



LOS ANGELES SECTION

SHAPING THE FUTURE OF AEROSPACE



American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics
LOS ANGELES SECTION

VAUGHAN

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A Trojan Leads First Americans to Contested City -- Liberation of Paris 80 Years

Ago by Prof. Mike Gruntman, Professor of Astronautics at USC (<http://astronauticsnow.com/>) August 12, 2024
(<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/trojan-leads-first-americans-contested-city-paris-80-mike-gruntman-6yq4c/>)

Liberation of Paris 80 years ago

USC Trojan Leads First
Americans to Contested City
on August 25, 1944

Colonel Boris T. Pash receives
the Legion of Merit in the Pentagon
as Chief of the *ALSOS Mission*



Eighty years ago on the evening of August 24, 1944, the first units of General Philippe Leclerc's 2nd Armored Division (2e Division Blindée) entered German-occupied Paris. Other elements of this French division and the U.S. 4th Infantry Division commanded by General Raymond Barton followed in the early morning of the next day.

On this chaotic August 25, with excited civilians filling the streets and sporadic exchange of fire between the Free French fighters and the remaining German units and Pro-Nazi miliciens, a small group of Americans cautiously advanced through the city suburbs. When attacked, they shot back.

A USC alumnus, Lieutenant Colonel Boris Pash of military intelligence, led these several men to Paris. They were part of his top-secret Alsos Mission to learn the secrets of the German nuclear program and capture its leading scientists. The group's specific objective on this day was "to enter Paris at our first chance -- then seize the world-famous [nuclear physicist and Noble prize winner in chemistry] Dr. [Frédéric] Joliot Curie and his laboratory."

A Trojan Leads First Americans to Contested City -- Liberation of Paris 80 Years Ago

Boris Pash knew, as he wrote later, that “the capture of Paris was to be effected by the French Second Armored Division under General Leclerc.” Commander of the Twelfth United States Army Group General Omar Bradley wanted “to help the French to recapture their pride after four years of occupation.” Therefore, Bradley chose “a French force [of General Leclerc] with the tricolor on their Shermans” for this task while, in his words, “any number of American divisions could more easily have spearheaded our march into Paris.”

The advancing Alsos men first stopped at Porte d’Orleans (near today’s Paris Exhibition Center). Boris Pash later recalled that “several considerations had kept me waiting at Porte d’Orleans. In the first place, we did not have enough strength to tangle in street-fighting. Secondly, I was not anxious to violate further the plan to let the French troops march in first; we were satisfied to have carried the American flag to the edge of Paris before any other Allied unit. Thirdly, I expected that the Pentagon would quarter me for going as far as I had. But certainly they would hang me outright if I actually penetrated Paris contrary to well-laid arrangements. Finally, our mission was not to liberate cities or engage in street-fighting. It was to secure Joliot-Curie.”

Col. Pash and his men then moved toward the College de France where they found Joliot-Curie and provided security for him. He would soon be transferred to London.

The Alsos Mission under daring Pash had been highly successful and achieved consequential results by the end of WWII, capturing numerous German scientists with atomic physics expertise; finding numerous documents, laboratories, and facilities; and uncovering and securing radioactive materials. Those taken into custody included (alphabetically) Kurt Diebner, Walther Gerlach, Paul Harteck, Werner Heisenberg, Otto Hahn, Max von Laue, Carl Friedrich von Weizsacker, Karl Wirtz, and many others.

Boris Pashkovsky, 1900-1995, was born in San Francisco. Several years later, his father, Metropolitan (Archbishop) Theophilus of the Orthodox Church, was recalled to his home country Russia. The family followed. Young Boris fought with the Imperial Russian Army in World War I and then in the White Navy against the Reds during the Civil War in Russia. He returned to the United States in the 1920s. Pashkovsky changed his name to Pash in 1932.

Boris taught and coached at Hollywood High School in Los Angeles since the 1920s. In 1939, he defended the thesis “A study of problem cases in a senior high school” and received the degree of Master of Science in Education from USC.

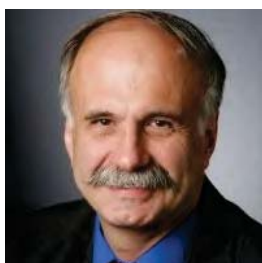
In 1940, the U.S. Army called USC alumnus and military intelligence reserve officer Boris T. Pash to active duty. Stationed at Presidio, he worked on security matters of the Manhattan Project when G-2 handled its security in the initial stages of the program. (G-2 is the military intelligence staff of the U.S. Army.) The recent “Oppenheimer” film mentioned Pash, as expected of Hollywood, in an uncomplimentary way.

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Boris Pash later recalled that, in 1943, he “had just completed a successful investigation of the first Soviet effort -- aided by American communists -- to steal our atomic secrets.” He was then “called to Washington, where [head of the Manhattan Project] General Groves and [head of military intelligence] General [George] Strong informed me of a new assignment. I was to command the special unit.” This unit would become the famous Alsos Mission with the primary urgent task to determine German progress in the development of the atomic bomb.

In 1969, Boris Pash published a book about the Alsos Mission. He gave a signed copy to the USC Edward L. Doheny Memorial Library. When I found this book in the collection, the University Library, on my request, placed it in its special collections. The signed book of USC’s alumnus war hero who did so much for the defense of the free world will thus be preserved for future Trojans.

#WorldWarII #ManhattanProject #BorisPash #Alsos #AlsosMission #NuclearWeapons #AtomicBomb
#LeslieGroves #MilitaryINtelligence #TechnicalIntelligence #G2 #CounterIntelligenceCorp #CIC
#UniveristyOfSouthernCalifornia #USC #LiberationOfParis #AmericansInParis #HollywoodHigh
#HollywoodHighSchool



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