"The first method of estimating the intelligence of a ruler is to look at the men he has around him."
- Niccolo Machiavelli, "The Prince"

SPEAKER FOR OCTOBER
Lt Col Ronald Janowski will speak. Subject not yet determined.

MEETINGS take place the second Monday of every month at the Radisson Hotel Grand Rapids Riverfront 270 Ann St NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49504 (616) 363-9001. Socializing begins at 6:00 (1800), dinner at 7:00 (1900), business meeting 7:15 (1915), and program at 8:00 (2000).
First World War officially ends!

The First World War will officially end on Sunday, 92 years after the guns fell silent, when Germany pays off the last chunk of reparations imposed on it by the Allies.

By Allan Hall, Berlin
Published: 28 Sep 2010

The final payment of £59.5 million, writes off the crippling debt that was the price for one world war and laid the foundations for another.

Germany was forced to pay the reparations at the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 as compensation to the war-ravaged nations of Belgium and France and to pay the Allies some of the costs of waging what was then the bloodiest conflict in history, leaving nearly ten million soldiers dead.

The initial sum agreed upon for war damages in 1919 was 226 billion Reichsmarks, a sum later reduced to 132 billion, £22 billion at the time.

The bill would have been settled much earlier had Adolf Hitler not reneged on reparations during his reign. Hatred of the settlement agreed at Versailles, which crippled Germany as it tried to shape itself into a democracy following armistice, was of significant importance in propelling the Nazis to power.

"On Sunday the last bill is due and the First World War finally, financially at least, terminates for Germany," said Bild, the country's biggest selling newspaper.

Most of the money goes to private individuals, pension funds and corporations holding debenture bonds as agreed under the Treaty of Versailles, where Germany was made to sign the 'war guilt' clause, accepting blame for the war.

France, which had been ravaged by the war, pushed hardest for the steepest possible fiscal punishment for Germany.

The principal representative of the British Treasury at the Paris Peace Conference, John Maynard Keynes, resigned in June 1919 in protest at the scale of the demands.

"Germany will not be able to formulate correct policy if it cannot finance itself,' he warned.

When the Wall Street Crash came in 1929, the Weimar Republic spiralled into debt. Four years later, Hitler was elected Chancellor of Germany.

http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/germany/8029948/First-World-War-officially-ends.html
Mike Krushinsky is turning seventy? It can’t be!

I’m surprised too. But rather than focusing on age, I’m thinking about starting my thirty years of free skiing...

And a party!

So we’re having an open house!

When: Saturday, October 9, 2010 from 1:00 to 5:00 pm
(No, you can’t stay for Thanksgiving dinner.)

Where: 11748 24th Ave, Marne
(We are easy to find if you know the way. Yes, that sounds dumb. It is dumb. It’s also true. Give us a call or email for directions. Or use your GPS.)

What to bring: Wife/husband/ girlfriend/boyfriend
(Just one from that list, please. Remember the fight last time?)
Kids (If you can stand ’em, I suppose I can too.)

What not to bring:
Pets. (Well, maybe cats.)
Gifts. (We have lots of stuff, in fact way too much stuff. Want some stuff? But seeing you will be a great pleasure, much better than stuff.)

General information:
Parking is somewhat limited, but is legal and safe on the street. (You’ll have the opportunity to buy back your radios later.)

And by popular request: The “Junk Room” will be open for tours.

Looking forward to seeing you on Saturday, October 9
Mike and Joyce Krushinsky
Marne MI 49435
616.677.1785
1944-45: A European Army at War
(Continued from “The European Volunteer Movement in World War II”, September issue)

The year 1944 opened with the Flemish SS Storm Brigade "Langemarck" fighting a savage retrograde action near Zhitomir in southern Ukraine. Simultaneously the Scandinavian "Nordland" Division and Dutch "Nederland" Brigade were desperately trying to stem a massive Red Army offensive in the Leningrad sector, and the European "Wiking" Division and Belgian Brigade "Wallonien" were going into the "sack" west of Cherkassy. The breakout from the Cherkassy Pocket on the southern Eastern Front was a true epic of heroism: a sacrificial struggle that bound troops of different nationalities firmly together. In the post-war years the survivors have held annual remembrance meetings so that to this day "Cherkassy" remains a living symbol of the European Voluntary Movement.

The spring of 1944 saw the three Baltic SS Divisions fighting with steadfast courage on the eastern boundaries of their countries. In Lithuania, the nucleus for a new SS Division began taking shape under the guidance of former Lithuanian Army generals, but the country was overrun by the communists before the project could be brought to fruition. Against the Anzio beachhead in Italy, the first combat ready Italian SS battalion grimly held its ground against all American breakout attempts. All over Europe, manpower was being voluntarily mobilized into the Waffen-SS to participate in what many people saw as the forthcoming, decisive struggle for the freedom of the continent.

The summer of 1944 saw the "battle of the European SS" on the Narva Front in Estonia. Here, nationals from Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Flanders, Holland and Estonia shared the trenches and fought shoulder-to-shoulder to throw the Bolsheviks back off "Orphanage Hill" and "Grenadier Hill." Leon Degrelle personally led a battalion from his "Wallonien" Division in a brilliant defensive action near Tartu on the west shore of Lake Peipus. Near Brody in Ukraine, the 14th Ukranian SS Division fought a life-or-death battle to escape from a Soviet encirclement; only about one-fourth of the Division survived the fighting, but they had acquitted themselves well.

As the year went on, more and more foreign volunteer divisions were formed. This meant that flexible leadership was needed to handle the different cultural distinctions and surprisingly, the Waffen-SS was equal to the task. Although organized religion was kept separate from the Waffen-SS, volunteers from devout Catholic, Moslem, Greek Catholic and Orthodox countries were given total freedom to practice their religions with their own clergy. For morale purposes, ethnic cultural activities were actively encouraged. It was quite a contrast to the way some minority groups were treated in the Allied armies at the time.
Some of the foreign SS divisions composed of Russian and Moslem volunteers had to be disbanded, since the time and personnel needed to develop these units were lacking. By the autumn of 1944 the Waffen-SS European volunteer tally sheet contained the following elements: 2 Dutch brigades, 2 Belgian brigades, 1 French brigade and 1 Italian brigade, (all being transformed into divisions), 2 Croat Moslem divisions, 1 Albanian Moslem division, 2 Hungarian divisions with 2 more in the works that never panned out, 2 Scandinavian/German divisions, 2 Latvian divisions, 1 Estonian division, 2 Russian divisions (both of which would later be transferred to the Vlasov Liberation Army), 1 Ukranian division, 1 Italian/German division, 1 Hungarian/German division, 1 Balkan/German division, 1 Serbian division, numerous ethnic brigades from the Soviet Union, and small detachments of Spaniards, Britons, Greeks, Romanians, Bulgarians, Arabs and Indians. The foreign SS units were all suitably supplied with national badges, insignia and unit distinctions. And while there were many volunteers from such neutral countries as Ireland, Sweden and Switzerland they could not be openly designated as such so as not to offend their respective governments.

On the Eastern Front, the war raged with unending intensity. In White Russia, part of the French SS Storm Brigade fighting with the 18th Hungarian/German SS Division "Horst Wessel," sacrificed itself completely in hard defensive action, losing two-thirds of its personnel in the process. In Estonia, a regiment of Estonian soldiers who had been serving in the Finnish Army returned home to fight for their country. They were reformed into a battalion of the 20th Estonian SS Division and in desperate combat on the Latvian frontier, were virtually annihilated. With grim determination the Latvian 15th and 19th SS Divisions fought the communists for every square foot of their homeland, while in the Carpathian Mountains, the Ukranian Volunteer Division was reassembled.

In Slovenia and Hungary, the brave Moslems of the 13th SS Division "Handschar" performed well against both Tito's partisans and the Red Army, but in France the 30th White Russian SS Division had virtually collapsed while in action against the Americans and French Maquis. These soldiers had only wished to fight the communists and saw no point in what they were doing in the west.

This was not the case in regard to both the 29th Italian SS Division and the 34th Dutch SS Division "Landstorm Nederland." The Italian SS troops fought both the Americans and the rear area communist partisans, and they distinguished themselves as perhaps the best troops that Italy produced during the war. "Landstorm Nederland" first battled the British at Arnhem as part of a hurriedly organized self-defense brigade, but during the winter of 1944-45 it was enlarged into a full-scale 12 000 man infantry division. In the
spring of 1945, the almost exclusively Dutch "LN" SS Division gave the British and Canadians fits as they tried with little success to advance into northwest Holland. None of the Allies could figure out why so many Dutchmen chose to join the "Landstorm" Division, so to avoid embarrassment, the story of this unit has been largely suppressed ever since. For the Dutch volunteers, there was no motivation problem. The Allies had joined with the Bolsheviks against not only their homeland but what they perceived to be European civilization as well. Like their fellow countrymen on the Eastern Front, the men of "Landstorm Nederland" fought with a dedicated resolve.

The Belgian and French SS Divisions were brought up to strength in the fall of 1944 from among the many refugees that had fled to Germany plus veterans of the war with Russia. In Holland, volunteers flocked to the Waffen-SS recruiting offices like never before and not because they had to. It didn't take a clairvoyant to see that Germany was virtually finished, but still the European volunteers rushed to join the battle.

The establishment historians have never been able to understand this phenomenon, perhaps because it involved an abstract concept alien to most of them: conscience. There was a great desire for many people, who had until this point sat out the war, to finally be "true to themselves"; to make the ultimate sacrifice out of loyalty to their beliefs, their homelands and their fellow countrymen who had already done so much. This was Europe's moment of crisis and many young men made the decision to leap into the crucible. It was a manifestation of spiritual honesty.

The Waffen-SS also managed to project a certain natural attractiveness. Littlejohn, in his book The Patriotic Traitors (p123), described the pull of the Waffen-SS as follows: "The Runic Flag evoked a heroic pagan spirit, a swaggering defiant attitude to life equally contemptuous of bourgeois timidity and of communist anarchy." The far-sighted Leon Degrelle, who had almost obtained political power in prewar Belgium also saw a powerful attraction and purpose in the Waffen-SS. In his words: "True elites are formed at the front ... the young leaders are born there ... the emblem of the SS shows Europe where political and social truth is to be found ... We are preparing the political cadres of the post-war world in the Great Seminary of the Front Line." A good many volunteers agreed with him.

The end of 1944 saw Leon Degrell's 28th SS Division "Wallonien" moving into that part of Belgium that had been retaken in the Ardennes offensive, where it received a hearty welcome and new recruits! But the curtain was rising on the last act on the Eastern Front, and in the weeks ahead most of the European volunteer forces would be in action there. In Kurland, Western Latvia three SS divisions-lith "Nordland," 23rd "Nederland" and 19th Letvian-were caught up in an unequal life-or-death struggle in January 1945. A few extracts from the history of the 49th Dutch SS Regiment "De Ruyter" gave the flavor of the action: (From the series of articles titled "Soldiers of Europe: The III. SS Panzer Korps" in Siegrunen Magazine)
After a surging, back-and-forth struggle, the south bastion of Ozoli Hill fell irrevocably to the Russians. The over-powered First Co./SS Rgt. "De Ruyter" fell back to the west. Untersturmführer Schluifelder, the commander, was badly wounded and shot himself rather than fall into enemy hands.

The Red Army infantry was storming forward. Guided entirely by radio reports, Obersturmführer Behler directed the heavy weapons fire of his Dutch gunners at the center of the enemy onslaught. But by mid-day, Behler's positions were entirely surrounded by the enemy. In bloody, close combat, Obersturmführer Behler and a few of his men managed to break out to the west.

In the same battle area, Danish Obersturmführer Johannes Hellmer's company from Second Battahon/"De Ruyter," was fighting for its life ... Using his own initiative, Kanonier Jenschke, a private, led a small battle group to a successful breakout. Jenschke's rank insignia had been obscured by his camouflage jacket so the men that he had been ordering about were unaware that they outranked him!

During these two days of heavy fighting all of the companies in the main battle line were fully extended. There was nothing to fall back on ... only 7 men could be spared to defend the whole town of Kuleti ... This, the defensive struggle of SS Division "Nederland" was the most heroic battle that I have ever lived through. Everyone, stayed in position to the finish. The attack came right up to the barrels of our artillery pieces. The firing pits were the main battle line. But although we were weakened and dispersed, we had acquitted ourselves with honor. (This extract from the war diary of Untersturmführer Horstmann.)

By the end of the fighting, the SS Regiment "De Ruyter" with a nominal strength of 2000 men had been reduced to 80 combatants! The Regiment was rebuilt on the run and thrown into action again on the Pomeranian Front less than two weeks later. For the first time "De Ruyter" received a Third Battalion, this being composed of Dutch and German war reporters whose jobs had become rather superfluous given recent military reversals.

Remaining in Latvia was the 19th Latvian SS Division, which time and again had proved itself the mainstay of bitter defensive fighting and had received several mentions in the Wehrmacht war bulletins. The Latvian volunteers received more decorations than any other non-German group in the Waffen-SS, including the award of 13 Knight's Crosses; a good indication of their contributions on the battlefield. In Poland and Silesia, the Hungarian and Estonian SS Divisions were temporarily able to stop the enemy onslaught,
even though the commander of the 26th SS Division, "Hungaria," *Oberführer* Zoltan von Pisky had been killed in action at Jarotschin.

As the Eastern Front was pushed slowly westwards, bits and pieces of the 27th Flemish SS Division "Langemarck" were rushed to the Oder River line from various training camps. Here they served alongside their co-national rivals, the Walloons, in a spirit of unbridled comradeship. First Battalion of the 66th SS Regiment/Division "Langemarck" picked up the nickname "leaping tiger" for the way its soldiers threw themselves into battle. But even more amazing was the fact that the battalion was composed mostly of teenagers from the Flemish Hitler Youth who had volunteered for service in the Waffen-SS after their country had been overrun by the Allies. If there was one drawback to service in this battalion it was that the regimental quartermaster stubbornly saw that the young troopers received a special ration of *Schokolade* and *Bonbons* instead of the schnapps and cigarettes passed out to the older soldiers!

With a good sense of historical irony, the Eastern Front slowly bent and folded itself around the German capital city of Berlin, throwing a good many of the foreign volunteers into the battle for the city. Regiments of the 15th Latvian SS Division, battered beyond belief, had naively decided to throw in their lot with the western allies against the communists (which proved to be an unfortunate decision for many of the officers who were forcibly repatriated to the death camps), and made a complete circuit of Berlin travelling in no-man's land all the time, until they saw a chance to make it to the American lines. The Division's reconnaissance battalion went out a little too far on a scout mission and wound up being impressed into the defense of the city.

To the north of Berlin, 500 survivors of the 33rd French SS Division "Charlemagne" which had been decimated in the defense of Pomerania, actually volunteered to go to the defense of the German capital, even though the Divisional commander had absolved them from any more service obligations. In the week of the epic battle that followed, these Frenchmen constituted the core of defense in the city center, displaying courage and fortitude on a scale seldom seen. When the fighting was over, only a few dozen would still be alive and four of their number would be decorated with Knight's Cross. One could call their mission a "beau geste," but the French soldiers saw it as a moral obligation—another abstract concept the establishment scholars choke on. The following is a description of these soldiers from the article "Defeat in the Ruins: France's Last Battle for Europe," by Gustav Juergens (*Siegriunen*, June 1980):

By this time, the warriors of the "Charlemagne" Division didn't even look like human beings any more. Their eyes were burning and their faces skull-like and covered in dirt and mortar dust. Supplies only came in negligible amounts, the most telling being the lack of water. The young SS men moved like robots through the hell of Berlin. The future was the farthest thing from anyone's mind. The only motivating idea that burned in their consciousness and kept them from collapsing was their flaming desire to come to grips with the Bolsheviks! They had to throw hand grenades, destroy tanks, and hold out against the Reds. That was their only reason for living and for dying.

(To be continued from “The European Volunteer Movement in World War II”, December issue)
You are cordially invited to attend the 2010 Open Mess of the Michigan Company of Military Historians and Collectors. Join us for a unique social evening patterned after a traditional British regimental “Ladies Dining-In-Night,” with a bit of ceremony, a piper and a round of toasts, along with a great dinner, good company and an entertaining guest speaker.

THE DATE: Saturday, November 13, 2010

THE PLACE: Boulder Creek Golf Club
5750 Brewer NE
Belmont, Michigan 49306
(616)363-1330

THE TIME: Cocktails at 6:00 PM
Dinner at 7:00 PM

THE PIPER: Rev. Thomas Bradley

THE DRESS: Gentlemen: Suit or Jacket
Ladies: Semi-Formal Attire

THE SPEAKER: Chuck Pfarrer, US Navy SEAL, anti-terrorist operations 1980s-
For over thirty years our organization has had the very real privilege of hearing the life experiences of many extraordinary men (and one woman!) at our annual Open Mess. Most of them were members of the ‘Greatest Generation’ and relayed to us their personal connection with World War II. The famous battles and campaigns were described to us as they lived them: the Battle of Britain, Corregidor, Buna, Midway, the Eastern Front, Omaha Beach and the Battle of the Bulge to name just a few. But as America has entered a new century we have been confronted with new challenges and unconventional enemies. Terrorism, Islamic fundamentalism, Lebanon, Kuwait, 9-11, Iraq and Afghanistan are some of the new challenges and battlegrounds. These threats appear to require unconventional champions to confront them.

Our Guest Speaker, Chuck Pfarrer, is just such a man. Son of a career Naval officer, Chuck became a Navy SEAL (‘sea, air, land’ Navy commandos) in 1981 after completing a diverse college education. His transformation however, from ‘Baby Boomer’ college kid to SEAL was less than conventional. He was present in Beirut in 1983 when the Marine barracks were bombed, took part in the successful capture of the notorious terrorist leader Abu Abbas, was a team leader that rescued the hostages aboard the cruise ship Achille Lauro and completed his naval career as an Assault Element Commander at the US Naval Special Warfare Development Group (DEVGRU). His autobiographical Warrior Soul, The Memoir of a Navy SEAL was a best seller in 2004. Chuck has served as an advisor to both governments and the media with respect to his counter terrorism expertise. He continues to write, having had published his first novel, Killing Che in 2007 and has written several movie screenplays. Copies of Warrior Soul will be available for purchase and autographing by Chuck. Be there, that’s an order.
THE COST: $50.00 per person for reservation with payment received by Monday, Nov. 8. Thereafter, $60.00 per person. We do NOT cash the checks until after the event! Please, there is no smoking in the dining room.

THE MENU: Boulder Creek Combo:

- 6 ounce prime rib and 4 ounce herb seasoned grilled boneless chicken breast served with baked potato, salad and vegetable followed by dessert.

YES, I will be there. Enclosed is my payment of $____ for ____ places. I will be accompanied by the following persons listed below. Please PRINT their names. This MUST be filled out.

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Sorry, I cannot attend this year.

Please mail this completed form with check made out to MCMHC and send to:

Mr. Jay Stone
7170 Belmont Ave NE
Belmont, Michigan 49306

If you have any questions, please call Don Hill at (616) 361-1628 or Jay Stone at (616) 866-9047 or Mike Krushinsky at (616) 677-1785. Feel free to visit the MCMHC homepage at: www.thecannonreport.org

REMEMBER, we are at Boulder Creek Golf Club again this year.

See you there!