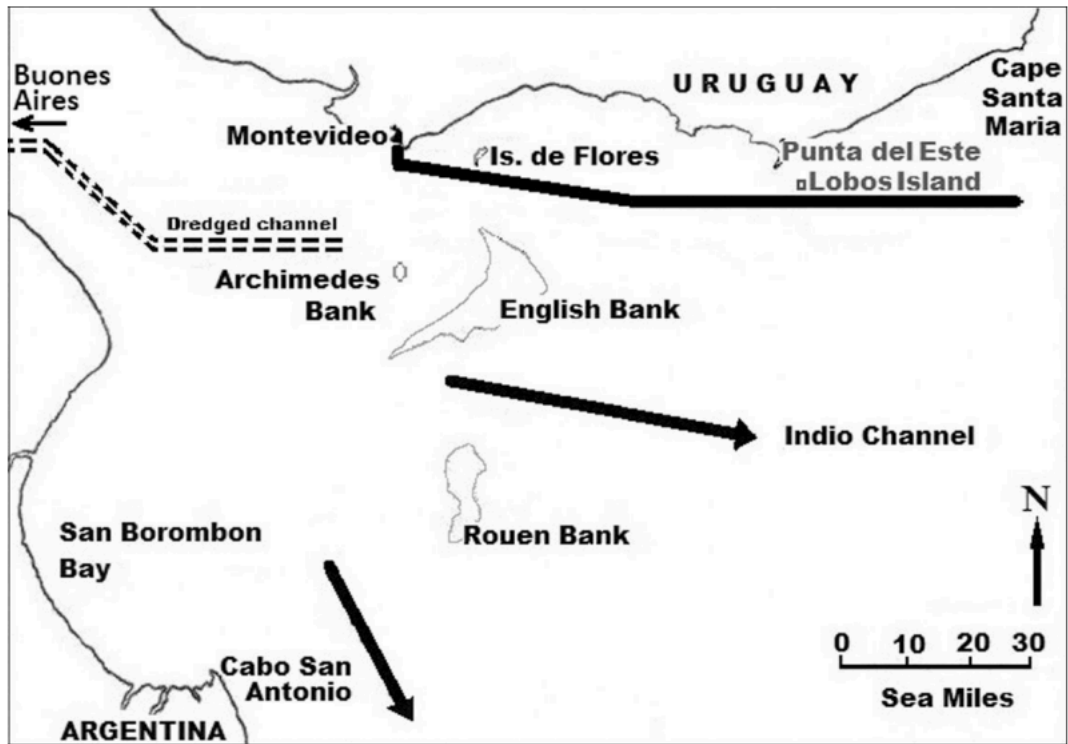
The Commander in Question

My first commander is Hans Langsdorff, the commander of the German pocket battleship Graf Spee. I am basing the facts on a couple of books the first being David Miller's "Command Decisions".¹⁰ The story of his mission at the start of the Second World War to prey on merchant shipping is graphically retold, and Langsdorff's command decisions are the primary focus of David Miller's gripping narrative. He considers in vivid detail the factors Langsdorff had to consider as he assessed the situation of his ship and choose his course of action. He describes the intelligence Langsdorff received and his knowledge of the position and strength of the forces of the Royal Navy that were arrayed against him. Langsdorff's interpretation of his mission and the tense calculations he had to make in order to carry it out are the essential elements of this dramatic story. Langsdorff, operating alone and thousands of miles away from home and with no prospect of support, had to grapple with the enormous burden of a lone command.

He was born March 20th 1894 to a lawyer on the Baltic island of Rugen. The family moved to Dusseldorf in 1898 and Hans enrolled in the *Marineschule* in Flensburg-Murwick joining the *kaiserlichmarine* class of 1912. After a few posts he received the Iron Cross second class in 1916. After WWI he was retained and worked as a liaison between the army and navy in Berlin. After Hitler's ascension to power he was transferred to the interior ministry and must have been aware of the consequences of the Night of the Long Knives, in 1934, when his own commanding officer was murdered, the Minister of Defense, General Von Schleicher. In 1936 he received a naval command and finally in 1938 the Graf Spee.

He was known to have admired the Royal Navy and his free thinking views about the Nazis were made known through his conversations with the British Captain Dove aboard the Graf Spee. He was certainly not a member of the Nazi party.

¹⁰ http://www.amazon.com/Command-Decisions-Langsdorff-Battle-River/dp/1848844905/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1459784883&sr=8-1&keywords=dauid+miller+command+decisions



The events I am about to describe took place in the estuary of

The River Plate

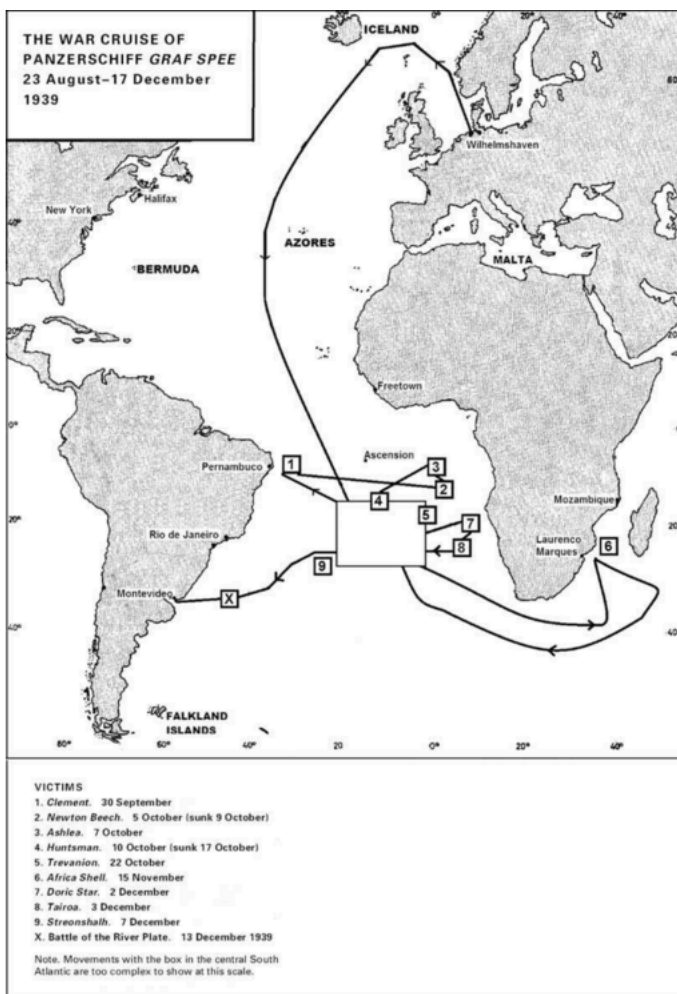


Captain Hans Wilhelm Langsdorff.

THE FACTS

Victory in the Battle of the River Plate, the first major naval engagement of the Second World War, was a great boost to British morale during the 'Phony War'.

When war broke out in September 1939, the German pocket battleship *Graf Spee*, commanded by Hans Langsdorff, was patrolling in the Atlantic. She represented a grave threat to Allied shipping, sinking six merchant ships between September and December.



Seven Allied 'hunting groups', totaling 23 major warships, were sent to look for her. After sinking three more ships, Langsdorff made for the busy shipping lanes off the River Plate in South America. Commodore Henry Harwood of Hunting Group G correctly guessed Langsdorff's intentions, and on 13 December he closed in with the heavy

cruiser HMS *Exeter* and light cruisers HMS *Ajax* and HMS *Achilles*.

Langsdorff concentrated his fire on the heavier *Exeter*, setting her alight, destroying most of her guns and forcing her to leave for the Falkland Islands. Shifting fire to *Ajax*, Langsdorff disabled two of her four turrets before breaking away for the port of Montevideo, in neutral Uruguay. Harwood kept watch outside while other Allied ships rushed to the area.

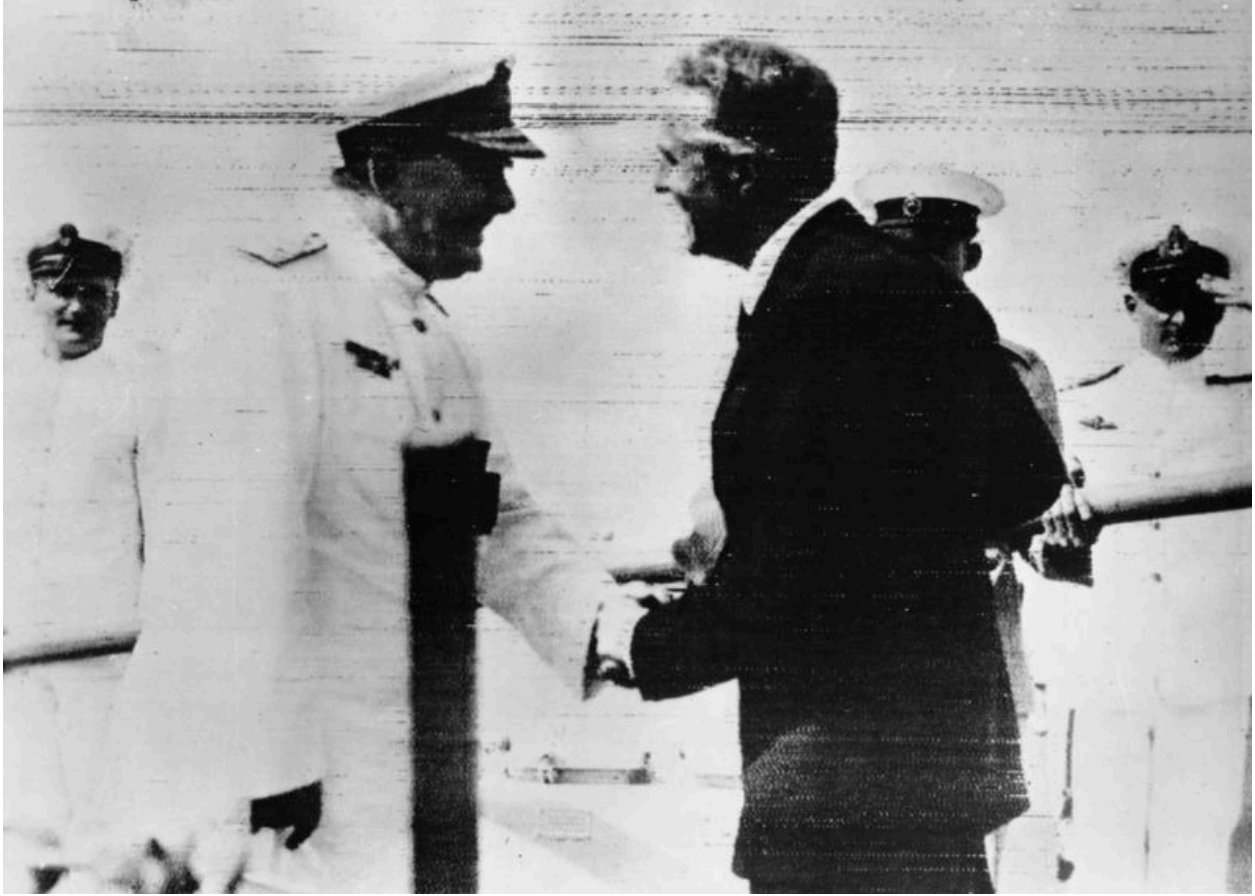
According to international law, a warship could only remain in a neutral port for 24 hours, and British diplomats tried to have *Graf Spee* interned or forced to leave. Langsdorff extended his stay by 72 hours but finally had to leave on 17 December.

Only the cruiser HMS *Cumberland* had arrived to reinforce Harwood, but Langsdorff, convinced that strong forces were waiting, sank *Graf Spee* himself rather than risk another battle.

Winston Churchill expressed his delight on the sinking of the *Graf Spee*.¹¹



¹¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZHc6Vpo5Ob4>



Commodore Henry Harwood being greeted by the British minister to Uruguay after battle

After Langsdorff scuttled his ship which allegedly infuriated Hitler, he and his crew were taken to Buenos Aires in Argentina. The German commander committed suicide on December 19 and was buried with full military honors. The British victory in the Battle of River Plate was a major military success which increased the popularity and reputation of Winston Churchill who was at the time the First Lord of the Admiralty but it was also a major success of the British intelligence and diplomacy which played an important role in the outcome of the battle. In addition to losing the pocket battleship Admiral Graf Spee and its commander, the Germans also suffered 36 dead and 60 wounded. The British, on the other hand, suffered 72 dead and 28 wounded. All three cruisers were damaged in the battle but none was damaged beyond repair.

There are no easy solutions to the life and death decisions a commander must face. He must use his own conscience and ethical sensitivity and balance them with duty, obedience and serving the general good. In demonstrating this he is showing true leadership. He must then allow his subordinates to be inspired by his choices and make their own moral choices with his blessing. This builds character and ethics in his subordinates. By resisting the temptation to use power and command structure, he is taking the road less travelled but the road that empowers his team to make independent moral choices and, when the battle comes, to make the right choices in the face of adversity. The hero I describe in this essay who faced certain court martial for his actions and decided to honorably end his life fully conscious and without regret for the sailors of both sides of the conflict he had the power to destroy and yet did not, following a time honored code of military conduct inherited from his Prussian military and naval forebears, remains alive to our generation as an inspiration of true leadership qualities.

I have argued previously that during the WWII both sides of the conflict were guilty of war crimes but only the victor, the Allies, held trials for war criminals.¹² Much scholarship has already been written on the subject of the Allies complicity however in this paper I wish to use this as a background and possibly a justification in using what some might consider an enemy officer as an example of modern day gallantry in the field of battle who defied his commander in chief, Hitler's orders, in order to save prisoners in battle. I use this example precisely because the historical revisionism disallows the moral complexity and ambivalence when looking closer at heroes on both sides of victors and victims.¹³

As a child of a sole survivor from Vienna who escaped in 1939 on the *kindertransport*,¹⁴ who was then interned in Australia and narrowly escaped torpedoes in the south Atlantic, my childhood was always framed in terms of victimhood and survival through the hellish trauma of war. But history reveals other voices of a more complex picture and below I will review the actions of one man who changed the course of how we look at war and how

¹²For a detailed bibliography of the subject see:

War Crimes, War Criminals, and War Crimes Trials - An Annotated Bibliography and Source Book, E. Tuterow. 1986 see also my Lecture to Society of Templars seminar on "Just War Theory" Purdue University Campus, 2013.

¹³ Among the best books on the subject are: Richard B. Frank, *Downfall* (2001); Robert James Maddox, *Weapons for Victory* (1995), which explodes the dubious use of original sources by the leading revisionist historian Gar Alperovitz and goes through systematically and refutes each of the left's arguments; Robert P. Newman, *Truman and the Hiroshima Cult* (1995) and his *Enola Gay and the Court of History* (2004); J. Samuel Walker, *Prompt and Utter Destruction* (1997); and Thomas B. Allen and Norman Polmar, *Code Name Downfall* (1995, and a newer edition). These scholars have demolished the revisionist arguments against use of atomic bombs. See also Edward J. Drea, *MacArthur's Ultra* (1992), the first book to examine our contemporaneous military intelligence files, which showed Japan was rapidly reinforcing the planned invasion area and was getting stronger as time went on. The revisionists who criticize the dropping of the atomic bombs had never examined this crucial documentation.

With regard to strategic bombing, the widely respected historian, Richard Overy, who has written about a dozen books on the war, wrote in his *Why the Allies Won* (1995) that our strategic bombing shortened the war and saved allied lives.

¹⁴ For more on this topic see <http://www.budrich-journals.de/index.php/diskurs/article/viewFile/3789/3178> as well as interview with my father <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IEqX4QhMj3k>

the behavior of diplomats would not prevent his taking a course of action to save the lives of his men **as he had acted so gallantly to his enemies during his attacks on allied shipping before.**

I discuss the actions of Hans Wilhelm Langsdorff in order to review the historical background to his gallantry towards the enemy and in defying his commander in chief, Hitler's orders, which ultimately cost him his life.¹⁵

He knew that having scuttled his ship in order to save his crew's lives he had made a fateful decision, an ethical decision of moral courage, and, in disobeying the Fuhrer's orders, he knew he could never return to Germany as the propaganda machine would inevitable spin his cowardice as had the press in Buenos Aires who so wanted a fight (and called him a coward the next day). His decision to take his own life to prevent further dishonor marks him finally as a hero of mythical proportions.

I consulted the following source for much secondary literature:

Langsdorff of the Graf Spee: Prince of Honor

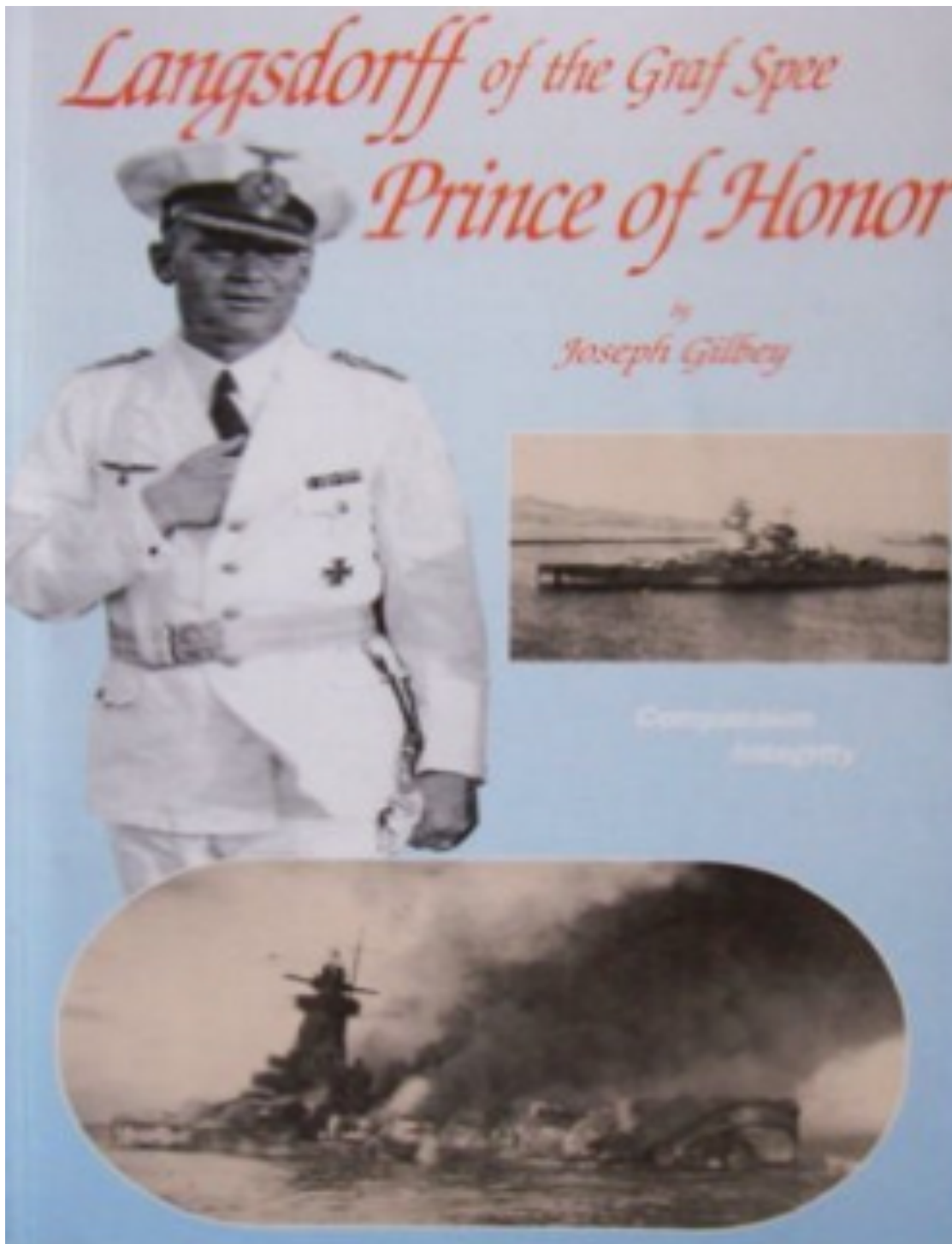
Published in Dec 2000.

(The author, Joseph Gilbey was born in Glasgow, Scotland in 1928. He served with the British Army (R.E.M.E.) in Palestine and Egypt (1947-1949). Gilbey immigrated to Canada in 1957 and worked with Iron Ore Company of Canada in Schefferville, Que. The company expanded operations to the borders of Quebec/Labrador - now Labrado City - in 1958. Gilbey set priorities for incoming essential materials at the new project. In 1963 he resigned and moved with his young family to Ontario. Following twenty-five years with Ford Motor Company of Canada in Oakville, Gilbey accepted early retirement in 1987.

It was then he began his travels and research into the biography of this hero.

While visiting Montevideo, Uruguay in 1993 he became fascinated with the Graf Spee saga. When closely examined, much of the published information lacked credibility. Gilbey began a serious investigation that rapidly became an obsession to unravel the true story. The long trail then led from Montevideo to Argentina, Germany and England. High-ranking officers and men that served on the battling warships gave Gilbey their personal experience.)

¹⁵ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m5jy8AGINrc&spfreload=5> for how the captain was inspired by his ship's namesake. The first naval battle of World War II took place just off the coast of Uruguay on December 13, 1939 as the German pocket battleship Admiral Graf Spee is cornered in the waters of the River Plate by the British cruisers HMS Exeter and Ajax and HMNZS Achilles.
[Video edited from excerpts of the 1998 documentary Lost Ships: The Last Broadside, available on Amazon.]



Admiral Harwood's sons and Captain Langsdorff's daughter helpfully opened their family records to help the cause. Joseph Gilbey published "*Langsdorff of the Graf Spee*" in 1999 and "*Admiral Raeder's Navy*" in 2005.



On 21 August 1939, *Admiral Graf Spee* left Wilhelmshaven port with orders to raid enemy commercial shipping in the South Atlantic following the outbreak of the Second World war on Sept 3rd 1939.

Despite the outbreak of hostilities, the raider was not allowed to commence warfare against Allied shipping, but was rather ordered on September 5 to avoid all contact with other ships. So Langsdorff kept clear of shipping routes, crossing the equator on September 8 and taking up station in a seldom-frequented area of the South Atlantic.



On September 11, Graf Spee's Arado seaplane, on a routine reconnaissance flight, spotted the British heavy cruiser HMS Cumberland on an intercept course with the German ships. The British lookouts did not spot the plane, which was able to alert Langsdorff to change course and avoid detection. Cumberland continued on her way from Freetown to Rio de Janeiro, none the wiser. Graf Spee remained in a holding pattern north of the River Platte - Cape of Good Hope shipping route, refueling twice from Altmark.

On September 26, Langsdorff finally received new orders. He was to commence hostilities immediately, but with several restrictions: he was to attack only British ships, and not French ships. Actions with enemy warships were to be avoided, so as to not risk his ship.

Langsdorff headed towards the coast of Brazil, to disrupt the flow of meat and grain to Britain along the shipping routes off Pernambuco. 75 miles northeast of the Brazilian port of Pernambuco, Graf Spee found her first victim just before noon on September 30. The captain of the 5050-ton freighter SS Clement spotted an approaching warship, and thought it was the British cruiser HMS Ajax.

But it was Graf Spee, whose Arado 196 seaplane was launched, and few machine gun bullets were sprayed at the bridge of the freighter. Clement's captain, F.C.P. Harris, was told to stop engines immediately, and order his crew to the boats, without sending a distress message. Capt. Harris disobeyed and sent a distress message. A few rounds from Graf Spee sank the abandoned freighter.



The sea was calm, so Langsdorff took captain Harris, his chief engineer, and a hand injured while abandoning ship on board the Graf Spee, while the rest of the crew were given the correct course back to the South American port of Maceio, all reaching that location safely the next day.

After treating the wounded man and questioning Harris, Langsdorff stopped the Greek steamer SS Papelemos. Her captain promised not to send a signal until reaching the Cape Verde Islands (a promise which he did not keep), so the three British men were transferred to the neutral freighter and Graf Spee went on her way.

Knowing that Clement in defiance of his orders, had gotten off a radio distress signal, Langsdorff took the Graf Spee off at high speed, choosing the Cape of Good Hope - Europe route as his next hunting ground. In that shipping route on October 5 Graf Spee found the British freighter SS Newton Beach (4650-tons) with a cargo of corn. The ship was stopped and a prize crew put on board so she could be used as a source of

supplies, but not before a distress message was transmitted, again in defiance of his orders.

In war, defiance can mean instant death, yet Langsdorff was merciful.



Another British merchant ship heard this call, and passed it on later in the day to the HMS Cumberland. This was the worst case scenario for the Germans: a powerful British warship was in the area, the location of the raider was known, and heavy Allied reinforcements could be rapidly dispatched from Dakar, the West Indies, and Pernambuco to track down the raider within a few days.

Heading east in the company of her prize, Graf Spee surprised the British steamer Ashlea (4220-tons) on October 7, which was loaded with sugar.

Her radio operator had no chance to send a message, and the ship was boarded. The Germans gained useful intelligence when her captain, C. Pottinger, failed to destroy his confidential instructions from the Admiralty. Clement's captain had made the same mistake, and the German raider was now in possession, among other valuable documents, of a complete copy of the code given by the Admiralty to merchant ships. Langsdorff now had Ashlea's crew was put onto Newton Beach, and Ashlea was sunk with scuttling charges.

On the evening of the 10th, Graf Spee approached the British liner Huntsman (8200-tons), on passage from Calcutta to London with a cargo of tea. The liner's captain, A.H. Brown, mistook Graf Spee for a British cruiser, and allowed her to approach. The Germans then sent a signal threatening to open fire if the radio were used. Unwilling to risk the lives of his crew, Brown complied, and a prize crew took over Huntsman. Returning to the waiting area outside the sea-lanes, Graf Spee refueled from Altmark. Her captain joined the Graf Spee, while the rest of her crew was put on Altmark, and the ship was scuttled.



Using intercepted radio transmissions and his captured codebook, Langsdorff headed south for another try at the Cape - UK trade route. On October 22 Graf Spee, flying a French flag, approached within a mile of the 5300-ton Trevenion. Her captain, J. Edwards, recognized the pocket battleship and sent off a distress call despite orders not to do so.

The Germans boarded the vessel, took off the crew, and scuttled her, but a British liner relayed her message to the C-in-C at Freetown. Realizing that his game was up, Langsdorff left the shipping lanes. He rendezvoused with Altmark on October 29 to refuel and transfer all of his prisoners.

Admiral Raeder in Berlin suggested new hunting grounds, and Langsdorff agreed: the Indian Ocean. It was time for the wool harvest in Australia, and the Cape of Good Hope - Australia trade route should be both filled with valuable prizes and poorly defended.



Photo # NH 81110 German armored ship Admiral Graf Spee in harbor



Heading southeast, Graf Spee sailed for over 3000 miles, staying far south of the cape

of Good Hope, which the raider passed on November 3. A message from Berlin commended the Graf Spee for her efforts and 100 Iron Crosses were awarded to crew.

But the Cape - Australia trade route in the Indian Ocean did not bring the prey the Germans anticipated. The wool clipping in Australia came late that year, and the ships carrying it were sitting in Australia, not yet loaded. For 10 frustrating days Graf Spee slowly cruised in search of ships, sighting none. Her engines were now in need of overhaul and the funnel belched smoke.

So Langsdorff headed to the Mozambique Channel, between the African coast and Madagascar. On November 15 Graf Spee took the tiny British tanker Africa Star (700-tons) by surprise, capturing her before a distress call could be sent. The captain, P. Dove, and his crew were taken on board Graf Spee and the diminutive tanker, loaded only with ballast, was scuttled.

The next day Graf Spee closed on another vessel, only to find that it was the neutral SS Mapia, of Dutch registry. Her neutrality was respected and she was allowed to go, but Langsdorff knew the Dutch captain would report . He sailed back to the Atlantic, passing the Cape on November 21.



Two days later Graf Spee arrived back at her original South Atlantic waiting area, where four days were spent in company with Altmark making repairs and adjustments to Graf Spee's engines. To confuse any ships that may have stumbled upon him in such a vulnerable state, Langsdorff ordered a second forward turret and second funnel constructed out of wood and canvas, radically altering the silhouette of his vessel to resemble HMS Renown.

Capt. Langsdorff decided that his ship and crew were about ready to go home. Having sailed over 30,000 miles, Graf Spee's engines were in need of more repairs than could be made at sea. Langsdorff decided to make one more sweep of South America to disrupt trade along the coast to the UK, and then head back to Germany for a well-deserved overhaul for his ship and R&R for his crew. He would first hunt the Cape - UK trade route until December 6, and once the enemy was aware of his presence he would take his ship to the River Plate area for a final sweep against beef and wheat from Argentina, and head for Germany with the New Year.



Refueling and provisioning from Altmark on November 26, Langsdorff decided to redistribute his prisoners. Captains and first officers would return to Germany on Graf Spee, while Altmark would land the rest at a neutral port. Ironically, Langsdorff wrote that because Graf Spee's period of commerce raiding was nearing the end, it was no longer absolutely necessary to avoid action with enemy warships. Should an enemy warship sight and attempt to follow Graf Spee, he would close the range and use his ship's powerful guns to at least damage it so as to eliminate the threat of a shadowing warship calling in reinforcements.

Graf Spee made her presence known off Africa on December 2. The liner Doric Star (10,100-tons) was sighted bound for Britain from New Zealand with mutton, butter, cheese, and wool. This liner too sent a distress message despite being warned not to do so. This properly stirred up a hornet's nest in the area, and the Germans planned to put a prize crew on the liner for later use as a supply ship before dashing across the Atlantic.

But just as German seamen boarded this valuable prize with her rich cargo, Graf Spee's seaplane ran out of fuel and had to make a forced landing. Recalling his crew he ordered the liner scuttled, and raced off to recover his valuable aircraft and its crew, which were located just before nightfall.

At sunrise on the 3rd, Graf Spee captured the steamer Tairoa (7980-tons), sinking her after taking off the crew. Tairoa's captain Star had gotten off a distress signal before his radio room was wrecked by gunfire. Langsdorff could have killed all the captains who disobeyed him. On December 6, Graf Spee met up with Altmark again. After exchanging prisoners for fuel and provisions, Graf Spee headed westward to the River Plate area. Captains Star and Brown (Huntsman) were also transferred to Altmark, so that they might look after the captive crewmen.

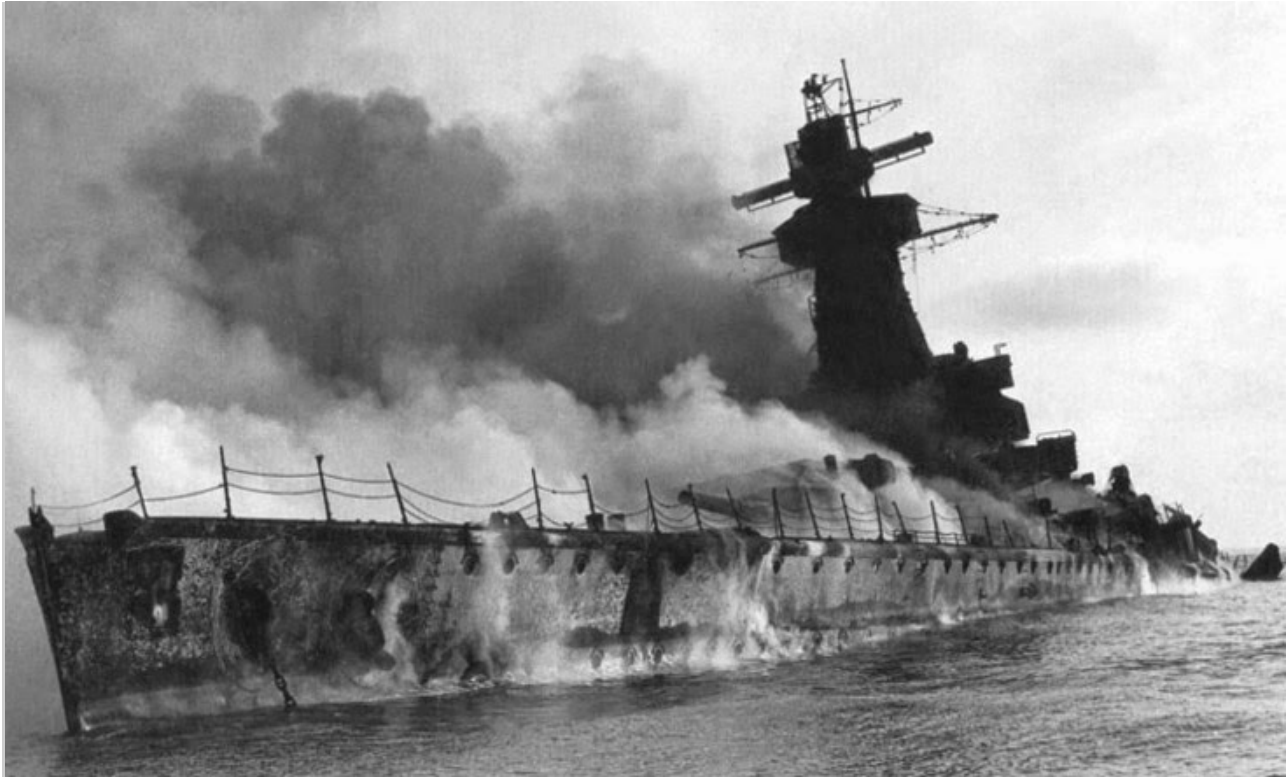
On the evening of December 7, Graf Spee sighted the freighter SS Streonhalh (4000-tons) bound for Britain from Montevideo. Her captain, J. Robinson, hoped that Graf Spee was a British cruiser and delayed sending a distress call until it was too late. Robinson attempted to dispose of his secret documents in weighted bags, but a German sailor saved one before it sank.



From this packet Langsdorff learned that British shipping leaving Buenos Aires and Montevideo steered for a point 300 miles east of the River Plate, before turning north-northeast past Pernambuco for Freetown. Langsdorff now knew where to find rich pickings before heading back to Germany. After taking off the crew, the ship was scuttled, bringing Graf Spee's total to nine vessels totaling more than 50,000 tons, without a sailor on either side being killed or wounded.

Langsdorff was warned of the great numbers of British and French warships hunting for him.

Four British cruisers were known to be off South America, but they were expected to be operating independently either on patrol or escorting merchant ships. Alone, each was no match for Graf Spee. Langsdorff headed for the newly discovered British shipping route, and planned to intercept a convoy of four ships that would sail from Montevideo without escort on December 10.



On December 11, Graf Spee's seaplane took off for its usual dawn patrol, sighting nothing. But the Arado 196 plane suffered another in a series of cracked engine cylinders, due to design fault of splashing cold sea water while landing, and Graf Spee was fresh out of spares, so Langsdorff would no longer have the benefit of his eyes in the sky.

December 13, Graf Spee reached the point 300 miles from Montevideo where she expected to find her final four victims. The lack of aerial reconnaissance caused Graf Spee's luck to run out: dawn broke, but no merchant ships were sighted. Instead, at 0552, two, and then four masts broke the horizon. Graf Spee went to action stations at 0600, and by 0610 her lookouts had correctly identified the newcomers: the heavy cruiser HMS Exeter, and the light cruisers HMS Ajax and HMAS Achilles.

Outnumbered and with a speed disadvantage of seven knots, Graf Spee had no chance to outrun her opponents. Langsdorff turned his ship at the British cruisers, ran his ship up to 24 knots (the most it could do with a fouled bottom and bad engines), and

engaged the enemy. The raiding cruise of the Graf Spee was about to come to a dramatic end at the Battle of the River Plate.



Near the end of her cruise, Graf Spee no longer had to avoid enemy warships at all costs, and Langsdorff planned to engage and disable any warship capable of shadowing his ship. Destroyers were ships Graf Spee could not hope to outrun, but could easily destroy. More importantly, destroyers were used to escort convoys. The German lookouts soon corrected their mistake, identifying the heavy cruiser HMS Exeter at 0600, and correctly identifying two light cruisers by 0610. But Langsdorff continued the approach, knowing that he could not outrun, but did outgun, the British ships.

The British warships were under the command of Commodore Henry Harwood, along with a fourth ship under Harwood's command, were collectively known as Force G. Harwood had previously had his ships spread out to cover a wide area of the ocean: The light cruiser HMS Ajax watched the River Plate estuary, the light cruiser HMAS Achilles patrolled further north off Rio de Janeiro, while the heavy cruisers HMS Exeter and HMS Cumberland guarded the Falkland Islands to the South. Harwood flew his flag from the Ajax, to be closest to the center of the patrol areas.

Harwood had guessed right: soon after dawn his lookouts spotted smoke on the horizon, caused by Graf Spee's diesel engines, which were badly in need of overhaul. At 0604 Exeter reported sighting smoke, and at 0616 signaled, "I think it is a pocket battleship."

Langsdorff was faced with three opponents, the slowest of which had a speed advantage of seven knots over his tired vessel. Avoiding combat was not an option, so the question became how to best engage his numerically superior, but smaller gunned opponents. He could turn away and keep his distance as long as possible, firing his 11.1-inch guns at long range, hoping to disable at least one of the enemy vessels before they could get into range to reply, and then use the superior weight of his larger guns to disable or drive the remainder off.

Photo # NH 85636 Funeral procession of Capt. Hans Langsdorff of the Admiral Graf Spee, December 1939



But in doing so he would waste tremendous amounts of his limited ammo: hits were rare at long range, especially firing only the three guns of the aft turret, and he might expend all 300 shells in the aft magazine without disabling all three British cruisers.

So instead, Langsdorff ran toward the enemy at full speed, closing to 20,000 yards, and then turned broadside to bring all six main guns and half his secondary guns to bear, hoping the greater weight of fire at shorter range would more quickly tell on the most powerful British ship, Exeter. At 0618, Graf Spee opened fire, expecting her weakly armored and armed opponents to shadow or retreat.

Graf Spee drew first blood and her salvo straddled Exeter, amidships where it killed the crew of the starboard torpedo mount and disabled both of Exeter's Walrus seaplanes, denying Harwood their use during the battle. ret without exploding. Soon a salvo, struck the front of "B" turret, putting it out of action and sending splinters across the bridge, killing everyone except the captain and two other officers, all of whom were wounded.



The wheelhouse was damaged also, severing communication with steering and engineering; the ship went out of control, and listed heavily to starboard. Captain Bell,

bleeding from a wound to the face, set up command in the secondary conning position and passed orders with messengers.


Meanwhile two more shells struck the ship forward, one of which blew a six-foot by eight-foot hole in the bow after striking an anchor, the other of which started a fire in the forecastle. Soon another sprayed splinters across "X" turret, temporarily disabling it. In exchange, Exeter's gunners scored but on hit on Graf Spee, which struck her control tower killing several officers and instrument operators, damaging communications, and destroying the main rangefinder.

Langsdorff let go Exeter which was listed to 10 degrees . 61 officers and men were killed, and 23 wounded. Graf Spee now shifted his attention on Ajax and Achilles , the light cruisers. With communications down and the main director gone, the turrets fired on local control. The British cruisers dropped back, a final hit from Graf Spee carried away Ajax's topmast, eliminating her wireless communication. Langsdorff was injured, being knocked unconscious by an exploding shell and cut by splinters from two other.

He received damage reports from all over the ship, did a tour of his command. What he found distressed him: a six-inch shell had penetrated the starboard quarter, destroying an ammunition hoist and cutting the electricity to the forward 11-inch turret; another had passed through the ship leaving a three-foot by six-foot exit wound as it passed out the port side; a third destroyed a four-inch gun and its ammo hoist. A gun mount, the ship's galley, the main rangefinder and the radar were destroyed by shellfire, and fire had destroyed the scout plane, three of the ship's boats, and Langsdorff's cabin.

The onboard plant to purify her diesel fuel for her engines was damaged beyond repair, there were six leaks below the waterline, and a shell had wrecked the bridge as it passed through without exploding. There were 36 dead and 59 wounded, and there was much repair work to be done before the ship could attempt the long voyage home. Langsdorff told his navigator, Jurgen Wattenberg, "We must run for port, the ship is no longer seaworthy."

MEN IN COMMAND OF THE GRAF SPEE
(December 1939)

Commander: *Kapitän zur See* Hans Langsdorff.
Executive Officer: *Kapitän zur See* Walter Kay.
First Artillery Officer: *Fregattenkapitän* Paul Ascher
Chief Engineer: *Korvettenkapitän (Ing.)* Karl Klepp.
Second Artillery Officer: *Korvettenkapitän* Hans Fuchs.
Third Artillery Officer: *Korvettenkapitän* Kurt Meusemann. 
Administrative Officer: *Korvettenkapitän (V)* Heinrich Nakoetter.
Navigation Officer: *Korvettenkapitän* Jürgen Wattenberg.

Langsdorff had two choices to put Graf Spee for repairs. Montevideo and Buenos Aires. Montevideo was closer, and he could call there without a pilot. On the other hand, the waters of the River Plate are some of the most dangerous in the world, and the estuary is littered with literally thousands of wrecks; Graf Spee would have to stop to take on a pilot, unthinkable with the British close behind.

Also, the Panzerschiff drew 22 feet of water, even without any damage. This meant that she would have to stay in the narrow dredged channel to reach Buenos Aires, while the British cruisers, which drew only 16 feet, would have freedom of movement. The channel was only 23 feet deep at some places, so if the British scored a hit below the waterline Graf Spee would ground, unable to move.

Even if she did not run aground, the German ship's water intakes for the cooling system of her diesels were at the lowest part of the ship's bottom, and any mud sucked in would cause the tired engines to overheat very quickly, immobilizing the ship. Disabled or stuck, Graf Spee would be easily destroyed, but would not sink, allowing the British to capture her. Buenos Aires was out; the ship would head for Montevideo. Langsdorff

sent a brief action report to German High Command, and announced his intention to enter Montevideo. Admiral Raeder replied in agreement with the plan.

Langsdorff sent someone to check on his prisoners, 62 British officers and seaman who had escaped injury in their compartment deep within the ship. They were fed, and all breathed a sigh of relief at their mixed blessing: while they had wished the Royal Navy victory, the destruction of the Graf Spee would have meant their deaths. They were not yet free, but they were alive.

Exeter was of no further fighting value, so Harwood ordered her to Port Stanley. With some luck and fair weather, she would make the 1000-mile voyage without sinking. Cumberland was ordered to leave the Falklands immediately to replace Exeter. She would arrive in 36 hours.

At 1104 Graf Spee sighted a merchant ship, the British steamer SS Shakespeare bound for the UK of Montevideo. Langsdorff altered course to intercept, intending to sink the ship with a torpedo as he went by and claim one last victim. Always chivalrous, Langsdorff signaled his intention to the steamer's captain, telling him to abandon ship, and also to Harwood, asking him to "Please pick up lifeboats from British steamer."

The German captain used his ship's correct call sign, and for the first time the British knew what ship they had been fighting. Shakespeare's captain hove to, but did not abandon ship.

Without the time to wait, and never being one to sink a vessel with unarmed sailors on board, Langsdorff turned Graf Spee back towards Montevideo without firing. Senseless slaughter was not Langsdorff's aim and that is why he let go crippled Exeter and diverted his fire to the two light cruisers, which were rapidly closing range.

At the height of the action, while still in the foretop, Langsdorff was injured by shrapnel and was knocked unconscious. Diggins called for the executive officer (Commander Kay) to take control of the ship, but by the time he arrived in the foretop, Langsdorff had recovered consciousness and said he would continue in command.

The flagship of the National Navy, the 1,150-ton gunboat Uruguay under the command of Captain Fernando J. Fuentes, sailed out to investigate. Around 1800 hours, Uruguay's lookouts spotted Graf Spee, and settled in to watch the action.

Harwood ordered Achilles to follow Graf Spee into the wide estuary of the river, International Law allowing 'hot pursuit' to override the respect for neutral territorial waters, while Ajax turned south to prevent the Germans from suddenly doubling back. At 1915, Graf Spee suddenly turned broadside and fired two salvos at Ajax at the range of 26,000 yards, causing the cruiser to turn away and make smoke. At 2048, just after sunset, Graf Spee fired three salvos at Achilles, compelling that vessel to keep her distance and reply with five salvos of her own.

Photo # NH 80973 German armored ship Admiral Graf Spee in the English Channel, 1939



A few minutes later, a German officer unlocked the door to the compartment that held the British prisoners and told them that Langsdorff would release them in the morning. Under International Law, Graf Spee could not hold prisoners and claim "havarie," the privilege of sanctuary for damage caused at sea.

Reinforcements were on the way, with Cumberland already en route and scheduled to arrive the next day. The battle cruiser Renown, the carrier Ark Royal, the cruiser Neptune, and the heavy cruisers Dorsetshire and Shropshire were proceeding towards Montevideo.

While the diplomatic and legal maneuvering began in Uruguay, there was celebration back in Britain. Harwood was an instant hero, and was promoted instantly to Rear Admiral and awarded the Knight Commander of the Order of Bath (KCB), while Bell, Parry, and Woodhouse were awarded the Companion of the Order of Bath (CB).



Before daylight on the 14th, the German Minister Dr. Otto Langmann boarded the Graf Spee. Uruguay, were profiting from trade with Britain. General Alfredo Baldomir, President of the Republic of Uruguay, and his ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defense, Dr Alberto Guani and General Alfredo Campos, prepared to hear arguments from the British and German ministers before they decided the fate of the warship they now hosted in their harbor.

At issue was the interpretation of the Hague Convention of 1907, the relevant International Law. This law stated that a belligerent warship could only stay in a neutral port for 24 hours before that neutral power was obliged to intern it for the duration of hostilities. However, a warship could extend their stay past 24 hours if it claimed "havarie," or the right of sanctuary, because it had suffered damage while at sea. If damage had been suffered, then the neutral power could not force the warship to go to sea until repairs were complete.

Langsdorff said it would take 15 days to make repairs to allow the Graf Spee to make a breakout, followed by a run past the Home Fleet for Germany.

The British minister, Eugen Millington-Drake, argued that because Graf Spee had sailed 300 miles at good speed to Montevideo after the battle she was indeed seaworthy, and should not be granted sanctuary for repairs that were to make the ship battle worthy, not seaworthy.

President Baldomir did not want to upset relations with either Britain or the pro-British USA, Uruguay's two largest overseas trading partners. They informed the German minister that Uruguayan technical experts would board the Graf Spee to inspect her damage and make their own estimates for repair. Langsdorff kept his promise, and ordered all prisoners released. The British merchant captains Dove and Pottinger went to pay their respects and say goodbye to the German warrior, who had acted more as a host than a captor.

Langsdorff greeted them, and gave each of them a cap tally from one of Graf Spee's dead, apologizing that they had been on board for the battle and expressing thanks that none of the British merchant seamen had been injured. As the British merchant officers and seamen mustered on the quarterdeck to be dismissed by the master-at-arms, they passed 36 coffins sitting under the guns of the aft turret; not everyone on Graf Spee had been as lucky as they.



Soon after Langsdorff freed his prisoners in the afternoon, and landed his dead and wounded for hospital treatment, the technical experts toured the ship. The Hague Convention had a clause in it to protect unarmed merchant ships from raiders: if a merchant ship belonging to a belligerent power left a neutral port, then a warship belonging to the other could not leave that same port for 24 hours, thus giving the merchant ship a fair chance to avoid capture.

Britain pulled strings and quickly arranged for the British steamer SS Ashworth to leave Montevideo at 1800 on the 15th prematurely.^y Guani and Campos made their decision: Graf Spee could not sail before 1800 on the 16th, but had to sail before 2000 hours on Sunday the 17th.

Meanwhile, the crew of the Graf Spee had been busy. Repairs had been started as best they could be, as Montevideo's one shipyard and all local firms refused to help, on instigation by Churchill. The crew of the Graf Spee, who looked upon Langsdorff as a father, labored not as men celebrating a victory over British warships, but as disciplined men preparing for a battle they knew they could not win.

In the evening of the 14th, Langsdorff met with his officers. The pro-Allied government must not intern the ship, nor could it fall directly into British hands. He intended to attempt a breakout at night.



The next morning Graf Spee buried her dead in a funeral attended only by a few of the crew and a handful of petty officers, as everyone else was busy working on the ship. A naval band led the procession from the dock to the Northern Cemetery on the outskirts of Montevideo.

Crowds lined the streets to see the spectacle, including many of the British seamen formerly held on Graf Spee. In a poignant scene that seems out of place in the 20th century, where bitter enemies approached each other and exchanged best wishes and handshakes. There was not a dry eye.

After giving a short eulogy at the gravesite, Langsdorff walked down the row of caskets sprinkling dirt on each one. At the end of the row, he came face to face with captain Dove, who stood saluting his former captor. Langsdorff paused, looked him in the eye, and stood at attention to return his salute. Dove left a wreath, which said "To the brave memory of the men of the sea from their comrades of the British Merchant Service." As a last salute to the fallen Germans was given, photographers immortalized the moment: Everyone stood with their arm outstretched in the Nazi salute, except Langsdorff who gave the traditional salute of the old German Navy. The propagandists had reported that the British had spat upon the coffins of the fallen German heroes along the funeral route.

There propaganda efforts went out the window when the crew of the Graf Spee vehemently denied these charges, and the photos of the funeral were splashed across the front pages of the world's newspapers.

British propagandists were equally annoyed, as their attempts to paint all Germans as heartless villains were dispelled by Captain Dove's radio interviews about how chivalrously the British sailors had been treated.



With the departure of the SS Ashworth, Graf Spee's window to leave Montevideo narrowed to just one day. Langsdorff's hopes of a surprise exit from harbor that night were gone. The German Captain met with his crew, which one officer recorded in his diary as being ready to follow their captain blindly, even to certain death. Langsdorff told some of his sailors that he would fight if he could, but if he could not he would not let Graf Spee and her crew 'become a target in a shooting match'.

One of Graf Spee's engine-room mechanics recorded Langsdorff's famous words to the effect that he would not let his ship be shot to pieces by a greatly superior force, and that to him a thousand young men alive were worth more than a thousand dead heroes.

Langsdorff reported back to Berlin: he was trapped, could not leave until at least 1800 on the 16th, and would be interned at 2000 on the 17th.

The German minister, Langmann, commented, "I regard internment as the worst possible solution. It would be preferable in view of shortage of ammunition, to blow her up in the shallow waters of the Plate and to have the crew interned." The German minister pressed for another extension, but under pressure from the Churchill, Guani and Campos held firm.

The Captain then met with his officers to discuss options. There was a slim chance that the ship could make Buenos Aires without being destroyed, grounding in the channel, or being disabled by mud in the cooling system, but no guarantee that the government of Argentina would be any more willing to let Graf Spee stay past 24 hours than Uruguay had.

But then the whole discussion became pointless: as a final insurance against a surprise exit by the German warship, the British steamer SS Dunster Grange had sailed from Montevideo, upon orders from Churchill. The Graf Spee could not leave before 1800 hours Sunday. With only a two-hour window, there would be no chance to surprise the waiting British by leaving early.

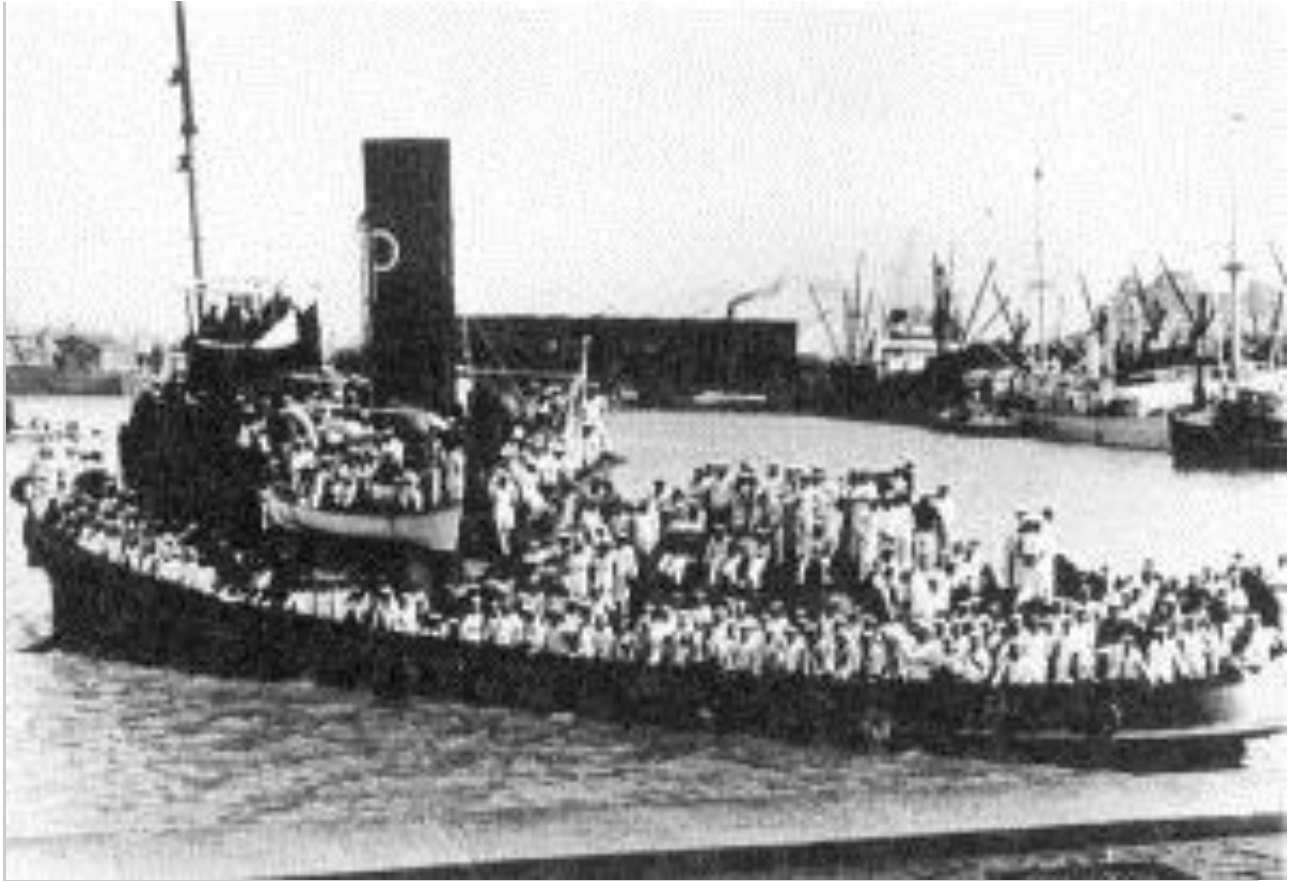
On the night of the 16th, repair work on Graf Spee was halted. She was filled with the sounds of hammering and small explosions, as the fire control installations, radios, radars, and other equipment were blown up. Dials and electronics were smashed with hammers, gun elevation gear was destroyed, and the breach blocks from the main guns were removed and tossed overboard.

The British would learn nothing when they boarded the wreck, and Graf Spee's guns would never be used against Germany.



Secret documents were destroyed, and the ship's bell, battle ensign, the portrait of Admiral Graf von Spee, and other historically significant items were sent ashore or torched on the vessel. Powder charges were stacked inside the turrets around a torpedo warhead, flash doors were opened, a torpedo was wired in the engine room, and detonator wires were rigged. Langsdorff instructed that the wires be run to the conning tower, where he would set them off manually and die with the blast. But his officers stonewalled him, and rigged up a timer instead.

As live radio carried real-time reports to the world, an estimated three-quarters of a million people crowded along the coast to watch the Graf Spee depart and face the waiting British warships.



At 1830 Graf Spee ran up two large battle ensigns and weighed anchor. 700 of her crew had been transferred to Tacoma, which under Captain Hans Konow weighed anchor as well, following about a mile behind the warship as she entered the South channel to the sea. Just outside the breakwater, Tacoma stopped and transferred the German sailors to the Argentine tugs Gigante and Coloso, which had been hired out of Buenos Aires. The Uruguayan National Navy quickly turned Tacoma back into Montevideo where she would be interned for the duration for the war, as she had sailed without proper authorization and assisted in a hostile act.

In the south channel, just outside Uruguay's then three-mile territorial limit, Graf Spee swung west, turned out of the dredged channel, and dropped anchor. The timers on the charges were set for 20 minutes, and the order to abandon ship was given. Langsdorff and the last five officers hauled down the ship's ensigns, made sure the remaining crew was safely off, boarded the captain's launch, and moved about a mile away.

Just before sunset, Graf Spee shuttered from the powerful explosion of the torpedo warhead in her engine room. A second later she was ripped apart in a tremendous explosion. Her rear turret was blown clear of the ship, the stern was severed, and flame belched high into the sky. The forward turret did not explode, probably because the initial explosion damaged the firing circuit. But the ship was in flames from one end to the other, and quickly settled into the shallow water with her main deck awash. The fires would burn for two days.

Langsdorff ordered the final entry into the Graf Spee's log: "Graf Spee put out of service on December 17, 1939, at 2000 hours."

Langsdorff and the rest of the crew would reach Argentina, where the German community greeted them with great hospitality.. But the Argentine Government's reception was hostile as they did NOT want to upset the British and USA. Confirming the suspicion that Graf Spee was no more welcomed in Argentina than in Uruguay, the officers and crew were not treated as shipwrecked sailors, but were rounded up and interned for the duration of the war.

16 officers escaped in the next two months, and 17 more in August, and a handful in 1942. A few ratings also escaped, and like the officers managed to return to Germany via a variety of routes, including through Japan and the Soviet Union. But the rest went to prisoner of war camps when Argentina joined the Allies in 1943. Six officers and 894 ratings were repatriated in February 1946, aboard the British liner Highland Monarch, fittingly enough escorted by HMS Ajax, while 168 chose to stay. Hundreds more returned, and some 500 of Graf Spee's crew eventually settled in Argentina.

Langsdorff enjoyed the company of his officers until about midnight. He was wounded and had hardly slept for the past few days. Going back to his hotel room, he lit a fine cigar, poured a glass of a favorite Scotch, and wrote a letter each to his wife, his parents, and the German Ambassador.



After sealing and addressing the letters, Langsdorff spread the Graf Spee's battle flag or Nazi flag (there are conflicting reports) out, laid on it, and shot himself in the head.

The next afternoon he was laid to rest in Buenos Aires, at a funeral attended by his officers, crew, and Argentinean officials. SS Ahlea's Captain Pottinger, attended to represent the British merchant sailors once held captive on board Graf Spee.

All of those released spoke highly of their treatment and of noble Langsdorff, who spoke perfect English and lent them English books to pass the time.

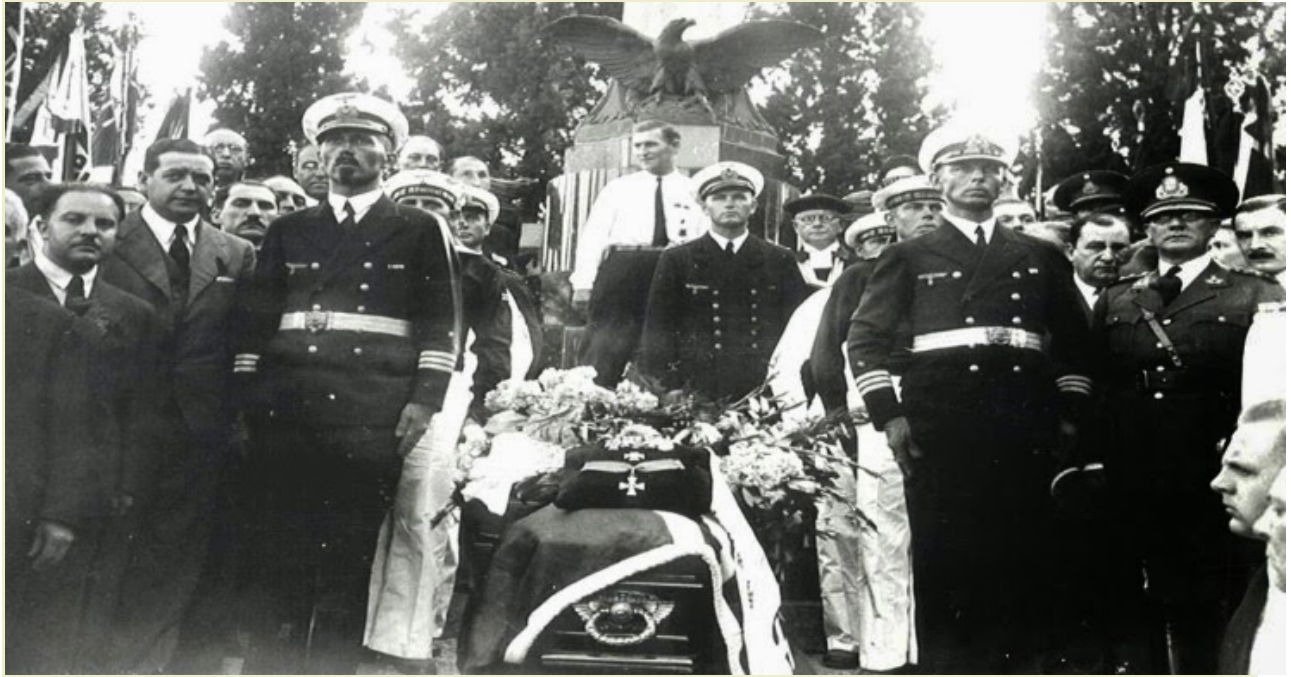


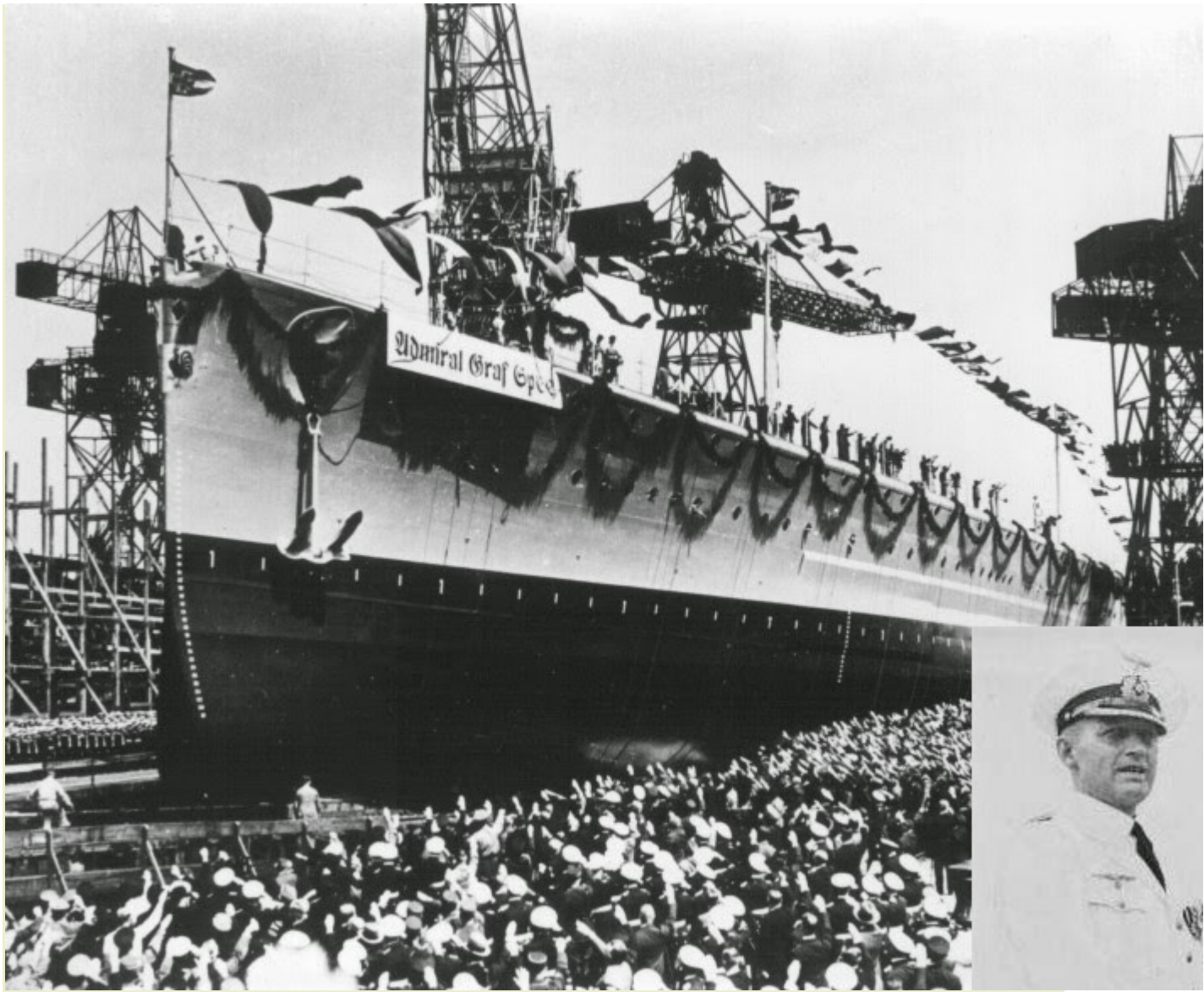
British officers boarded the Graf Spee as soon as the fires were out, but found nothing of value. One of the Royal Navy's top divers attempted to enter the forward turret to recover the advanced gyro-firing system (actually destroyed before the scuttle), only to become trapped and drown. The wreck of the Graf Spee slowly sank into the mud, until by 1948 only the control tower could be seen above water. In a few years even that was out of site, and the Graf Spee was just another of thousands of wrecks in the River Plate estuary.

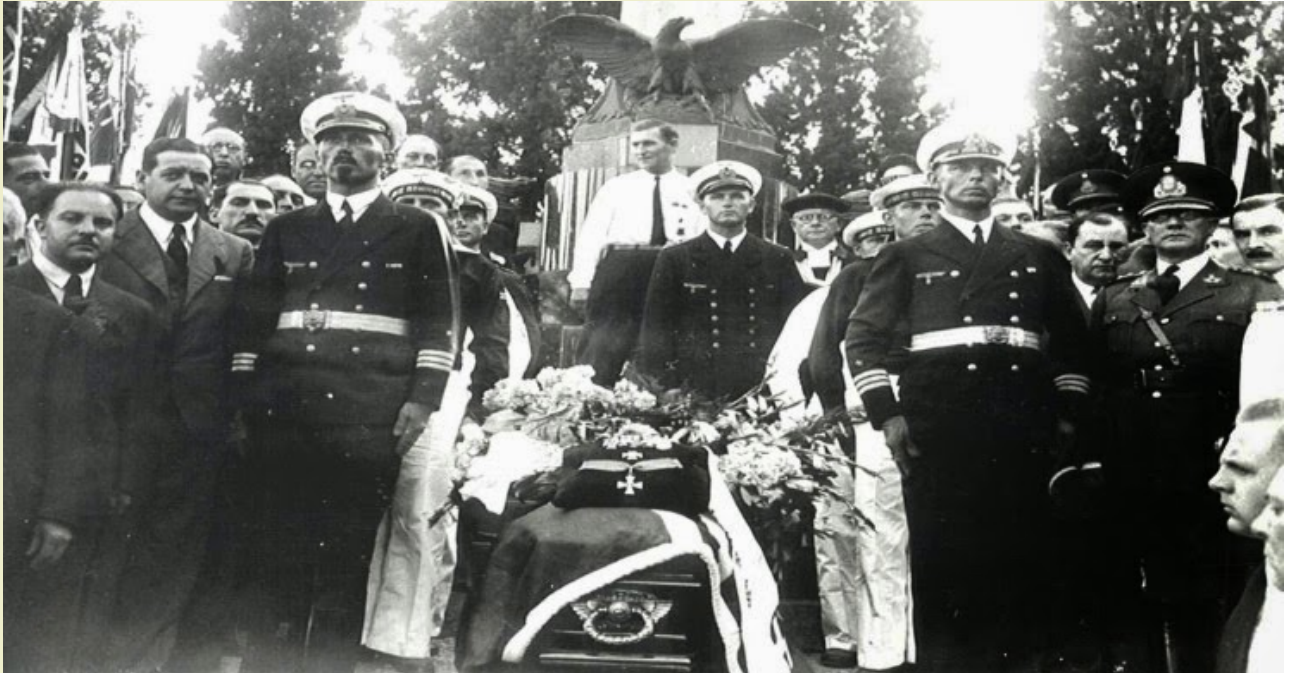
Due to poor design, the vulnerable heavy oil fuel purifiers took a hit, and Graf Spee had just 16 hours of fuel. No spare parts were available, in the 72-hour window period. Her engine speed had reduced from 28 knots to 22 knots, and was guzzling fuel. Her fresh water generator was destroyed. There was no way Graf Spee could get back to Germany avoiding all hostile British warships, waiting outside.



KAPITAN ZUR SEE HANS LANGSDORFF
DECEMBER 1939







Adolf Hitler, though he said that Graf Spee should have shown no mercy to the crippled HMS Exeter, gave a pension to Capt. Langsdorff's wife.



Notice his salute was not the Heil Hitler salute, but the traditional German Navy salute which infuriated Hitler (sic) when he saw the picture. However, he was saluting civilians which was customary and the Hitler salute only became de rigueur in June of 1944. (Not to be taken as some gesture of rebellion as some have interpreted)

The Last Letter

Dec. 19, 1939

Your Excellency,

After a long struggle I reached the grave decision to scuttle the Admiral Graf Spee, in order to prevent her from falling into enemy hands. I am still convinced that under the circumstances this decision was the only one left, once I had taken my ship into the trap of Montevideo. For with the ammunition remaining, any attempt to fight my way back to open and deep water was bound to fail. And yet only in deep water could I have scuttled the ship, after having used the remaining ammunition, thus avoiding her falling to the enemy.

Sooner than expose my ship to the danger that after a brave fight she would fall partly or completely into enemy hands. I decided not to fight but to destroy the equipment and then scuttle the ship. It was clear to me that this decision might be consciously or unwittingly misconstrued by persons ignorant of my motives, as being attributable entirely or partly to personal considerations. Therefore, I decided from the beginning to bear the consequences involved in this decision. For a captain with a sense of honor, it goes without saying that his personal fate cannot be separated from that of his ship.

I postponed my intention as long as I still bore responsibility for decisions concerning the welfare of the crew under my command. After today's decision of the Argentine government, I can do no more for my ship's company. Neither will I be able to take an active part in the present struggle of my country. I can now only prove by my death that the fighting services of the Third Reich are ready to die for the honor of the flag.

I alone bear the responsibility for scuttling the Admiral Graf Spee. I am happy to pay with my life for any possible reflection on the honor of the flag. I shall face my fate with firm faith in the cause and the future of the nation and of my Führer. I am writing this letter to Your Excellency in the quiet of the evening, after a calm deliberation, in order that you may be able to inform my superior officers, and to counter public rumors if this should become necessary.

Kapitän zur See Hans Langsdorff¹⁶

¹⁶ - See more at: <http://ww2today.com/captain-langsdorff-commits-suicide#sthash.4OKeqoJd.dpuf>



The funeral was captured in this film reel:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RgW_LcB

Langsdorff's Inspiration

Courage is defined as follows:

Courage (also called bravery, bravado or valour) is the choice and willingness to confront agony, pain, danger, uncertainty or intimidation.

Physical courage is courage in the face of physical pain, hardship, death or threat of death, while moral courage is the ability to act rightly in the face of popular opposition, shame, scandal, discouragement, or personal loss.

In some traditions, fortitude holds approximately the same meaning.

In the Western tradition, notable thoughts on courage have come from philosophers, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas and Kierkegaard;

in the Eastern tradition, some thoughts on courage were offered by the Tao Te Ching.

More recently, courage has been explored by the discipline of psychology.

Despite the British propaganda the captain of the Graff Spee followed his ship's name-sake Admiral Maximilian Reichsgraf von Spee^[1] (22 June 1861 – 8 December 1914)

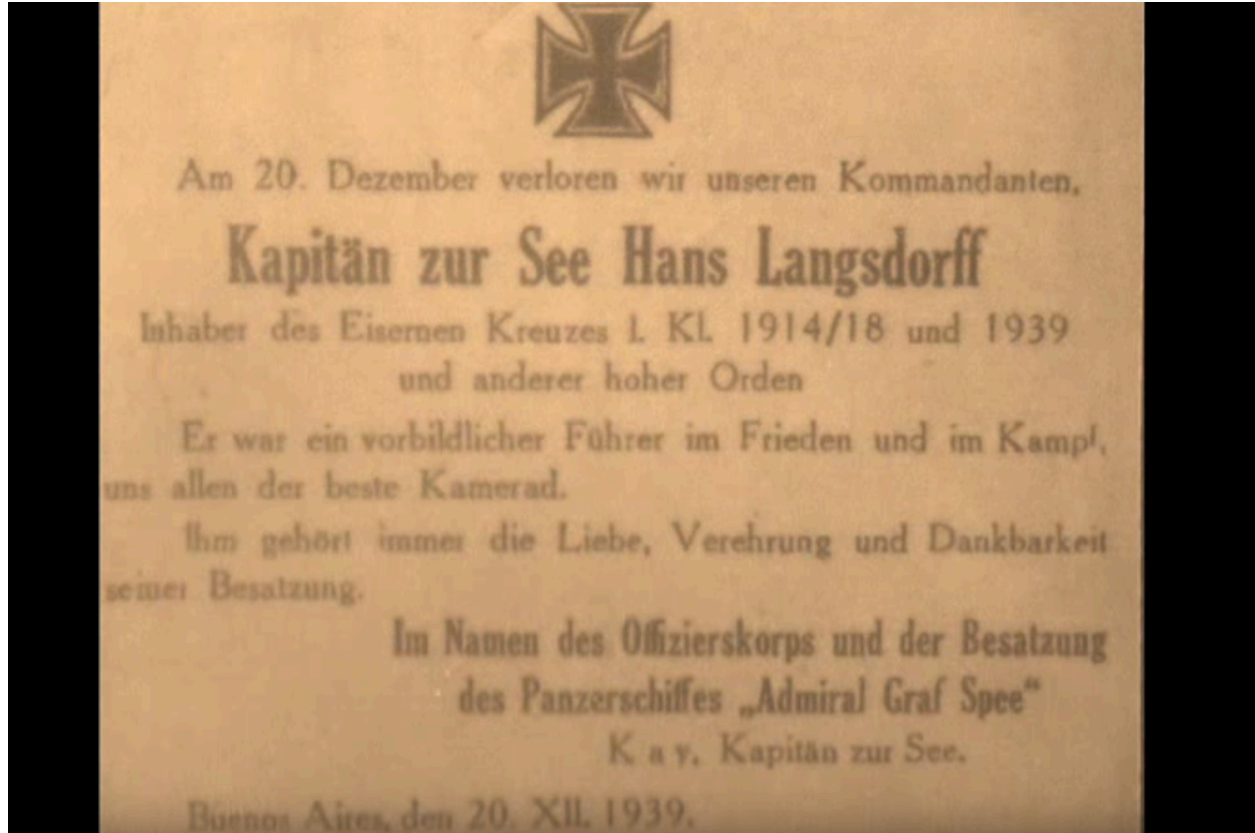
Von Spee was a naval officer of the German *Kaiserliche Marine* (Imperial Navy), who famously commanded the German East Asia Squadron during World War I.

Spee entered the navy in 1878 and served in a variety of roles and locations, including on a colonial gunboat in German West Africa in the 1880s, the East Africa Squadron in the late 1890s, and as commander of several warships in the main German fleet in the early 1900s. By 1912, he had returned to the East Asia Squadron as its commander, and was promoted to the rank of *Vizeadmiral* (Vice Admiral) the following year.

After the outbreak of World War I in July 1914, Spee led his squadron across the Pacific to the coast of South America. Here on 1 November, he defeated the British 4th Cruiser Squadron under Rear Admiral Christopher Cradock in the Battle of Coronel, sinking two of Cradock's cruisers and forcing his other two ships to retreat. A month later, Spee decided to attack the British naval base in the Falkland Islands, though a superior British force surprised him. In the ensuing Battle of the Falkland Islands, Vice Admiral Doveton Sturdee's squadron, which included two powerful battlecruisers, destroyed the East Asia Squadron.

Spee and his two sons, who happened to be serving on two of his ships, were all killed, along with about 2,200 other men. Spee was hailed as a hero in Germany, and several ships were named in his honor, **including the heavy cruiser *Admiral Graf Spee*.**





The announcement of his death December 20th 1939.¹⁷

Hans Langsdorff was buried in the German section of the La Chacarita Cemetery in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and was honored by both sides in the battle for his honorable conduct.

70 years after his death, a memorial was held on December 20^h 2009

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LN2Unn1oF5E>

The last surviving mariner to set the bombs to scuttle the ship speaks of his captain in this documentary: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ewZYfQJGHs>

Lukas Wirp tells how the bombs were installed. And how the firing of the bombs was made. He lives in Hamburg and was 97 years old in 2012 when this was filmed.

¹⁷ see also <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qwxXgXF9B84>

His Memorials

Langsdorff's role in the Battle of the River Plate, and the fate of the Graf Spee has remained obscure. Historians have described him as a "high-class person", but have occasionally suggested that as a commander he was somewhat unimaginative.

Admiral Raeder left a black mark on Langsdorff's record in his post-war writings when he blamed Langsdorff for losing his ship by attacking three cruisers and going against general orders.

Others say the evidence shows clearly that Langsdorff followed his orders, faithfully fulfilled his duty and maintained his personal code of honor and decency.

Langsdorff, Hans Wilhelm

[Back to all people](#)

-Nationality :
Germany.


-Ranking :
Captain of the cruiser " Admiral Graf Spee"

-Born :
20-03-1894, Bergen auf Rügen.

-Died :
12-12-1939, suicide, age 45, Buenos Aires.

-Buried :
Buenos Aires, Argentine, German section of the La Chacarita Cemetery.

-Medals :



Germany Kapitän Zur See Kriegsmarine

He wrote on December 19th 1939:

“I can now only prove by my death that the fighting services of the Third Reich are ready to die for the honor of the flag. I alone bear the responsibility for scuttling the pocket-battleship Admiral Graf Spee. I am happy to pay with my life for any possible reflection on the honor of the flag.”

He lay on Admiral Graf Spee's battle ensign and shot himself, forestalling any allegations that he had avoided further action through cowardice. Another motivation was Langsdorff's desire to go down with the Graf Spee.

He was talked out of such an action by his officers, who convinced him that his leadership was still needed in seeking amnesty for his crew. Once the fate of the Graf Spee's crew was decided, Langsdorff killed himself over her ensign as a symbolic act of going down with his ship.

In the UK the National Memorial Arboretum unveiled a monument to the Battle of the River Plate in 2014 where four survivors met to dedicate the monument.¹⁸

The memorial dedication at the arboretum, at Alrewas, Staffordshire was attended by four River Plate veterans - John Garrard and Ted Wicks from HMS Ajax and Jim London and Basil Trott from HMS Exeter - families of those who served, as well Captain Stephen and Commander Henry Harwood - the sons of Commodore Henry Harwood.

The new memorial is a lasting tribute to the selfless courage of those who fought and lost their lives in the battle and the ships which fought it - heavy cruiser HMS Exeter, light cruisers HMS Ajax and Achilles and the Graf Spee.

Peter Danks, chairman of the HMS Ajax and River Plate Veterans Association, said: 'We are very proud to be unveiling our memorial which will ensure that all who took part in the Battle of the River Plate will be remembered always.'

¹⁸ <http://www.thenma.org.uk> and <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2602647/Battle-River-Plate-monument-mark-Allies-victory-Graf-Spee.html#ixzz44iLTM9h4>

THE BATTLE OF THE RIVER PLATE



HMS AJAX
NEC QUISQUAM NISI AJAX
'None but Ajax can overcome Ajax'



HMS ACHILLES
FORTITER IN RE
'Bravely in action'



HMS EXETER
SEMPER FIDELIS
'Ever faithful'



In the South Atlantic Captain Langsdorff in Pocket Battleship Admiral Graf Spee was sinking British merchant ships. Commodore Harwood, commanding Hunting Group G, ordered the cruisers HMS Ajax, Achilles and Exeter to the River Plate. On the morning of 13th December Exeter investigated smoke and signalled, "I think it is a Pocket Battleship!" Graf Spee initially concentrated her fire on Exeter. Ajax and Achilles closed on Graf Spee causing significant damage. Exeter retired from the battle badly damaged. Ajax and Achilles shadowed Graf Spee into Montevideo in neutral Uruguay. Langsdorff requested 14 days to repair her damage but Uruguay only allowed 72 hours. Knowing that escape was no longer an option Graf Spee scuttled in the River Plate on 17th December. Two days later Captain Langsdorff shot himself.

The Battle brought the first victory of the Second World War and lifted the Country's morale.

"This brilliant sea fight takes its place in our naval annals and in a long cold dark winter it warmed the cockles of the British hearts." Winston Churchill

13TH DECEMBER 1939

THIS MEMORIAL WAS UNVEILED BY SURVIVORS AND COMMEMORATES THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BATTLE OF THE RIVER PLATE. IT IS DEDICATED TO THOSE WHO SERVED IN THE SHIPS AT THE BATTLE AND IN SUBSEQUENT ACTION ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES.

HMS AJAX AND RIVER PLATE VETERANS ASSOCIATION
HMS EXETER RIVER PLATE VETERANS AND FAMILIES ASSOCIATION
HMS ACHILLES RIVER PLATE VETERANS NEW ZEALAND

SHARE PICTURE





Mail Online



Home **News** | U.S. | Sport | TV&Showbiz | Australia | Femail | Health | Science | Money
 Latest Headlines | News | World News | Arts | Headlines | Pictures | Most read | News Board | Wires

'It warmed the cockles of the British hearts': Battle of the River Plate monument to be unveiled to mark Allies' famous victory over Nazi 'pocket battleship' Admiral Graf Spee

- Encounter in Dec 1939, off Uruguay, was first major naval battle of WWII
- Four survivors will meet at National Memorial Arboretum for ceremony
- Battle fought by heavy cruiser HMS Exeter, light cruisers HMS Ajax and Achilles and Graf Spee; 72 British sailors died
- In a radio broadcast, Churchill said: 'This brilliant sea fight takes its place in our naval annals and in a long, cold, dark winter it warmed the cockles of the British hearts'

By IAN DRURY FOR THE DAILY MAIL

PUBLISHED: 19:38 GMT, 11 April 2014 | UPDATED: 08:43 GMT, 12 April 2014

The battle - in which 72 British sailors died - brought the first Royal Navy victory of the Second World War and gave a much-needed lift to the country's morale.

In a radio broadcast to the nation, Churchill said: 'This brilliant sea fight takes its place in our naval annals and in a long, cold, dark winter it warmed the cockles of the British hearts.'

Captain Stephen Harwood, the son of Commodore Harwood, who is also patron of the Memorial Dedication, said that the new monument would continue 'to fulfil Winston Churchill's prediction that this battle will long be told in song and story.'

The front of the memorial is engraved with the crests of the three Royal Navy vessels, a description of the battle and includes the words:

'It is dedicated to those who served in the ships at the battle and in subsequent action especially those who gave their lives.'

On the back is the Graf Spee's crest, an engraving of the battle area and the Churchill quote: 'This great battle will long be told in song and story.'

On the German side, too, the tides of memory and history also caught up with the conscience of the nation, where a monument was finally erected in 2011 to the memory of the commander, Wilhelm Hans Langsdorff.

I found this memorial in the June 2011 issue of the StadtBote.

Johann Wilhelm Rudolf Langsdorff

Ein Kapitän zur See zwischen Kaiserreich, Weimarer Republik, Nationalsozialismus und sein Anspruch an Ethik und Moral (Teil 1/2)

Johann Wilhelm Rudolf Langsdorff ist ein Bergener Kind, auch wenn sein Leben hier nur ein kurzes Intermezzo gab. Es klingt für einen Offizier der Marine paradox, wenn es ihm wichtig war das Leben von Menschen nicht achtlos zu zerstören. Das brachte ihm selbst bei den



Feinden Achtung ein. Anlass war maßgeblich sein Verhalten am 17. Dezember 1939 als Kommandant des deutschen Panzerschiffes „Admiral Spee“ in einer entscheidenden Situation. Er ignorierte Hitlers Forderungen „Durchhalten bis zum Tod“. Hitler fragte nicht nach Sinn oder Sinnlosigkeit. Langsdorffs Antwort in einer aussichtslosen militärischen und menschlichen Situation war: „Ich werde uns nicht von einer Übermacht in Stücke schießen lassen. Für mich sind tausend junge Männer lebend mehr wert als tausend tote Helden.“ * Wer war nun dieser Hans Langsdorff? Sein Geburtsort ist Bergen auf der Insel Rügen, wo er am

20. März 1894 auf die Welt kam. Sein Vater **Karl Ludwig Wilhelm Langsdorff** arbeitete am Bergener Königlichen Amtsgericht als königlicher Amtsrichter. Seine Mutter Minna Marie Karoline Elisabeth Langsdorff war eine geborene Steinmetz. Beide Eltern prägte die christlich evangelische Tradition und so erzog man die Kinder eines Richters würdig in der rechtlichen und christlichen Tradition, also ehrlich, aufrecht, religiös. Johann Wilhelm Rudolf war das zweitgeborene Kind (lt. Taufregister) und empfing am 19. April 1894 in der St. Marienkirche zu Bergen die Sakramente der christlichen Taufe. Seine Taufpaten sind heute noch aufschlussreich für die Familientradition. Der erste Pate war der königliche Baurat in Clausthal **Dr. Wilhelm Langsdorff**.

Weitere Taufpaten waren der Göttinger Superintendent **Dr. theol. Rudolf Steinmetz**, **Frau Margarete Elisabeth Abels, geb. Langsdorff** aus Saarbrücken und der in Reiffenhausen bei Göttingen lebende **Pastor August Steinmetz**. Die Taufe nahm **Pastor Jacobi** aus Geehren in Mecklenburg-Strelitz vor. Bereits im selben Jahr ging die Familie nach Sangerhausen am Harz und fand 1898 ihr Domizil in Düsseldorf. Hans, so sein Rufname hatte noch einen 1895 geborenen Bruder und die 1901 geborene

Schwester. In Düsseldorf absolvierte er das städtische Gymnasium bestand im Februar 1912 das Abitur mit 17 Jahren. * Für seinen Lebenslauf gab es eine entscheidende Situation. Nach dem Umzug der Familie Langsdorff nach Düsseldorf hatte sie als Nachbarn die Familie des Grafen **Maximilian von Spee** (22.06.1861-08.12.1914). Er war Admiral der kaiserlichen Marine und führte in Ostasien und Südamerika im 1. Weltkrieg (1914-18) ein Geschwader. Nach anfänglichen Erfolgen gegen die englische Flottille unterlag sein Verband in einem Gefecht gegen ein übermächtiges englisches Geschwader unter der Führung des englischen **Admirals Stur-**



dee vor den Falklandinseln. Mit dem Untergang seines Flaggschiffes Scharnhorst fand Graf von Spee den Tod. Im selben Gefecht wurden die Schiffe Gneisenau und Nürnberg versenkt. Dabei fanden die beiden Söhne von Spee den Tod.



Das Panzerschiff „Admiral Graf Spee“ im Kaiser Wilhelm-Kanal (1936)

Diese Erlebnisse haben sicherlich das Leben von Hans Langsdorff u.a. nicht unbeflügelt gelassen. Gegen den Willen seiner Eltern trat er 1912 in die Kieler Marineakademie ein. Am 01. April des Jahres nannte er sich Kadett zur See in der Kaiserlichen Deutschen Marine. Bereits am 12. April 1914 wurde er zum Fähnrich befördert und nahm mit 20 Jahren einen vierten Rang in seiner Crew ein. Zu Beginn des 1. Weltkrieges 1914 tat Langsdorff seinen Dienst auf einen alten kleinen Kreuzer namens

„Medusa“ als Offiziersdiensttuender, später als Adjutant und Torpedooffizier. Vom 31. Mai - 1. Juni 1916 tobte im Skagerrak die große Seeschlacht gegen den britischen Verband Home Fleet bei der er auf dem neuen Linienschiff „Großer Kurfürst“, das erst am 30. Juli 1914 in Dienst gestellt war, als Adjutant und Signaloffizier tätig war. Ab Juni 1917 unterstellte man ihm als Kommandant eine Hilfsminensuchflottille in der Nordsee. Zum Leutnant befördert wurde er im selben Jahr Kommandant der Minensuchboote M 36 und M76. Das blieb er bis zum Kriegsende 1918. Oberleutnant zu See durfte sich Langsdorff ab dem 25. Dezember 1917 nennen.

Eine besondere Anerkennung erfuhr Johann Wilhelm Rudolf Langsdorff nach der Auflösung der Kaiserlichen Marine. Er wurde als einer der wenigen Offiziere in die neue deutsche Reichsmarine übernommen. Als Marineoffizier Hans Langsdorff der Kaiserzeit stand er nun als Marineoffizier für die Weimarer Republik. Am 1. April 1922 wurde er zum Kapitänleutnant befördert und Kommandant eines Torpedobootes. Eine weitere Veränderung seiner Aufgaben erfolgte 1924.

Während eines Aufenthalts in Dresden lernte er seine spätere Frau **Ruth Hager** kennen, die dort in einem Marinebüro arbeitete. Im März 1924 war die Trauung. Am 14. Dezember des Jahres wurde der **Sohn Johann** geboren. Dem Ehepaar Langsdorff wurde auch noch eine Tochter geboren. Im Oktober 1925 nahm Langsdorffs Karriere einen großen Schritt. Er wurde in das Reichswehrministerium nach



Kapitän zur See Hans Langsdorff Pfeife rauchend auf der „Spee“ (1939)

Berlin kommandiert. Von der Zeit an hatte er die Aufgabe als Verbindungsoffizier zwischen Marine und Reichsheer zu fungieren.

Kürschnermeister Uwe Hinz
18528 Bergenauf Rügen, Postfach 1224,
firma-hinz@web.de; www.altstadtverein-bergen-auf-ruegen.de

His mark in history is one of great leadership qualities with his first and foremost commitment to the sanctity of human life whether friend or foe. He exhibited compassion for enemy sailors in the truest sense, honoring of the Naval tradition of “commonality of conflict” in the treatment of enemy combatants and in defiance of his commander in chief.

The choice he made must have been difficult, knowing full well he served at the pleasure of his commander in chief, Adolf Hitler, and the entire Nazi war machine. Despite the horrors this Reich perpetrated, there were moments where other soldiers within the Nazi system who also represented the highest ideals of military valor. (similar stories emerged from the concentration camps where even SS officers showed mercy, albeit rare, to prisoners).

My choice of this Captain reflects my more nuanced approach to ethics and morality and in defiance of the usual and customary slogans perpetuated by a simplistic cultural model, and a growing awareness over the last few years of the complexity of the human soul, in the face of evil.

Hannah Arendt as well as Claude Lanzman have documented the “banality of evil” and how simple middle class folk could have been drawn into participating, though banal acts of simple everyday life activities, like the pressing of a button or the pulling of a lever (in the case of the trainman at the station junction leading to Auschwitz. So too in the military, where each soldier might have followed orders simply following the chain of command, as did most, not thinking to what extent their “banal” contribution ultimately added up to the enormity of the crimes on a mass level unheard of in the history of humanity, crimes never before committed, genocide on such a scale that we are still reeling from it theologically culturally and socially.

In the face of all of this come these few leaders who defied the common good, the reigning spirit, the Nazi ethos, the Japanese view of the enemy as vermin, and whose acts for courage and determination shine in history as a beacon of light for humanity and for future leaders. Hence my choice.

Other Commanders with Similar Responses at Time of Battle

Langsdorff was not alone. In the battle for the skies of Europe the bombers sent by the Allies were dropping their deadly load upon the cities of Europe and the Luftwaffe was keenly aware and in search of these deadly machines.

Another (but abbreviated) account to show that chivalry in this other theatre of war the air battle was also demonstrated.

The ability of the pilot not to bring down the crippled B57 knowing he could have been court martialled for disobedience is the hallmark of character, ethics and true leadership.

The notion of chivalry in this theatre was recently captured in a CNN article by John Blake.

<http://edition.cnn.com/2013/03/09/living/higher-call-military-chivalry/>

Where in this article a German pilot was moved by his teacher who pushed him to pursue a “higher calling”.

The idea of a “higher call” in which the senior officer tells the pilot....

"You follow the rules of war for you -- not your enemy. You fight by rules to keep your humanity."

The CNN article was a review of the book “*A Higher Call: An Incredible True Story of Combat and Chivalry in the War-Torn Skies of World War II*” by Adam Makos and Larry Alexander (2014).

The Example of Commander Shunsako Kudo

In another end of the world in the Pacific Ocean another terrible battle between the Japanese Imperial Navy and the Allies was conducted with orders to the Japanese Navy not to take prisoners at sea.

Japan fostered and indoctrinated its soldiers with the popular notions of the enemy as totally cruel and despicable to be mercilessly treated on the battlefield as well as in prisoner of war camps. Soldiers were subjugated to humiliation and torturous treatment at times worse than the Nazi treatment of its prisoners of war.

I will conclude this paper with the account of an unknown commander who displayed similar ethical/moral standards to enemy combatants as had Langsdorff and who sunk into ignominy had it not been for a persistent sailor whose life he had saved and went in pursuit decades later.

This other act of chivalry proves the Langsdorff example was not singular:

Even in the most fearsome times of warfare and battle, like the naval fighting that occurred between Japan and its enemies at the height of World War II, the spirit of chivalry has a crucial function — not, as some might claim, to provide any sense of comfort or courtesy to the enemy, but rather to facilitate the sense of reconciliation and diplomacy that must eventually be established if war is ever to come to an end. This real-life story of two true World War II heroes and the men they served with and fought against is a fine example of how the balm of chivalry can help heal wounds that might otherwise fester for generations.

Humanity in Battle Brings Healing Spirit¹⁹

British war veteran Sir Samuel Falle, one of 422 officers and sailors of the British Navy rescued by a Japanese warship during World War II, visited Japan and placed flowers on the grave of the ship's commander last Sunday.

Falle praised the commander's brave decision to save the men as an example of **Japanese chivalry**. His story could help change the negative image of the Japanese military during the war and promote reconciliation between former English prisoners of war, many of whom bear anti-Japanese feelings, and the Japanese.

On March 1, 1942, the British Royal Navy Destroyer Encounter and its heavy cruiser Exeter were sunk by the Imperial Japanese Navy off the coast of Surabaya, a port in what is now Indonesia, in the northeastern Java Sea. About 450 British officers and sailors were left drifting in the water under the scorching sun.

¹⁹ <http://chivalrytoday.com/chivalry-war-peace> by Scott Farrell 2009

The next day, when the men had been pushed to their limits due to fatigue, thirst and fear of shark attacks, the Japanese destroyer Ikazuchi found them by chance while patrolling that sector of the ocean.

Commander Shunsaku Kudo made the decision to rescue all the officers and sailors, despite being in danger of submarine attacks, thus saving the lives of 422 British sailors. The deck of the Ikazuchi, which had 220 crew members, was filled with the rescued British officers and sailors, who were covered in heavy oil from the water, but the crew members treated them as friendly forces by washing them and giving them clothing and food.

“I remember to this day that they gave me a green shirt, khaki trousers and a pair of tennis shoes. Then, we were given hot milk, corn willies and biscuits,” said Falle, former lieutenant of the British Royal Navy and a former ambassador to Sweden, at a press conference Sunday after paying his respects at Kudo’s grave in Saitama prefecture north of Tokyo.



According to the 89-year-old man (pictured above) – who was in a wheelchair but whose mind was keen – Kudo came down to the deck and addressed the British sailors in English, saying, “You are the honored guests of the Imperial Japanese Navy. You fought very bravely. We respect the English Navy, but the English government foolishly made war on Japan.”

“He treated us with all the chivalry possible as the commander of a small destroyer and it was a remarkable experience that has lived with me throughout my life. I can still see him standing there and addressing us,” said Falle.

In 2003, Falle visited Japan to offer flowers at Kudo’s grave, but could not locate the site. Later, Japanese journalist Ryunosuke Megumi discovered where his grave and his relatives were located, and upon hearing this, Falle decided to visit Japan again.

Megumi introduced the story in Japan in 2006 by publishing a book, **Save the Enemies**, describing Kudo’s decision and the rescue.

These heroes were quiet and unknown until brought to light by the rescued. The Captain never spoke about it to his wife and he never received any recognition for his gallantry. This adds to the very core notion that the ethical act is done for its own sake with no ulterior motive.

Below is the record of this encounter:

“I actually expressed my gratitude in person at the grave of Commander Kudo,” Falle said, after the reunion at Kudo’s gravesite after 66 years.

The next day, a memorial ceremony for Kudo and a welcoming ceremony for Falle, hosted by Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defense and the Japan-British Society, were held at the Grand Prince Hotel Akasaka in Tokyo.

“I am sure that Sir Falle’s visit to Japan will help in strengthening ties with Britain and bringing about reconciliation between former English prisoners of war and Japan,” said Foreign Minister Hirofumi Nakasone.

In fact, Kudo’s decision to conduct such a large-scale rescue operation during a battle at sea, where Dutch and U.S. submarines were swarming, is noteworthy. A Japanese carrier had been attacked and sunk by an enemy submarine the day before in that area of the sea.

6.9. HMS "ERIDGE"

6.8.2 Service

On 30 July *Encounter* joined Force H, sailing on 31 July with six other destroyers as escort to the aircraft carrier *Argus* in Operation Hurry—the first "Club Run"—to deliver twelve Hurricane fighter aircraft to the besieged island of Malta.*[1]

While serving with the Eastern Fleet in 1942, she and the destroyer *USS Pope* were attacked by four Japanese cruisers and four destroyers in the Second Battle of the Java Sea. *Encounter* suffered major damage and was scuttled by her crew. Eight of the ship's company were killed and the remaining 149 became prisoners of war, 38 of whom died in captivity.*[5] *Pope* was later attacked and sunk by 12 dive-bombers after sustaining many direct hits.

The following day, the Imperial Japanese Navy destroyer *Ikazuchi* rescued 442 survivors from *Encounter* and *Pope*. The survivors had been adrift for some 20 hours, in rafts and lifejackets or clinging to floats, many coated in oil and unable to see. Among the rescued was Sir Sam Falle, later a British diplomat.*[6] This humanitarian decision by Lieutenant Commander Shunsaku Kudō placed *Ikazuchi* at risk of submarine attack, and interfered with her fighting ability due to the sheer numbers of rescued sailors. The action was later the subject of a book*[7]*[8] and a 2007 TV programme.*[9]*[10]*[11]

6.8.3 Discovery of wreck

The wrecks of *Exeter* and *Encounter* were first located by divers off Java in February 2007, and their identities confirmed at that time.*[5]

6.8.4 Notes

- [1] Mason, Geoffrey B. (1998). "HMS *Encounter*, destroyer" . *Service Histories of Royal Navy Warships in World War II*. Retrieved 27 January 2011.
- [2] Lenton, p. 156
- [3] Whitley, p. 103
- [4] English, p. 141
- [5] "World War II Royal Navy wrecks discovered in the Java Sea" . *webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk*. 23 May 2008. Retrieved 28 January 2011.
- [6] "Reunion for sailor saved by enemy" . *BBC* (BBC). 13 June 2003. Retrieved 29 June 2008.
- [7] Megumi, Ryuunosuke (5 July 2006). 敵兵を救助せよ!—英国兵422名を救助した駆逐艦「雷」工藤艦長[*Save the Enemies!*] (in Japanese). Tokyo, Japan: Soshisha Publishing Company. ISBN 978-4-7942-1499-7.
- [8] "Axis History Forum : Kudo Shunsaku and the Destroyer *Ikazuchi*". *forum.axishistory.com*. Retrieved 29

June 2008. This forum discussion contains a brief summary of the 2006 Megumi book's account of the HMS *Encounter* and USS *Pope* rescues.

- [9] "The Untold story of Captain Kudo Shunsaku and the Destroyer *Ikazuchi*". *japanprobe.com*. 19 May 2007. Retrieved 29 June 2008.
- [10] Gyokai (2007). *日本の武士道 1 Japanese BUSHIDO saved lives* (video). YouTube. Retrieved 29 June 2008. See also part 2 and part 3. (Japanese)
- [11] 伊勢, 雅臣 (13 August 2006). "駆逐艦「雷」艦長・工藤俊作 (Destroyer "Ikazuchi", Kudo Shiyunsaku captain)" (in Japanese). Retrieved 29 June 2008. A summary of the 2007 television program.

Some crew members jumped into the sea to save sailors who could not grab or climb a ladder or a rope by themselves. Moreover, the Ikazuchi searched for all of the survivors in the surrounding area and went wherever survivors were found.



Sam Falle, Book Guild Publishing Ltd; illustrated edition edition (August 29, 1996)

Falle, who had imagined that the Japanese were cruel and strange, felt like he was dreaming and even pinched his arm, as he described it in his autobiography, **My Lucky Life**, published in 1996.

Kudo, who never told anyone, including his wife, about the event, passed away at age 77 in 1979. The heartwarming story would have been buried in history without Falle sharing publicly about his extraordinary experience.

Kiyosumi Tanigawa, the former navigating officer of the Ikazuchi, aged 92, explained the reason that Kudo did not talk about the operation even after the war.

“Under the right circumstances, with no enemy airplanes, ships or submarines, we took for granted saving enemies who had lost their combat capability and who were dying,” Tanigawa said. “I guess that Kudo might not have thought that he had accomplished a great achievement.”

Tanigawa also explained that the Japanese Imperial Navy did the same thing during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905. The story became famous by chance because Falle brought it to light, he said.

“Kudo was a well-tempered and silent man of worth, and a quick decision maker,” according to Tanigawa.

After experiencing life as a prisoner of war of the Imperial Japanese Army for three-and-a-half years until the end of the war, Falle started working for the British Foreign Ministry. He continued praising Kudo’s decision at commemorative events in Indonesia and the United States, as well as in England.

When the 50th anniversary of the outbreak of the war in Surabaya was held in 1992, he spoke at the ceremony, praising Kudo as a model of chivalry.

He also submitted a report on his experience titled **Chivalry** to the U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings in 1987.

In April 1998, one month before an official visit of the Japanese emperor to England, former prisoners of war who had been oppressed by the Japanese Imperial Army demonstrated, demanding compensation from the Japanese government and requesting an apology from the emperor.

During World War II, about 60,000 prisoners of war of the Allied powers, including British soldiers, were forced to work to build the Thai-Burma Railway. Over 10,000 died during the operation from malnutrition, malaria or cholera under poor living conditions and a shortage of food. Some have harbored strong anti-Japan sentiments ever since.

To soothe the demonstrators, Falle, through letters to the editor of the **Times**, called on them to give the emperor a warm welcome and promoted reconciliation with Japan by sharing his experience of Japanese chivalry. His story was printed in the newspaper on April 29, 1998, and helped ease the tide of anti-Japanese sentiment.



“I was very impressed by his attitude that he cannot die until he pays his respects to Kudo and his family for his brave action,” said Kichio Kudo, the adopted son of Kudo’s niece. He came from Yamagata prefecture in northern Japan to see Falle, representing Kudo’s relatives.

“Falle has exemplified the spirit of chivalry more than Kudo did,” he said.²⁰

²⁰ © 2009 Hiroyuki Koshoji

This article was originally published by [UPI Asia](#) in a Dec. 11, 2008 report.



Born	January 7, 1901 Higashiokitama District, Yamagata, Japan
Died	January 12, 1979 (aged 78) Kawaguchi, Saitama, Japan
Allegiance	 Empire of Japan
Service/branch	 Imperial Japanese Navy
Years of service	1923–1945
Rank	Commander
Unit	Combined Fleet
Commands held	<i>Hatakaze</i> <i>Ikazuchi</i> <i>Hatsuharu</i> <i>Hibiki</i>

Sir Sam Falle, who was held prisoner in Japan, said he would not be alive today but for Shunzo Tagami, who dragged him from the Java Sea.

Bath-based Sir Sam, who subsequently earned his knighthood for services to the diplomatic service, was on board the HMS Encounter when his ship came under attack.

He was in the sea for a day and night and his hopes of surviving began to fade.

But then a Japanese ship appeared on the horizon and the captain took the decision to save the Englishmen.

Mr. Tagami, who was part of the rescue operation, came to Bath to visit Sir Sam.

Through an interpreter he said: "We realized it was the many British people we had defeated yesterday.

“There were no allied ships in the neighborhood and so they saved our lives and we are eternally grateful”

Sir Sam Falle:

"The captain knew we had a choice - whether he can just leave them all or just go and save them, bit of course the captain decided to go and rescue all of them."

Sir Sam said: "The captain gave the order to abandon ship and we jumped into the Java sea.

"Some were in lifeboats, some hanging on to floats and I was lucky enough to be hanging on to a float.

"It's absolutely clear that this ship saved our lives. There were no allied ships in the neighborhood and so they saved our lives and we are eternally grateful."

Years later Sir Sam wrote of the incident, the article was translated into Japanese and, by chance, Mr. Tagami read it.

Since then the pair have been in regular contact, but this was their first meeting since the incident more than 50 years ago.²¹

²¹ http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/uk_news/england/somerset/2986762.stm © BBC 2016

What I learned from this research that I may apply to my role as an officer:

The commander of the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, COL JP McGee's has had eight combat deployment to Iraq or Afghanistan over the past decade, and over the course of his experiences he has become convinced that restrained, ethical conduct in war is vitally important, for several reasons:²²

1. Ethical conduct provides a huge operational advantage. Being "the good guys" in societies that lack legitimate institutions wins us public support and sets the conditions for even our enemies to reconcile and partner with us. He points out that the Anbar Awakening/Sons of Iraq movement, in which Iraq's tribal Sunni insurgents (not Al-Qaeda in Iraq or other inherently murderous insurgents) partnered with us in 2006-07 and began to participate peacefully in Iraqi governance, would have been impossible if we'd had a history of mistreating Sunni detainees or civilians. Being "good" when other parties weren't set the conditions that later allowed us to win an unexpected victory.

2. Ethical conduct protects our soldiers' psyches/souls. In the craziness of a combat deployment, our soldiers will do what we ask them to do; they trust their leaders. After a deployment, they will reflect on their actions. People know right from wrong. If they have acted immorally during the deployment, they will be wracked with guilt and shame. If their leaders led them to act immorally, they will feel used and betrayed. If, on the other hand, they conducted themselves with honor under the stresses of combat, they will feel great pride in themselves and gratitude to their leaders.

3. Ethical conduct maintains a unit's honor. Soldiers are entrusted to maintain their unit's honor. In the case of that brigade (327th Infantry Regiment), American soldiers have been fighting honorably under its colors since World War I. The brigade's nickname, "Bastogne," was earned in its heroic defense of that town during WWII's Battle of the Bulge. COL McGee pointed out that every "Bastogne" soldier has the privilege and responsibility to live up to and to carry forward the unit's honor. The unit's honor is bigger than any one soldier; it has been earned by the ethical and courageous conduct of thousands of soldiers before them over almost 100 years. Yet, the unit's honor can be sullied by unethical conduct by even one of its members. He pointed out that, in his study of war crimes, three factors are almost always present: a "bad actor" with a criminal/sociopathic flaw; weak leaders supervising them; and others who had concerns but didn't intervene. He told his soldiers to be alert—to identify and remove morally-flawed soldiers; not to tolerate weak leaders; and to trust their guts and intervene if they see either of the first two factors.

²² <http://soldier-ethicist.blogspot.co.il/>

4. Being good is good in itself. We should always act morally and in accordance with our personal and national values, especially when they are tested by adversity.

I was moved by the sensitivity these teachers in ethical theory at West Point displayed in these courses.

The behavior of the commanders I have written about in this paper have inspired me to follow that same trajectory always balancing the difficult choices between loyalty and personal moral standards demanded of an officer in command.

The need for courage determination moral codes of honor and humility are the very standards that will bring honor to the unit I serve in.

Application of these values to today's Military

In a civil society guided by moral conduct and codes of living based on the western Judeo-Christian system of values and upon the Constitution of the United States and the Military Code of Conduct the individual situational ethics demands the use of and development of moral conduct in dubious situations as well. The development of moral sensitivity is inspired by leaders and commanders such as those outlined above.

How do these men influence my view of the treatment of enemy combatants today?
Robert Povtak expresses the doubts many have:

It is no secret that in the search for intelligence in the war on terror, the United States has employed a broad spectrum of interrogation techniques in its questioning of possible sources. Few will doubt the importance of gleaning what could be life-saving material from this type of data-mining, but few will quarrel either with the notion that a balancing test must be applied to weigh the interests of national security, and the threat of the violation of human rights.

*Guidelines for treatment of prisoners of war have been set forth in the Geneva Convention.*²³

*If we assume that our adversaries in Afghanistan are not entitled to prisoner of war status, international treaties govern, notably Common Article III of the Geneva Convention. Within this framework for treatment of all detainees, the International Committee of the Red Cross explains that "unlawful" enemy combatants may be detained and prosecuted under either the domestic law of the detaining state, or international humanitarian or criminal law if applicable.*²⁴

Whether domestic law comports with the rules set forth internationally is to be determined on a case-by-case basis. In the United States' war on terror, so enters the Army Field Manual.

*Field Manual 2-22.3 is one of several specialized Army Field Manuals that function as operational guidelines for different activities engaged in by soldiers serving in the field.*²⁵

FM 2-22.3 is the guide for Human Intelligence Collectors Operations, which, in plain terms, means the interrogation of detainees.

²³ Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War art. 3, Aug. 12, 1949, 6 U.S.T. 3316, 75 U.N.T.S. 135, available at <http://www.icrc.org/ihl.nsf/WebList?ReadForm&id=375&t=com>.

²⁴ The Relevance of IHL in the Context of Terrorism, The Int'l Comm. of the Red Cross, July 25, 2005, <http://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/misc/terrorism-ihl-210705.htm>.

²⁵ Dept. of Army, FM 2-22.3 (FM 34-52), Human Intelligence Collector Operations vi (2006) [hereinafter Army Field Manual], available at <http://www.army.mil/institution/armypublicaffairs/pdf/fm2-22-3.pdf>.

This guide was originally released during Dwight D. Eisenhower's presidency, but the most recent update occurred in 2006.²⁶

Due to controversy over the use of the previous version, the 2006 update was met with the hope that clearer rules would be drawn to avoid questionable techniques that tip-toed the line between acceptability and torture.²⁷

The new, publically retrievable manual specifically prohibits many of the controversial enhanced interrogation methods which helped bring the torture discussion to public attention, and also stipulates that the list of prohibited actions is not exhaustive.

The newest manual is also notable because in 2009 President Obama signed Executive Order 13491 which required the CIA and other executive agencies to conduct interrogations only in accordance with FM 2-22.3.²⁸

Previously the CIA was not bound by the same restrictions that the U.S. military was.²⁹

The debate outlined in Povtak's research was the work of New York Law School students in a project-based learning course, "Detention in the War Against Terrorism," taught by Professor Stephen Ellmann.

The Geneva Conventions presuppose the notion of "communality of combat," with prisoners of war being treated as "brothers-in arms...The Geneva Conventions codified practice as it had developed in the 18th century.

To quote Major Chris Case, U.S. Army, Major Bob Underwood, U.S. Army, and Colonel Sean T. Hannah, Ph.D., U.S. Army in the Center for Army Profession and Ethic³⁰

The current expressions of the Army's ethical commitments are products of the values of the American people, as expressed in their laws and the requirement of winning wars.³¹ The Army Values, Soldier's Creed, Warrior Ethos, NCO Creed, Officer Oath of Office, the Soldier's Rules, and other expressions are all products created to address the unique space in which the Army operates.

These commitments capture important elements of the Army Ethic. Yet these alone do not completely or consistently express the full framework of the ethic. That is, they may

²⁶ *The Army Field Manual: Sanctioning Cruelty?* Amnesty Int'l (Mar. 19, 2009, 02:58 PM), <http://www.amnesty.org.au/hrs/comments/20575/>.

²⁷ John Hendren, *Manual Defines Limits of Prisoner Interrogation*, NPR, Sept. 6, 2006, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5776992>.

²⁸ Exec. Order No. 13491, 74 Fed. Reg. 4893 (Jan. 27, 2009) (mandating that all government agencies use the Army Field Manual).

²⁹ <http://www.detainedbyus.org/212/>

³⁰ <http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a545099.pdf>

³¹ Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2006), 197.

all be necessary but none alone are sufficient. Further, much of our ethic is implicit, ingrained in our Army culture and not made explicit. Because the ethic cannot separate the actions of the professional from the inherent duties of the profession, the framework of the ethic must reconcile possible tensions between action and duty. It does this by providing guidance for both why we fight and how we should fight.

Why We Fight:

The Army's Duty to establish a moral basis for the Army Ethic, we need to examine the good that the profession exists to provide. The Army Capstone Concept states that

"The aim of Army operations is to set conditions that achieve or facilitate the achievement of policy goals and objectives."³²

While these statements are valid when considering the ethic, we need to look deeper. Defending a "way of life," or achieving objectives, are goals that many organizations could adopt as their purpose. Drug cartels, organized crime, and terrorists could easily make the same factual claims. They too seek to defend their morally bankrupt ways of life. Another view of the Army's purpose is to provide for a "common defense." Again, other organizations that practice collective violence can claim that they act in their "common defense."

The defining difference between these organizations and the Army is the moral end it seeks. *The Army's use of organized violence seeks to achieve moral purposes through disciplined restraint. Recognizing this moral duty will move our discussion of the Army Ethic beyond the realm of mere matters of fact into the realm of values. The Army's sole purpose is the defense of the United States as a sovereign nation that protects and respects human rights.*

This conception of the Army's purpose is the only thing that can give the American profession of arms its legitimate claim to employ force ...the framework of the ethic must reconcile possible tensions between action and duty. It does this by providing guidance for both why we fight and how we should fight.

³² 4th Infantry Division Headquarters, "AR 15-6 Investigation" American Civil Liberties Union: Torture FOIA, 24 August 2003, (20 February 2009), 55.

Soldier vs. Warrior

I began with the notion of the “western warrior spirit” which formed the basis for the Geneva Conventions. The warrior spirit is to be indomitable and courageous, but in literature and history, “warrior” also suggests an unreliable, undisciplined, self-regarding person with a noisy zeal for war and action.³³ Importantly, the term carries associations about love of the fight itself. As J. Glenn Gray says in his timeless classic, *The Warriors: Reflections on Men in Battle*³⁴:

When soldiers step over the line that separates self defense from fighting for its own sake, as it is so easy for them to do, they experience something that stirs deep chords in their being. The soldier-killer is learning to serve a different deity, and his concern is with death and not life, destruction and not construction.

Gray’s “soldier-killer” thus suggests a refraction of the archetypal warrior as an ecstatically self-regarding person. As Gray indicates, transforming from soldier to warrior—in this sense—is “easy.” It requires little encouragement. Human nature already contains the impulse to destroy like a warrior. People have evolved to like violence. Soldiers from Alexander to Robert E. Lee have recognized this latent potential for enjoying war’s violence ecstatically.

Regardless of the moral or political correctness of a warrior; all warriors have a few basic things in common:

- They are disciplined, both internally and externally. Without discipline, they could not stay alive long enough to call themselves a warrior.
- They develop mental focus. No one can develop essential skills of dealing with life, protecting one's self or facing a foreboding opponent with an unfocused mind.
- They develop an attitude of persistence. They have to face difficulty, pain, discomfort, discouragement, fear and the prospect of failure and utter doom without quitting. All struggle and conflict is settled in the mind before it reaches a physical resolution. If their resolve wavers, failure and defeat are certain.
- They train. you don't train, you don't develop the skills that you need to survive ... and you die!

³³ For more on the difference between soldier and warrior and its use in the branches of the US military see the paper by Lieutenant Colonel Peter Fromm, U.S. Army, Retired, is currently the supervisory English editor of Military Review at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. <http://usacac.army.mil/CAC2/MilitaryReview/resources/assets/SampleManuscript.pdf>

³⁴ J. Glenn Gray, *The Warriors: Reflections on Men in Battle* (New York: Harper & Row, Bison Books, 1998) 51-57.

There is a difference between a warrior and a soldier. A soldier is trained to follow orders, to respect authority, and to subjugate their individual thinking process and will to the command hierarchy. A warrior, in contrast, is more autonomous and independent. A warrior engages in battle out of personal choice rather than because of obedience to orders. **A warrior is capable of making moral judgments and acting accordingly.** A warrior is flexible and adaptable; able to act independently as well as be a team player. A warrior takes responsibility for his or her choices and actions. A warrior is a person of compassion who understands pain and the consequences of action. A warrior understands the horror of war and does not seek it. A warrior understands that glory is only for fools who bask in their own illusions. A warrior, however, when engaged in a righteous cause, fights with such skill, passion, intensity, and brilliance that victory is assured.

In building an ethical and moral fiber the command must realize the same internal moral compasses that drove the leaders outlined above in this essay are the warrior qualities we must instill in our core through example and leadership.

I hope I have demonstrated in this paper the complexity of ethical values and the system of struggling with competing values of duty honor and obedience yet pursuing a higher calling even within the military leadership and how the examples I have shown demonstrate the need for independent moral and critical thinking in our leadership.

Julian Ungar-Sargon MD PhD
IGR OCS

April 2016

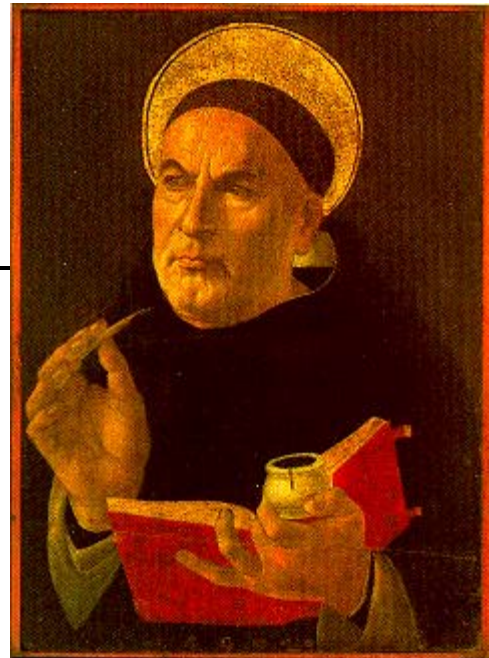
ADDENDUM I

Commonality of Enemies: Roots in Judeo-Christian Tradition

The origins of *jus ad bellum* can be traced back to the ancient writings of Aristotle and Cicero, along with the religious philosophies of St. Augustine, Moses Maimonides, and Thomas Aquinas. Augustine was the first Christian theologian to try to reconcile the faith's divine commandments with the demands of earthly reality by clarifying that, since the state was authorized by God to protect peace and punish aggression, killing on behalf of the state was not in itself a wrongdoing. In fact, the state's failure to intervene in such circumstances should be understood as a sin.

Thomas Aquinas formalized Augustine's position in the second part of his *Summa Theologica*, where he established three criteria a war must meet to be just: (1) it must be authorized by the sovereign; (2) it must have a just cause, namely "that those who are attacked...deserve it on account of some fault"; (3) and the attackers should have a righteous intention, that is, "they intend the advancement of good, or the avoidance of evil."

St. Thomas Aquinas
The Summa Theologica
Part II, Question 40
(Benziger Bros. edition, 1947)



OF WAR

Whether it is always sinful to wage war?

Objection 1: It would seem that it is always sinful to wage war. Because punishment is not inflicted except for sin. Now those who wage war are threatened by Our Lord with punishment, according to Mt. 26:52: "All that take the sword shall perish with the sword." Therefore, all wars are unlawful.

Objection 2: Further, whatever is contrary to a Divine precept is a sin. But war is contrary to a Divine precept, for it is written (Mt. 5:39): "But I say to you not to resist evil"; and (Rm. 12:19): "Not revenging yourselves, my dearly beloved, but give place unto wrath." Therefore, war is always sinful.

Objection 3: Further, nothing, except sin, is contrary to an act of virtue. But war is contrary to peace. Therefore, war is always a sin.

Objection 4: Further, the exercise of a lawful thing is itself lawful, as is evident in scientific exercises. But warlike exercises which take place in tournaments are forbidden by the Church, since those who are slain in these trials are deprived of ecclesiastical burial. Therefore, it seems that war is a sin in itself.

On the contrary, Augustine says in a sermon on the son of the centurion [*Ep. ad Marcel. cxxxviii]: "If the Christian Religion forbade war altogether, those who sought salutary advice in the Gospel would rather have been counselled to cast aside their arms, and to give up soldiering altogether. On the contrary, they were told: 'Do violence to no man . . . and be content with your pay' [*Lk. 3:14]. If he commanded them to be content with their pay, he did not forbid soldiering."

I answer that, in order for a war to be just, three things are necessary. First, the authority of the sovereign by whose command the war is to be waged. For it is not the business of a private individual to declare war, because he can seek for redress of his rights from the tribunal of his superior. Moreover, it is not the business of a private individual to summon together the people, which has to be done in wartime. And as the care of the common weal is committed to those who are in authority, it is their business to watch over the common weal of the city, kingdom or province subject to them. And just as it is lawful for them to have recourse to the sword in defending that common weal against internal disturbances, when they punish evil-doers, according to the words of the Apostle (Rm. 13:4):

He beareth not the sword in vain: for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath upon him that doth evil..

so too, it is their business to have recourse to the sword of war in defending the common weal against external enemies.

Secondly, a just cause is required, namely that those who are attacked, should be attacked because they deserve it on account of some fault. Wherefore Augustine says (Questions. in Hept., qu. x, super Jos.):

A just war is wont to be described as one that avenges wrongs, when a nation or state has to be punished, for refusing to make amends for the wrongs inflicted by its subjects, or to restore what it has seized unjustly.

Thirdly, it is necessary that the belligerents should have a rightful intention, so that they intend the advancement of good, or the avoidance of evil. Hence *Augustine* says (*De Verb. Dom.* [*The words quoted are to be found not in St. Augustine's works, but *Can. Apud. Caus. xxiii, qu. 1*]):

True religion looks upon as peaceful those wars that are waged not for motives of aggrandizement, or cruelty, but with the object of securing peace, of punishing evil-doers, and of uplifting the good.

For it may happen that the war is declared by the legitimate authority, and for a just cause, and yet be rendered unlawful through a wicked intention. Hence *Augustine* says (*Contra Faust. xxii, 74*):

The passion for inflicting harm, the cruel thirst for vengeance, an unpacific and relentless spirit, the fever of revolt, the lust of power, and such like things, all these are rightly condemned in war.

Moses Maimonides, writing out of the Jewish tradition, actually developed a more hawkish outlook on the just war than those of his Christian counterparts. His *Mishneh Torah* includes a section titled "The Laws of Kings and Their Wars" that identifies two kinds of morally justifiable war. The first of these is war by divine "commandment," which the sovereign can prosecute without legislative approval whenever an imminent threat is posed to the state. The second type of just war Maimonides specifies he calls "optional war," which, with the approval of the legislature, can be fought to enlarge a state's borders, greatness, or reputation. This type of war is still understood as defensive, since it serves to protect the state's welfare in the future.

The other half of just war theory, *jus in bello*, is an extraordinarily broad topic with far less consensus about what is and is not morally acceptable. Rules governing proper conduct during wartime originally developed throughout the ancient world, appearing in texts as diverse as the Judeo-Christian Bible and the Hindu Mahabharata. Perhaps the most notable contemporary contributions to *jus in bello* are the four Geneva Conventions, drafted between 1864 and 1949 and currently recognized, either wholly or in part, by 194 countries globally. The first two treaties were written in order to establish the protections guaranteed to soldiers who were sick or injured in action, whether on land or at sea. The third treaty addresses the fair treatment of prisoners of war, and the last concerns the protections guaranteed to civilians during wartime.

Though these and similar documents have helped to standardize a number of issues in this area, as the nature of war itself changes, these regulations risk eventual obsolescence. The increasing use of unmanned predator drones and terrorist combatants' lack of national affiliation, for example, pose new problems for determining whether an individual should be protected as a prisoner of war, a civilian, or neither.

Contemporary just war theory seeks to resolve some part of these disagreements by insisting that proper military conduct meet seven specific criteria:

(1) all international laws on weapons prohibitions (specifically chemical and biological weapons) will be obeyed;

(2) combatants will take due caution in discriminating between combatant and civilian populations;

(3) the force used by combatants will not be more harmful than it is beneficial (typically excluding weapons of mass destruction);

(4) the rights of prisoners of war will be respected according to the Geneva Conventions;

(5) weapons and strategies held to be *mala in se* ("evil in themselves") will be strictly excluded, such as mass rape, genocide, poison, etc.;

(6) a violation of *jus in bello* by one side of a conflict will not be answered by a violation on the other side;

(7) and all parties to the conflict will strive to respect the human rights of their own peoples during wartime.

ADDENDUM II

THE ETHICAL MORAL THEORETICAL ISSUES

Much has been written on the moral issues raised during the Second World War, Vietnam War and their aftermath. The ethical issues of **just war theory** refer to the society as a whole engaging in war, and much changed as a result of the trauma experienced there. However, despite the changes in society's perception of the ethical duty of a soldier and commander, the individual soldier continues to be challenged to this day (maybe even more so with more lethal weapons and remote drone warfare) and must engage in moral argument with his conscience as to the appropriateness of any command (as described below in the military code). The core imperative of the soldier remains one of obedience up the chain of command: **The notion of gallantry and chivalry in battle and off has been the hallmark of both leadership and command.**

The core issues from an ethics perspective maybe summarized as follows:

Obedience as a functional imperative:

The moral starting point of this argument is that in a just society there are strong moral goals of the armed forces to protect the integrity of the citizenry, and that we have a strong moral obligation to choose the best means of attaining these goals. These goals clearly are considered extremely important; indeed, they are so important that we are willing to fight wars in order to realize them. Ultimately, these goals are based on our commitments to various rights and freedoms.

Common Arguments for Obedience to commands:

One will be punished or at least not rewarded if he does not obey.

While this may be true and may sometimes provide sufficient reason (on teleological grounds) for complying with orders or regulations, nonetheless, it provides grounds only for compliance (not obedience) and only in those instances where the disobedience will

be noted. We are more interested in an obedience based on the authority of the superior than in a compliance due to the superior's ability to give rewards and punishments. We are interested in a moral obligation to obey even when no rewards or punishments are involved and when disobedience will not even be noted.

One should obey because most of the time the authority is right.

Alternatively, one should obey when the authority is right. Here the problem is that such compliance is based on the moral acceptability or desirability of the commanded action rather than on authority. Furthermore, it says nothing about an obligation to obey an order that commands something which is otherwise neutral or something that is one of several alternatives when it is difficult to determine which alternative is best. Even when the commanded action is prima-facie right, the prima-facie obligation to perform the act is strengthened if there is an independent prima-facie reason to obey.

One should obey because the authority has more experience, better judgment, more knowledge of the situation, etc.

This argument focuses on the fact that an authority usually is also an expert. Thus we could accept the authority/expert's judgment for the same reasons that we would accept any expert's judgment. While this reasoning might be sufficient for compliance, nonetheless, it is not concerned with obeying an authority because he is the authority. Furthermore, an authority is often not an expert relative to some subordinates.

One should obey because the authority has been fairly elected, duly appointed, or is otherwise entitled to be an authority.

The thinking in this argument suggests that since it is right that the individual be an authority, it must be right that he or she be obeyed. However, this argument, too, is misleading. In the first place, it might be that in some instances we should disobey even a legitimate authority; at a minimum, the relation between the superior's being a legitimate authority and the subordinate's obligation to obey needs to be established. In the second place, an authority is not always entitled to be an authority. The position

might have been gained through bribery, cheating, walking all over others on the way to the top, etc. Nonetheless, we might still have an obligation to obey this authority. In the third place, some legitimate authorities' commands might generate an obligation to obey while others might not. In short, something besides legitimacy is needed in order to generate a moral obligation to obey.

The imperative to obey is however tempered by the following statement embedded within the military code:

The military oath taken at the time of induction reads:

“I, _____, do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and that I will obey the orders of the President of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to the regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice. So help me God”

The Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) 809.ART.90 (20), makes it clear that military personnel need to obey the **“lawful command of his superior officer,”** 891.ART.91 (2), the “lawful order of a warrant officer”, 892.ART.92 (1) the “lawful general order”, 892.ART.92 (2) “lawful order”. In each case, military personnel have an obligation and a duty to only obey **Lawful** orders and indeed have an obligation to disobey Unlawful orders, including orders by the president that do not comply with the UCMJ. The moral and legal obligation is to the U.S. Constitution and not to those who would issue unlawful orders, especially if those orders are in direct violation of the Constitution and the UCMJ.

During the Korean War in the early 1950s, the Chinese Army and North Korean Army captured some American military men. These American prisoners then faced a deadly new enemy, the *Eastern World's* POW environment.

For the American prisoners, brutal torture, random genocide, lack of food, absence of medical aid, and subhuman treatment became a daily way of life. Many of the Americans found that their training had not prepared them for this *new battlefield*.

After the war the American armed forces jointly developed a Code of Conduct. The President of the United States approved this written code in 1955. The six articles of the code create a comprehensive guide for all American military forces in time of war, and in time of peace. The articles of the code embrace (1) general statements of dedication to the United States and to the cause of freedom, (2) conduct on the battlefield, and (3) conduct as a prisoner of war.

The new Code of Conduct is not a part of the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ). Instead, the Code of Conduct is a personal conduct mandate for members of the American armed forces throughout the world.

Article I: I am an American, fighting in the armed forces which guard my country and our way of life. I am prepared to give my life in their defense.

Article II: I will never surrender of my own free will. If in command, I will never surrender the members of my command while they still have the means to resist.

Article III: If I am captured, I will continue to resist by all means available. I will make every effort to escape and aid others to escape. I will accept neither parole nor special favors from the enemy.

Article IV: If I become a prisoner of war, I will keep faith with my fellow prisoners. I will give no information nor take part in any action which might be harmful to my comrades. If I am senior, I will take command. If not, I will

obey the lawful orders of those appointed over me and will back them up in every way.

Article V: When questioned, should I become a prisoner of war, I am required to give name, rank, service, number, and date of birth. I will evade answering further questions to the utmost of my ability. I will make no oral or written statements disloyal to my country and its allies or harmful to their cause.

Article VI: I will never forget that I am an American, responsible for my actions, and dedicated to the principles which made my country free. I will trust in my God and in the United States of America.³⁵

During the Iran-Contra hearings of 1987, Senator Daniel Inouye of Hawaii, a decorated World War II veteran and hero, told Lt. Col. Oliver North that North was breaking his oath when he blindly followed the commands of Ronald Reagan. As Inouye stated, **“The uniform code makes it abundantly clear that it must be the Lawful orders of a superior officer. In fact, it says, ‘Members of the military have an obligation to disobey unlawful orders.’** This principle was considered so important that we-we, the government of the United States, proposed that it be internationally applied in the Nuremberg trials.”³⁶

Senator Inouye was referring to the Nuremberg trials in the post WW II era, when the U.S. tried Nazi war criminals and did not allow them to use the reason or excuse that they were only “following orders” as a defense for their war crimes which resulted in the deaths of millions of innocent men, women, and children. “In 1953, the Department of Defense adopted the principles of the Nuremberg Code as official policy” of the United States.³⁷

³⁵ Code of Conduct: (excerpt from *Warrior Culture of the U.S. Marines*, copyright 2001 Marion F. Sturkey)

³⁶ Bill Moyers, “The Secret Government”, Seven Locks Press; also in the PBS 1987 documentary, “The Secret Government: The Constitution in Crisis”

³⁷ Hastings Center Report, March-April 1991

However Kenneth Wenker³⁸ argues as follows:

Times change. We have put an unpopular war (Vietnam) behind us. We have entered the era of the all-volunteer force. We have, in various ways, emphasized the importance of the individual soldier and his or her autonomy. In fact, many say we have gone too far, that people have bought the plea for freedom, independence, and autonomy at the expense of proper functioning of the armed forces. Discipline, obedience, a sense of group identity, and the willingness to subordinate personal desires to the good of the whole seem to have weakened. Many now question whether we would be capable of defending our nation even if we had large numbers of well-equipped soldiers: our soldiers are seen by many as psychologically, morally, and spiritually inadequate. We must, it seems, re-emphasize obedience and associated virtues.

The shift in our attitudes toward obedience reflects a dual tension. The first tension exists between the freedom and autonomy of the individual—traditionally valued in our country—and the need for individuals to subordinate themselves to group goals. The second tension is between the awesome evil that is possible through a misapplied obedience and the tremendous benefits to society as a whole that are possible if we cooperate as obedient citizens. If we obey, we run at least some risk of great evil, as in Nazi Germany; but if we do not obey, we lose the opportunity for good that results from working as a group rather than as individuals.³⁹

Wenker argues that obedience embodies a duality, the two possibly opposing goals of personal autonomy vs. societal goals. The “slippery slope” argument hangs over the soldier whereby the extreme example of obedience (Nazi Germany) forcing him or her to make moral choices no matter what. He bemoans the swing of the pendulum too far on the autonomy scale allowing for too much individual decision making. On what basis does he make such a sweeping globalizing claim? Could not the opposite be true? That more autonomy allows for better moral decision making?

What about the commander? What must he struggle with? What ethical decision making process must he engage in prior to ordering a soldier to act in a way that might trigger the moral ambiguity of the order?

Simultaneously with the general social movement toward more reliance on the law, there is a growing commitment in the armed forces of the United States to the professional

³⁸ Kenneth H. Wenker *Air University Review*, July-August 1981 Morality and Military Obedience

³⁹ Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth H. Wenker (B.A., St. Johns College, California; M.A., Ph.D., Ohio State University) is a Tenure Associate Professor and Chairman of Instruction for Philosophy at the United States Air Force Academy. While assigned as a communications officer, he was detachment commander and chief of maintenance at overseas locations. Colonel Wenker is Editor of the *USAF Academy Journal of Professional Military Ethics*.

military ethic (PME). The PME represents the ethics of the profession of arms. The program has been widely incentivized within the U.S. military and recently described as:

“An exemplary Ethic is [a] necessity for any Profession of Arms given the lethality inherent in its practices. Militaries must establish and enforce an Ethic that governs the culture, and the actions of individual professionals to inspire exemplary performance in order to guard the integrity of the profession.”⁴⁰

As a profession, the military has the dual obligations to uphold a high sense of duty and to guard and oversee its deadly resources and skills, in which the rest of society may not participate. It is a contracted relationship with society where the commander is authorized to exercise professional judgment. The PME is defined as

“a set of shared explicit and implicit moral values and principles intended to guide the conduct of military professionals in the performance of their duties.”⁴¹

Otherwise stated, “Our professional military ethic is the system of moral standards and principles that define our commitment to the nation and the way we conduct ourselves in its service.”

The breadth of its review is broader than a legal review and focuses on inspiring us to encourage behavior, rather than to control behavior through sanctions.

“Rather than constraining the conduct of military professionals, [the moral aspiration approach of the PME] seeks to inspire the conduct of military professionals [and] appeals to the time-honored martial virtues internal to the military profession. These virtues when internalized become the social-psychological mechanisms that infuse the otherwise morally reprehensible phenomenon (killing and dying) with morally redeeming qualities.”

These “individual and institutional values [inculcated through ethical training] are more important than legal constraints on moral behavior.”

They are more important in large part because of the complexity and tempo of combat and the commander’s role. The wise lawyer will acknowledge that there are no laws that can cover all contingencies in any issue, especially when in the chaos of battle. The exemplary leader, through the PME, inspires and motivates through example and positive reinforcement and helps soldiers to attain their best and to be prepared to go “above and beyond the call of duty.” These actions are

“the moral aspirations of the military, . . . the traditional martial virtue and honor.”

Yet, these aspirations must be present to motivate our soldiers to do the extraordinary: to kill and be killed, and do so without losing their moral compass, kept in alignment with our

⁴⁰ Hannah, Doty, and Jennings, *Building Moral Character for an Era of Persistent Conflict and Beyond*, Center for the Army Profession and Ethic, U.S. Military Academy (2011), 23. 59.

⁴¹ Jennings and Hannah, 23-2

culture. In addition, “forming partnerships and co-opting factions within the system are critical in setting the conditions for experimentation and risk-taking.” Proficient commanders therefore integrate many skills when formulating their internal perception of ethics in decision making.

According to A. Edward Major the PME educates the commander’s own sense of ethics and the subjective element to it and builds better leadership. Through the PME, the commander may capitalize on leadership skills and personal ethics to access facts about the command, such as morale, supply, weather, and fatigue, which are less well understood by an SJA, even if he is embedded with the unit.⁴²

The PME encompasses several categories of values and standards including Army Values, the Warrior Ethos, the Noncommissioned Officer’s Creed, the Soldier’s Creed, and the oaths of office. The PME combines these and other values embedded in the military culture into a cohesive whole. Collectively these values and standards provide principles that guide the decisions of military commanders, recognizing the lethal power wielded by our armed forces. These values and standards operate much like the ethics within the legal profession and are mutually complementary.

For me however the professionalizing of ethics and appropriation above by lawyers misses out on the deeper aspects of conscience and may contribute to the blunting of the catastrophic effect these lethal decisions may have as they get drowned under the weight of legal jargon and philosophical ethics.

The simple conflict between obedience and autonomy on the one hand and duty and social conscience on the other must be sharpened in an ethical society (including its military) not dulled.

Learning from history and great figures who embodied the ethics of warfare and the compassion for human life where duty and honor to all combatants were concerned, we are then able to integrate these models for future leaders.

It is only with this added dimension will the commander feel more keenly his duty, his conscience, his moral obligation to his soldiers, and the need to struggle even harder to make such ethical decisions.

⁴² A. Edward Major, Law and Ethics in Command and Decision Making, Military Review, May-June 2012