

# Reviews

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***Soviet Partisan Versus German Security Soldier*** by Alexander Hill; Oxford, England: Osprey Books; 1999; 80 pages; \$22 paperback.

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Partisan warfare and guerrilla warfare are now often thought of as – in an apt phrase – “the war of the flea,” a form of political and attritional military struggle used by an inferior military-political force vs. superior conventional military forces. Many of us in the last 20 years have personal combat experience with that in Iraq, Afghanistan, the Horn of Africa and other spots where the world is confronting a virulent strain of militant Islam. Osprey Books’ publication of Alexander Hill’s book ***Soviet Partisan Versus German Security Soldier*** is of relevance to not only today’s Armor leaders but a vast spectrum interested in operations against this type of elusive foe.

Hill has written extensively about partisan warfare, publishing in 2005 ***The War Behind the Eastern Front: Soviet Partisans in North West Russia 1941-1944***. The U.S. Army’s Center of Military History has published three booklets on it: ***Guerrilla and Counter guerrilla Warfare in Russia During World War II, Rear-Area Security in Russia*** and ***The Soviet Partisan Movement 1941-1944*** for those wanting in a more in-depth or different view of it. Hill’s scope of work here is on several discrete operations in the Leningrad-Kalinin area, while placing these specific actions within the context of the greater partisan war on the Eastern Front.



Specifically, Hill drills down on three operations: Kholm in January 1942, Iasski in February 1942 and a German anti-partisan security sweep called Operation Spring Clean in April 1943. The three chosen operations are different enough to both keep the reader’s interest and for different lessons to be drawn due to these differences. Spring Clean is perhaps the easiest to put in any context of the overall war, as it could be interpreted as German preparation to secure their rear areas before the Kursk offensive, as well as endeavoring to regain the initiative after the disaster of Stalingrad and the winter of 1942-1943 Soviet Winter Offensive.

Guerrilla warfare might happen spontaneously, but for it to be successful, some structure is needed. Hill neatly dissects and talks about that need for structure in the chapter on the opposing sides. He lays out the contrasts and similarities of the opposing sides in areas such as recruitment, training, doctrine, command-and-control (C2) and tactics. Stalin, before the massive industrialization effort took off, had earlier extensively prepared the countryside for partisan warfare, but the purges of the late 1930s removed and eliminated many of those involved with that earlier framework; when the Germans invaded in Operation Barbarossa, there was no real infrastructure left to call upon.

Early partisan efforts were structured either around Communist Party members or units that had been cut off by the German blitzkrieg. We saw in Iraq little evidence of cut-off units turning to either partisan warfare or banditry, but likewise, the Baathist Party members who had everything to lose – much like the Communist Party members in Hill’s work – helped start the initial gestation of resistance to Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). With both Barbarossa and OIF, the lack of enough boots on the ground produced large swaths of unsecured areas and huge amounts of arms for such partisan movements to begin. We failed to heed the lessons from the German invasion of Russia.

In both OIF and Operation Barbarossa, a series of overly optimistic assumptions were done in terms of considering rear areas and lines of communication security. Within several months, the assumptions for both operations proved fatally erroneous. As Hill shows, much of the German effort to redress this in Russia was both *ad hoc* and constrained by a lack of able-bodied forces who had enough firepower and good communications proper for the heavily forested areas in which the Germans and Russians clashed.

It’s easy to dismiss the Osprey books as fluff at times, but Hill has done yeoman work in distilling the key facts to give one a good sense of operations in this theatre. Hill’s use of good color maps with a map key done in terms of a timeline enables the reader to easily grasp the operational situation. Hill’s distillation included:

- The Kholm segment of the book would be considered within the greater initial efforts of the first Soviet winter offensive of 1941-1942. Unlike many of the fights we encounter, the fight for Kholm was to be a

coordinated effort by partisans led by Soviet military officers and reinforced by regular Army units. Kholm was a key road junction, but the heavy snows of that winter hindered both sides. Worse for the Soviet partisans, poor C2 and staff work meant that their effort to capture the town failed, despite seizing much of the town.

- Operation Spring Clean is more akin to what we currently do in terms of using intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance – and our mobility – to try and hermetically seal off such forces. Spring Clean was a planned operation that, with better comms and the use of Fiesler-Storch planes for battlefield reporting, enabled the Germans to clean out this partisan base.

The German tactical doctrine of immediately counterattacking was employed at both Kholm and Iasski to help restore the situation, though less so at Iasski. What we see in these northern case studies is that German operational security suffered because of the severe weather, not unlike how American units in World War II and somewhat today are less robust at nighttime. German security units were often equipped with vintage leftover weapons from World War I, such as the water-cooled MG08/15 light machinegun that would freeze in the extreme climate of northern Russia.

German forces also suffered from language problems, recruiting from Soviet prisoners of war, local collaborators who often had personal scores to settle, Cossack and Islamic cavalry units, and older police battalions. (See Westermann's *Hitler's Police Battalions: Enforcing Racial War in the East*.) For us with our too-many Blue-on-Green incidents – primarily in Afghanistan but some in Iraq – we are always running a security risk to not just our forces but with our efforts to try and win the hearts and minds of the local population. The Germans were plagued as well with informers.

Overall the book is not just relevant but quite a good read – in part due to the three widely different combat actions that Hill presents. The book is nicely illustrated with great photographs and high-quality maps that enable a quick visual understanding of the battlespace. My one question, though, is the use of the painting *Rest After the Battle* by Yuri Mikhailovich Neprintsev. As presented, it is allegedly partisans in the painting, but one clearly sees T34/85 tanks in the background. Moreover, the soldiers seem to be submachine-gun riders of these same tanks.

I daresay I was unsure how I fully felt about Hill's work until I sat down and contemplated it with the writing of this review. It is both a keeper and most likely one that will be used as a quick-reference source and, as such, is recommended.

DR. (LTC) ROBERT G. SMITH

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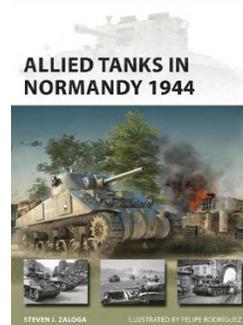
***Allied Tanks in Normandy 1944*** by Steven J. Zaloga; New York, New York: Osprey Publishing; 2021; 46 pages including photographs, index; \$17.14.

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Steven Zaloga's latest work continues to enhance our knowledge of World War II armored operations. Concentrating on the Normandy Campaign, Zaloga presents a succinct discussion of British, Canadian, Polish and American armored organization and employment against German forces from June to September 1944. The tug-of-war struggle that followed the Allies' successful landing in Normandy is presented in a clear and easy-to-follow sequence of events.

Beginning with the Allies' command structure, the author explains the initial objectives for the campaign. The British, Canadian and Polish contingent aimed at the French city of Caen, while the Americans intended to seize the port of Cherbourg. The British force was stymied by the swift German reaction to their moves in terrain that favored the employment of armor. At the same time, the Americans were held in place by a determined German defense that skillfully used the hedgerow terrain to halt their movement to the vital port.

The organization of British and American armored units is presented in an orderly fashion. The British armored regiment was equivalent to the American medium-tank battalion. The British fielded three squadrons to each regiment. Each squadron contained four troops. The M4 Sherman was the backbone of both Allied armored units. The British regiment contained 61 Shermans, while the Americans placed 59 in a battalion. U.S. armored forces included separate tank battalions assigned to each corps and usually dispersed to infantry



units that lacked organic tank battalions. These various force structures are described by Zaloga, along with applicable charts displaying American, British and German tank losses.

Given the ever-changing conduct of the campaign, the Allies had to continually deal with the unexpected. Since German armor often outranged and penetrated Allied armor, the situation required an effective countermeasure. As the author explains, the British Sherman Firefly, which mounted a 76mm main gun, was an effective method in dealing with the German armored threat. In the American sector, the hedgerow that divided the fields permitted the Germans to establish strong lines of resistance. Improvisation saved the day as dismantled beach obstacles created tank-mounted cutters to penetrate the banks of the hedgerows. Zaloga includes a battle-analysis section that provides more information on the importance of artillery, armor and infantry coordination.

Zaloga employs charts throughout the book displaying a variety of subjects. These charts are keyed to the subject under discussion in a particular section. For example, the table displaying the ever-dwindling density of German armored forces per mile of frontage gives one an appreciation of the destructive power the Allies brought upon their enemy. Also, the graph of British offensive operations to seize Caen will be of assistance in guiding armor leaders to further in-depth reading on a particular operation.

This is a well-written, profusely illustrated review of the Normandy Campaign. While not a comprehensive tactical analysis of the various actions, it a useful reference that will supplement other detailed works on a particular engagement. Also, armored leaders will gain a better appreciation for the value of the combined-arms team, the role of improvisation in battle and the importance of battlefield feedback to improve existing equipment.

**COL (R) D.J. JUDGE**

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***The German Way of War: A Lesson in Tactical Management*** by Jaap Jan Brouwer; South Yorkshire, United Kingdom: Pen and Sword Books Unlimited; 2021; 229 pages, including photographs, appendices and index; \$42.95 (hardcover).

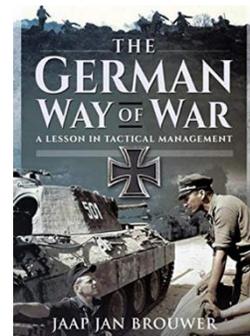
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The author, a management consultant by trade, argues convincingly that primarily due to the culture of *auftragstaktik* (mission-type tactics), the German army consistently outperformed its British and American counterparts at the tactical level during World War II. The author supports his position by comparing German, British and American units using a business-model framework called the “7-S” model. This model forms the basis of the chapters exploring aspects of the different armies as learning organizations; their doctrinal command concepts, structures, leadership, teams and training; and shared values and morale. While at times heavily exalting the Germans and exceedingly disparaging toward the Allies in general, there are valuable lessons to be taken from his study.

Any student of World War II will confess to German tactical ability during the war. Strategically and operationally biting off more than they could effectively handle, German tactical prowess could not overcome the burden of Allied materiel once mobilized on two fronts against her. However, the culture and tradition imbued within the Wehrmacht proved to be effective and resilient, allowing Germany to continue retrograde operations and limited counterattacks, forestalling the inevitable end of the war without collapsing. This resilient organizational cultural fabric is the very essence of what the author explains throughout his work, the concept of *auftragstaktik*.

Characterizing a learning organization, the Prussian army started serious reform after being beaten by Napoleon at Jena-Auerstadt. It continued refinement through the 1800s under Helmuth von Moltke through the wars of German unification. Continuing to extract lessons from both their victories and losses, the author explains how the Germans embraced the inevitable chaos of the battlefield and did not try to impose control over it as other armies sought to do. By empowering trained subordinates within a flexibly organized army, they could adapt and seize fleeting moments of opportunity on the battlefield without waiting for orders from a centralized command authority.

Contrastingly he points out that the British and American armies were resistant in changing their hierarchical organizational structures, mainly because they were past victors. The British, steeped in their colonial empire



policing structure and mentality, embraced a culture of aristocracy and rigidity. Surprisingly, even though the Americans studied and exalted German methods, they seemingly could not culturally adopt them successfully. The author is clear that recognition and embrasure of flexible, empowered organizational structures that could seize opportunities or forestall reverses through quick actions, guided by a clear mission, enabled German tactical successes. The lack of the same plagued the Allies.

A fascinating dive into the organizational cultures of these three armies, the author encompasses many divergent concepts under the framework of *auftragstaktik*. In one chapter, he delves into the Germans' embrace of military organizations' human and psychological dimensions. This approach helped them recruit and select the right personnel to build cohesive, effective organizations underscored by competence and trust. He contrasts that with various deficiencies in British and American recruitment, training and organization.

Embracing the combined-arms concept early, the Germans developed a flexible organizational structure that permitted dynamic task-organization of various capabilities when and where needed from available manpower. This greatly assisted their regenerative power later in the war, when remnants of units were forced together into viable and effective units due to losses and shortages. As with other comparisons throughout the book, the Germans are again clearly set forth as a shining example of building a competent, effective and efficient military organization, while the Allies were continually able to overcome repeated deficiencies in these same areas with materiel might.

This book is a quick read at just over 200 pages, broken into nine chapters, and an appendix supported by many historical examples and more than 60 references to support the research. Although the book exalts German organizational culture and performance over their British and American counterparts to a fault, there is much merit to the work once you look past the author's apparent bias. As *auftragstaktik* is the cornerstone of our mission-command philosophy, those looking for more context on the concept should take the time to read this book.

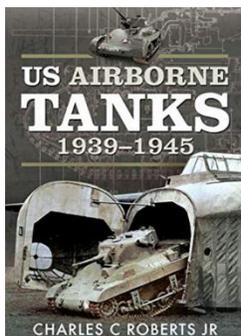
LTC BILL AULT

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***U.S. Airborne Tanks 1939-1945*** by Charles C. Roberts Jr.; Havertown, PA: Frontline Books; 2021; 208 pages with photographs, diagrams, maps, appendix; \$32.95.

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Since man first took to air in hot-air balloons, the desire to place a large mass of troops behind enemy lines has intrigued military thinkers. The advent of the airplane allowed this concept to become reality through the creation of a parachute-delivered force. Experiments on the delivery and employment of such a force began in the 1930s within Russia. Germany and Japan followed the Russian developmental process. Each of these nations quickly realized that airborne employment would be foolish if the force did not possess significant firepower in the form of an armored vehicle. As war approached, research and development efforts sought a tank that could be air-delivered in support of airborne forces.



Charles C. Roberts Jr., a noted collector of military vehicles, reviews the creation and employment of an armored vehicle to support an airborne force during World War II. Despite the fact that the Russians investigated placing a tank in an available cargo aircraft, they abandoned the effort after several false starts. Roberts reviews their efforts, along with those of the Germans and Japanese prior to the start of World War II. Using an impressive collection of period photographs and diagrams, he explores the trials and tribulations experienced by these three nations in searching for a suitable armored vehicle and means of delivery.

As war began, Great Britain also developed an airborne force and sought a delivery means for such a vehicle. Several delegations were dispatched from England to the United States seeking an answer to the problem. Roberts follows the discussion held between the Allies as both sides attempt to find the ideal system to support the airborne forces. These talks led to the creation of a design requirement.

The author presents several design proposals for both the tank and an appropriate means of transportation using photographs and text. Roberts describes the British development of a Vickers-Armstrong-built light tank, christened Tetrarch. The vehicle mounted a 40mm main gun and a coaxial machinegun. To transport the tank, the

British constructed the large Hamilcar glider. They were employed during the invasion of Normandy by 6<sup>th</sup> British Airborne Division.

The tanks were landed by glider, where their appearance initially caused the Germans to cancel a counterattack at a key moment in the battle. The tanks, however, did not perform well, as several were lost in accidents, and those that did see action proved to be inferior in firepower to the German armored vehicles. A few days after the beginning of the operation, the tanks were removed from direct engagement with German armor and used only to provide fire support.

While the British were employing the Tetrarch, the Americans fielded the M22 light tank. Excerpts from the vehicle's technical manual, along with details on the creation of a tank-gunnery course, are explained by Roberts. The U.S. Army created a company, then a battalion, to train on these vehicles. Powered by a Lycoming aircraft engine to save weight, the eight-ton tank had an impressive top speed of 40 mph and a cross-country speed of 30 mph. The crew consisted of a commander/loader, driver and gunner for the 37mm main gun. Various glider designs were also tested without success.

Once again, the author provides detailed photos and explanations on the various transportation means attempted, engine design, weapon systems and training of the battalion as it prepared for deployment. Completing glider training in 1943, the newly designated 151<sup>st</sup> Airborne Tank Battalion participated in large airborne maneuvers. Roberts details the impressive results that the battalion achieved in these field-training exercises. Despite their achievements, the Army believed the men of the battalion would better serve the war effort as replacements for already fielded European-based armored units. When 151<sup>st</sup> was disbanded, the Army provided more than 260 M22 tanks to the British.

The British designated the M22 as "Locust" while modifying the 37mm main gun. The author clearly lays out details on the "Little John" adapter for the main gun. Given the availability of the Hamilcar glider to transport them, training was conducted on employment methods. The tank engine was notorious for stalling. To counter this tendency, the crew started the engine once the glider was cut free from the tow plane. Roberts further explains that the exhaust fumes were funneled out a port on the side of the glider and how the cross-lashings securing the tank to the glider floor was released by the crew upon landing.

To assist in crossing the Rhine, the British employed the largest airborne force in history. Operation Varsity saw the 6<sup>th</sup> British Airborne and American 17<sup>th</sup> Airborne Divisions occupying drop zones in the vicinity of the German city of Wesel. Accompanying the airborne forces were eight M22 Locust tanks. They provided direct-fire support to the airborne troops but were systematically destroyed by superior German firepower. The vehicles were never again employed by the Allies for the rest of the war.

Roberts presents a detailed look at the development of a tank to support airborne forces. The photographs, along with technical manual extracts and details on training, are impressively presented. As the quest for a suitable armored vehicle to support airborne and air-mobile forces continues, this book presents many historical insights that will aid in satisfying this requirement. This is a work worthy of review and comment by combined-arms leaders.

**COL (R) D.J. JUDGE**

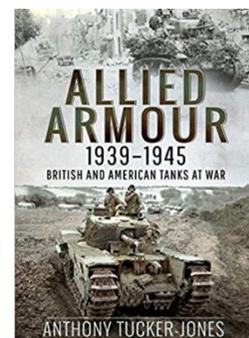
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***Allied Armour 1939-1945: British and American Tanks at War*** by Anthony Tucker-Jones; South Yorkshire, United Kingdom: Pen and Sword Military; 2020; 232 pages, \$34.95 hard cover.

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Readers searching for an exhaustive study of American and British tanks in World War II need look no further than ***Allied Armour*** by author and military historian Anthony Tucker-Jones. Rather than examine tanks by type or model, Jones discusses the employment, performance and improvements of armored vehicles through the major campaigns of the African, European and Pacific theaters of war. Tucker-Jones is a prolific writer with more than 40 previous publications to his credit and is clearly an expert in his field of study.

Be forewarned, ***Allied Armour*** is not a typical "coffee table" book full of glossy photos but scant on actual information. This is a book densely packed with detail and is prose-laden, with facts and figures useful to the tank researcher or perhaps historical wargaming



enthusiast. Tucker-Jones' style of writing makes for a difficult reading; restated, this is not a book to be consumed at a single sitting.

The absence of even a single map further challenges the reader; I found myself continually searching the Internet for operational- and tactical-level maps to place the writing into a readily understandable context.

Interspersed throughout the pages are small excerpts from soldiers and observers sharing their personal experience with tank warfare. These all-too-infrequent additions add a much-needed human element to the book. Equally helpful are the three companion appendices listing Allied armored divisions as well as describing individual U.K. and U.S. armored vehicles.

Perhaps the book's most important point may be found in the final chapter titled "Industrial Muscle." As the "Arsenal of Democracy," the United States provided dozens of other Allied nations with all manner of military equipment throughout World War II. For example, the Soviet Union alone received some 425,000 vehicles and aircraft between 1941-1945. By comparison, I went to Iraq in 2003 without a full basic load of ammunition for my aging M16A2 rifle and wearing a Cold-War-era flak vest in lieu of modern body armor. With the U.S. military's shift from counterinsurgency operations to a more appropriate focus on large-scale ground-combat operations, professional study must include the materiel production base required to sustain such war.

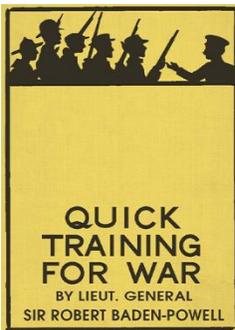
LTC CHRISTOPHER J. HEATHERLY

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*Quick Training for War* by LTG Sir Robert Baden-Powell; Oxford, United Kingdom: Osprey Publishing; 2018 (reprint); 128 pages; \$14 hard cover.

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When the United Kingdom and its empire went to war in 1914, the regular British Army was small, and the forces of the empire were dispersed. In contrast to the imperial wars of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Britain experienced a surge of patriotic young men seeking to join the Army in August 1914, who wished to do their bit for "king and country" and feared missing out on a short war.



Responding to the need to prepare the young men who would be leaving civilian life and serving as junior leaders, Robert Baden-Powell wrote a short primer on basic tactics and leadership in late summer 1914 entitled *Quick Training for War*. Baden-Powell had previously trained a generation of young men in general outdoor skills through scouting and possessed more insights on how to stand up new forces based on his work creating a constabulary in South Africa during the Second Boer War.

Baden-Powell's short primer is of interest – both as a reminder of some of the timeless essentials of small-unit leadership and tactics in the army of a liberal society, and for its insights for modern readers of what Baden-Powell imagined service in wartime would demand of new officers. At one point, the reader is reminded about the importance of confidence and "playing the game" to lead and motivate soldiers. In another passage, Baden-Powell remarks how no army of volunteers would want its lives sacrificed pointlessly. Both passages are dark reminders to the modern reader of the fate of Britain's new forces, as more than 19,000 soldiers were killed on the first day of the Somme in 1916.

Baden-Powell's vision of war that stressed lessons and techniques from his imperial service increasingly contrasted with the reality of the Western Front of trenches, railroads, massed artillery and eventually the tanks, airplanes and combined-arms tactics that marked the last 100 days of British, French and American operations in 1918.

Despite the grinding industrial nature of war, after the trenches on the Western Front were fully established, there was still need within the British army for small units to conduct nightly raids and reconnaissance, as well as to maintain and improve defenses in the dark. This need in turn demanded skilled and savvy leaders who understood the value of using terrain and who could lead and motivate their soldiers under difficult conditions.

Baden-Powell defined the four fundamentals of soldiering as courage, common sense, cunning and cheerfulness, and his manual provided young leaders with valuable hints on how to succeed across all these areas. In addition, the British soldiers who fought not just in France and Belgium but in the more mobile campaigns in Mesopotamia, the Levant and Africa would have benefitted from the useful sections on maintaining hygiene and health in austere

conditions. World War I was the last war for more than a century where most deaths came from disease rather than combat, and Baden-Powell understood the need for young officers to protect their soldiers' lives and health.

Baden-Powell also shows how the fundamental skills of moving stealthily in groups or individually may be taught at low cost and with no technology. Baden-Powell's advice on using little blocks of time to build or reinforce fundamental skills in an engaging way with little cost or equipment is still a vital way leaders can create cohesion and confidence.

Similarly, Baden-Powell's section on cheerfulness resembles in some ways the concept of resilience that modern armies, schools and teams seek to inculcate in their members.

With his book, Baden-Powell fundamentally sought to mine his imperial experiences to provide young men who had little to no experience in campaigning with a pocket-sized guide that would better help them to survive, fight and win. Although World War I was vastly different in scope, scale and suffering than the wars of Baden-Powell's experience, he was still able to capture some key lessons for his readers who would soon be charged with fighting in a war that demanded a mastery of the fundamentals as the price of survival and eventually victory. For today's reader, this manual from a century ago can serve as a thought-provoking example of the possibilities and limits of translating fundamental soldier skills from one type of war to another.

With the wars of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century increasing in violence and complexity, the need to both adapt quickly to change and to master the basics remains the fundamental mandate of Army leadership. Baden-Powell's short book is a reminder that there are useful lessons from the last two decades of operations that leaders will still need to apply in any future large-scale conflict.

LTC ANDY WHITFORD

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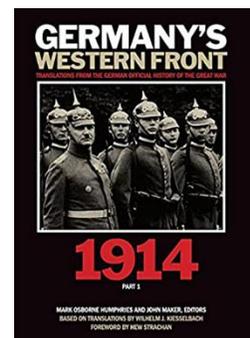
***Germany's Western Front: Translations from the German Official History of the Great War, 1914, Part 1*** by Mark Humphries and John Maker, editors; Ontario, Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press; 2013; 580 pages; \$49.99 paperback.

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At first glance, house-hunting and going to war would seem to have little in common with each other, that they are mutually exclusive intellectual endeavors. In actuality, the two concepts share a great deal in common. Both are rooted in manifold assumptions, hopeful planning and wishing away certain aspects of the execution phase, and both are saddled with manifold and unforeseen problems because one did not subject either endeavor to a rigorous cross-examination.

The official German history of the opening campaign up to the Battle of the Marne in World War I is an excellent case in point of exactly this in retrospect.

Military dictums, like clichés, always contain at least some kernel of truth -- none more obvious and yet overlooked than "no plan survives first contact with the enemy." (In one sense, however, if no plan survives contact, it's arguable the plan was really a very good one.) What this history shows, though, is that a number of underlying assumptions were wildly inaccurate. The German shock-and-awe campaign against civilians in both Belgium and France seems to have boomeranged on them and would do so even more in the court of world opinion.



There is a bit of a perfidious air and contempt throughout this volume for the British Expeditionary Force (BEF). The assumption that the British army would cut and run after Mons became a painfully apparent false assumption.

One of the lessons obviously unlearned by Helmuth von Moltke and others after their wars of unification – and particularly those at Comigrates – is leadership on the spot. Their eye on the battlespace, taking the pulse of the fight, was critical to success. Instead, the General Staff thought that process, efficient orders and well-developed plans had become enough that the superior German army would win by virtue of its martial superiority and elan.

We hear all too often this pithy advice as junior leaders: "Plan your work and work your plan." Here the plan was to invade France and advance to victory! It seems to have escaped the notice of those in command that command-and-control issues were going to be exacerbated by some unknown level of Clauswitzian friction due to the size of the German armies, which dwarfed the Prussian army of 1866 and 1870. Worse, logistics seemed to have been a

bit overlooked since the timetable meant that victory would be achieved by Day X, ergo “we” need not think beyond the published timetable.

In Barbara Tuchman’s **August 1914**, one reads of the great railroad timetable for the German army to go to war, but no one seemed to consider what effect such a deep strike would have on men doing 50-kilometer roadmarches in brutal August heat or the subsequent demands of needing to reshoe horses. Friction seems to have been simply ignored.

Contrast the German army commanders on the Western Front with the duo of Grant and Sherman in 1864 in the American Civil War. Both of these commanders grasped the essence and importance of logistics. Neither Grant nor Sherman required that damning quality of seeking adulation and the spotlight.

That quest for the victor’s laurel crown would become quite the issue for the German command structure in 1914. Army commanders were competing against one another and not working toward the common goal of victory. Alexander von Kluck was perhaps the greatest offender, but it is hard to single out which commander was most egregious in not being a team player.

Ironically, this same type of almost-cavalier attention to the bigger picture and the overarching campaign would be repeated in Operation Barbarossa in Summer 1941. Karl von Bulow often appeared to not have good situational awareness.

In fact, many of the exchanges between the Oberste Heeresleitung (OHL) (the German High Command) and among commanders almost seem petulant in nature. Moreover, some of the thinking as shown in the book is almost incomprehensible – such as “As communications with the OHL were difficult, it was thought trying to contact them [First Army] before any final degree of clarity had been achieved would be a waste of time.”

It almost makes you feel sorry for von Moltke when he was given a late radio message sent from First Army to Second and Third Armies (but not OHL) that stated they had crossed the Marne at Chateau Thierry. The message didn’t say what forces had crossed, but that was really a minor issue. His orders were to follow Second Army in echelon but instead chose a course of action that showed he “had acted counter to not only the literal but also to the implied sense of his orders.”

Von Moltke was lethargic, waiting for information from below and not proactively seeking it. History showed that the danger von Moltke foresaw (and tried to alleviate by simply issuing orders; he didn’t follow up on the execution) did come indeed to pass. The Miracle of the Marne was indeed a miracle, but an easily foreseeable one, with this volume ending just before the French Army and the BEF’s Marne offensive.

Getting the view from the other side of the hill *a la* Basil Liddell Hart is always useful, but this fresh look at the opening moves of 1914 through German eyes is both riveting and difficult to put down. The editors enhanced the official German history by their knowledgeable commentary and use of supplemental archival material. **1914 Part 1** is recommended reading for anyone with an interest in this period of the opening moves of World War I.

**DR. (LTC) ROBERT G. SMITH**

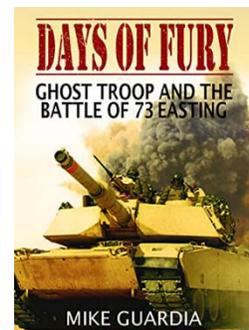
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***Days of Fury: Ghost Troop and the Battle of 73 Easting*** by Mike Guardia; Maple Grove, MN: Magnum Books; 2021; 217 pages with photographs and sketch map; \$14.95.

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Former Armor officer Mike Guardia’s ***Days of Fury: Ghost Troop and the Battle of 73 Easting*** is the follow-on to his ***Fires of Babylon: Eagle Troop and the Battle of 73 Easting***, published in 2015. The Gulf War’s Battle of 73 Easting (a Universal Traverse Mercator north-south grid line) was the 20<sup>th</sup> Century’s last great tank battle. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Armored Cavalry Regiment (ACR), VII Corps’ covering force, destroyed two brigades of the Iraqis’ Republican Guard Tawakalna Division in less than a day. West Point classmates then-CPT H.R. McMaster and then-CPT Joe Sartiano commanded Eagle and Ghost Troops, the lead units of 2<sup>nd</sup> ACR’s 2<sup>nd</sup> Squadron.

Guardia adds historical context to this book by describing the abysmal state of readiness of the Army in the 1970s after the Vietnam War and how it became the world’s most technologically lethal force by the time it fought in the Gulf War in 1991. The United States responded to Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait Aug. 2, 1991, by deploying XVIII Airborne Corps as a



deterrent against an Iraqi incursion into Saudi Arabia. When Saddam Hussein failed to respond to diplomatic pressure to withdraw from Kuwait, on Nov. 9 President George H.W. Bush ordered the deployment from Europe of the armor/mechanized heavy VII Corps, with its three divisions, and 2<sup>nd</sup> ACR.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> ACR faced the monumental task of deploying 4,000 troopers and equipment to Saudi Arabia while simultaneously planning and training for a radical change in mission. In Europe since 1958, 2<sup>nd</sup> ACR's mission was to conduct reconnaissance-and-security operations along the West/East German border. Units deploying from Europe had to break free of Cold War thinking, which was to defend relatively restricted European terrain, and adapt to conducting offensive operations on open, featureless desert terrain.

Guardia's interviews of Ghost's troopers, their diaries and personal photographs ably reveal the human side of a small unit's preparation for war and its troopers' reactions to the physical and psychological traumas of combat. His narration of the ebb and flow of Ghost Troop's fight at 73 Easting is compelling. This book, however, will disappoint Armor and Cavalry soldiers seeking a detailed battle analysis of Ghost Troop's actions. Inexplicably, Guardia devotes only 31 pages to the actual battle. Without examination of official documents such as staff journals, after-action reports and message-traffic transcripts, the book is an incomplete appraisal of Ghost Troop's performance.

Two months after deploying, 2<sup>nd</sup> ACR crossed into Iraq Feb. 23, initially encountering ineffective opposition from the poorly trained and equipped front-line Iraqi units previously pummeled by incessant Allied air strikes. After those units disintegrated, the more formidable Tawakalna Division massed Feb. 26 to counterattack the advancing VII Corps.

When blowing sand, fog and stiffening enemy opposition limited Sartiano's situational awareness, the war became a platoon leader's fight. LT Paul Hains' scout platoon and Eagle Troop's 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon destroyed at least five T-72 tanks. LT Andy Kilgore's tank platoon, adjacent to LT Keith Garwick's scout platoon, became VII Corps' most forward units. Kilgore's tank platoon destroyed more than a dozen T-72s and *boyevaya mashina pekhoty* (BMPs) (a Soviet-made amphibious tracked infantry fighting vehicle) and killed dozens of dismounts.

By 7 p.m. Feb. 26, Ghost consolidated on 73 Easting. After three more hours of fighting, Ghost Troop completed its mission at 10 p.m.

Despite its flaws, battalion and squadron commanders, especially those facing an imminent combat deployment, should include this book in their leader-development programs. It is a reminder that small units win large-scale combat operations. Although not a formal battle analysis, *Days of Fury* reveals how a well-trained unit, led by competent and mentally agile leaders, can adapt to a major change to its mission.

Ghost Troop's actions at 73 Easting is a case study of today's mission-command doctrine. Its victory resulted from its leaders' instinctive application of the mission-command principles of competence, disciplined initiative, shared understanding and mutual trust.

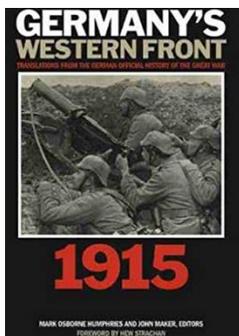
LTC (R) LEE F. KICHEN

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***Germany's Western Front 1915: Translations from the German Official History of the Great War, Part 2*** by Mark Humphries and John Maker, editors; Ontario, Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press; 2010; 462 pages illustrated; \$48.95 paperback.

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1915. What does the average student or reader of World War I history think about when they think of 1915?



Most people will probably think of Gallipoli or the Dardanelles Campaign – those always readily come to mind. Maybe the Dogger Bank naval fight might surface in your mind. Or you might recall the series of czarist military disasters in Poland. However, for most people, 1915 is at best murky and fuzzy. The year is almost treated as if the war sort of went into hiatus until Verdun and the Somme in 1916.

Let's just say after reading the official German history as annotated by the editors Humphries and Maker, your view might begin to perceptively alter in how you understand the year 1915. I can readily say up front, my view changed and changed to such a degree that I will look for more on this neglected period.

The theme that inescapably runs throughout **1915** is one of command and strategy. Who is really in command in a sense seems to be an issue; although GEN Erich von Falkenhayn is nominally in control, commanders like Rupprecht, crown prince of Bavaria, have a direct appeal to the Kaiser. The Kaiser is noted as the Supreme War Lord, and having said that, that's all that needs to be said, as he's relegated to, at best infrequent, mentions of little consequence.

We also begin to see more mention of what the High Seas Fleet offers and what its role in the war was, other than a bargaining chip perhaps once the war was concluded.

Another thrust, although ex post facto, is an underlying realization that the war was not being fought as a coherent effort. If you are the army, you begin to question why so much treasure and resources were spent on the High Seas Fleet when its operational usefulness by the end of 1915 was such that "[g]iven the overall situation at present, the deep-sea fleet is of increased significance and is an important political instrument in the hands of the Kaiser and thus an adverse battle at sea would have particularly grave consequences." It is easy to trace in an almost linear sense how Adolf Hitler consolidated power over all aspect of military planning because the memory of that lack of coherent and comprehensive inclusion of all military elements was still a painful memory from World War I.

Worse, what the real war aims are now seem to surface in the **1915** volume, other than simply that of "victory." One is reminded of the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) era. Even as a combat leader in it and as a joint historian on the Joint Chiefs of Staff, one could argue we never quite pinned down with any finality and fidelity what GWOT really was intended to accomplish as its endstate. Therein lies so much of the value of **1915**, as we see the German High Command – which is really the army – fighting a land war without having a coherent military and political strategy. They never, if you will, got to spend a dime or reichsmark because there was not much thought given to DIME [diplomacy, information, military and economics] in any sense, other than hoping and trying to stir up a jihad in the British Empire's colonial possessions to serve as a distraction.

Throughout the volume, one gets a growing sense of the awareness that the German High Command was becoming more and more unenthused about its erstwhile allies. The Ottomans presented a special problem; the Austrians-Hungarians failed to knock Serbia out of the war; there were no rail lines to supply Istanbul that the Germans could use. The Bulgarians in modern parlance would receive an up check, but the Austria-Hungarian forces, with a severe lack of any strategic direction and leadership, was showing signs of being an albatross around the German neck.

Perhaps a greater albatross for the Germans and Falkenhayn, who had by now replaced GEN Helmuth von Moltke after Moltke failed at the Marne, was a drift in where did Germany's center of gravity lie – was it the Eastern Front or was it the Western Front? The book traces the growing rift of how the war should be fought as well as the enmity and deep personal rift between the Easterners, as championed by GEN Paul von Hindenburg and GEN Erich Ludendorff, and the Westerners, led by Falkenhayn.

As the book notes at its opening, despite some impressive victories and the occupation of much of France's resources, industrial heartland and all but a sliver of Belgium: "At the beginning of 1915, the war in the East was not going well for Germany or Austria-Hungary. ... By [the] new year, Germany was faced with war on two European fronts, a struggling ally in the east and an ominous situation in the Balkans, all of which threatened to turn the tide against the Central Powers." So for those who thought the Third Reich paid too much attention to the Balkans, one can better begin to understand its obsession with that flank with this type of anecdotal antecedent, for it was a pressing reality for much of each war.

What we also come across is something seldom conveyed in most of the other histories of World War I: that the Germans even in 1915 were reaching the threshold of a manpower crisis. We read time and time again of just enough of a German reaction force, arriving like the proverbial cavalry in a John Ford Western, to seal a breakthrough or serve as the spearhead of a counterattack per German doctrine to seize any lost defensive positions. Repeatedly we read about the crisis caused by seemingly incessant French attacks, even if poorly executed by German estimations, that were becoming a psychosis of sorts for the German High Command, propelled by the fear of what would happen on the Western Front when Horatio Kitchener's (British Secretary of State for War) new British Expeditionary Force armies would appear.

**Germany's Western Front 1915** was more than a pleasant surprise to this reader and military historian. My overall awareness of the extent and depth of the near despair for the Germans was deeply increased and broadened by this narrative of the ongoing crisis of 1915 as seen through German eyes. Even if one lacks the specific background to fully understand the military operations, the underlying political and issues as set forth in **Germany's Western Front 1915** of military strategy vs. operational aims, coupled with a political strategy that often veered between moribund and flailing, is simply too interesting to ignore.

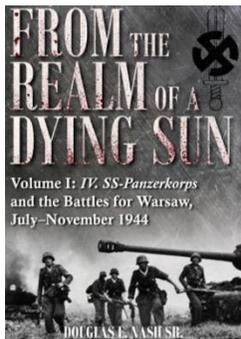
DR. (LTC) ROBERT G. SMITH

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**From the Realm of a Dying Sun. Volume I: IV SS-Panzerkorps and the Battles for Warsaw, July-November 1944** by Douglas E. Nash Sr.; Havertown, PA: Casemate Publishers; 2020; 552 pages illustrated, with appendices and endnotes; \$25.71 hardcover.

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Seldom in my time as a student of the Ost Front have I encountered a book that was so grim and gritty, yet so engrossing at the tactical, operational and strategic levels, as **Realm of a Dying Sun**. The impression it will create will be indelible and different than other books of its scope due to the enhanced perspective from the other side of the hill, giving the narrative the critical mental sinews to make the story whole. This story is one unimaginable to us as leaders: a war with little chance of victory, with diminishing resources, yet where we are still compelled to do our duty.



The volume starts out with a basic history of how the Panzer Corps was birthed. Frankly, I would be surprised if you don't find it fascinating from both the political and administrative processes. IV SS Panzer was to be another corps, but when it was stood up, all its cadre and leadership went with the other SS corps – hardly an auspicious birth for such a large unit. Add in the political infighting between the Wehrmacht and the Waffen SS even before the events of July 20, 1944 [an attempt to assassinate Adolf Hitler and initiate Operation Valkyrie], and you really see the volatile mix the author so neatly dissects and lays out here.

In terms of sheer history, the volume fills in what I have always seen as a poorly chronicled period of the war on the Eastern Front: the fight in Poland after the destruction of Army Group Centre. Is it because this is a period that doesn't sell well in the West? Is it because there were no sweeping operational victories for the Wehrmacht anymore? Instead this volume focuses on a grinding battle of attrition as the Wehrmacht and its IV SS Panzer counterparts are fighting a two-front war against the victorious Soviet Army fresh off the destruction of Army Group Centre and the Polish Home Army's uprising in Warsaw.

There is always a point of diminishing returns in warfare, but what do you do when your last recourse is to cannibalize and poach from other services – robbing Peter to pay Paul? And the quality of what you are extracting from Peter to pay Paul is problematic? This became an issue for IV SS Panzer because part of its replacement pipeline were surplus or superfluous Luftwaffe personnel or infantry soldiers who were “90 day wonders” while retaining their rank. Would you want as your new armor-company commander an officer inflicted upon you by a replacement system who was heretofore solely a public-affairs officer? That was the reality of the German manpower crisis in 1944.

Where the book shines is in bringing to light the months-long grinding struggle in front of Warsaw and much of the Vistula River front. Many World War II histories gloss over this period, as it is hard to easily summarize, nor were there any epic named battles. Instead, as this volume shows, it was a period where the Wehrmacht's and IV SS Panzer Corps' tactical acumen ruled for the most part their battlespace, often by desperate improvisation. It becomes mind-numbing reading of the incredible battle loss of wearers of the Knight Cross (think of it as a near parallel to the American Medal of Honor with exceptions), who were the key and near-irreplaceable tactical leaders at the company and battalion level.

The author's style of writing is both engrossing and detail-laden. The depictions and vividness of the stress of combat readily come across by both the overall writing and the structure Nash uses. I was able to follow the flow of most tactical actions in the mind's eye with little trouble.

The book is eminently readable and, unlike a myriad of other books that focus on units, never seems to get mired in writing mud but moves along briskly. Overall the volume is well-illustrated, and the reader will sense this is a well-researched book. Critically the book is well-steeped in doctrinal materials from both sides of the hill in a deft manner.

More importantly, Nash fills in that critical period after the Russian offensive Operation Bagration destroyed Army Group Centre in the summer of 1944. No other book so neatly and in such detail captures these desperate defensive armor struggles at Warsaw in the summer and autumn of 1944. It clearly presents and delineates that the Wehrmacht, and in particular IV SS Panzer Corps, were still a lethal foe. Be prepared for a grim, vivid and compelling page-turner.

**DR. (LTC) ROBERT G. SMITH**

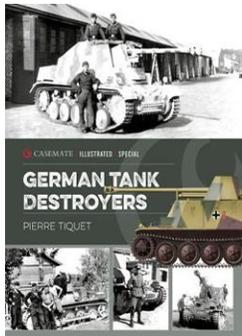
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***German Tank Destroyers*** by Pierre Tiquet; Havertown, PA: Casemate Publishers; 2021; 192 pages with photographs, appendix; \$39.95 hardcover.

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German victories against Poland and France were the result of the revolutionary employment of aircraft, radios and tanks to form a command-and-control system that swiftly responded to battlefield dynamics. Evaluating their performance, the Germans noted several equipment deficiencies. One of these flaws focused on an inability to destroy enemy armored forces. In his latest work, Pierre Tiquet evaluates eight tank-destroyer systems created to resolve this deficiency.

Even though the French poorly managed their armored forces, the towed German 37mm anti-tank gun was not up to the task of stopping individual enemy tanks. Soldiers derisively referred to the weapon as the “army door-knocker device.” Only the German 88mm was decisive when engaging the armor threat. To the Germans the answer to effectively destroying enemy armor lay in creating mobile weapon systems.



Given the paucity of available material, the initial German effort centered on the use of captured enemy equipment. Before they invaded Russia in June 1941, the Germans mounted the 47mm Czechoslovakian gun on the Panzer I chassis. This vehicle was known as the *Ente* (Duck). While effective against various Russian tanks, the vehicle lacked a radio, had limited cross-country mobility and was unable to deal with the Soviet T-34 tank, although almost 500 vehicles were fielded before they were withdrawn from front-line service.

To replace them, the Germans mounted a 75mm gun on a captured French Hotchkiss chassis. This vehicle was designated the *Marder I* (Marten). Its large silhouette and limited cross-country mobility allowed limited battlefield operations. However, the weapon system worked well against the Soviet armored formations.

As Tiquet details, this led to modifications of the original design. The *Marder II* mounted a German 75mm gun on a Panzer II chassis.

Given the vast amount of Russian equipment captured, the Germans improved the *Marder III* with the high-muzzle-velocity Russian 76.2mm gun mounted on the Czech 38 (t) chassis. The “t” represented the German designation of Czechoslovakian systems. The vehicle contained 30 main-gun rounds and had a high silhouette but was radio-equipped. A little more than 600 were eventually produced and served in North Africa, Russia, Italy and France.

Arguably the next two vehicles Tiquet describes were artillery weapons rather than pure anti-tank vehicles. Their ability to destroy a tank, however, was indisputable. The *Dicker Max* (Fat Max) mounted a 105mm gun on the Panzer IV chassis, while the *Sturer Emil* (Stubborn Emil) carried a 128mm mounted on a unique chassis. These vehicles required a logistical-support system that the Germans possessed in only a limited degree. Appreciating the destructiveness of the 88mm gun, the Germans mounted the gun on the *Hornisse* (Hornet) using either a Panzer III or IV chassis.

Two other systems were fielded to deal with ever-increasing Allied armored threat. The *Nashorn* (Rhinoceros) employed the 88mm on a unique chassis, while the *Elephant* also carried the 88mm. This vehicle was rushed into the 1943 Battle of Kursk. As the author details, the vehicle possessed too high a profile, had transmission and engine problems, a limited traverse and no weapon system to defend against infantry. The Russians destroyed a great number of these vehicles.

Tiquet's description of the *Hetzer* (Agitator), which mounted the German 75mm on the Czechoslovakian 38 (t), demonstrated German Innovation as they continued to modify current and captured materiel to their advantage. The low profile of this vehicle, along with that of the *Jagdpanzer* (tank destroyer) IV 70/75mm gun on a Panzer IV chassis, were highly effective tank destroyers that arrived too late in the war to be decisive.

Each of the systems Tiquet describes includes a vast amount of period photos, along with thumbnail sketches of personnel awarded decorations for their bravery using a given system. Also, various engagements in Europe, Russia, Italy and North Africa are described. Maps and comparison charts displaying such items as weight, height, ammunition type, muzzle velocity and number produced are not provided. These items would have aided the reader. These shortfalls require the reader to consult other reference works to appreciate the characteristics and employment of each vehicle.

Their use of captured enemy equipment, the development of tactics and techniques to enhance weapon effectiveness – along with an understanding of the effectiveness of camouflage by the Germans – demonstrates flexibility and inventiveness, traits which still apply to the battle grounds of today.

As the author notes, each of these vehicles had their challenges. They were cramped gas guzzlers, with limited room for ammunition, had no defensive weapons for attacks by infantry or air, were dependent on camouflage to survive, lacked a rotating turret and were difficult to operate. Despite these problems, maneuver commanders will find this work beneficial in appreciating how the Germans responded to battlefield demands.

**COL (R) D.J. JUDGE**

## **Acronym Quick-Scan**

**ACR** – armored cavalry regiment

**BEF** – British Expeditionary Force

**C2** – command and control

**GWOT** – Global War on Terrorism

**OHL** – Oberste Heeresleitung

**OIF** – Operation Iraqi Freedom