

RESOURCES AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES- SOUTHEAST REGION FOR TEACHING WORLD WAR II HISTORY

"THE FIGHTING FRONT"

David E. Hilkert
National Archives, SE

For the student of World War II, the National Archives offers a marvelous opportunity to explore a multitude of subject areas. The researcher in Washington can find anything from the Instruments of Surrender to the files of the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces. The National Archives estimates that about 164,000 cubic feet, or 26 percent of all the military records in its custody document this period when the entire nation was mobilized for war. Thousands of these records were microfilmed and are available at the National Archives-Southeast Region, in East Point, Georgia, one of twelve Regional Archives that seeks to preserve and make available for researchers records created by the Federal government.

The Regional Archives System was established in 1969 to preserve and make available for research those records created by United States courts and Federal agencies located outside the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area. The National Archives-Southeast Region is the depository for Federal agency records created in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee, including records of agencies that had a great impact on the mobilization of the Southeast and the nation as a whole.

This paper will discuss two aspects of holdings in East Point. The first part will be devoted to National Archives microfilm related to the military, which focus almost entirely on the national war effort.

The second portion of the paper will address the textual holdings of the Southeast Region, which reflect a regionalized view of the military war effort.

Microfilm Holdings

The National Archives-Southeast Region currently has over 60,000 rolls of National Archives microfilm publications. Although the region does not have a copy of every microfilm publication produced by the National Archives, the collection, includes a very wide variety of publications from numerous agencies pertaining to World War II. Each microfilm publication has been assigned a number, preceded by the letter "M", "T", or "A." Many, if not all, of the "M" microfilm publications are accompanied by descriptive pamphlets, which generally provide a brief history of the originating agency, a description of the records' content, and an explanation of the arrangement of the records.

One of the prominent collections of microfilm that the Southeast Region has among its holdings, consists of the General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59. Documents reproduced on the series M982, Records of the Department of State Relating to World War II, 1939-1945, are from the State Department decimal files. The first portion of this series relates to the German occupation of Czechoslovakia, the Low Countries, Denmark, Norway, and France; the German invasion of Poland; the Russo-Finnish War; and the Italian invasions of Africa and Greece. Many of the records also relate to the extension of the European war to the Pacific area. Included

in the last portion of this microfilm are correspondence relating to Anglo-American plans for the defense of the South Pacific countries; U.S. policy toward the Far East; worldwide reaction to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor; plans for the defense of Mexico against possible Japanese attack; and press reaction to the atomic bomb. Other microfilmed series of State Department records concern the pre-war and mid-war internal affairs of several nations: Palestine, the Balkan States, Syria, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, the Baltic States, the Soviet Union, and Trans-Jordan. Other series portray the political relations between the United States and Germany, political relations between the United States and the Soviet Union, and political relations between the United States and Great Britain.

Wartime world relations are also documented in series M1723, *Miscellaneous Documents Relating to Japan's Economic, Industrial, Military, and Diplomatic Activities, Used As Background Materials By the International Prosecuting Section, 1929-45*. The decline and final break in U.S. relations with Japan is continued with M1730, *Miscellaneous Documents Relating to the Japanese Attack on Pearl Harbor and Other Japanese Military Activities, 1941-1945*.

John F. Kennedy scholars will find something of interest pertaining to the Second World War. The National Archives-Southeast Region has the Logbooks of PT 109 on microfilm, series T576.

Supplementing the Southeast Region's textual holdings of the Manhattan District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, are two series that relate to the Manhattan Project. The first series, M1108, consists of the Harrison-Bundy Files Relating to the Development of the Atomic Bomb, 1942-1946. The second series, M1109, consists of the formerly "Top Secret" correspondence of the Manhattan Engineer District, 1942-1946.

Researchers interested in naval history can find the Annual Reports of Fleets and Task Forces of the U.S. Navy, 1920-1941, M971. These reports include documentation from the Pacific and Asiatic Fleets up to the U.S. entry into World War II. The fleet records document the Japanese incursions into China, while naval reports from Squadron 40-T depict the collection of information on the Spanish Civil War, as well as the evacuation of American citizens from war areas.

For those exploring the Allied strategic planning of World War II, the Southeast Region offers the Papers and Minutes of Meetings of Principal World War II Allied Military Conferences, 1941-1945, M995. These nine conferences were held primarily to enable the American and British military staffs to coordinate their war plans. Some of the more prominent meetings were those held at Casablanca in January 1943; The Citadel, Quebec in August 1943; Tehran in November and December 1943; and Yalta in February 1945.

The complete surrender proceedings for both Japan and Nazi Germany are microfilmed on T826. In addition to these records, the Southeast Region affords an in-depth look at the War Crimes Trials, both in Nuremberg, Germany and in Yokahama, Japan. Among this collection are the War Diaries and Correspondence of Gen. Alfred Jodl (T989), the case against Juergen Stroop (T990), the Mauthausen Death Books (T990), and the U.S. Trial Brief and Document Books (T991). The trials for some of the guards at the more notorious concentration camps of Buchenwald, Dachau, Flossenbug, Nordhausen, and Muehldorf are part of the series M1217, Reviews of U.S. Army War Crimes Trials. Much of the material, especially evidence entered into the trials, is in German or Japanese.

Nazi ministry records that were seized during the Second World War can be found on various series of

microfilm (in German, obviously). Most notable are the records of Joseph Goebbels' Reich Ministry for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda (T70); Albert Speer's Reich Ministry for Armaments and War Production (T73); and the Armaments Ministry's predecessor Todt organization (T76).

One very important part of the struggle against the Japanese in World War II was the fight in the China-Burma-India Theater. The National Archives-Southeast Region has two resources for this oftentimes overlooked aspect of the War: M1159, Tactical Mission Reports of the 20th and 21st Bomber Commands, 1945, and M1419 "Eyes Alone" Correspondence of General Joseph Stilwell, January 1942-October 1944. Much of General Stilwell's correspondence is with President Roosevelt, Chief of Staff George Marshall, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek, and Madame Chiang Kai-Shek. It should be noted that the latter portion of M1159, the reports of the 21st Bomber Command, documents the B-29 bombing missions directed against the Japanese homeland. The 21st Bomber Command, during the period covered by this microfilm, was commanded by Gen. Curtis LeMay. Scholars researching the air war should also not overlook M1065, Mission and Combat Reports of the Fifth Fighter Command, 1942-1945. The Fifth Fighter was in the Southwest Pacific as early as October-November 1942, and operated with the Fifth Air Force until the end of the War. Among the more interesting finds of these records is one report submitted by Charles Lindbergh, the only civilian to shoot down Japanese planes during the war. Students of the air war should also be aware that the Southeast Region has other records of the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey. These are found in M1738, Miscellaneous Documents Relating to the Atomic Bombing of Japan. The papers include, among other documents, drawings and maps of effects of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

No archival collection is complete without photographic evidence. Perhaps a more intimate look at the leaders of the Allies can be obtained through pictures. The Southeast Region has four microfilm rolls of selected photographs of Presidents Roosevelt and Truman, and General (and later President) Eisenhower, part of series M865, M835, and M868, respectively. The horrors of the war are depicted in yet another series, M1733, Photographs of Japanese Soldiers and of Allied Prisoners of War, 1942-1945.

Original Records

While the original textual material pertaining to the Fighting Front is not as extensive at the National Archives-Southeast Region as the microfilm holdings, it should certainly not be overlooked. Among the most important records are those of Record Group 26, Records of the U.S. Coast Guard, especially records of the U.S. Merchant Marine. This little-recognized force served as the link between the Allied fighting forces overseas and the production army on the U.S. Home Front. Approximately 75 percent of the total cargo lift leaving the U.S. during the war was carried by ships of the Merchant Marine. The casualties they endured were staggering. From the beginning of the war until V-J Day, 733 American merchant vessels of over 1,000 gross tons were sunk. A total of 5,638 merchant seamen and officers were killed or reported missing. Included in the holdings of the Southeast Region are the Merchant Marine vessel logbooks for five major southeastern ports: Mobile, Alabama; Jacksonville, Miami, and Tampa, Florida; and Savannah, Georgia. These logbooks provide an interesting look at some of the Atlantic and Caribbean voyages, during which many crews encountered Nazi U-Boats or other hostile forces.

Another one of the significant groups of records that the Southeast Region has is the Records of Naval Districts and Shore Establishments, Record Group 181. Included in this series are records of the 6th Naval District Headquarters (most of North Carolina, all of South Carolina and Georgia, and the Jacksonville area of Florida), and the records of the 7th Naval District Headquarters (the remaining area of Florida east of the Apalachicola River). The holdings for the commandants of each Naval District document the role of the District in protecting the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts of the United States. Anti-submarine and naval air protection are among some of the activities documented in the Navy records.

While United States coastal cities were under constant threat of hostile attack during the war, inland cities such as Louisville, Kentucky, offered some protection for military and war support agencies. One such medical depot was relocated to Louisville from Seattle, Washington, in 1942. Records of the depot are part of Record Group 112, Records of the Surgeon General (Army). The holdings that exist at the Southeast Region are not extensive (2 feet), but they contain an interesting record of how the Army was supporting the Fighting Front with medical supplies and equipment, both for the U.S. military and the Soviet Lend-Lease Program. A fire that occurred in one of the warehouses during the war is described in the records, with the fire eventually being attributed to an Axis sympathizer.

One of the myriad agencies tasked with logistical support of the Fighting Front was the Office of the Chief of Transportation (U.S. Army). Records of the 4th Transportation Zone (Headquartered in Atlanta), found in Record Group 336, show how important this agency was in World War II. The Atlanta office and its field offices throughout the Zone were responsible for the shipment of Army cargo (including ordnance, as well as the all-

important Army staple of coffee!). The Zone was also responsible for shipping all lend-lease materiel moving through the port of Nassau.

While the Tennessee Valley Authority is primarily remembered for providing hydroelectric power to the Tennessee River Valley and adjacent areas, it was also involved in the lend-lease program during the 1940s. The Southeast Region has nineteen feet of records from Record Group 142, Records of the Tennessee Valley Authority. Records relating to lend-lease to the Soviet Union, 1942-1945, deal with the design and procurement of equipment to build dams in the Ural Mountains. The material consists of correspondence, blueprints, and design computation notebooks.

Most of the World War II records that the National Archives-Southeast Region has pertaining to the development of the atomic bomb, come from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers records, which are on microfilm. There are, however, many Manhattan District records found with the District's successor agency holdings, Records of the Atomic Energy Commission, Record Group 326. These records document the development, production and employment of the fission of uranium. Most of the records originate from the District Office, located in Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

The National Archives-Southeast Region has much to offer to the scholar of World War II. There is no charge for utilization of the microfilm or textual material. Scholars wishing to view the microfilm holdings in the Region's Research Room should call ahead to reserve a microfilm reader at (404) 763-7477. Arrangements can be made with university/college libraries for inter-library loan of microfilm. Those wishing to utilize original record material are encouraged to confer with an archivist at the Region in advance.

The Region is open Monday-Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., with the exception of Federal holidays. The Archives is also open each Tuesday evening until 9:30 p.m. and the second Saturday of each month, from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., as well as the next day, from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. The National Archives-Southeast Region is committed to the preservation of the documentary legacy of World War II, but more importantly, it is committed to making that legacy available to all.