

BOOK REVIEWS



Victory at Any Cost: The Genius of Viet Nam's Gen. Vo Nguyen Giap. By Cecil B. Currey. Brassey's, 1997. 401 Pages \$25.95. Reviewed by Dr. Joe P. Dunn, Converse College.

Cecil Currey, a retired U.S. Army Reserve chaplain who again retired last year as an academic professor of military history, has been a prolific writer. The most important of his ten works are the first two parts of the trilogy that this book completes—*Self-Destruction: The Disintegration and Decay of the United States Army During the Vietnam Era* (1981), an extremely controversial book, and *Edward Lansdale: The Unquiet American* (1988).

We have needed a good biographical study of the victorious North Vietnamese general for some time, and this volume—designated an Association of the United States Army book and a History Book Club selection—is an interesting, readable, and useful study.

Currey paints a picture of Giap as bright, adaptive, creative, a genius of organizational skills, a vain man of indomitable will who would pay any price for victory. As Currey traces Giap's military career, which is simultaneously the history of the communist revolutionary movement in Vietnam, he offers increased insight into the perspective of an adversary.

For his sources, the author employs Vietnamese and American writings, an extensive questionnaire and interviews with Giap and other Vietnamese, and a thorough grounding in the secondary literature. Throughout the study, he provides new details on various aspects of the war. Particularly valuable is an enhanced perspective on U.S. relations with Ho Chi Minh and Giap at the end of World War II and in the early years of the French-Indochina War. Also interesting are Giap's reservations about the change of strategy in Tet 1968 and his efforts at recovery after that disaster. The book brings the story of both Giap and Vietnam up through the octogenarian's retirement years after being "kicked upstairs" following the defeat of the Americans.

As the author admits, the heavy reliance upon the recollections of Giap himself entails certain limitations; but until Vietnam-

ese historical archives are more open than they are at present, this will stand as the best work available on the illusive general. It is fascinating reading for scholar and general reader alike.

Ernie Pyle's War: America's Eyewitness to World War II. By James Tobin. The Free Press, 1997. 312 Pages. \$25.00. Reviewed by Ralph W. Widener, Jr., Dallas, Texas.

This is the story of a very talented writer who was better able than any other World War II correspondent to relate what was happening on the battlefield to the folks back home. He did this in such a way that they could see their men in uniform winning the war, despite the carnage it produced. And he did this despite the constraints of wartime censorship.

It is also the story of the fighting man's admiration for Ernie Pyle. For one thing, the soldiers enjoyed the attention he gave them. In one of his columns, he wrote, "Your average doughfoot will go through his normal hell a lot more willingly if he knows that he is getting some credit for it, and that the home folks know about it, too."

Pyle was not the only correspondent who traveled with the troops, but he was the only one to gain their universal approval. As Tobin points out, "As a rule, GI's distrusted correspondents as flashy cowards without the guts to stay near the front any longer than was necessary to grab a quick quote. They were outraged by headline hype about dashing columns and effortless gains which left out their agonies." Pyle, on the other hand, "was universally regarded as a 'guy who knows how it is' because he lived at the front, did many of the things they did, and sweated it out with them."

This is also the story of a man who, during the war, would take to his bed (a cot, or the ground itself when with the troops) with physical ailments and a great sense of depression. These, he told his bosses at Scripps-Howard, resulted from being so long under the strain and tension of combat. He was not alone. Audie Murphy, World War II's most-decorated soldier, felt this way to the end of his life.

It's also the story of a man whose personal life back home was anything but what it should have been. His wife, Geraldine, moved between alcoholic breakdowns and moody depressions, each time imploring him to come home and give up the war. Though he often wanted to heed her advice, he could not do this once he had spent time with the troops. Fortunately for the reader, Tobin uses many of the letters between them in his book.

The book ends with Pyle going to the Pacific because he felt he owed it to the fighting men there, men he had not yet favored with his columns home. He moved to the fighting front on Ie Shima, a small island near Okinawa and, on April 18, 1945, did what he had told the men in Europe not to do: He stuck his head up to see where the enemy was and was shot dead by a Japanese machinegunner.

This interesting book about a man who was loved by the people at home, as well as those on the battlefield, will be just as appreciated today as his columns were more than 50 years ago.

Stalin's Lieutenants: A Study of Command Under Duress. By William J. Spahr. Presidio, 1997. 352 Pages. \$24.95. Reviewed by Colonel George G. Eddy, U.S. Army, Retired.

As Stalin rose in power and authority, especially after Lenin's death when it had appeared that Trotsky would prevail as the legitimate successor, he became more ruthless, barbaric, and bloodthirsty than ever. As huge as the battlefield casualties were—estimated at 27 million (Stalin was personally responsible for millions of combat deaths due to his bungling and intermittent interventions)—the executions of suspected traitors based on fabricated evidence was seemingly endless. To the paranoid Stalin, everyone, even the very top military commanders who helped the Red Army prevail, was a potential suspect. No one Stalin fingered was able to escape. These purges of key military commanders not long before the German invasion put Russia in such a precarious state it was a wonder the country survived. Weather, terrain, and space

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proved to be critical factors. But, for the Red Army commander: a favorite one day, a corpse the next.

"At the end of the 1920s," writes the author, "there had been a purge of officers and political workers suspected of being in sympathy with the Trotsky opposition. In the early 1930s there had been a purge of former officers of the old army. In this case more than 3,000 officers were not only dismissed, but the victims were tried on the basis of falsified evidence. According to Voroshilov a total of 47,000 officers were dismissed in these two purges, including 5,000 who were members of the Trotsky opposition. In mid-1936, arrests of Red Army commanders began again...." As Eugene Lyons noted in his 1941 book *The Red Decade*, "It was official carnage unprecedented for size and imbecilic in detail...at least 50,000 communists, officials, professors, economists were killed without the formality of trials; the country's foremost generals, admirals and marshals were executed and four-fifths of the higher officers' corps, about 30,000 Red Army, Navy, and Aviation specialists, were 'liquidated' by exile, demotions and execution; a terror more frightful than anything in a thousand years of Russia's sanguinary history swept through the country, leaving mountains of corpses in its wake."

What has to be considered miraculous is that so many officers braved this ferocious and terrifying bloodletting storm and continued to serve the army and the country, never knowing when they might be the next victims. These men successfully defeated the White Russian forces, the Poles, the Finns, the Japanese, and finally the Germans while struggling in a ravaged and devastated country, inadequate foodstuffs, shelter and clothing, an economy in shambles without a meaningful infrastructure. Roads were nonexistent in many parts of Russia, mere ruts and trails, communications in pathetic condition, and rail lines and rolling stock woefully inadequate for so vast a country.

Why did the leaders and the followers continue to fight? Mere love of country and a chance, however slight, of a better existence? Some observers might respond, "What other choice did they have?" Surely, however, this love of the land alone cannot explain how the leaders were able to develop proper units, and increasingly larger ones, and motivate desired performance. The author is silent on how these top Red Army commanders, Stalin's lieutenants, carried out this significant task. While the army at the outset was forced to depend on officers who had fought in the Tsarist army,

the "specialists" as Spahr identifies them, the subsequent leaders were largely uneducated peasants. How did they learn so fast? Again, we don't get much help from the author here. The Russian experience adds new meaning to "learning on the job." Several military academies were launched to help train future commanders, but these did not exist during the fighting against the White Russians in the nascent days of the new Red Army.

The chief flaw of this book is the amount of detail the reader must plod through, trying to piece together major events, organizations, their leaders, and dispositions without maps, organizational structures, or order of battle information.

***Small Wars: Their Principles and Practices.* By Colonel C.E. Callwell. Third edition reprint. Bison Books, 1996. 559 Pages. \$25.00.** Reviewed by Lieutenant Colonel Harold E. Raugh, Jr., U.S. Army.

United States military operations in the past quarter-century (with the exception of the Persian Gulf War), including those in Beirut, Grenada, Panama, Somalia, Haiti, and Bosnia, are reminiscent of Queen Victoria's "little Wars" of a century ago. Indeed, Rudyard Kipling called them "the savage wars of peace."

Originally published in 1896, *Small Wars* was written by Colonel (later Major-General Sir) C.E. Callwell. The third edition, of which this is a facsimile reprint, was published in 1906, with updated information from British operations in India, the Sudan, South Africa, and elsewhere, and the U.S. campaign in the Philippines. This new edition includes an insightful introduction by military historian Douglas Porch.

Callwell considered the term "small war" difficult to define, but said it "is simply used to denote, in default of a better [term], operations of regular armies against irregular, or comparatively speaking irregular, forces." In his study, he did not intend to cover all aspects of fighting small wars; he believed the details of logistics and administration were covered sufficiently in military publications. The purpose of his book was to give a "sketch of the principles and practices of small wars as regards strategy and tactics...."

The initial chapters of the book highlight the causes and objectives of small wars. The subsequent chapters emphasize various aspects of intelligence; the importance of "boldness and vigour," offensive, defensive, infantry, cavalry, and mounted camel tactics; hill, bush, and night warfare; and many

other contemporary topics. Of significant interest is the chapter on guerrilla warfare in general. All chapters include detailed examples of British, French, and even American military operations, of the Victorian and Edwardian eras. These examples illustrate the author's encyclopedic knowledge of, and experience in, many of the campaigns he wrote about.

This book also chronicles, probably unwittingly, the evolution of warfare during the period of imperial expansion. Technology (then and now) could never substitute for tactics or strategy, countering enemy mobility, the ability to adapt to different terrain and climates, and timely and accurate intelligence. The regular forces in the small wars depicted, even though seemingly technologically superior, were not always successful in defeating their opponents. This, according to Callwell, was because commanders frequently did not foresee and prepare for differing facets of the campaigns, and occasionally did not understand the habits, customs, and tactics of their "inferior" enemy. The key to success was quick, decisive battle. These lessons should not be lost on today's military leaders.

Small Wars is not just a treatise on military history and tactics; it is also a primer for potential future military operations. In 1906 the British Chief of the Imperial General Staff recommended this third edition as "a valuable contribution on the subject of the conduct of small wars...full of useful facts and information on all the details...of those minor expeditions..." The same recommendation for this informative and analytical book is still valid today.

***The Sleeping Giant: America's Armed Forces Between the Wars.* By J.E. Kaufman and H.W. Kaufman. Praeger, 1996. 212 Pages, \$55.00.** Reviewed by Lieutenant Colonel Albert N. Garland, U.S. Army, Retired.

The period between 1920 and 1940 was not a happy time for our military services, although some fared better than others. With little popular support and even less presidential and congressional backing, the services struggled to retain some aura of military credibility, despite ever-shrinking budgets and manpower allocations. As bad as 1920s were, the 1930s (at least until 1938) were even worse as the country suffered through a severe economic depression.

The authors, both teachers in the Texas educational system, have attempted in this book to tell us what the services did to maintain their sanity. To do this, they have

adopted a less-than-comprehensive approach. In their words, the book "synthesizes the history of all the armed forces as well as the development of strategy and tactics in the interwar period."

Unfortunately, they devoted most of their attention to a few specific areas of interest: naval and air maneuvers; development of naval air and the aircraft carrier; the Army Air Corps' attempts, beginning with Billy Mitchell, to gain greater recognition and increased budgets; and our coastal defense systems, both at home and abroad.

With the latter exception, the Army's story is almost totally neglected until the late chapters because, the authors say, "the bulk of the Army rarely found itself in the lime-light during this period." From this, I got the distinct impression that if an Army story did not appear in *Time* magazine, it was not worth mentioning.

Much must be omitted in any synthesis, and so it is with this book. The most important omission was the authors' decision to ignore the human element, to tell us about the men who manned the guns, the planes, and the ships. Who were they? Where did they come from? How were they trained? Who made up the officer and noncommissioned officer corps? And by ignoring the service school systems, the authors made a serious mistake, for it was these systems that did more than any other single agency to hold the services together and to keep them striving, and thinking, and pushing developments despite the paucity of resources.

The authors do include a bibliography (mainly secondary works), a list of abbreviations, and a useful index. There are other syntheses available that may offer a different slant on the same era, and these should also be consulted. Overall, though, much remains to be done in writing any history of this 20-year period.

Fighting on the Brink: Defense of the Pusan Perimeter. By Brigadier General Uzal T. Ent, U.S. Army Retired. Turner Publishing Company, 1996. 431 Pages. \$49.95. Reviewed by Lieutenant Colonel Michael F. Davino, U.S. Army.

During the summer of 1950, the U.S. Army was engaged in a desperate struggle on the Korean Peninsula. The undermanned and incompletely trained Eighth U.S. Army traded space for the time the U.S. and its allies needed to marshal forces for a counter-offensive.

General Ent's *Fighting on the Brink* is a close study of this phase of the Korean War. It covers the situation before hostilities, the

invasion by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the defense of the Pusan Perimeter, and the eventual breakout and pursuit of the North Korean forces.

Although recent generations of Army leaders have devoted their efforts to trying to see that we never again face the need to conduct similar operations, this possibility cannot be entirely ruled out. We cannot be sure that future enemies will allow us the time to build up a huge force before the start of a war, as was the case in the Persian Gulf. Even today in Korea, where the Combined Force Command maintains two formidable field armies, many of the allied divisions are located in vulnerable garrisons within artillery range of the north Koreans. If these divisions are to survive largely intact and with time to assemble in the opening stages of a conflict, they will require a clear and unambiguous warning of an impending attack. Since this is something our intelligence apparatus has failed to provide in the past, we cannot be assured of entering such a war with complete units.

Additionally, if Korea is the second of two nearly simultaneous major theater wars, we may once again be fighting a prolonged defensive campaign. Therefore, leaders en route to an assignment in Korea would profit from reading this excellent book.

The author, a veteran of the campaign, has researched this critical period of the war in great detail. He makes extensive use of the official records and previous literature, but also includes the first-hand recollections of hundreds of participants. The narrative is full of lessons on the use of fire support, especially close air support, defensive warfare, and the conduct of counterattacks.

General Ent's accounts of the delaying actions and the fight to establish and maintain the so-called Pusan Perimeter are the most comprehensive published to date. He describes and analyzes the actions of units as well as the decisions made by leaders at all levels and is candid in his assessments.

This work could have been improved in the areas of editing and documentation. There are typographical errors throughout the text, and documentation consists of a list of sources, by chapter, at the end of the book. A more conventional documentation (sequentially numbered end-notes or footnotes) would have been more helpful to readers who want to do further research.

The author has succeeded in his objective of writing a definitive account of this crucial campaign. The book documents and explains the efforts of U.S. and allied forces to give General of the Army Douglas MacArthur the time he needed to launch the am-

phibious assault at Inchon.

Serious students of the Korean War will want this book for their libraries. The detailed accounts of small-unit actions also make it especially valuable for small-unit leaders.

Agent of Destiny: The Life and Times of General Winfield Scott. By John S.D. Eisenhower. The Free Press, 1997. 464 Pages. \$27.50. Reviewed by Colonel Cole C. Kingseed, U.S. Army.

No military officer more indelibly imprinted his personality on his age than did Winfield Scott. A hero of the War of 1812, the conqueror of Mexico City in the Mexican War, Scott was general-in-chief of the United States Army at the outbreak of the American Civil War. His military career spanned more than half a century, from 1808 to his forced retirement in 1861, during which time the fledgling American republic expanded from the Atlantic seaboard westward to the Pacific. In the process, Scott emerged as the nation's first truly professional soldier and one of its most vocal advocates of Manifest Destiny. In this, his latest book on the Mexican-American War, John Eisenhower has produced the definitive biography of this magnificent soldier.

For those unfamiliar with the U.S. Army of the first half of the 19th century, this biography will make compelling reading. Eisenhower's Scott emerges as an officer driven by personal thirst for prominence and prosperity. Introduced to the national scene as a spectator at Aaron Burr's treason trial in 1807, Scott joined the Army and won rapid promotion in the aftermath of military debacles in the War of 1812. He ended the war as a national hero, having contributed significantly to U.S. victories at Chippewa and Lundy's Lane. Between that war and the Mexican War, Scott played an integral role in revising Army doctrine and creating a sound military establishment. Appointed general-in-chief of the U.S. Army in 1841, Scott reached his zenith as a military commander in his conquest of Mexico in a brilliantly conducted campaign from Vera Cruz to Mexico City in 1847.

Still, his career was not without mishap. Three times, he found himself before a court martial, and once, he was convicted of "un-officer-like conduct," incurring a year's suspension from the Army. As the author says, it was a "shaky" beginning for an ambitious officer. On numerous occasions, his rivalry with Generals Alexander Macomb, Andrew Jackson, and Edmund Gaines earned censure from numerous presidents and secretaries of

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war. Not surprisingly, Scott's military influence waned in the aftermath of the war with Mexico, due in no small part to his private and public flirtations with politics, an arena in which he was not particularly adept. His retirement in 1861 was as much a result of Lincoln's lack of confidence as of General George McClellan's own ambition.

In the final analysis, Eisenhower's greatest contribution is not in relating Scott's military exploits but in analyzing his relationship with civil authority. Scott served 14 presidents, 13 as a general officer. With his headquarters alternating between New York and Washington, Scott established cordial relationships with most of the country's leading politicians. Perhaps his greatest achievement lay in his efforts to avert a third war with Great Britain over a boundary dispute in the Maine wilderness. Scott was also the Whig Party's last candidate for president in 1852. In the aftermath of the election, Presidents Franklin Pierce and his successor, James Buchanan, relegated Scott to the sidelines as the Union drifted to dissolution.

In the pantheon of American military heroes, Eisenhower rates Scott "a military giant," who was his country's most prominent general for the four decades preceding the Civil War. Although he was not the architect of Manifest Destiny, Scott was the principal agent for the consolidation of the nation as a single unity and for its expansion. Herein lies Scott's greatest achievement.

Chancellorsville. By Stephen W. Sears. Houghton Mifflin, 1996. 593 Pages. \$35.00. Reviewed by Major Don Rightmyer, U.S. Air Force, Retired.

Stephen Sears, the author of previous Civil War histories on the battles of Antietam (*Landscape Turned Red*), the Peninsula Campaign of 1862 (*To the Gates of Richmond*), and a biography of General George B. McClellan (*George B. McClellan: The Young Napoleon*), has provided another excellent Civil War history, this time examining the campaign and battle of Chancellorsville in the spring of 1863. This book may be the best history of its type that Sears has produced.

The Army of the Potomac was in real trouble in early 1863. Its beloved commander, George McClellan, had been relieved of command the previous fall, after the battle of Antietam. The army had suffered an ignominious defeat at Fredericksburg under the command of General Ambrose Burnside. Senior officers of the Potomac army were disloyal toward their

commander, one of the key people among them being General Joseph Hooker.

Despite that, President Lincoln placed General Hooker in command of the army and gave him responsibility for its spring offensive against the army of General Robert E. Lee. The battle of Chancellorsville was another serious defeat for the eastern Union army, and for Hooker's removal from army command as well. Sears provides a very fair, even-handed coverage of Hooker's efforts to reorganize the army and carry out a strategy that he hoped would result in the defeat of the Army of Northern Virginia once and for all. Despite Lee's audacious division of his forces in the face of the Union army and the loss of his able subordinate, General T.J. "Stonewall" Jackson, at dusk on the first day of the battle, the Southern commander was able to deal a solid defeat to the Army of the Potomac and send them back to where they had started their campaign.

This is the best history and analysis of the Chancellorsville campaign ever written. It goes into considerable detail for all aspects of planning, logistics, cavalry operations, and combat actions during the two days of the battle. It will certainly stand for some time as the best work done on Chancellorsville in several decades. Others have been published but, in comparison with this work, they are only surveys of the battle.

For students of the Civil War, we can only wait with anticipation for the next Civil War campaign that will attract the attention of Stephen Sears. It always seems well worth the wait and the time necessary to read one of his excellent volumes. *Chancellorsville* is highly recommended.

RECENT AND RECOMMENDED

Drawing Fire: A Combat Artist at War: Pacific, Europe, Korea, Indochina, Vietnam. By Howard Brodie. Portola Press (P.O. Box 911, Los Altos, CA 94023), 1996. 159 Pages. \$16.95, Softbound.

Twilight Warriors: Inside the World's Special Forces. By Martin C. Arostegui. St. Martin's, 1998. 346 Pages. \$6.99.

Inside Hitler's Headquarters. By General Walter Warlimont. Originally published by Bernard & Graefe Verlag, 1962. Presidio, 1997. 672 Pages. \$19.95.

The Battle for Hunger Hill: The 1st Battalion, 327th Infantry Regiment at the Joint Readiness Training Center. By Daniel P. Bolger. Presidio, 1997. 384 Pages. \$24.95.

The Company They Keep: Life Inside the U.S. Army Special Forces. By Anna Simons. The Free Press, 1997. 240 Pages. \$25.00, Hardcover.

Drop Zone Sicily: Allied Airborne Strike, July 1943. By William B. Breuer. Originally published in 1983. Presidio, 1997. 240 Pages. \$14.95, Softbound.

A Piece of My Heart: The Stories of 26 American Women Who Served in Vietnam. By Keith Walker. Presidio, 1997. 352 Pages. \$15.95, Softbound.

Sabres in the Shenandoah: The 21st New York Cavalry, 1863-1866. By John C. Bonnell, Jr. White Mane Publishing Company (P.O. Box 152, Shippensburg, PA 17257), 1997. 377 Pages. \$34.95.

Rebel Watchdog: The Confederate States Army Provost Guard. By Kenneth Radley. Originally published in 1989. Louisiana State University Press, 1997. 340 Pages. \$16.95, Softbound.

The Rakkasans: The Combat History of the 187th Airborne Infantry. By Lt. Gen. E.M. Flanagan, Jr., U.S. Army, Retired. Presidio, 1997. 416 Pages. \$27.95.

Six Silent Men: 101st LRP/Rangers: Book Two. Ballantine, 1997. 293 Pages. \$5.99.

Storm Over Iraq: Air Power and the Gulf War. By Richard P. Hallion. Smithsonian, 1997. 383 Pages. \$16.95.

Relieved of Command. By Benjamin S. Persons. Sunflower University Press (P.O. Box 1009, Manhattan, KS 66505-1009), 1997. 109 Pages. \$20.95.

Mosquitoes to Wolves: The Evolution of the Airborne Forward Air Controller. By Gary Robert Lester. Air University Press, 1997. 280 Pages.

A Stupendous Effort: The 87th Indiana in the War of the Rebellion. By Jack K. Overmyer. Indiana University Press, 1997. 288 Pages. \$29.95.

Parachute Infantry: An American Paratrooper's Memoir of D-Day and the Fall of the Third Reich. By David Kenyon Webster. Originally published in 1994. Louisiana State University Press, 1997. 288 Pages. \$12.95.

Stalking the Vietcong: Inside Operation Phoenix: A Personal Account. By Stuart A. Herrington. Originally published as *Silence Was A Weapon*, 1982. Presidio, 1997. 240 Pages. \$14.95, Softbound.

Invasion Balkans! The German Campaign in the Balkans, Spring 1941. By George E. Blau. White Mane Publishing Company (P.O. Box 152, Shippensburg, PA 17257), 1997. 164 Pages. \$19.95.

Apollo's Warriors: United States Air Force Special Operations During the Cold War. By Colonel Michael E. Haas, USAF, Retired. Air University Press, 1997. For sale by Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402-9325. 369 Pages.

Vendetta: Castro and the Kennedy Brothers. By William B. Breuer. Wiley, 1998. 278 Pages. \$24.95.

Firepower in Limited War. Revised Edition. By Robert H. Scales, Jr. Presidio, 1997. 352 Pages. \$17.95.

The Invention that Changed the World: How a Small Group of Radar Pioneers Won the Second World War and Launched a Technological Revolution. By Robert Buder. Touchstone Books, 1998. 575 Pages. \$12.00, Softbound.

Patton's Ghost Corps: Cracking the Siegfried Line. By Nathan N. Prefer. Presidio, 1998. 288 Pages. \$24.95.

My Just War: The Memoir of a Jewish Red Army Soldier in World War II. By Gabriel Temkin. Presidio, 1998. 272 Pages. \$24.95..