

Reviews

Operation Typhoon: The German Assault on Moscow, 1941 by Philippe Naud; Havertown, PA: Casemate Publishers; 2018; 1,128 pages, including maps, photographs, bibliography; \$24.95.

From Moscow to Stalingrad: The Eastern Front, 1941-1942 by Yves Buffetaut; Havertown, PA: Casemate Publishers; 2018; 1,128 pages, including maps, photographs, bibliography; \$24.95.

Casemate Publications continues their World War II series with several new entries. As with the previous entries in the series, the new works begin with a time chart covering the period addressed in the book. French authors Philippe Naud and Yves Buffetaut provide detailed maps, thumbnail commanders' biographic sketches and colored plates of participating tactical vehicles to supplement their narratives. At the conclusion of each volume, a list of reference material for future study is provided.

On June 22, 1941, almost 100 German divisions crossed through Russian-occupied Poland with three massive army groups. Army Group North aimed at Leningrad; Army Group South directed their forces toward the oil regions of the Caucasus; while Army Group Center moved to seize Moscow. Planners anticipated the fall of Moscow within four months of the invasion.

Initial victories seemed to reinforce this timeline as the German forces swept through the major Russian cities of Minsk, Smolensk and Kiev. Thousands of Soviet tanks, aircraft and associated support systems either were destroyed or fell into German hands. An estimated million-plus Russian soldiers became prisoners of war. The situation was truly bleak for the Russians.

As Naud notes, the Russian collapse resulted from a series of blunders by the leader of the Soviet Union, Josef Stalin. As with Adolf Hitler, Stalin believed himself a military genius quite capable of employing his forces in defense of his country. Initial events exposed many deficiencies in his abilities and those of his army and air forces. Pre-war purges of the military had destroyed the leadership, as many senior officers were either imprisoned or murdered. Without a capable senior military structure, force development lagged far behind peer competitors. The forces that initially faced the German onslaught, for example, lacked communications equipment. Without adequate means to transmit orders and instructions, the entire structure suffered, as units could not coherently coordinate the actions of aviation, artillery, armored forces and infantry.

Adding to the chaos at the tactical level was Stalin's insistence on holding terrain against massive well-coordinated German moves.

It is small wonder that Hitler sensed the imminent destruction of the Soviet military when he diverted forces from his other two army groups to Army Group Center and ordered them to drive toward Moscow. On Oct. 2, 1941, the Germans officially launched Operation Typhoon to destroy the Soviet army groups defending Moscow. As Naud's descriptive narrative explains, the Germans had every reason to believe they would quickly capture the Russian capital.

By restructuring his forces to drive on Moscow, Hitler deprived his other two army groups of armored formations vital for their continued success against the Russian forces defending the northern and southern portions of the Soviet Union. Also, German logistical support went from bad to worse as a combination of factors caused a total breakdown in the supply chain. The lack of adequate support vehicles, the tremendous distances between supply depots and the front lines – along with the terrible Russian road system – ground the German offensive to a halt. The weather added to the front-line misery for both sides. With some units within 50 miles of Moscow, freezing rain, then snow, caught the Germans unprepared for winter warfare.

By Oct. 20, 1941, the situation was slowly moving in favor of the Russians. Hitler added to the chaos by removing the commander of the German army, Field Marshal Walther von Brauchitsch, over disagreements regarding the ongoing effort against Moscow. At this point, Naud's narrative ends. It is assumed that future books in the series will address the Russian movement of troops and supplies to successfully defend their capital.

Buffetaut's latest work, *From Moscow to Stalingrad*, briefly addresses the situation in and around Moscow. His emphasis is on the actions of Army Group South. Appreciating that Moscow was beyond his grasp, Hitler decided to seize victory by attacking the oilfields of southern Russia. First, the German forces had to survive their first Russian winter and resupply their forces. Furthermore, with the entry of the United States into the war, Stalin was now receiving materiel support from both British and American factories.

Given these circumstances, Hitler decided his best chance for victory lay in disrupting the flow of oil and materiel resources to the Russian military by seizing the areas within southern Russia. Buffetaut believes that the "1942 German offensive is of utmost importance in the history of World War II, as it was the first entirely directed by Adolf Hitler himself after von Brauchitsch's dismissal during the Battle for Moscow."

By April 1942, German forces were on the move again. Issuing his vague Directive 41, Hitler stated his desire to crush the Russian army. How various German commanders interpreted this directive is discussed in detail by the author as German forces were once again realigned to meet Hitler's instructions. At the same time, the Russian high command reorganized its armored forces to meet German might. Several diagrams and explanatory inserts fully describe the changes of 1942 Soviet armored forces.

Throughout the narrative, Buffetaut returns to the Germans' failure to meet logistical requirements for their forces. As an example, he points out that the German plan to use the railroad from Rostov to Baku was frustrated by the different gauge of track used in Russia. Supplies had to be constantly cross-loaded as track widths either enlarged or diminished, depending on which stretch of the railroad the trains operated. The delays meant that the German forces were constantly short of fuel, which strangled the operations' chances of success.

Supplementing his presentation with many photos of the Russian defenses surrounding the Black Sea port of Sevastapol, the author describes the German assault and capture of this great port city. The book concludes with German forces on the banks of the Volga poised to seize the industrial city of Stalingrad.

The World War II Russian campaign can be a challenge for maneuver commanders seeking to appreciate the varied campaigns and directions the Germans undertook in their futile attempt to conquer the Soviet Union. These two works facilitate an understanding of force structure, commanders' initiative and the vital role of logistics in both offensive and defensive operations. As such, they should be examined as a first step toward appreciating the role a combined-arms team plays in attaining battlefield success.

RETIRED COL D.J. JUDGE

German Armor in Normandy by Yves Buffetaut; Havertown, PA: Casemate Publishers; 2018; 1,128 pages, including maps, photographs, bibliography; \$24.95.

Ardennes 1944 by Yves Buffetaut; Havertown, PA: Casemate Publishers; 2018; 1,128 pages, including maps, photographs, bibliography; \$24.95.

German Armor in Normandy is the fourth book by Yves Buffetaut addressing British, American and German forces fighting in the 1944 Normandy beach area. The author begins this volume with the actions around the French city of Caen. As with the other works in this Casemate series, this volume is profusely illustrated with photo and colored plates of various tactical vehicles, adequate campaign maps and thumbnail biographical sketches of prominent participants. This volume focuses on German armored commanders and their role in attempting to stop the Allied breakout from the Normandy beach area.

Buffetaut concentrates this work on German army and SS armored units. Ten of these type of panzer divisions were involved in the battles around Normandy. Given the huge demand for resources required to sustain German forces in Russia, the forces in the West relied on ingenuity and innovation to create a credible armor deterrent to the Allies' combined might. Buffetaut examines in detail each divisional and special-unit structure. Organizational charts greatly assist in understanding the various complex structures the Germans created out of necessity.

As the author points out, the Germans had captured an abundance of weapons and vehicles during their campaigns against the 1940 armies of Western Europe. The challenge facing the German commanders in the

Normandy area was how best to employ these various armored vehicles and weapons. Appreciating that the bulk of captured French armored vehicles would not survive an engagement with Allied forces, the Germans undertook a massive modification effort that retained the chassis and suspension systems of various French armored vehicles while altering the on-board weapon systems. For example, the Germans modified the French Hotchkiss H39 tank's upper portion to mount their standard anti-tank gun system while retaining the original suspension and engine system.

Throughout the book, photo and colored-plate illustrations display the transformation of previously captured equipment into self-propelled artillery and anti-tank systems.

Having explained the various German armored-force vehicular structures, Buffetaut succinctly addresses the tactical employment of this force. The German force successfully stalled Allied progress to break out from the Caen region. However, as Allied ground power, combined with air supremacy, took a devastating toll on any German movement, the Americans attained a breakthrough. The book concludes with an interesting assessment of the failed German Mortain counterattack and the Allies' frustrating movement in the Falaise region. Both evaluations provide much food for thought about a tactical commander's coordination and synchronization of combat assets.

While certainly well organized, this volume focuses almost exclusively on the German order of battle rather than on a detailed explanation of German moves to contain the Allied advance. For those desiring an appreciation of the extent to which the Germans went to salvage through organizational and equipment alterations, this information will prove informative. For those desiring a better understanding of the various combat actions, the previously reviewed Casemate-series works on armored activity in Normandy may prove to be more beneficial.

Casemate follows up their appraisal of the actions in the Normandy area with Buffetaut's work on the December 1944 German Ardennes offensive. As the author notes in *Ardennes 1944*, "For the Americans, the Battle of the Bulge was, and still is today, their biggest campaign of all times, its 600,000 troops committed to battle significantly exceeding Operation Desert Storm's half a million."

Once again, using photos of the battle area, colored illustrations and applicable maps, the battle plan of the Germans and countermoves by the Allies are well laid out by Buffetaut. Of particular interest are the sections on British actions in support of their American allies. Field Marshal Bernard L. Montgomery's employment of forces, while controversial, is handled in an even-handed manner by the author.

While believing that the Allies attained a significant victory over their foe, the author holds that "in terms of the overall Western Front campaign, the Allied failure – particularly Montgomery's – to aggressively pursue and prevent the German withdrawal to their redoubts behind the Siegfried Line clearly added weeks, if not months, to the war."

This is a well-written explanation of the largest land battle fought in the European Theater of Operations. The skillful use of photos and maps details American actions around the Belgium towns of St. Vith and Bastogne; the impact of Allied airpower on the German forces; the rapid regrouping and counterattack by Third U.S. Army under the command of LTG George S. Patton Jr.; and the role of logistics in support of tactical operations. This book should have a prominent place in the library of those seeking to enhance their appreciation of this great battle.

RETIRED COL D.J. JUDGE

Pershing's Tankers: Personal Accounts of the AEF Tank Corps in World War I; edited by Lawrence M. Kaplan; University Press of Kentucky; 2018; 312 pages; \$50 (hard cover).

The centenary marking the end of World War I generated renewed interest in the perspectives and observations of those who went "over there" to fight in the war to end all wars. In answer to that interest, military historian Lawrence Kaplan researched and edited *Pershing's Tankers* to tell the story of the American Expeditionary Force's (AEF) Tank Corps. *Pershing's Tankers* is a compilation of articles written in response to BG Samuel D. Rockenbach's (chief, AEF Tank Corps) order for officers to share their personal experiences in the Great War. Restated, this book was authored by the men who were there, in the mud, at the genesis of the U.S. Army Armor Corps.

In recording the history of the AEF Tank Corps, Rockenbach asked his officers to eschew formal reports in favor of vivid, engaging stories containing “all possible local color and human interest.” Contributor George S. Patton Jr. took this guidance to heart, showing an unexpected humorous side to his account of leading tanks into battle at the French village of Pannes.

The contributors were not professional authors, and their writing style hails from a different era altogether. The details and true horror of warfare do not always come directly through to the reader. Indeed, the officers frequently went to great lengths to highlight their unit’s bravery while minimizing the dangers of war itself.

Individual chapters are arranged by the authors’ rank, duty position and unit, with some editing to arrange them by major events such as equipment fielding or battles. However, the book’s overall narrative would be improved with additional background providing strategic context to the men’s tactical level observations and more-detailed maps. In their absence, *Pershing’s Tankers* becomes a list of obscure French villages and engagements without a coherent storyline.

Readers who served in uniform may see their own experiences mirrored by those detailed in the authors’ descriptions of high-intensity combat or the more mundane military/bureaucratic red tape. They will also recognize the inevitable friction arising between those fighting the war and the remote Washington, DC-based Army staff. In many respects, the only difference between 1918 and 2018 is the absence of PowerPoint slides and unit safety briefings.

Pershing’s Tankers holds a key and timeless lesson for the U.S. military as it takes its first, tentative steps into the domains of cyber and space warfare. The men of the AEF Tank Corps could easily attest that introducing new technology and doctrine is not without difficulty, particularly in the midst of a major ground war. Success required bold leaders willing to take risks and challenge the status quo. More simply stated, cyber and space warriors would do well to heed one of tank pioneer Patton’s favorite quotes – “L’audace! L’audace! Toujours l’audace!” (“boldness, boldness and ever more boldness”) – as they begin their own their own journey into future war.

LTC CHRIS HEATHERLY

In Memory of Self and Comrades: Thomas Wallace Colley’s Recollections of Civil War Service in the 1st Virginia Cavalry; edited by Michael K. Shaffer; Knoxville, KY: The University of Tennessee Press; 2018; 310 pages with illustrations, maps, five appendices, endnotes, bibliography and index; \$47.

In 2016, descendants of Virginia cavalryman Thomas W. Colley (1837-1919) showed up at a lecture given by Civil War historian and professor Michael K. Shaffer, and presented him a car-trunk-load of journals, letters, various other ephemera and a Bible carried by Colley throughout the Civil War. Noted for his previous book, *Washington County, Virginia in the Civil War*, as well as his ability to tell a good story, Shaffer was floored by the presentation. He immediately recognized the invaluable material as a first-hand account of a Confederate Soldier’s entire wartime service, spanning nearly the whole of 1st Virginia Cavalry Regiment’s activities. The family members had a request: take the material they presented and tell Colley’s story to preserve his memory for future generations.

In Memory of Self and Comrades is part of a larger compendium of material, *Voices of the Civil War*, edited as a series by Michael P. Gray. The series is intended to “make available a variety of primary source materials that illuminate issues on the battlefield, the home front and the western front, as well as other aspects of this historic era.” Colley’s writings span a period from April 1861 until shortly before his death in 1919. Though the preponderance of the material included in the volume covers the Civil War service of a bold and opinionated, thrice-wounded Confederate cavalryman – importantly, the portion of the story after Colley’s final significant wounding at the Battle of Haw’s Shop in May 1864 and amputation of his left foot – is important for modern warriors to take in as well.

The comprehensive autobiographical account written by Colley, and told by Shaffer, is a mature perspective of battle, loss, transition, recovery and, in the end, a productive life fully lived. Replete with maps and illustrations throughout, the book is a tremendous accompaniment to more broad Civil War campaign analyses of the Virginia theater of war, written by legions of authors who have relied principally on second- and third-hand sources to tell

their stories. Aside from the Civil War action, the book provides insight into the Reconstruction period and the advent of veterans' fraternal organizations some years after the physical scars of war had healed.

A member of several associations of historians and writers, Shaffer carefully transcribed the entirety of the material presented to him by Colley's family and edited Colley's writings only for the purposes of clarity. Shaffer deliberately left intact Colley's authentic spellings and remembrances of names, as well as particular circumstances Colley encountered in his travels across Virginia, including his activities after the Civil War. The account Shaffer rendered has a remarkable grit of reality. Not simply a narrative of one man's place on the battlefield for a single battle or a campaign, Shaffer provides a perspective of Colley's front-line tactical actions, but within the context of one of the most notable Confederate militia cavalry regiments of the Civil War.

In Spring 1861, at the time of his accession to the Washington County Mounted Rifles (later twice reorganized as a company in 1st Virginia Cavalry), Colley was a well-known 34-year-old brick mason and plasterer of Washington County, VA. Partly because of his mature assertiveness and his horse sense, Colley was well regarded by the senior members of his command. These attributes provided him the ability and confidence to "lead-up" in the company of cavalymen he kept. That he was a mature militiaman, one can grasp his sense of loyalty to his unit and the cause for which they fought. I was heartened to read in Colley's writings of his ability to think critically about the secessionist cause and his use of an abundance of restraint before he acted with violence.

Because Colley had a penchant for keeping details in his wartime journal, when I read Shaffer's work, I got a sense of the reality of not just the engagements in which Colley took part, but his palpable fear of being attacked while standing guard on picket detail; his sense of determination to live after being shot through the abdomen and left to die at the Battle at Kelly's Ford; and his personal struggles to transition to a future following battle that left him wounded in more than one way. Having written my own first-hand account of command in combat, and now aged enough to understand Colley's range of emotions that he expresses throughout his account, I felt a certain connection to Colley as I read the vivid details of battle, of his sicknesses he encountered, and of his life after his transition from the military.

In Memory of Self and Comrades is a tremendous first-person account of Soldiering. I recommend it to those who seek to understand more of a Soldier's perspective of the Civil War. Moreover, it's a recommended read for leaders who want to better understand how to enable successful transitions of their Soldiers and themselves from military service.

COL JOE HOLLAND

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Masters of Mayhem: Lawrence of Arabia and the British Military Mission to the Hejaz by James Stejskal; Havertown, PA: Casemate Publishers; 2018; 304 pages; \$32.95 (hard cover).

The name "Lawrence of Arabia" is synonymous with both T.E. Lawrence's personal account of World War I and the eponymous 1962 movie bearing his *nom de guerre*. Since its original publication in 1926, his book ***Seven Pillars of Wisdom*** has long been considered a classic study of insurgency. Author James Stejskal's latest work, ***Masters of Mayhem: Lawrence of Arabia and the British Military Mission to the Hejaz***, re-examines Lawrence's role as a military adviser during the Arab Revolt as the genesis of modern British special operations.

Stejskal's opening chapters aptly demonstrate that ***Masters of Mayhem*** is not simply a revisionist retelling of ***Seven Pillars*** or yet another coffee-table book written to take advantage of the centenary of World War I. Instead, the book delves into Lawrence's use of armored cars in desert warfare, the creation of a supporting operations staff and the unique personalities of the British advisers and their Arab counterparts. It also avoids another pitfall common to military history writing. Far too often military history falls into one of two camps: 1) well-researched books but dry tomes lacking the perspective only first-hand combat experience brings, or 2) veteran-written, engaging stories bereft of academic rigor. Here, finally, is a compelling and documented account of warfare

authored by an expert in military operations. (Stejskal spent more than 35 years in U.S. Army Special Operations and the Central Intelligence Agency, putting that experience to good use throughout *Masters of Mayhem*.)

Although Lawrence fought his war more than a century ago, his methodology and practices are still quite relevant to our own conflicts. Lawrence and his fellow British advisers aptly demonstrate the value a handful of disciplined, seasoned professional soldiers may provide in support of conventional military forces, provided they understand their irregulars' culture, language, capabilities and limitations. Stejskal cites many examples of the value of predictive, timely intelligence to the successful conduct of military operations. The book frequently reveals the pragmatic nature of irregular militaries fighting for pay vice nation-representing soldiers – particularly when no sense of nation exists outside Washington, DC.

LTC CHRIS HEATHERLY

Acronym Quick-Scan

AEF – American Expeditionary Forces