



CASTLE ITTER COMPANION

CASTLE ITTER

— THE STRANGEST BATTLE OF WWII —

CONTENTS

PART 1: CASTLE ITTER

Castle Itter	1
War in Europe Draws to a Close	2
Calls for Rescue	3
Unlikely Allies	5
The Defense Plan	7
The Battleground	8

PART 2: THE BATTLE

Probing Attacks	13
SS Preparations	14
The Main Assault Begins	15
A Tank Destroyed, A Defender Falls	16
Reinforcements	17
Borotra's Escape	18
Endgame	19

MAPS

4 - 5 May 1945	9
5 May (0400 - 1600)	11

APPENDICES

The Defenders	20
Distinguished Service Cross	21
The French Prisoners	22
Hellcat News	25
Views of Castle Itter	27

References and Additional Resources	28
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Purpose of this Book

Castle Itter Companion serves as a primer for the Battle of Castle Itter, which has been called the “Strangest Battle of WWII.” This book provides historical context and maps for the battle, and it also gives insight into the design process for the game.

CREATED BY

David Thompson

Art by Matt White

Maps by David Thompson

Proofreading and copyediting by Emery Gallant

Designer notes in this rulebook are placed in light beige tone boxes.



Digital
Capricorn
Studios



Castle Itter

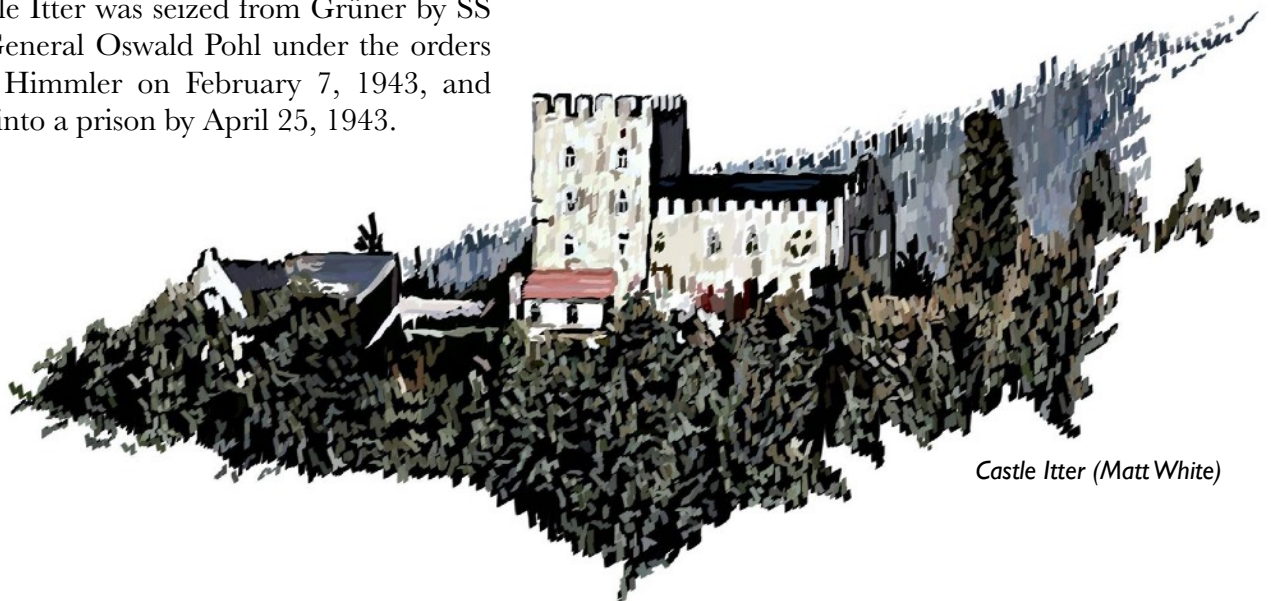
If someone told you a multinational force of French prisoners, U.S. soldiers, German soldiers, and Austrian resistance fighters united in battle against Hitler's SS during World War II, would you believe it?

Castle Itter sits atop a knoll at the entrance to the Brixen Valley (Brixental), near the Austria-Germany border. A fortress at the modern day castle site existed at least as early as the mid-1200's.

The Brixental was acquired by Salzburg in 1312. In 1380 the castle was sold to Archbishop Pilgrim II of Salzburg, but it was devastated during the German Peasants' War in 1526. The Brixental belonged to Salzburg until it fell to the newly established Kingdom of Bavaria in 1805. The Bavarian government left the castle ruin to the Itter citizens who used it as a quarry. The present-day building was erected on the foundations of the former one in 1878.

After the 1938 Anschluss annexation of Austria by Nazi Germany, the Reich government officially leased the castle in late 1940 from its owner, Franz Grüner. Castle Itter was seized from Grüner by SS Lieutenant General Oswald Pohl under the orders of Heinrich Himmler on February 7, 1943, and transformed into a prison by April 25, 1943.

Established to incarcerate prominent French prisoners valuable to the Reich, the facility was placed as a sub-camp under the administration of the Dachau concentration camp. Notable prisoners included tennis player Jean Borotra; former prime ministers Édouard Daladier and Paul Reynaud; Generals Maurice Gamelin and Maxime Weygand, who had been prominent during the Phoney War; right-wing leader François de La Rocque of the Réseau Klan resistance movement; trade union leader Léon Jouhaux; André François-Poncet, a politician and diplomat; Michel Clemenceau, politician and son of Georges Clemenceau; and Marie-Agnès de Gaulle, resistance member and sister of General Charles de Gaulle. Also housed in the castle were Eastern European prisoners detached from Dachau, who were used for maintenance and other menial work.



Castle Itter (Matt White)

Castle Itter / War in Europe Draws to a Close

WAR IN EUROPE DRAWS TO A CLOSE

By April of 1945, the War in Europe was drawing to a close. On April 27, 1945, as Allied forces closed in on Milan, Mussolini was captured by Italian Partisans. He was killed the next day. Hitler, learning of Mussolini's death, realized that the end had finally come. He remained in Berlin, the crumbling Nazi capital, even as the city was encircled and trapped by the Soviets and the Battle of Berlin raged. On April 30, Adolf Hitler committed suicide in his bunker to avoid capture by Soviet troops. In his last will and testament, Hitler appointed Grand Admiral Karl Dönitz as the new German leader. But Germany lasted only 7 days longer under the "Flensburg government" of Dönitz. He surrendered unconditionally to the Allies on May 8, 1945.

This brief period of the War in Europe, bookended by Hitler's death and the surrender of Germany, was tumultuous. While the Third Reich was falling apart, SS soldiers carried out brutal vengeance campaigns throughout the areas still held by the Nazis. In contrast, many Wehrmacht soldiers were more concerned about returning home than continuing the fight.

In Austria in early May 1945, the SS were carrying out attacks against suspected resistance members, prisoners of war, and even civilians. The prisoners of Castle Itter were aware of these actions by the SS and were afraid they would suffer the same fate. They were worried that as symbols of French resistance to Nazi and Vichy rule, they would be targets.

The prisoners had also heard that American soldiers were operating nearby, liberating Nazi-held territories. In addition, they knew Austrian resistance groups were also active. The resistance was taking charge of Austrian towns to protect the people from SS reprisals. So the prisoners of Castle Itter began planning for a way to reach the Americans or Austrian resistance as a means of protection against imminent SS attack. They turned to a Croat prisoner of the castle named Zvonimir Čučković for help.

“History and the German people will despise every man who in these circumstances does not give his utmost to save the situation and the Führer.”
— Adolf Hitler, 26 April 1945



Adolf Hitler

Castle Itter / Calls for Rescue

CALLS FOR RESCUE

Zvonimir Čučković had fought against Nazi Germany with the Yugoslav Communist Resistance before he was captured. He spent years working at Castle Itter as an electrician, janitor, and handyman. Known to the French prisoners as “André”, the thirty-six year old Croat was well liked by the prisoners but was frequently abused by the commander of the prison, Captain Sebastian Wimmer. Čučković regularly left the castle to run errands for Wimmer, so when the French prisoners asked him to deliver a message requesting help, he agreed.

On May 3, Čučković left Castle Itter to run an errand for Captain Wimmer, but in reality he was carrying the prisoners’ message. Čučković rode his bicycle through the town of Wörgl, where SS troops were going door-to-door rounding up suspected deserters. Then, he had to talk his way through two German roadblocks. On May 4, Čučković ran into an advance party of the 409th Infantry Regiment of the 103rd Infantry Division near Innsbruck, Austria. He gave the Americans the letter informing them about the prisoners being held at Castle Itter, and they began formulating a rescue plan.

Also during the early morning hours of May 4, Captain Wimmer and his SS-Totenkopfverbände guards abandoned Castle Itter. U.S. troops were advancing into Austria as German resistance continued to collapse, and with his superiors dead, captured, or on the run, Wimmer felt there was little reason to stay. That morning the prisoners suddenly found themselves in control of Castle Itter. They proceeded to the armory, seizing whatever weapons the Germans had left behind.

When Čučković failed to return, the prisoners turned to an unlikely ally for help — a German SS officer: SS-Hauptsturmführer (Captain) Kurt-Siegfried Schrader. Schrader had befriended some of the prisoners of Castle Itter while on convalescence in the nearby village of Itter. On May 4, Augusta Bruchlen and Leon Jouhaux traveled to the village and asked Schrader to assume the role of the prisoners’ guardian. Schrader agreed and returned with them to the castle.

The prisoners turned to an unlikely ally for help — an SS officer.



SS-Hauptsturmführer Kurt-Siegfried Schrader

Castle Itter / Calls for Rescue

Meanwhile, another prisoner of the castle, Andreas Krobot, volunteered to seek American or Austrian resistance help in the event that Čučković had been killed or captured. Krobot was a Czechoslovakian who served as the castle's cook. He set out on a bicycle, riding to nearby Wörgl, where he witnessed SS troops firing into houses that were displaying white flags for surrender or Austrian flags as a symbol of independence. The situation in Wörgl was growing increasingly dangerous, as the SS was ruthlessly suppressing potential dissent amongst the population. Seeking haven from the German shock troops, Krobot just so happened to run into a organized cell of the Austrian resistance.

The resistance took Krobot in, and introduced him to a key ally — a Wehrmacht officer: Major Josef “Sepp” Gangl. Gangl had served as the commander of the 2nd Battalion of the Volks-Werfer Brigade 7, but by April 1945, the brigade was no longer a cohesive unit. When he and his few remaining men entered Wörgl, he made contact with members of the local Austrian resistance and agreed to provide them with weapons, supplies, and intelligence in their fight against the roving bands of SS. He quickly earned the trust of the underground movement, and on April 30, leaders of the Austrian Resistance placed Major Gangl in charge of military operations in the Wörgl sector.

It was through his contacts in the Resistance that Major Gangl learned about the prison at Castle Itter where a group of French dignitaries were being held captive by the SS. He began planning for a covert German-Austrian raid to rescue the prisoners, but the heavy presence of Wehrmacht and SS troops in the area made such an operation very risky. The sudden appearance of Andreas Krobot on May 4, with news of the situation at Castle Itter, changed those plans dramatically.

Major Gangl faced a difficult decision: he wanted to rescue the French prisoners, but he also wanted to keep the soldiers under his command alive, and help the resistance protect the citizens of Wörgl. He decided that the best way to accomplish all three objectives was to seek the help of Americans in the nearby town of Kufstein. Riding in a military Kublewagen driven by his personal driver, Corporal Keblitsch, Major Gangl rode through several roadblocks manned by Wehrmacht and SS troops. The situation was increasingly chaotic and dangerous as they moved closer to the front lines where heavy fighting was still raging.

**The resistance took Krobot in,
and introduced him to a key
ally — a Wehrmacht officer.**



Major Josef “Sepp” Gangl (colorized by Eric Airlangga)

Castle Itter / Unlikely Allies

UNLIKELY ALLIES

Almost an hour after leaving Wörgl, Major Gangl and Corporal Keblitsch rode into Kufstein holding up a white flag, and were soon met by U.S. forces. Barely able to speak English, Major Gangl introduced himself to the commander of the group, a U.S. Army officer and tank company commander named Lieutenant John "Jack" Lee Jr. This meeting would set the stage for the Battle of Castle Itter.

Gangl presented Lee with the letter written by Christiane Mabire. After reading the letter, Lee contacted his commanding officer — Lieutenant Colonel Kelso Clow. Clow gave Lee permission to handle the situation as he saw fit. Lee immediately set off with Gangl in his Kubelwagen to Wörgl. The Kubelwagen passed through groups of Wehrmacht loyal to Gangl, and eventually reached Wörgl, where Lee and Gangl briefly met with the local leader of the Austrian resistance — Rupert Hagleitner.

The three men traveled together to the village of Itter, where they briefly met with Captain Kurt-Siegfried Schrader, who was heading back to his house after meeting with the French at the nearby Castle. Major Gangl recognized him from their time together in a battlegroup and guaranteed Lee that the former SS officer was on their side.

The men traveled on to Castle Itter, where they briefly met with the former prisoners. After Lee assessed the situation, he promised to return with more men. Lee and Gangl then set out for Kufstein, while the protection of the castle and the former prisoners was left to Schrader and small contingent of Gangl's loyal Wehrmacht. By the evening of May 4, Lee and Gangl had returned to Kufstein and assembled a makeshift rescue force.



Lieutenant Jack Lee

Design note

During the research of this text, some uncertainty arose concerning Jack Lee's rank during the Battle of Castle Itter. In Stephen Harding's book, "The Last Battle," the author refers to Lee as a Captain, which is the rank that Lee is almost always referred to in accounts of the battle. However, according to the "Hellcat News" (the newspaper of the 12th Armored Division during WWII), Lee was a lieutenant during the battle and was promoted to the rank of Captain a few days after the battle. Several weeks after the battle, Lee was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his actions. The citation refers to Lee as a captain, but by the time the citation was awarded, Lee had been promoted, according to the Hellcat News article. In the game, I have referred to Lee as a lieutenant, as I assume the Hellcat News article, written on May 26, 1945, was accurate. The confusion concerning Lee's rank during the battle is most likely due to his Distinguished Service Cross citation.

Castle Itter / Unlikely Allies

As the commander of B Company, 23rd Tank Battalion of the 12th Armored Division, Lee drew two tanks from his company for the rescue force. He also conscripted five tanks from the incoming 3rd Platoon, Company B, 753rd Tank Battalion and supporting infantry from the 142nd Infantry Regiment. Just after 7pm, Lee's rescue force departed Kufstein for Castle Itter.

Lee led the force in his tank, an M4A3E8 "Easy Eight" named Besotten Jenny. En route, Lee was forced to send part of the rescue force back when a bridge proved too tenuous for the entire column to cross, he left a tank behind to guard a key bridge, and he left part of his rescue force in Wörgl to help defend against SS troops that had returned. However, in Wörgl, Lee's rescue force was reinforced by a small number of Wehrmacht soldiers loyal to Gangl.

When the rescue force finally reached Castle Itter, it consisted of ten American soldiers, a handful of Wehrmacht, and a single tank. The prisoners greeted the rescuing force warmly but were disappointed at its small size. Lee took charge of the defense of the castle, and positioned Besotten Jenny at the main entrance.

When the rescue force finally reached Castle Itter, it consisted of ten American soldiers, a handful of Wehrmacht, and a single tank.

*An M4A3E8 "Easy Eight"
(Matt White)*



Castle Itter / The Defense Plan

THE DEFENSE PLAN

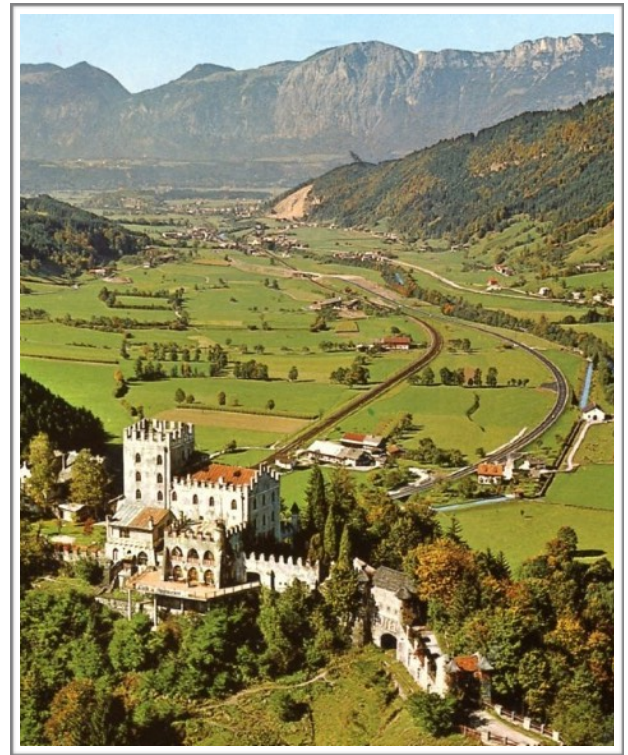
After arriving at the castle, Lee and Gangl, along with Lee's second in command — lieutenant Harry Basse — met with Schrader to assess the situation. Schrader informed the others that some of Gangl's Wehrmacht soldiers had sighted SS forces moving through the woods surrounding the castle. Lee ordered the French prisoners to take shelter in the castle's cellar, and the American and German officers began planning their defense.

Castle Itter's position on the high ground provided invaluable protection from small arms fire. If enemy troops attacked from the north, south, or west, they would have to exhaust themselves scaling the sides of the hill under heavy fire. If they attacked from the east they would be exposed traveling up the main road. Lee knew it was only a matter of time before additional U.S. troops arrived.

Lee, Basse, Gangl, and Schrader each commanded a section of the castle's perimeter. Besotten Jenny was parked in front of the gatehouse overlooking the main road as the first line of defense. Armed with a 76mm cannon, a .50-caliber machine gun, and a .30-caliber machine gun, the tank covered the approach to the castle. In addition, Lee had one of the tank's .30-caliber machine guns removed and placed in the castle's gate house.

Design Note

During the evening of May 4, before the Battle of Castle Itter began, Besotten Jenny's crew removed the assistant driver's hull mounted M1919A4 .30-caliber machine gun and emplaced it in the nearby gate house to increase its firing arc. The game models this by allowing the tank crew to man the gun in the gate house's southeastern tower.



Castle Itter, positioned at the entrance to the Brixen Valley

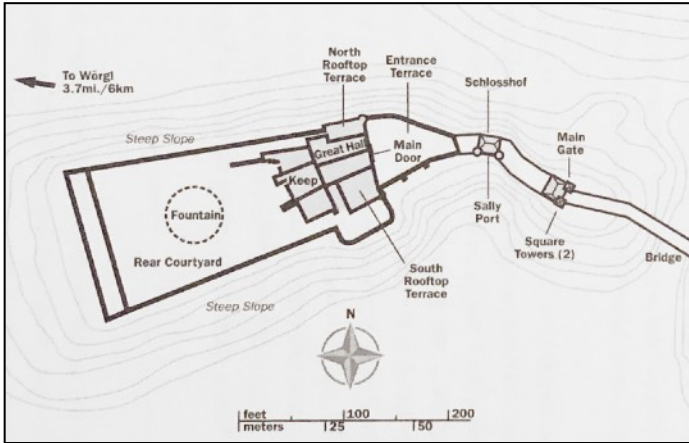


Castle Itter / The Battleground

Design note

The board design for Castle Itter was based on three primary sources: line drawings, satellite imagery, and ground photography. The features on the board were created to scale with precise mensuration, though some features were subsequently exaggerated for gameplay purposes. Line of Sight (LoS) was determined through viewshed analysis.

Line drawing from Stephen Harding's "The Last Battle"



Satellite Imagery: Geoimage Austria



Game Board - Base Image



Game Board - Final



Battle for Castle I

4 MAY

1900

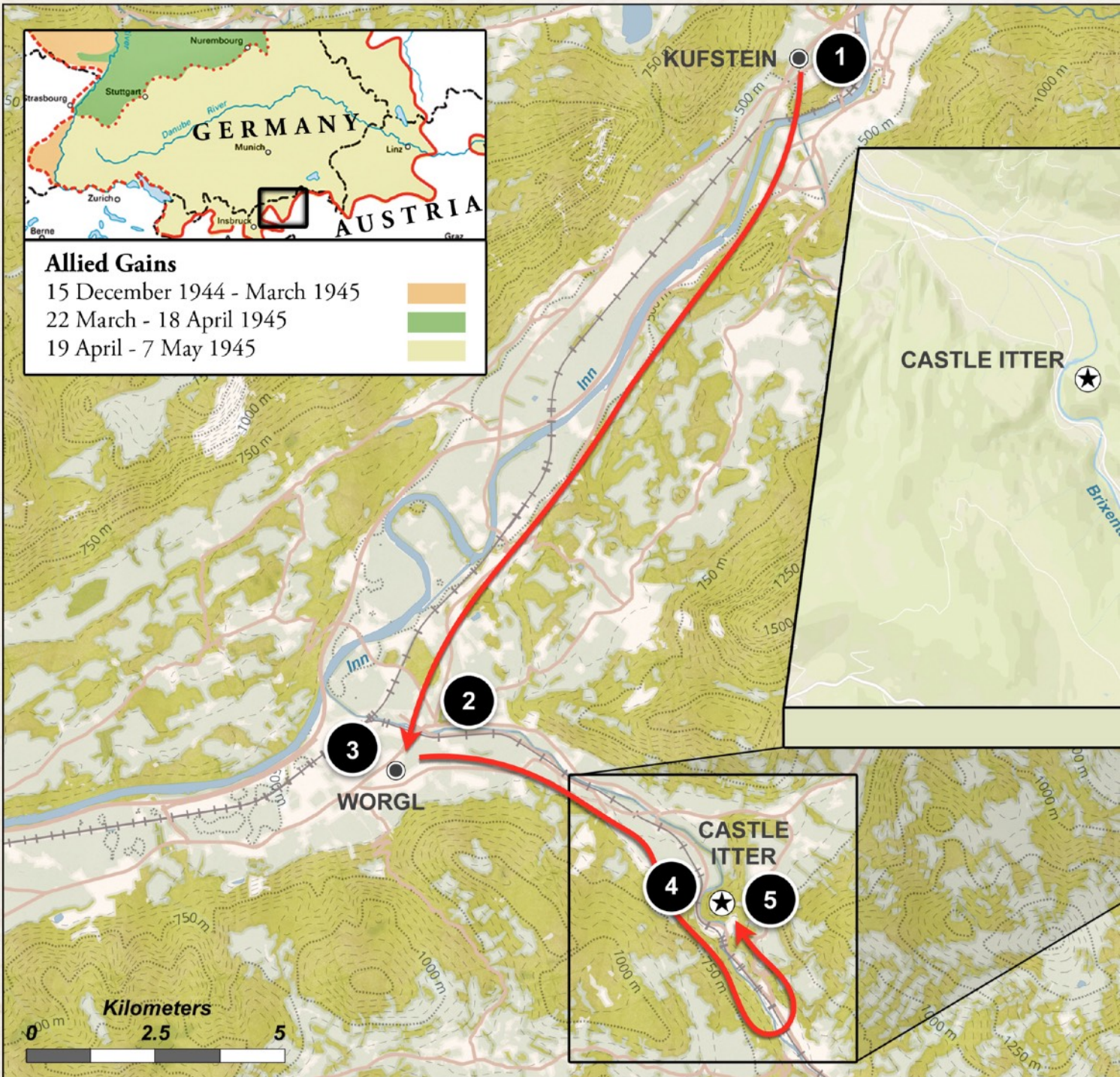
1940

2000

1) Capt. Jack Lee and Major Josef Gangl depart Kufstein, Austria with a rescue column bound for Castle Itter. The rescue force consists of seven M4A3(76)W Sherman tanks and three infantry squads.

2) A bridge over the *Brixentaler Ache* begins to crumble during the rescue force's crossing. Three Shermans are forced to return to Kufstein.

3) Lee leaves two Shermans in Wörgl to help defend the town against roving bands of Waffen-SS. Wehrmacht Heer riflemen join the rescue force.



ttter (4 - 5 May 1945)

2100

4) The rescue force discovers a bridge rigged with explosives at Bruggberg. Lee leaves one of the Shermans and its crew to disarm the explosives and protect the structure.

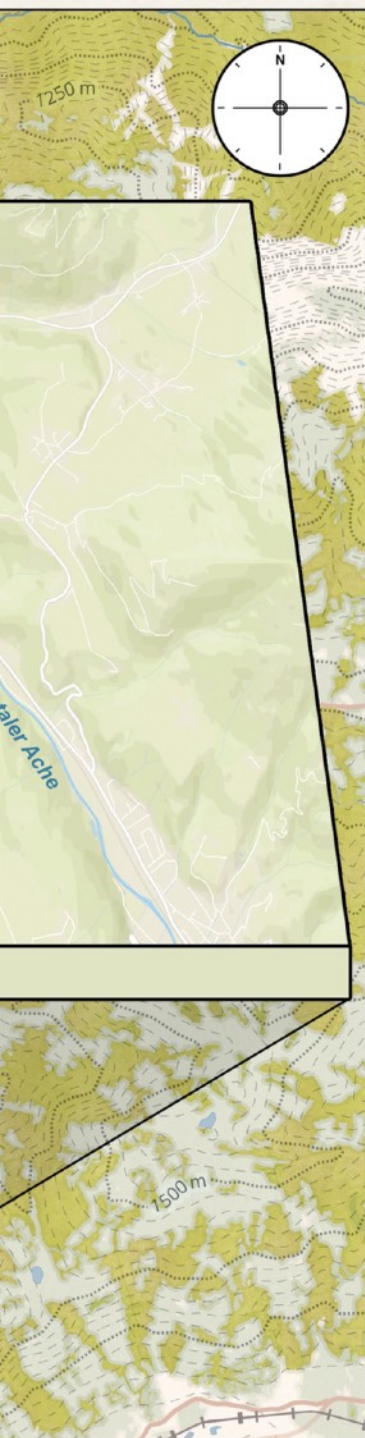
2200

5) After fighting its way through a Waffen SS roadblock in the market town of Hopfgarten, the rescue force arrives at Castle Itter to take on its defense.

5 MAY

0400

The defenders of Castle Itter are awoken by gunfire, signaling the beginning of the SS-Waffen assault.



Belligerents



United States

- 12th Armored Division
- 142nd Infantry Regiment



Wehrmacht Heer



Austrian Resistance



French Former Prisoners

SS

Nazi Germany

- 17th Waffen-SS Panzer Grenadier Division

Strength

Troops

- United States: 10
- Wehrmacht Heer: 8
- Waffen-SS: 1
- French Former Prisoners: 5

Reinforcements

- Wehrmacht Heer: 2
- Austrian Resistance: 1

Armament

- M4A3(76)W Sherman: 1

Troops

- Waffen-SS: 100 - 150

Armament

- 20mm Flak 30: 1
- 75mm Pak 40: 2
- 88mm Flak 37: 1

Battle for Castle Itter (04)



- a Waffen-SS unit was suppressed.
- **Herbert** relocated.
- Four Waffen-SS soldiers were killed from the West.
- A Waffen-SS unit was the attacker.
- **Josef** was the main strength.
- **Wegscheid** and **Waltl** were involved.
- An 88mm gun was the decisive factor in the beginning.
- **Besott** and **Rushford** were involved.
- Five of the **Rocque** were involved.
- **Gang** was involved.
- **Borot** and the 142nd Infantry Company were involved.
- A square was used for a rescue.

(00-1600, 5 May 1945)

n-SS machine gunner fires an MG-42 from the parallel ridgeline east of the castle. **William Rushford** suppresses the machine gunner with Besotten Jenny's .50-caliber Browning. [1]

Bert McHaley and **Alfred Worsham** use one of Besotten Jenny's .30-caliber Brownings (which had been moved to the Gate House) to suppress Waffen-SS fire from the top floor of an inn in Itter. [2]

Waffen-SS troops try to scale the castle walls with grappling hooks and ropes, but are repelled by M1 fire. **William Sutton**. [3]

armacht Heer rifleman repels SS-Waffen troops who were approaching the castle from the south. [4]

In response, a Waffen-SS machine gunner fires his MG-42. **Rushford** suppresses the MG-42 with Besotten Jenny's .50-caliber Browning.

armacht Heer rifleman betrays the defenders and flees the castle, most likely to join the SS-Waffen troops. **Arthur Pollock** fires on the deserter with his BAR machine gun, but misses.

Gangl spots between 100-150 SS-Waffen troops dismounting from a column of trucks situated on Itter's main street, the Ittererstrasse. [5]

Heider and **Linsen** travel from Wörgl to Castle Itter to serve as reinforcements. They are joined by **Hans**, a seventeen-year-old member of the Austrian resistance. [6]

88mm Flak 37 and a 20mm Flak 30, situated approximately 700 meters northwest of the castle, fire on the defenders. The woods surrounding the castle erupt with automatic weapons and rifle fire, marking the beginning of the main SS-Waffen assault on the castle. [7]

Besotten Jenny is hit by an anti-tank round, most likely from an 75mm Pak 40 on the ridgeline to the east. **Rushford**, the only crew member inside at the time, escapes. [8]

Four of the French former prisoners (**Jean Borotra**, **Michael Clemenceau**, **Maurice Gamelin**, **François de la Rocque**, and **Paul Reynaud**) join the defense of the castle.

Heider is killed by a sniper while trying to protect **Reynaud**.

Borotra escapes during a brief lull in the fighting and makes his way to the regimental command post of the 142nd Infantry Regiment. After meeting briefly with the regiment commander, **Borotra** sets out with the regiment's command company G, leading them back towards the castle. [9]

Members of SS-Waffen press the attack, as one of them aims at the castle gate with a Panzerfaust. Just then, reinforcements from the 142nd Infantry Regiment arrive.

0400

0600

0800

0900

1000

1030

1400

1600

The Battle / Probing Attacks

PROBING ATTACKS

It was just after 4am on May 5, that heavy gunfire broke out around Castle Itter. A German MG-42 machine gun began pelting the castle from a ridge line to the east. Besotten Jenny's .50-caliber machine gun fired in response, silencing the MG-42.

Manning one of the gate house's towers was U.S. Army Corporal William Sutton. He had spotted several SS troops attempting to cut through the barbed wire that surrounded the castle. Sutton fired his M1 Garand into the ravine, forcing the infiltrators back down the slope.

Lee ran throughout the castle checking the defenses as American and German troops began opening fire upon shadowy figures and muzzle flashes around the vicinity. It appeared that the enemy was probing the defenses, seeking a way to penetrate the castle without launching a costly frontal assault up the main road.

Inspecting sounds of gunfire from the third floor of the great hall, Lee and Gangl went into a room to find a Wehrmacht soldier laying on the floor badly wounded. The young soldier explained that he saw a group of SS troops penetrating the barbed wire defenses, but he had been able to force the enemy to fall back.

The enemy's initial probing attacks had been repelled, but a larger assault was almost certainly forthcoming.

Design Note

The LoS mechanism in Castle Itter is one of the game's greatest strengths, in my opinion. It allows for a streamlined and simple, but also logical, system for determining LoS. At the same time, it still provides for tactically relevant choices for positioning. Many different LoS systems were tested with the game. Ultimately it was determined that breaking the LoS down into the four cardinal directions and adding a fifth LoS area for the internal area between the gate house and great hall struck the right balance.



Western (Red) line of sight

The Battle / SS Preparations

Around 8am, gunfire erupted near the gatehouse. One of Gangl's Wehrmacht riflemen had taken off down a ravine, either trying to escape the battle or defect to the enemy. Lieutenant Basse accused the other Wehrmacht riflemen of not trying to stop the fleeing man, as none of them had opened fire. Only an American BAR gunner, Arthur Pollock, had fired on him. Gangl thought the soldier may have panicked and wanted to avoid execution in the event that they were overrun. Gangl checked in with the rest of his men, and made it known that their only hope was to stick with their American allies. He reported back to Lee, promising that he and his men would carry on the fight to the bitter end.

SS PREPARATIONS

A short time later, the defenders spotted a convoy of military trucks traveling down the main road in the town of Itter. Between 100 and 150 men dismounted from the trucks, which bore the insignia of the 17th SS Panzer-Grenadier Division. The SS immediately made for the woods at the base of the hill where the castle was situated. At the same time, the defenders saw SS positioning artillery around the castle. They had positioned an 88mm Flak 37 and 20mm Flak 30 to the northwest, a 75mm Pak 40 to the south, and a 75mm Pak 40 to the east.

The appearance of the artillery was worrying for Lee. Not only was the artillery a threat to the castle's defenders, but also to any relief force that might be on the way. After conferring briefly with Schrader and Gangl, Lee had Gangl call the Neue Post Inn in Wörgl, where he would be able to get in touch with the leaders of the Austrian resistance. Gangl instructed the resistance to warn any Americans who were on the way. He also ordered two more of his men — Second Lieutenant Wegscheider and Corporal Linsen — to travel to the castle as quickly as possible. The two men were accompanied by seventeen-year-old Hans Walzl, the only man the resistance felt they could spare. A trip that would have typically been a twenty-minute drive took the men nearly forty-five, as they took several detours to bypass SS roadblocks on the main routes out of Wörgl.

Design Note

The Low Morale [M] attribute was inspired by the story of the Wehrmacht rifleman fleeing from Castle Itter's defense. During the game, you must be careful not to leave Wehrmacht riflemen in a location without a counter with the Wehrmacht Officer [O] attribute.



Design Note

The Reinforcements [R] attribute, used in conjunction with the Reinforcements card, allows Wegscheider, Linsen, and Walzl to join the fight about halfway through the game. Make sure to use them wisely. They are equipped with MP 40s, which provide good suppression. You also have the flexibility to deploy them in any combat position.



The Battle / The Main Assault Begins

THE MAIN ASSAULT BEGINS

It was about 10am when the battle for Castle Itter really began. Artillery fire from the 88 began slamming into the keep, while the Pak 40 that was positioned on the parallel ridgeline east of Castle Itter began firing on Besotten Jenny. The woods surrounding the castle erupted with machine gun and rifle fire, marking the beginning of the main SS assault on the castle.

Some of the French prisoners had been in the courtyard when the attack began, defying Lee's orders. The women and children fled back to the cellar while the men, all veterans and some of whom had fought in the Great War, all agreed to help in the fight and armed themselves with weapons that had been left behind by their SS guards. The men — Paul Reynaud, Maurice Gamelin, François de La Rocque, and Michel Clemenceau — were soon joined by their fellow Frenchman Jean Borotra.

Design Note

The in-game target locations for the 75mm Pak 40, 88mm Flak 37, and 20mm Flak 30 are based on their positions during the Battle of Castle Itter as depicted on the map on p. 17.

“I soon saw that...the attackers could penetrate from the other side into the courtyard by the bridge which linked up with the flank of the mountain.”
— Paul Reynaud



75mm Pak 40
(Matt White)

The Battle / A Tank Destroyed, A Defender Falls

A TANK DESTROYED, A DEFENDER FALLS

Besotten Jenny, a key element of the defense of Castle Itter, was understandably one of the primary targets for the SS artillery. Not long after the artillery barrage began, an anti-tank round (most likely from the Pak 40 east of Castle Itter) knocked out the Sherman. Two riflemen, Art Pollock and Al Worsham, were positioned near the tank at the time, providing cover for Bill Rushford. Rushford, the tank's driver, had been inside the tank, trying to repair its radio. All three men were able to escape, and retreated back to the castle proper.

Meanwhile, Lee and Gangl had joined the Frenchmen and some of the other defenders in the castle's courtyard. With Besotten Jenny out of action, Lee and Gangl were discussing how best to shore up the castle's defenses. While Lee and Gangl were conferring, Reynoud took up a position closer to the gate house, though the position was exposed to fire from the SS attackers. Sensing the danger, Gangl moved to protect Reynaud — and was shot down by sniper fire in the process.

The defenders did not have time to mourn the loss of the Wehrmacht officer. Artillery fire continued to hammer the castle, and ammunition was beginning to run low. Lee ordered Basse to hold the gate house as long as possible.

Design Note

Gangl's sacrifice [S] attribute was a late addition to the design. In most plays it won't have an impact, but it's the type of rule I like including in a game. It helps evoke the history of the event, and provides an in-game incentive for taking the action. If Gangl is in the same location as one of the French prisoners when the Frenchman would become a casualty, you can remove Gangl from the game instead. By doing this, you'll lose Gangl's key command ability, but you'll gain extra victory points.

Design Note

Finding the right rules for movement was a challenge, primarily in striking a balance between simulation and abstraction for the sake of gameplay. Ultimately, a decision was made to allow for maximum tactical flexibility with regard to movement within a location, since players must balance the pros and cons of having defenders in combat positions with two colors. While they can target two colors, they are also much more likely to be targeted. Movement between locations needed to be easy enough to encourage players to take advantage of the option, without being so forgiving that players moved without regard for the cost.



Major Josef "Sepp" Gangl

The Battle / Reinforcements

REINFORCEMENTS

Before leaving Kufstein, Lee had spoken with Colonel George E. Lynch, commander of the 142nd Infantry Regiment, who assured Lee that his 2nd Battalion would be “right behind” Lee and Gangl. According to the plan, the 2nd Battalion, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Marvin J. Coyle, would be passing by Castle Itter on the morning of May 5. However, SS roadblocks, blown bridges, and cratered roads slowed the 2nd Battalion’s progress.

Meanwhile, Čučković and the rescue force from the 103rd Infantry Division’s 409th Infantry Regiment, bolstered by M10 tank destroyers from the 824th Tank Destroyer Battalion, had departed for Castle Itter just after dawn on May 5. After encountering SS on the road to the castle, the commander of the rescue effort — Major John T. Kramers — was told by his divisional commander that the rescue would need to be aborted. The 409th had crossed into area assigned to the 36th Infantry Division.

Kramers reluctantly sent the tank destroyers and his infantrymen back. But he, along with Čučković, a U.S. Army sergeant, a French Army liaison officer, and two war correspondents continued on. When they arrived in Wörgl, they met with elements of the Austrian resistance and then were able to make contact with the Lt. Lee and defenders of Castle Itter by phone.

Lee explained to Kramers that the situation in the castle was dire, and then the line was cut when the castle was hit by artillery. Kramers knew that his small contingent would not be able to provide the castle defenders the support they needed. It was at this point that elements of the 142nd Infantry Regiment’s 2nd Battalion, supported by the 753rd Tank Battalion, arrived in Wörgl.

Once again, a rescue force was assembled, this time consisting of Shermans, half-tracks, and infantry. It left Wörgl just after 1pm, but would encounter SS snipers, machine gunners, and infantrymen, all intent on stopping the relief force.



*M10 Tank Destroyer
(Matt White)*

The Battle / Borotra's Escape

BOROTRA'S ESCAPE

Although Lee has been reassured by Kramers that help was on the way, the situation at the castle was still grave as the SS continued to press the attack. Furthermore, Lee had not been given a chance to describe the situation around the castle to Kramers. He needed to warn any relief effort about the extent of the SS force, especially with its artillery. Jean Borotra — the famous tennis star — stepped forward and volunteered to try to escape from the castle so that he could make contact with the would-be rescuers. Lee knew Borotra's chances to make it through the SS lines were slim, but with no other options he reluctantly agreed to let the Frenchman try.

Borotra disguised himself as an Austrian, waited for a lull in the attack, and then climbed over the walls on the castle's north-facing side. He dropped 15 feet to the ground below and was then on his way. He eluded several groups of SS, to include a group of machine gunners manning an MG-42, and crossed the stream north of Castle Itter. Eventually Borotra met up with the relief effort that had been assembled in Wörgl. He requested an American army uniform, a weapon, and led the force back to Castle Itter



Jean Borotra

Design Note

Getting Borotra's escape right was very important. It is a key piece of the lore for the Battle for Castle Itter. In the game, the goal was to make his escape difficult but also very rewarding. The earlier you're able to complete the escape, the earlier the relief force from the 142nd Infantry Regiment is likely to appear in the game. While Borotra doesn't have to escape for you to win, it helps, as it shortens the game.

The Battle / Endgame

ENDGAME

Lee and the defenders of Castle Itter had no way of knowing the status of the would-be rescue force composed of elements from Companies E and G of the 142nd Infantry Regiment's 2nd Battalion. So, on the afternoon of May 5, they readied themselves for the worst. Lee began planning for the eventuality that the SS would penetrate the outer defenses of the castle. In such a scenario, the defenders would fall back to the keep and defend it by posting riflemen at the tops of the staircases.

With Besotten Jenny out of action, the suppressive fire of the tank's .30-caliber machine gun that had been deployed in the gate house and Pollock's BAR machine gun was instrumental in holding back the last efforts of the attackers to storm the castle. The final assault came from the road leading to the castle. As a squad of SS made their way towards the castle, one of their group took aim at the front gate with a panzerfaust.

Moments later, gunfire from the village of Itter alerted both the defenders and the SS attackers that the situation had changed. It was 4pm in the afternoon with the relief force from the 142nd Infantry Regiment arrived. The SS immediately broke off their attack and fled into the woods. The defense of Castle Itter was a success.

“What kept you?”
— Lt. Jack Lee

Design Note

Finding a good balance between attacking and suppressing was one of the key design challenges for Castle Itter. Because the game is literally a “castle defense” game, suppression needed to be thematically and mechanically important. While attacking is certainly a strong aspect of the game, knowing when to suppress is critical. You must also make the difficult decision of how many suppression tokens to use when you suppress. It is essentially a press-your-luck mechanism, where you're trying to get as much value for each suppression token as possible.



BAR Gunner
(Matt White)

Appendix I: The Defenders

Name	Rank	Position	Notes
Josef "Sepp" Gangl	Major	Battalion Commander	Joined Austrian resistance by May 2, 1945
Kurt-Siegfried Schrader	SS-Hauptsturmführer	Supply and Logistics Officer	Released from duty on April 28, 1945
Dietrich	Hauptmann		Joined Austrian resistance by May 2, 1945
John "Jack" Lee	Lieutenant	Company Commander	Besotten Jenny Tank Crew
Harry Basse	Lieutenant	Tank Commander	
Hockel	Oberleutnant		Joined Austrian resistance by May 2, 1945
Blechschmidt	Lieutenant		Joined Austrian resistance by May 2, 1945
Wegscheider	Lieutenant		Joined Austrian resistance by May 2, 1945
William Rushford	Technician 4th Grade	Driver	Besotten Jenny Tank Crew
Edward Seiner	Technician 5th Grade	Loader	Besotten Jenny Tank Crew
Edward Szymczyk	Corporal	Gunner	Besotten Jenny Tank Crew
William Sutton	Corporal	Rifleman	
Linson	Gefreiter		Joined Austrian resistance by May 2, 1945
Herbert McHaley	Private First Class	Bow Machine Gunner	Besotten Jenny Tank Crew
Alex Petrukovich	Private First Class	Rifleman	
Arthur Pollack	Private First Class	BAR Machine Gunner	
Alfred Worsham	Private First Class	Rifleman	
Hans Waltl			Austrian Resistance
Jean Borotra			Tennis star and ally of De La Rocque
Michel Clemenceau			French Intelligence
Maurice Gamelin			Former CINC of French Armed Forces
François De La Rocque			Leader of the Réseau Klan resistance
Paul Reynaud			Former Prime Minister of France



B Co/23rd TB/12th AD (US)



E Co/2nd BN/142nd IR/36th ID (US)



French Prisoner of War



Kampfgruppe Giehl,
Northwest Alpine Front
(Wehrmacht)



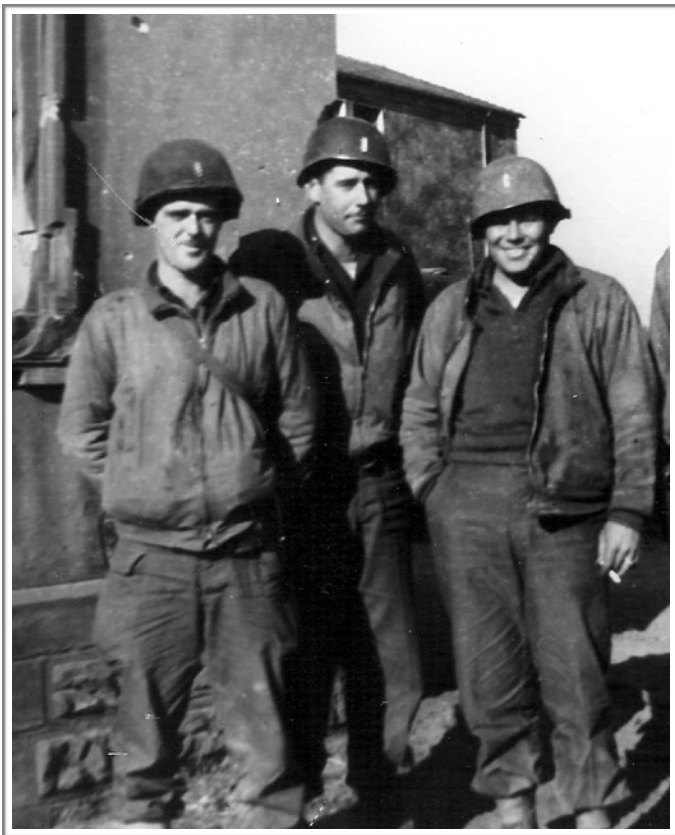
Kampfgruppe Giehl,
Northwest Alpine Front
(SS)



Austrian Resistance

Appendix 2: Distinguished Service Cross

Following the Battle of Castle Itter, Jack Lee and Harry Basse were honored for their roles in the Battle of Castle Itter. Jack Lee was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, and Harry Basse was awarded the Silver Star. The Distinguished Service Cross is awarded for extreme gallantry and risk of life in combat, and is second in order of precedence only to the Medal of Honor. The Silver Star is awarded for valor in combat and is the third-highest U.S. military decoration.



Lt. Jack Lee (right) with Lt. Harry Base (center) and Lt. John Powell

Citation for the Distinguished Service Cross

The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress, July 9, 1918, takes pleasure in presenting the Distinguished Service Cross to Captain John Lee, United States Army, for extraordinary heroism in action, as Commanding Officer of Company B, 23rd Tank Battalion, in the vicinity of Wörgl, Austria, and the Itter Castle on 4-5 May 1945. Captain Lee with a small group of soldiers infiltrated into hostile territory, demoralized enemy forces, prevented the destruction of two key bridges, and caused 200 German soldiers to surrender. He found many prominent French prisoners at Itter Castle, and immediately organized a defense with both American and German troops. Despite a fanatical SS attack and heavy artillery barrage, Captain Lee's men held until friendly troops arrived. Captain Lee's initiative, boldness, courage, resourcefulness and outstanding qualities of leadership exemplify the highest traditions of the Army and the United States.

Appendix 3: The French Prisoners

The Nazi government used Castle Itter as a prison for ehrenhäftlinge, “honor prisoners” whom the Germans considered powerful enough to be kept alive and in good conditions. In addition to the French prisoners who helped defend Castle Itter, there were quite a few more key figures from French political and cultural life kept in the castle.

Jean Borotra and Mabel de Forest

Borotra returned to a life in sports. He was one of the last people to be awarded the Olympic Diploma of Merit. He also founded the International Committee for Fair Play. He died on July 17, 1994, at 95. Borotra’s wife, Mabel de Forest, had been imprisoned with him at Castle Itter. They divorced in 1947.

Augusta Bruchlen

Bruchlen, the secretary and partner of Léon Jouhaux, aided Jouhaux in his postwar efforts. She served as the director of the International Labor Organization’s Paris office from 1950 to 1971, and was named a commander of the Legion of Honor in May 1992 and a Grand Officer in July 2001. She died on April 28, 2003, at 104.

Michel Clemenceau

Clemenceau was active in French politics following the war, serving in the first and second National Constituent Assemblies from 1946 to 1951. He died on March 4, 1964, at 91.

Édouard Daladier

Daladier returned to politics after the war, serving as a deputy in France’s Constituent Assembly and from 1953 to 1958 as mayor of Avignon. He died on October 10, 1970, at 86.



From left: Léon Jouhaux, François de La Rocque, Jean Borotra, a US soldier, and Marcel Granger.

Appendix 3: The French Prisoners

Marie-Agnès de Gaulle and Alfred Cailliau

De Gaulle was the elder sister of Free French leader Charles de Gaulle, and a member of the French resistance. She died on March 25, 1982, at 92. Alfred Cailliau, a minor politician, was de Gaulle's husband. He died in 1956, at 79.

François de La Rocque

De La Rocque was placed under police supervision and then house arrest following his return to France. He died on April 28, 1946, at 60.

Maurice Gamelin

Gamelin devoted himself to completing his memoirs, a three-work volume entitled *Servir*. He died on April 18, 1958, at 86.

Marcel Granger

Granger, a relative of the Free French General Henri Giraud, returned to Paris after the war, carrying notes for Weygand's intended memoirs and Reynaud's book. Granger may have traveled to North Africa after his visit to Paris, but the details of his later life are unknown.

Léon Jouhaux

After returning to France, Jouhaux split from the General Confederation of Labor (CGT) to create the social-democrat Worker's Force (CGT-FO). He was instrumental in setting up international labor organizations and trade unions. He was awarded the Nobel Peace prize in 1951. He died on April 28, 1954, at 74.



Marie-Agnès de Gaulle shakes hands with Lt. Harry Basse

Appendix 3: The French Prisoners

Christiane Mabire

Mabire, who had served as Reynaud's office assistant, married Reynaud in December 1949 and bore three children: sons Serge and Alexandre and daughter Evelyne. She died in 2002, at 89.

Paul Reynaud

Reynaud returned to politics after the war. He won election to the Chamber of Deputies in 1946 and over the following decade held several cabinet posts, including minister of finance and economic affairs. He died on September 21, 1966, at 87.

Maxime and Marie Weygand

Weygand was arrested by the French government on May 10, 1945, and charged with "attempts against the internal security of the state." He testified at the trial of Marshal Philippe Pétain, and his own trial lasted for the next three years. He was acquitted in 1948. He died on January 28, 1965, at age 98. Weygand's wife, Marie-Renée-Joséphine had been imprisoned at Castle Itter too. She died in 1961.



From left: Édouard Daladier, Marie-Renée-Joséphine Weygand, Maxime Weygand, General Anthony McAuliffe (Commander, 103rd ID), Paul Reynaud, Maurice Gamelin.

Appendix 4: Hellcat News

Hellcat News - 12th Armored Division

Volume 3, Number 2
Saturday, May 26, 1945

12th Men Free French Big-Wigs

By Cpl. John G. Mayer
Co. B, 23rd Tank Bn.

American troops, soldiers of the Wehrmacht, and a handful of French personages slated for death by the SS, fought side by side in an alpine castle on the last day of the war in Bavaria.

Among the 14 French notables rescued by tankers of the 12th Armored Division were former Premier Edouard Daladier, aging General Maxim Weygand who commanded the French armies when the Germans broke through into France, tennis star Jean Borotra and his wife, and a sister of the present chief executive of France, General Charles de Gaulle.

Also in the strangely mixed pro-and-anti-Nazi group were former premier Paul Reynaud; General Maurice Gamelin, former commanding general of all the French armies; Mrs. Weygand; Colonel DeLaRoque, former French fascist leader; M. Caillaux, former member of the government; Leon Jouhaux, French labor union leader; and Michel Clemenceau, son of the World War I statesman.

Top heroes of the scenario-scrap were Lieutenant John C. Lee, Jr., commanding officer of Company B of the 23rd Tank Battalion, and his gunner, Corporal Edward J. Szymcyk.

Across the Border

Their saga began the afternoon of May 4 shortly after their platoon took Kufstein, just across the Austrian border, after knifing through a well-defended roadblock. Into the town came a German major, under a flag of truce, who said that he was in position to surrender a large force of enemy troops and 14 notables once connected with the pre-Petain governments of France.

All, he said, were at a castle in Itter, eight kilometers away. Lee and Szymcyk immediately left with the major but when they arrived, the German colonel in command refused to surrender.

Back in Kufstein, Lee picked up his reinforcements -- two tanks from his own outfit and five more from the 36th Infantry Division's 142nd Battalion. With Lee and Szymcyk went Lieutenant Harry Basse, Santa Ana, Cal., maintenance officer and the tanks' crews. At the town of Worgl the force paused. Lee, leaving the others behind, took his own medium tank with five volunteers, said goodbye to his rear-guard, and rumbled on to the castle, the faithful major trailing in his car.

Then began the classic defense of the ancient "schloss", which had not known battle since the days of crossbow and boiling oil. The defenders numbered 41 -- there were 20 soldiers of the Wehrmacht (German regular army), 14 French men and women, and seven Americans.

At 4 o'clock on the morning of May 5, a small force of SS men launched an attack up the slope toward the castle. American rifles and German light machine guns teamed up to beat them back.

Appendix 4: Hellcat News

Tennis Star Helps

“Jean Borotra was the spark of the defense,” Lee recalls. “He volunteered to jump over the castle wall and make his way to Worgl to summon help. It meant a run across forty yards of open field before he could reach cover. I refused.”

But half an hour later things started looking tougher, so Lee permitted Borotra, whose name ranks among the immortals of tennis history, to make what was a brave but futile dash. Soon after he left tanks of the 36th were sighted far away.

Guessing that they hadn't received Borotra's message and regarded the castle as simply another German stronghold to be blasted out of the way, Lee and Weygand quickly teamed up on an American 30-calibre machine gun and opened fire sending long bursts crackling into the woods well ahead of the approaching tanks.

“It worked,” Lee said. “Later I found that the tankers had their heavy guns trained on the castle ready to fire when they recognized the sound of the American 'thirty' and decided it was a signal rather than a threat.”

So the possibility of being killed by their own rescuers was averted for Lee and his men, who included, in addition to those already named, Technical Sergeant William E. Elliott, Corporal Edward J. Seiner, and Pfc. Herbert G. McHaley, Linton RFD 1, Ind.

Sgt. Glenn E. Shermann of Cameron, Mo., served as radioman and gunner on Elliot's tank. Pvt Joseph Wall, Selma, N.C., was left to guard the bridge alone all night, armed only with a carbine, and took a number of prisoners.

The SS, however, had no compunctions about blasting away at the castle. Their 88 shells crashed through thick walls into several rooms, wounding a German.

Last Fight on Front

At 3 o'clock on the afternoon of the 5th, the cautiously-advancing tanks of the relief force, led by Elliott and Sherman, after 16 hours pounded through the opposition and arrived at the castle like mechanized cowboys in a new-style Western movie. Lee's saga was ended. His tank, “Besotten Jenny,” as she was fondly dubbed by the Negro troops, was kaput. All the infantry peeps were filled with notables. So Lee and his heroes climbed onto a truck loaded with German prisoners and rode ingloriously back to their outfit. They arrived just in time to hear the radio broadcast that all German troops in the south had agreed to stop shooting that day at noon. Theirs had been the last fighting on the whole southern front.

But there's a postscript: a few days later Lee's promotion to Captain was announced and his men have all been cited for decorations.

Appendix 5: Views of Castle Itter



From the ravine



The bridge crossing the ravine



The south side of the castle



The courtyard's wall



The gate house



North side of the castle

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Castle Itter Scenarios for other Games

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