

# BOOK REVIEWS



One of the most controversial military leaders of World War II was (and still is) British Field Marshal Bernard Law Montgomery, victor at El Alamein in late 1942 and commander of the combined Anglo-American armies that stormed ashore in Normandy in June 1944.

Unfortunately, Nigel Hamilton's second of a planned three-volume Montgomery biography — **MASTER OF THE BATTLEFIELD: MONTY'S WAR YEARS, 1942-1944** (McGraw-Hill, 1983. 863 Pages. \$25.95) — does not in any way make Montgomery a less controversial military leader; if anything, it does just the opposite. In fact, in his almost total distortion of the Allied military campaigns in northwest Africa, Sicily, Italy, and Normandy, Hamilton does Montgomery a tremendous disservice and makes Montgomery appear a far less capable high-level military commander than even his harshest critics claim.

Montgomery was never a team player, and he had little use for his American allies. (For that matter, he didn't care much for the Canadians and the Poles.) He could barely conceal his contempt for the Americans after the Kasserine Pass fiasco, and his almost complete lack of regard for the U.S. commanders dominated the later campaign in Sicily. His actions during the early days of the Italian invasion reeked of this same contempt. (It is probably only fair to say that most of the senior British commanders in Europe at this time felt the same way.)

The Normandy operation should have been regarded as the great Allied victory it was, but Montgomery's ego stood in the way and his insistence that "every thing had gone exactly as I had planned it" destroyed any sense of victory and led to serious divisions in the Allied ranks before the war ended in

May 1945.

Fortunately, there is a corrective to the Hamilton story about Montgomery's actions in planning for and executing the 1944 invasion of northwest France. In fact, no other author has presented a better description of Montgomery's role in that operation and the 76 days of heavy fighting that began on 6 June and ended at Falaise and Argentan on 17 August than Carlo d'Este in his book **DECISION IN NORMANDY** (Dutton, 1983. 555 Pages. \$22.50). The author served as an officer in the United States Army from 1958 to 1978, when he retired to research and write this book. He has done both exceedingly well, and his book should prove one of the definitive accounts of what actually transpired in Normandy — how the campaign went wrong and how it was eventually won.

Along the way, d'Este attacks the British official military history of the Normandy campaign, accusing the British historians of relying on incomplete documentary evidence and criticizing them for their "clear lack of objectivity and a failure to address a number of important questions."

Since 1945, a myth has grown up about Montgomery's role in Normandy and has been perpetuated and enlarged upon mainly by British writers, the latest being Nigel Hamilton. D'Este's book destroys that myth, and U.S. military men are urged to read it at their earliest opportunity.

Another book on the fighting in Normandy that the U.S. military professional should read is Max Hastings' **OVERLORD: D-DAY AND THE BATTLE FOR NORMANDY** (Simon and Schuster, 1984. 368 Pages. \$17.95).

Hastings is a British war correspondent and military historian with a long list of previously published works to

his credit, including one on the Falklands war. He takes a less rigorous approach than d'Este, but he did read d'Este's manuscript before writing his own book.

What concerns Hastings the most is the fact that few people today realize "just how intense were the early OVERLORD battles." He goes on to say, "In the demands that they made upon the foot soldier, they came closer than any other in the west in the Second World War to matching the horror of the eastern front or of Flanders 30 years earlier. Many British and American infantry units suffered over 100 percent casualties in the course of the summer, and most German units did so."

Hastings, therefore, concentrates on how the German, British, and American ground troops performed. He feels that the "German Army's achievement in Normandy was very great" and that the "Allies in Normandy faced the finest fighting army of the war, one of the greatest that the world has ever seen."

He also feels that it was "not that the Allied armies in Normandy were seriously incompetent, merely that the margin of German professional superiority was sufficient to cause them very great difficulties."

By the first week in August 1944, though, as Hastings points out, the "balance of psychological advantage had at last shifted decisively" and "the Americans had gained a new confidence in their own powers." He says, "Isolated infantry units held their ground; headquarters staffs kept their nerve; the American forces dispatched to meet the Germans [at Mortain] drove hard and sure to throw back the panzers."

The U.S. war in the Pacific between 1941 and 1945 has never received the attention the war in Europe has but

two recent publications go a long way toward balancing the difference.

One is Ronald H. Spector's *EAGLE AGAINST THE SUN: THE AMERICAN WAR WITH JAPAN* (The Free Press, Macmillan, 1985. 589 Pages. \$24.95), which is one of the volumes in the publisher's series titled "Wars of the United States."

Spector now teaches history at the University of Alabama, and holds a commission as a major in the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve. He previously served with the Army's Center of Military History, and was recently ordered to active duty to prepare a study of the Grenada operation.

Spector's is a complete, if sometimes opinionated, story of the war in the Pacific — ground, air and sea — and includes the happenings in the China-Burma-India theater. He also includes an account of the Army's only Black combat units to see action in the Pacific — elements of the 93d Division — and of the Black service units that served in the Marine Corps.

His chapter titled "Strangers in Strange Lands" graphically portrays how the American fighting man and his supporting elements reacted to the largely inhospitable environment.

Spector concludes his narrative by saying that "for the United States, the record of the Pacific War is not so much a story of how the services forgot their differences but rather of the ingenuity displayed by service leaders in devising courses of action which allowed them to get on with the war without having to settle those differences."

There are generalized notes at the end of each chapter and a rather complete bibliographic note just before a comprehensive index. An excellent reference work, this book should be remembered by the U.S. military professional.

The second Pacific War publication is Edward J. Drea's *DEFENDING THE DRINIUMOR: COVERING FORCE OPERATIONS IN NEW GUINEA, 1944* (Leavenworth Papers Number 9, Combat Studies Institute, Fort Leavenworth, 1984. 182 Pages. \$5.00, Softbound).

The main strength of this volume for the infantryman lies in its account of the small unit actions that were fought during General Douglas MacArthur's Aitape, New Guinea campaign in mid-1944.

The author, formerly with the Combat Studies Institute at Fort Leavenworth but now with the Military History Institute at Carlisle Barracks, was well qualified to write this study. A U.S. Air Force veteran, he lived and studied in Japan for six years. He has authored one other Leavenworth Paper.

In this volume, Drea concentrates on the performance of the 112th Cavalry Regiment and those elements of the 32d Infantry Division that fought units from the Japanese 18th Army along the Driniumor River for 45 days in a series of small but bitter engagements. He not only provides a day-by-day account of the battle, he also addresses tactical planning, logistics, and combat support.

Both sides experienced enormous difficulties in the hostile jungle terrain, and Drea points out that neither army had a sophisticated doctrine for jungle warfare. Accordingly, the combat units themselves had to improvise doctrine as the fighting went on.

Drea does not neglect the big picture, or the importance of Ultra information to the success of the overall operation. But the importance of his work is his tactical narrative and the lessons that this long-ago action on New Guinea can offer today's U.S. fighting man.

We would also call your attention to a good, solid, and generally dependable one-volume military history of the United States — *FOR THE COMMON DEFENSE*, by Allen R. Millett and Peter Maslowski (Free Press, Macmillan, 1984. 621 Pages. \$24.95).

The authors, both of whom teach history at the university level, present a straightforward historical narrative, concentrating their attention not only on the military services and their combat operations but on the political, economic, and social factors that helped shape this country's military policies. The focus on social factors is

particularly evident is the later chapters.

A selected bibliography can be found at the end of each chapter — a nice touch — while a general bibliography can be found at the end of the book.

Professor Maslowski wrote the first nine chapters while Professor Millett prepared the other eight and the epilogue. As a general history of American military policy, we do not hesitate to recommend it to the military professional for study and reference.

A new publication, in softbound form, has just come to our attention. It is titled *DEFENSE ANALYSIS* and is produced by Brassey's Defence Publishers. Its Volume 1, Number 1 is dated March 1985, and its North American editor is Roger Beaumont, a professor of history at Texas A&M University. Four issues a year will be published. The publisher intends this publication as a "new kind of forum," one that will "open up discussion and analysis in defense studies."

This first issue contains four articles, four professional notes, and a short section titled "Landmarks in Defense Literature."

All in all, this publication should attract considerable attention at the higher military levels in this country. It may not be the sort of thing junior infantrymen find helpful and informative, but they should at least look at it.

Finally, in our May-June 1985 issue, we mentioned the Osprey Publishing Company's several series of uniform books, one of which is titled *Men-at-Arms*. We also mentioned several of the more recent publications in that series. We have now received another one that U.S. infantrymen should find most interesting: *GRENADA, 1983*, with a text by Lee E. Russell and M. Albert Mendez, and color plates by Paul Hannon. (*Men-at-Arms* 159. 1985. 48 pages. \$7.95, Softbound.) In addition to the eight color plates, numerous black-and-white photographs complement the short but concise and seemingly complete narrative that covers the activities of all of the military services.

operating under stringent rules of engagement, American personnel accomplished their missions with prudence and valour....The military skills of every participant were tested and found sound. Hopefully, the Grenada operation will serve a similar purpose to the Falklands war, as a symbol of military professionalism and a national resolve to keep faith with its citizens in peril."

Here are a number of our longer reviews of recently published books:

**THE END OF CHIVALRY: THE LAST GREAT CAVALRY BATTLES, 1914-1918**, by Alexis Wrangel (Hippocrene Books, 1982. 176 Pages. \$24.95). Reviewed by Lieutenant Colonel David A. Rolston, United States Army.

The author has collected a number of eyewitness accounts of World War I Russian cavalry battles and presents them in the story-telling style of oral history.

While the stories are interesting, the reader gets the feeling that old men's memories may have drifted far from fact during the 60-odd years between living the battles and telling of them.

The author makes no attempt to analyze the battles for significant lessons or historical significance. But this is still a worthwhile book for peo-

ple who enjoy the reminiscing of their elders and those who wish to get the flavor of Russian cavalry units of the past.

**THE SOURCES OF MILITARY DOCTRINE: FRANCE, BRITAIN AND GERMANY BETWEEN THE WORLD WARS.** By Barry R. Posen (Cornell University Press, 1984. 282 Pages). Reviewed by Lieutenant Colonel John C. Spence III, United States Army Reserve.

Why did Germany's blitzkrieg offensive succeed so well in the spring of 1940, and why did Germany's air offensive against England fall just a few months later? The answers to these paradoxical questions can be found in Barry Posen's illuminating and well-researched study of comparative military doctrine.

Posen, an assistant professor of politics and international affairs at Princeton University, carefully examines the military doctrines of France, Britain, and Germany in the interwar period. His methodology focuses on the various doctrines in terms of the theory of balance of power and the theory of organization. Both of these theories, Posen points out, are useful in explaining the be-

havior of states during the past several centuries. For instance, the balance of power theory explains the behavior of states in an essentially "unregulated environment." On the other hand, organization theory can be used to explain organizational behavior when there are "functionally specialized bureaucracies."

Specifically, Posen points out that organization theory explains the French tendency after World War I to develop a primarily defensive doctrine. It can also explain the development by the British of the RAF Fighter Command and the air defense system.

Likewise, the balance of power theory explains much of the behavior of the three subject states during the interwar period. Thus, Germany, a pariah nation after the Treaty of Versailles, had no firm allies and had to rely on her own devices. Britain and France had to rely on each other in terms of a coalition.

Posen concludes that the balance of power theory is a "slightly more powerful tool" than organizational theory for the purposes of the study of doctrine. He deemphasizes technology and geography as elements of military doctrine.

This book is of great interest to the student of both military history and military strategy. Posen's analysis

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