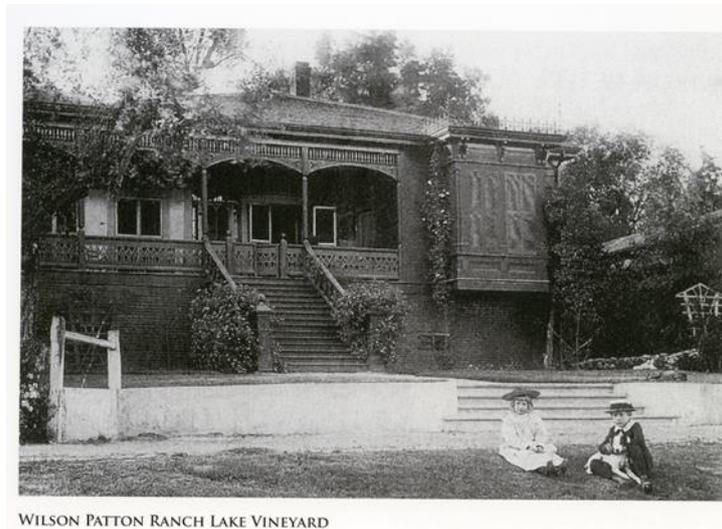


GENERAL GEORGE SMITH PATTON JR. III



1885-1917: YOUTH IN THE USA

George Smith Patton, jr. III, son of George S. Patton II and Ruth Wilson, was born on 11 November 1885 at the Wilson-Patton-Ranch, Lake Vineyard, near Pasadena, California.



His father was a District Attorney.

Due to the Patton-Wilson family 's relative wealth, George had a happy and carefree childhood.

George was educated by his father and it was only at the age of 12, that he went to primary school.

Later on, he attended secondary school in Pasadena.

In 1903, he attended the Virginia Military Institute in preparation for his admission to the United States Military Academy at West Point.

At the age of 16, he first met Beatrice Ayer, his future wife. Her father was immensely wealthy, as he owned the American Woolen Company.

They spent their holidays together on Catalina Island, where their parents owned a vacation home.

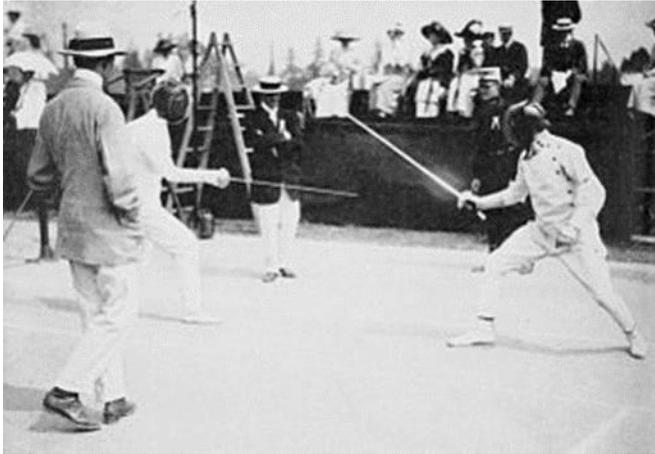
In 1904, George entered West Point Academy. He graduated in 1909 with the rank of Second Lieutenant.

On 26 May 1910, he married Beatrice Ayer at the Episcopal Church in Beverly Farms/ Massachusetts.

Their marriage produced 3 children: Beatrice born in 1911, Ruth Ellen born in 1915 and George Smith IV, born in 1923.

Patton's military career began at Fort Sheridan where he became a Cavalry officer in the 15th Cavalry Regiment.

It was peacetime in the United States. Officers and soldiers had to live on a very modest income. Beatrice and George were however well off, which allowed them to live comfortably.



In 1912, Patton participated in the Olympics held at Stockholm, competing in the modern military pentathlon.

This competition included fencing, swimming, horseback riding, cross country running and pistol shooting.

He made fifth overall.

In 1916, after a short assignment at Fort Bliss, he became the aide-de-camp of General Pershing who had been tasked to organize a punitive expedition in Mexico against Pancho Villa whose bandits terrorized parts of New Mexico.

During a raid led by Patton himself, he killed General Julio Cardenas, one of Pancho Villa's deputies, in a gun fight.

1917-1919: FIRST STAY IN EUROPE

In 1917, he embarked for Europe as the aide-de-camp of General Pershing. After a couple of months, he asked his commander to be assigned to a combat unit.

He was allowed to choose between an infantry battalion and an armored unit.

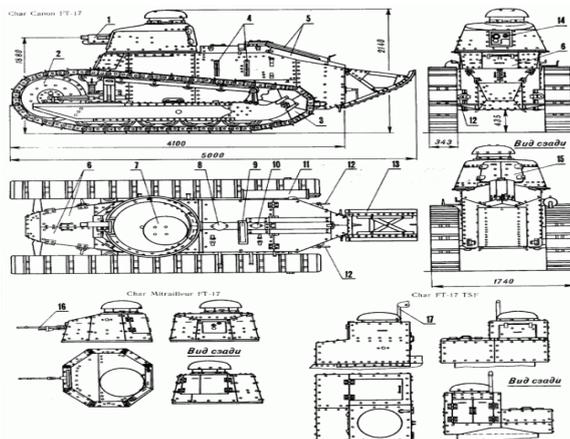
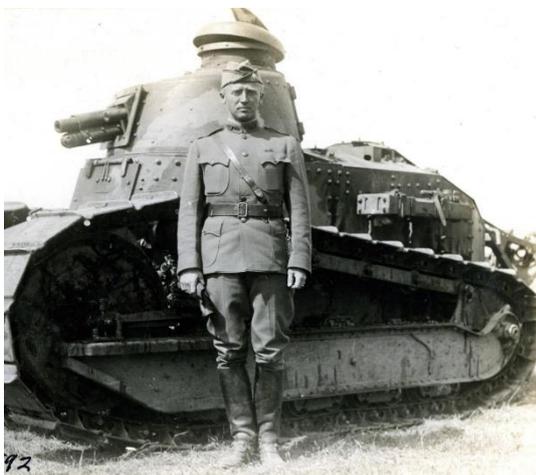
Showing no interest at all for the infantry, he favored an armored unit.

He was assigned to a unit commanded by General Samuel Rockenbach.

As the US Army did not yet possess many tanks, Patton, meanwhile promoted to the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel, was tasked to constitute a unit with tanks of his choice.

He opted for a French tank, rated to be more mobile than other models.

When the first Renault tanks were delivered, Patton was the only person able to drive them.



At the training camp in Langres, he formed the first two battalions of the 304th Tank Brigade.

He submitted his men to rigorous discipline which soon gave him a reputation as the worst quibbler of the whole United States Army.

While ensuring the training of his units, he also continued to attend training courses organized by General Pershing.

On 20 August 1918, the 304th Armored Brigade entered into the battle of Saint-Mihiel.

General Pershing, commanding the 1st US Army, had been tasked to prepare an attack on the enemy salient. This attack began on 12 September. On 15 September, by the evening, the enemy had been driven back behind the Fresnes-en-Woëvre-Champey line.

During this battle, Patton demonstrated his skills as a leading tank expert.

On September 26, during the Meuse-Argonne offensive, Patton's leg was severely wounded.

He was evacuated to a hospital in Dijon but escaped to return to the frontline before the end of hostilities.



On 17 October 1918, he was promoted to the rank of Colonel.

Having commanded his troops with bravery, the Distinguished Service Cross was awarded to him by General Pershing.

1919-1942: RETURN TO THE UNITED STATES AND TRAINING ON TANK

In February 1919, he embarked for the United States together with his two battalions.



Back home, he was soon confronted with the first consequences of peace time.

Wartime promotions were readjusted: Patton was downgraded to his regular rank of Captain.

But on June 1st 1919, he was again promoted to Major.

The Armed Forces were considerably reduced in numbers and the US Congress, following the end of war trends, was not willing to allocate appropriate funds to develop an armored force.

Tactical procedures were mainly based on the assumption that tanks should be used in order to accompany and support the Infantry.

Patton therefore returned to the Cavalry but his interest in tanks never waned.

He continued to study their technical improvements and concepts of employment.

Patton was nominated a member of the Technical Board of the Army whose main role was to study the evolution of equipment and military doctrines.

In 1929, former soldiers of the 1914-1918 Expeditionary Corps were claiming financial compensation for their services to the country

Thousands of demonstrators protested in Washington D.C. They remained in the vicinity of the White House.

President Hoover tasked the Army to clear the area.

This operation was commanded by General Mc Arthur, assisted by Majors Eisenhower and Patton.

Promoted consecutively to Lieutenant-Colonel and Colonel in 1939, Patton took over the command of the 5th Cavalry Regiment.

Meanwhile, his two daughters Beatrice and Ruth Ellen got married. His son George had just begun at the Virginia Military Institute in order to prepare his admission to the Military Academy at West Point.

At that time, Patton was very preoccupied by his career, thinking that he would have to serve in a peacetime environment until his retirement.

But suddenly war again broke out in Europe and a worldwide conflict appeared to be on the horizon.

Patton had continued to improve his knowledge about tanks.

He had analyzed with interest the studies published by Liddell Hart, Guderian, Rommel and Charles de Gaulle.

Due to his membership of the Technical Board of the Army, he had established a good relationship with an engineer who had been developing a new type of suspension enabling tanks to maneuver at high speed.

Patton had studied all about modern combat in which tanks had been used, most often to help the infantry.

With their "Blitzkrieg" in Poland, the German Army had illustrated a remark, repeatedly made by Patton: An army without tanks is like a lobster without claws.

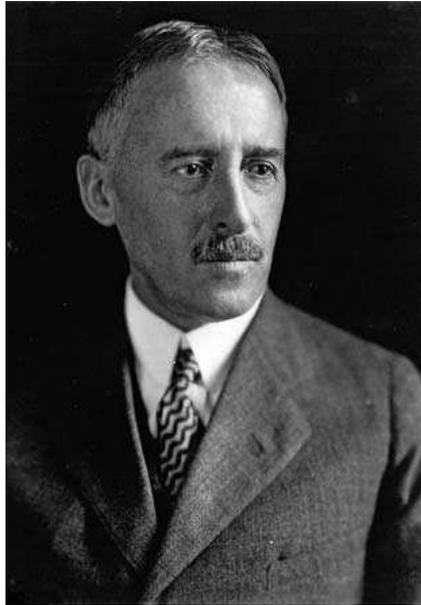
The revelation of the role of tanks in modern conflicts brutally stirred up the U.S. High Command in Washington.

The United States quickly needed effective and modern armored forces.

Several factors then contributed to the positive development of Patton's career.

In 1939, General Marshall had been appointed the new Chief of Staff of the Army. During the campaign in France, Marshall had been in charge of the “Operations” Section in General Pershing’s staff. As a result, Patton knew him very well.

Another individual supporting Patton was Henry Stimson, Secretary of State for Defense.



Henry Stimson

In June 1940, General Marshall decided to create an armored force.

In early 1940, Patton had been promoted to Brigadier General and in July he took over the command of the 2nd Armored Brigade, serving under General C. Scott.

Patton started to prepare his troops with his usual vigor and enthusiasm. This training included tactical instruction as well as technical knowledge of the equipment.

In April 1941, he was promoted to Major General and took command of the 2nd Armored Division.



After an adequate preparation time, his unit participated in several exercises during which he attracted the particular attention of his superiors who were deeply impressed by his command style, his audacity and his will for victory. He was considered an extremely valuable and dynamic commander, a potential candidate for commanding large armored units in real conflicts.

In 1936, Patton had qualified war as the “supreme ordeal for men.”

History provided him with a second opportunity to pit his strength against his own standards when the Japanese raided Pearl Harbor and the Germans declared war against the United States.

In early 1942, Patton was given the command of the 1st Armored Corps consisting of the 1st and 2nd Armored Division.

1942-1944: OPERATIONS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA

In August, he was ordered to prepare himself for Operation Torch, the Allied invasion of North Africa.



Major General Patton was chosen to command the Western Task Force.

On 24 October, the Task Force sailed from Norfolk, Virginia, landing on the shores of Morocco. The Western Task Force included the 3rd and 9th Infantry Divisions as well as the 2nd Armored Division.

The invasion began on 8 November 1942 at dawn.



Commanded by officers loyal to Marshal Pétain, French troops were resisting to the landing of American troops.

Immediately after landing, Patton, took things in hand, started to direct the operations, reorganized units, planned attacks and defined the objectives.

Finally, the French resistance ceased, and an armistice was agreed on 11 November 1942.

Patton installed his Headquarters in Casablanca.

On 16 November he met the Sultan of Morocco, Mohammed Ben Youssef as well as the Crown Prince Hassan, in Rabat.



Patton was awarded the “Grande Croix du Ouissam-Alaouite”, together with a citation which included the following sentence: “... and the lions in their den are shaking as they watch him approach.”

During the Conference between President Roosevelt and Churchill at Casablanca (Stalin was not able to attend due to the battle of Stalingrad), Patton was in charge of participants’ security.



One of the decisions taken during this conference concerned Sicily. It was decided that Sicily should be invaded by spring 1943.

Eisenhower was designated to take over the overall command of the forces, composed of the 8th British Army under General Montgomery and the 2nd US Corps under General Patton.

Patton at this point went to Tripoli where he met Montgomery for the first time.

Before being involved in the planning for the operation in Sicily, Patton was put in charge of the 11th US Corps which had encountered serious problems in Tunisia.

Major General Fredendall, the commanding officer, was relieved of his duties and sent back to the United States.

After having successfully accomplished his taskings in Tunisia, Patton handed over his command to General Omar Bradley.



One event in Tunisia had deeply touched Patton, namely the death of his aide-de-camp, Captain Richard Jenson, mortally wounded by a piece of shrapnel.

He joined the staff of the 1st Corps in order to start preparations for the invasion of Sicily, operation Husky.

In early March, Patton was promoted to Lieutenant General.

The Invasion of Sicily was launched on 10 July 1943. The operation, conducted jointly by the 7th US Army under Patton and the 8th British Army commanded by Montgomery, was successfully accomplished after five weeks, ending with a race between British and US troops towards Messina, which was eventually won by Patton.



Despite his success, Patton found himself in trouble with his military chain of command.



During the campaign, several incidents discredited Patton in his leaders' eyes: he had personally shot a mule blocking the road and had slapped two soldiers during a visit of a field hospital.

Public opinion was alerted.

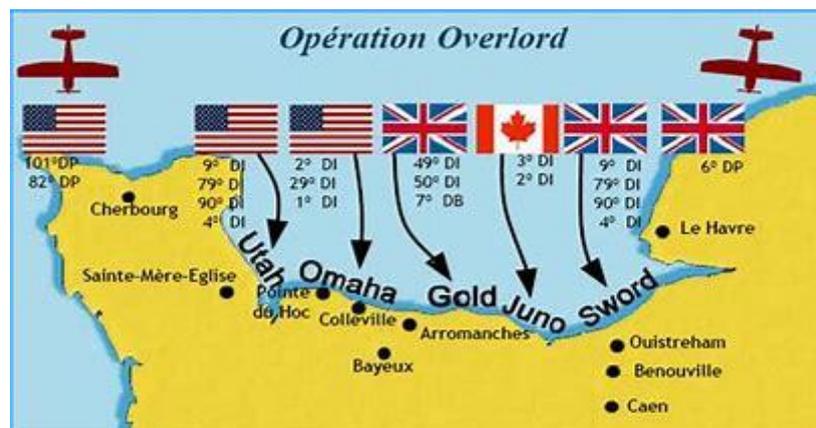
Eisenhower ordered Patton to apologize to the two soldiers, to the personnel of the military hospital and it was even envisaged to relieve him of his command.

But this idea was quickly abandoned due to Eisenhower's appreciation for Patton's style of command.

He considered Patton a valorous combatant and a brilliant strategist.

These extraordinary qualities had to take precedence over his temper and his immoderate reactions when it is up to decide who is affected commander.

The planning for Operation Overlord, the invasion of Normandy, began in early 1943.



Patton was given the command of the 3rd Army.

Bradley was selected to lead the 1st Army, designated to land on D-Day on the beaches of Normandy.

This operation required a calm, well-balanced and flexible commander, able to coordinate with the British partners.



Eisenhower believed that these were definitively not George Patton's main attributes.

In the United States the incident in relation to the soldiers slapped by Patton during the Sicily campaign resurfaced after a radio broadcast and provoked massive public reactions and a new round of interventions from parliamentarians.

Numerous letters were addressed to political leaders, but those in support of Patton outweighed the criticism in the end and he was not dismissed from command.

The most important disappointment for Patton was the fact that 83 years old General Pershing informed him of his categorical disapproval.



1944: STRATEGIC STAY IN ENGLAND

On 22 January 1944, Patton was ordered to go to England. There he joins Eisenhower's Headquarters in London which had been installed a month previously.

Operation Overlord was launched on 6 June 1944.



The 3rd Army was kept in reserve; its involvement in operations was foreseen for a later stage.

Patton's presence in England and later on in France was kept secret in order not to alert the Germans.

After his successful operations in Tunisia and Sicily, the Germans considered him to be audacious and dangerous.

He was one of the rare Allied generals to have impressed the German command. They consider him as an extraordinary strategist.

Hitler called him the "General Cowboy".

1944: LANDINGS

According to the Allied planning, the town of Caen should have been conquered the day after the invasion. This plan turned out to be illusory.

Montgomery's Army was blocked in the area of Caen while Bradley's 1st Army conquered Cherbourg on 26 June but was unable to break through the Lessay-Caumont frontline.

On 25 July, Patton was informed that his friend Paddy Flint had been killed in action in Normandy. Patton was profoundly affected.



Colonel Flint, the godfather of his son George S. Patton IV, died from a wound the day before while he was moving forward in order to head his battalion.

The Colonel's death was a terrible blow to Patton, who commented it as follows:

He is dead, as he would have wanted it, in battle. I hope that when my time comes, I too will pass away gloriously and without suffering.

The 3rd Army went into combat on 1 August 1944. During operation Cobra, Patton's units rushed towards Brittany.



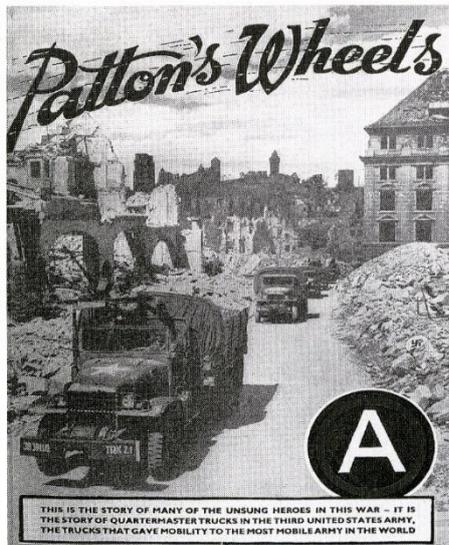
Nothing could stop the impressive breakout of the 3rd Army across Northern France anymore.



Mid-August, the three Corps of Patton's Army were lined up against the Dreux-Chartres-Orleans line.



In September, Patton's Army reached the area of Nancy, taking position along the Moselle river, south of Metz. The fortified city of Metz fell to the 3rd Army only on 22 November.



In early November, Patton was informed about the future objectives of his Army.

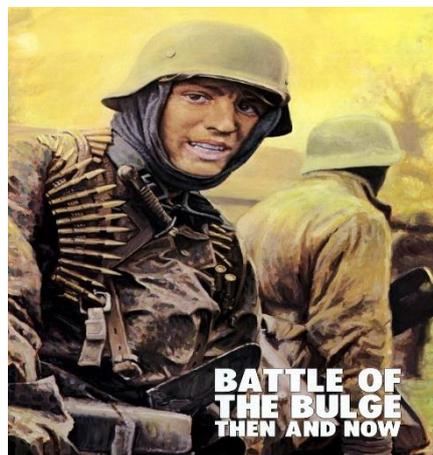
It was foreseen that his units should cross the Siegfried Line in order to conquer the cities of Worms and Mainz and to progress thereafter in direction of Frankfurt and Kassel.

In order to achieve those goals, it was however necessary first to occupy the fortifications of the Maginot line in the vicinity of Metz.

These fortifications, formerly constructed by the French authorities in order to prevent a German invasion, were now defended by German troops and considerably hampered Allied action.

It was only on 13 December that the last of these fortifications fell to the 3rd Army.

After the capitulation of Metz, Patton's units pushed into the Saar Basin and occupied the area of Saarlouis and Mertzig. Preparations for an offensive in the Saar area were almost finished when the Germans launched their attack in the Ardennes on 16 December 1944.



The advance of the 3rd Army was considerably hampered by heavy rainfall. Patton called for Colonel James O'Neill, an Army Chaplain and ordered him to prepare a prayer requesting for better weather conditions.

The Chaplain replied that it would be quite unusual to ask God to improve weather conditions to kill the enemy.

Nevertheless, Patton insisted and formally ordered the Colonel to prepare such a prayer.

The prayer prepared by the Chaplain reads as follows:

"Almighty and most merciful Father, we humbly beseech Thee, of Thy great goodness, to restrain these immoderate rains with which we have had to contend. Grant us fair weather for Battle.

Graciously hearken to us as soldiers who call upon Thee that, armed with Thy power, we may advance from victory to victory, and crush the oppression and wickedness of our enemies and establish Thy justice among men and nations. Amen”.

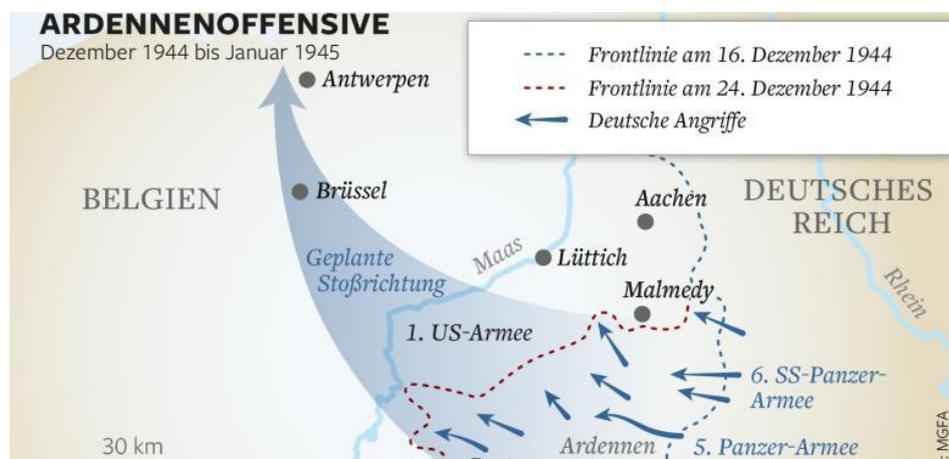
When the sun appeared again on 23 December, Patton called for the Chaplain and awarded him with the Bronze Star.

The prayer, printed on several hundred thousand cards, was distributed to all the members of the 3rd Army on Christmas Eve.

1944-1945: THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE

Hitler’s last attempt to regain the initiative on the Western front, began on 16 December 1944.

Three German Armies attacked the American positions between Monschau in the North and Echternach in the South with the strategy of driving on towards Brussels and Antwerp.



The Headquarters of the 12th Army Group ordered Patton to stop the advance of his 10th Armoured Division in order to reinforce General Middleton’s VIII Corps.

Although Patton protested, he felt that Bradley had serious reasons for such a decision.

On 9 December, he had indeed been alerted by the chief of his Intelligence Services about a possible German offensive.

The services had intercepted various radio messages which allowed concluding that German units were moving towards an unidentified destination.

Unlike the Intelligence of the 1st Army, Patton took these messages seriously.

Patton was convinced that the Germans were preparing an attack against the frontline held by the 1st Army and ordered his staff to prepare plans for a possible intervention of the 3rd Army.

On 18 December, Patton was called to a conference at the Headquarters of the 12th Army Group in Luxembourg. He was accompanied by three of his staff officers, Koch, Maddox and Muller.

When Patton arrived in Luxembourg, his staff had already identified 14 different German divisions pushing towards the River Meuse.



After completion of the situation briefing, Bradley asked Patton to prepare his troops for backing up the 1st Army.

Patton informed Bradley that he was in a position to move immediately three of his divisions towards the area of operations.

After being returned to his Headquarters in Nancy, he was informed by Bradley that a conference with Eisenhower was scheduled the next day at 11.00. in Verdun.

Before leaving for Verdun, he met his staff officers. He explained the overall situation and outlined his plans for an intervention in the Ardennes area.

In addition to Patton, Air Marshal Tedder, General Devers and General Strong attended the meeting convened by the Supreme Commander in Verdun.

After a short introduction, Eisenhower explained the envisaged measures and stated he wanted Patton to get to Luxembourg and take command of the operations and make a strong counter-attack with at least 6 divisions.



Patton replied that he would be able to counter-attack already on the 22 December, with three divisions; the 4th Armoured, the 26th and the 80th.

Patton kept his promise.

On 21 December, he established his temporary headquarters in the Pescatore Foundation in Luxembourg.



The counterattack, he had promised to start on 22 December, was launched on time at 06.00. with 3 divisions, the 4th Armoured as well as the 26th and 80th Infantry.



The main direction of advance of the 4th Armoured division was the road leading towards Martelange and Bastogne, the 26th Infantry Division launched an attack in the direction of Wiltz and the 80th advanced towards Ettelbruck. One regiment of the 5th Infantry Division attacked in the vicinity of Echternach.



On 26 December, a combat group belonging to the 4th Armoured Division reached Bastogne and established contact with the 101st Airborne Division, besieged since several days.



General Patton visited his troops almost on a daily basis.

After extremely violent fights, elements of the 1st US Army commanded by General Hodges and the 3rd Army were able to link up in the area of Houffalize and thus re-established the contact between the Allied Forces.

The divisions having participated in the 22 December attack, were progressively reinforced by other units attached to the 3rd Army or by reserve forces.



On 29 January 1945, the 13 divisions belonging to the 3rd Army had taken up positions along the rivers Moselle, Sure and Our, ready to cross the Siegfried line between Saarlautern and St. Vith.



During the night of 6 - 7 February 1945, elements of the 3rd Army crossed the Our and Sure into German territory.

The flooded rivers made the crossing extremely difficult and called for many casualties.

On 13 February, visibility was greatly reduced by dense fog.

Patton crossed the river Sure on a floating bridge. When he suddenly appeared amidst his soldiers on the other riverside, rumours circulated that he had been swimming across.

On 1 March 1945, the 3rd Army took the city of Trier with elements of the 94th Infantry Division and the 10th Armoured Division.

The following morning, Patton received a message from SHAEF, the Supreme Headquarters of Allied Expeditionary Forces, with the order to bypass Trier, as he would need at least 4 divisions to conquer the town.

Patton reacted in sending a telegram with the following content:

I have conquered Trier with two divisions only. What shall I do now? Return the town to the Germans?

Patton pushed his units' forwards.

On 7 March, the 3rd Army reached the west bank of the Rhine north of Coblenz.



The 3rd Army had conquered the entire Palatinate with 4 armoured divisions, the 4th, 10th, 11th and 12th.

In 230 days, the 3rd army made 230.000 prisoners of war.

Patton hurries on toward the Rhine and conquered on April 4 the town of Fulda and then Cobourg and Saalfeld.



At the end of April his Vth Corps crossed the Czechoslovakian border and arrived in Pilsen.

During the progression across Germany, Patton's units discovered the atrocities committed in the concentration camps. His XXth Corps liberated the camp of Buchenwald.



Harry S. Truman, succeeding President Roosevelt after his death, promoted Patton to the rank of a 4-star General on 17 April 1945.



When the Germans signed their capitulation on 8 May 1945, four Army Corps composed of six armoured and seven infantry divisions were under Patton's command.

His IIIrd Corps occupied the entire territory of Bavaria, the V Corps was deployed 80 kilometres from Prague, the XIIth Corps in the area of Pizek and the XXth Corps had passed Linz in Austria.

The IIIrd Corps had conducted the junction with the Soviet Army in Armstetten.

Patton was designated military governor of Bavaria. He started reorganizing the 3rd Army and established his headquarters in Bad Tölz.

The end of the war went together with various victory celebrations.

His meetings with Russian generals confirmed Patton's suspicion he had against the Soviet Army.

He was convinced that he would have to fight them one day.

1945: SHORT VISIT TO THE USA

In June Patton returned to the United States to join his family after having been separated from them since 1942.



He was received in triumph in many cities.

Thousands of enthusiasts testified their appreciation to him.



At one occasion he pronounced a speech containing a tactless declaration related to soldiers killed in action: "... a man was frequently a fool when he got killed".

Again, the declaration provoked an adverse reaction of the press and letters of indignant parents were sent to the Congress. Defence Secretary Stimson tried to defend Patton during a press conference noting that there had been a misinterpretation of his statement.

At that time, Patton had already a premonition he would die soon. At one occasion, when his wife was not present, he told his daughters:

Good bye children, we will not meet again. Take care of your brother George. I will meet again your mum, but I will not see you anymore.

1945: LAST TRIP TO EUROPE, AWARDS AND ACCIDENT

On 4 July, Patton returned to Europe.

After another clash with Eisenhower related to the denazification policy, Patton was relieved of his command and replaced by General Truscott.

He was made commander of the 15th Army, a virtual army without any subordinated units, composed of a staff in charge of analysing World War II operations.

Perfectly aware that he had fallen into disgrace with his chain of command, Patton decided to resign from the Army at the end of the year.

End of October, he was received by General de Gaulle in Paris who conferred to him the “Cordon de Grand Officier de la Légion d’Honneur”.



He also paid visits to Normandy and Brittany where he was made a Citizen of Honour of several towns liberated by the 3rd Army.

End of November 1945, he attended the first anniversary of the liberation of Metz and was made an honorary citizen of this town.

On Sunday morning, 9 December 1945, accompanied by his Chief of Staff, General Hobart R. Gay, he wanted to go hunting near Speyer. They're in his command car, a 1939 model Cadillac 75, driven by Private Horace L. Woodring.



In the suburbs of Mannheim, they stopped at a railroad crossing.

Their car began moving after the train had passed by when Woodring suddenly noticed a GMC truck ahead, approaching in their direction.

He was going too fast to react when the truck made a sudden move and the car smashed into the fuel tank of the truck.



Patton, sitting on the rear seat was projected forward, fell back and was thrown against General Gay.

He suffered from a laceration on his forehead, an injury caused when his head struck the car roof and the separation between front and back seats.

But the worst thing was that he could not move his fingers. He realized that this could be a symptom for paralysis.

He was taken to the 130th Station Hospital at Heidelberg. The diagnostic of the doctors was unanimous: Beside the head wound, a fracture of the third cervical vertebra caused a total paralysis from the third vertebra downward.

Learning of the accident, his spouse immediately flew to Europe, arriving in Heidelberg in the afternoon on 11 December.

Patton smiled when he welcomed her, but his words were disquieting:

« I'm afraid Béa, that's the last time we see us. »



The doctors tried in vain to keep the famous « Blood and Guts » alive.

*In a speech at the beginning of the war, Patton emphasized that a war would be won only by blood and courage.

"Our blood and his courage" was the comment of his soldiers.

From this episode was born the expression "Blood and Guts".

The World War II hero died on December 21, 1945 at 05.45 pm.

For two days, his body rested in a villa in Heidelberg, where many of his soldiers paid him the last respects.



He was laid to rest on 24 December 1945 at the military cemetery in Hamm, close to Luxembourg City in presence of a great number of civilian and military authorities.



He rests among the soldiers of the 3rd Army who had fought with him.

General Patton did not belong to the top echelon of the Allied chain of command.

He was highly qualified for field commands and never had ambitions for the position of the Supreme Allied Commander.

He was a complex and controversial person.

His key concern had always been to lead his troops avoiding unnecessary casualties.



This was the reason why he always opted for a maximum of mobility and speed in operations.

He was convinced that rapid advances would reduce the enemy's striking capability.

He was certainly not a fearless superman, he had the same fears than anybody else and never tried to hide this.

He believed in reincarnation and was convinced that he had been living in the past, spanning several centuries.

Sometimes, he had the impression that he remembered incidents that happened hundreds of years ago.

There is certainly an explanation to this.

He had become a product of his readings and his own imagination. He swallowed all military works.

After a while he identified himself with the events and adopted them as his own recollections.

Patton was delighted when general Alexander told him one day:

"You know, George, you should have lived during the XVIIIth century, you would have made a splendid Marshal under Napoleon."

Patton smiled and responded:" I was there."

His death made him more popular than he had ever been during his whole life.

