

# BOOK REVIEWS



***Maneuver and Firepower: The Evolution of Divisions and Separate Brigades.*** By John B. Wilson. The Army Lineage Series. Center of Military History, United States Army, 1998. 469 Pages. \$36.00 (GPO S/N 008-029-00340-6). Reviewed by Lieutenant Colonel Albert N. Garland, U.S. Army, Retired.

The author of this volume was a member of the Organizational History Branch of the Center of Military History from 1968 until he retired in 1997. He worked on one other book in the lineage series and authored several articles on various aspects of organizational history and evolution.

Although Wilson finished most of his manuscript in 1990, he returned to the Center to add a short chapter detailing the changes in the Army's organizational structure between 1990 and 1996. This became necessary because of the time it took for the Center to get the volume ready for publication; some official histories have taken longer.

Overall, Wilson has done an excellent job of mixing history with minute organizational details and in accomplishing what he set out to do: to tell the story of "the evolution of divisions and separate brigades in the U.S. Army as it searched for the most effective way to fuse combat arms, combat support, and service units into combined arms teams."

Having lived through roughly 60 years of the Army's recent history—either in or closely connected with, or an ardent observer of, Army matters—I found that Wilson's narrative and even the usual boring descriptions of unit structures, brought back many memories—some fond, some not so fond. I can recall the arguments between advocates of the square and triangular divisions; the disappearance of brigades from organizational tables, which I thought was a good idea then and was sorry to see them brought back; the ridiculous Pentomic division that eliminated the regiment from our structure, all to please one senior officer and an action that plagues the Army to this day: the rise of Army aviation and the tremendous battles with the Air Force ("anything with wings belongs to the USAF"); Division-86; and the Army of Excellence (AOE);

plus the many other efforts undertaken by goodness knows whom and for goodness knows what purpose: ROCID, ROAD, CARS, ARS, and on and on.

Wilson tells all these stories after he uses his first four chapters to get his reader to the World War I era and the eventual authorization, for the first time in our history, of permanent brigades and divisions, which was accomplished by the passage of the National Defense Act of 1916. The 1st Division, now the 1st Infantry Division, was our first permanent division, and it came into being on 6 July 1917 in France.

Many things in this book stood out for me. Until almost the outbreak of World War II, our organizations were formulated on the basic assumption that they would fight within the United States, not overseas. Until then, our commitment to foreign wars was considered an aberration.

Another item was the number of civilians authorized within each division, again until the late 1930s. These could be found in the service units, but I could not help wondering about their status. Wilson does not go into this and I don't suppose it is that important, but it brings into focus once again the Army's dependence on civilians (today called technical representatives) at various times in its history. Can the Army go to war today without these people? Not from what I understand.

Finally, Wilson demonstrates the effects rapid demobilization has had on the Army and its various organizations. The country tends to go through a frenzy of "Bring the boys home" after every war or battle campaign, regardless of how the military services may feel about the world situation or what problems it might face in trying to carry out the political decisions that will be thrust upon it. Then when war breaks out, we rush to mobilize large numbers of soldiers, fill up unit ranks with hastily trained people, and send them off to war woefully unprepared for what they will face.

This raises a most important point that Wilson only touches on: When combat units arrive in overseas theaters during a full-out war, the overseas commander invariably modifies the structures to meet his views on how his war will be fought. To

paraphrase an old saying, "No organizational structure survives the first bullet." In each of our most recent major wars, our units were reorganized time and again to meet the challenge posed by well-trained and determined enemy forces. (We have been most fortunate since the end of the Vietnam War in not having to meet such a foe.)

One last point I would make that Wilson does not: What is the answer to the frequent question, "Does doctrine precede organization, or does organization precede doctrine?" I have seen it go both ways. Personal views, however, rather than serious doctrinal study, usually precede the creation of the organizations to execute that doctrine. In these cases, any studies that were made generally agreed with the expressed views of the individual who created the study group. There was a period in the 1980s when the Army never completed one set of organizations to carry out a particular set of doctrinal tenets before it had to create a whole new set of organizations to carry out another set of tenets.

Today, the Army seems to be on the verge of undergoing all sorts of reorganizations to meet someone's ideas of how the future will pan out. Go to smaller, more flexible and maneuverable organizations, or stay with the heavier, which has more firepower but will be less flexible? Shades of the Pentomic division and TRICAP! But one word of warning to today's planners: Don't you dare touch the airborne division, and never, never change the unit designation of our one air assault division!

I strongly recommend that all Infantrymen who are truly concerned about the Army's future ground themselves in this book. They will be far better and more knowledgeable soldiers for having done so.

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***Thunder on the Dnepr.*** By Bryan Fugate and Lev Dvoretzky. Presidio, 1997. 415 Pages. \$27.95. Reviewed by Colonel Christopher B. Timmers, U.S. Army, Retired.

OK, class. In today's History of World War II, let's see a show of hands as to how many of you believe the following: (1) Hit-

ler's 22 June 1941 invasion of Russia completely took Stalin by surprise because, (2) Soviet intelligence was generally inept and failed to anticipate German intentions so that, (3) Vast amounts of artillery, tanks, and combat engineer equipment—not to mention tens of thousands of prisoners, fell into the *Wehrmacht's* hands.

Very good. You all pass. Sort of. No, not on your military history test. But you do pass muster for having accepted those statements as gospel—those *highly dubious* statements which you should have challenged. What's that? How were you to challenge them? What scholarship was available back in those days at West Point or Annapolis or wherever? Well, OK. There was no scholarship to challenge the conventional "wisdom" then.

But there is now.

Permit me to introduce Dr. Brian Fugate of the University of Texas and his colleague Colonel (retired) Lev Dvoretzky of Amscort International. These gentlemen eloquently argue—and buttress their contentions with excerpts from official Soviet correspondence, maps, and operations orders—that Stalin, acting upon the advice of Marshals Zhukov and Timoshenko, conceded to the invading Germans huge tracts of land and deliberately allowed their own forces to be encircled. But they point out that much of the Russian Army's artillery and vital engineer equipment had been evacuated to rearward positions weeks before the June 22 invasion. Indeed, Soviet intelligence was not caught napping, at least not entirely. The spymasters at the Kremlin had anticipated an invasion in August, not June, but had anticipated it nonetheless.

And what about all those soldiers in Bialystok salient and other pockets? The ones cut off from their own lines? The authors tell us that many of these Russian soldiers were not captured but constituted "floating pockets" of resistance which drifted westward back toward Soviet lines and could not easily be reduced. The Germans had counted on a swift armored advance, as had been the case in their Blitzkrieg through the low countries and France. They had not counted on the Soviet defense in depth and the vast distances over which military operations took place in Russia. And they undermined their own efforts by mistreating many of the non-Russian minorities whose villages they occupied (particularly the Ukrainians). Many of these ethnic groups had no use for Joseph Stalin and the Russian majority which ruled the USSR and, had their disaffection been cultivated, could have been made into valuable allies for, instead of

partisans against, the German war effort. Finally, outside the little town of Yelnya on the Dnepr river, the exhausted German army finally had its lightning advance checked and the war in Russia had its turning point.

You, class, all of you, need to buy and read this book. At \$27.95 it is easily worth the price. As you read, pay particular attention to the maps and especially to the chapter on the January-February 1941 Soviet war games, which were so instrumental in helping Zhukov formulate his plans for the defense of the Russian Motherland. I advise you to give this book the close study it deserves over the weekend. There will be a test on Monday.

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***Phoenix and the Birds of Prey: The CIA's Secret Campaign to Destroy the Viet Cong.* By Mark Moyar. U.S. Naval Institute Press, 1997. 416 Pages.** Reviewed by Dr. Joe P. Dunn, Converse College.

Few aspects of the Vietnam War are less understood and subject to more myth and misinformation than the Phoenix program. Only a few solid works, such as Richard Hunt's *Pacification* (1995) and Dale Andrade's *Ashes to Ashes: The Phoenix Program and the Vietnam War* (1990), exist on the topic. Now Mark Moyar's thoroughly researched, balanced perspective, and fascinating new study, which draws heavily upon interviews with more than 100 American and Vietnamese participants, becomes the premier work on this topic. Moyar began this study as an undergraduate thesis at Harvard, and even though he is now only in his mid-twenties, this book makes him a serious scholar of the Vietnam War.

Moyar offers a fresh and realistic perspective on the Viet Cong's efforts to establish alternative political control in the villages, what he calls "the shadow government." He then proceeds to address and to assess the myriad programs in the many areas of South Vietnam over the span of the long war all with the common objective of targeting the shadow government. He focuses, however, on the 1967-1972 period, the height of the effort against the VC infrastructure.

He clarifies that Phoenix was a coordinating effort of many components against the VC infrastructure, an outgrowth of the original Intelligence Coordination Exploitation (ICEX) born in 1967. It ran parallel to the South Vietnamese corollary, the Phung Hoang program. Phoenix became the catch phrase for a host of activities, some relatively successful and some hapless, and the program differed tremendously in nature and

effectiveness in different provinces and districts. Leadership was the key element. Where there was strong American and Vietnamese leadership, the programs were successful. Where this was not the case, especially on the Vietnamese side, they were usually not effective.

Among Moyar's many other conclusions, several of which counter existing scholarship, he judges that in the latter years of the war most villagers favored the South Vietnamese government. They were not driven into the Viet Cong ranks by the effort against the shadow government. While mistakes and even atrocities undoubtedly occurred, they were the exception and not the rule or practice within the genre of activities labeled as Phoenix. Moyar also addresses the important questions and intellectual debate over a primary emphasis on pacification as opposed to the big-unit conduct of the war. His arguments have forced me to reconsider some of my own assumptions on these questions.

This is a fine, readable, and captivating book that I recommend most highly.

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***The Union Soldier in Battle: Enduring the Ordeal of Combat.* By Earl J. Hess. University Press of Kansas, 1997. 244 Pages. \$29.95.** Reviewed by Major Don Rightmyer, U.S. Air Force, Retired.

This book is an excellent attempt at answering the question, "What was combat like for the Union soldier who served during the Civil War?" Given the nature of the linear battle tactics used predominantly throughout the first part of the war and the trench/siege warfare encountered later at such places as Vicksburg and Petersburg, Virginia, historians have wondered what a Northern soldier's existence was like from his initial recruitment to discharge, or until wounds or death cut short his career of military service in the war.

Historian Earl J. Hess of Tennessee's Lincoln Memorial University has done an outstanding job of analyzing the Union soldier through a variety of official war records, published memoirs, and unpublished personal accounts and correspondence. While his observations certainly do not have total relevance to the experience of the American fighting man in other wars of this nation, they certainly help us better understand the challenges and experiences of combat that faced these soldiers on the mid-19th century battlefield.

Hess provides a thorough analysis of the Northern soldier's gradual progression from new recruit through the first taste of battle to

seasoned combat veteran. He provides a thorough description of the way Civil War soldiers viewed courage and the way in which they were able to fight despite the presence of death and the loss of comrades around them during many battles. His descriptions of Civil War battles from the participants' own perspectives give a much better appreciation of the combat in which they engaged and the manner in which most Northern soldiers were able to adapt and perform their duties honorably.

*The Union Soldier in Battle* is a major contribution to a better understanding of the American soldier's experience during the Civil War. It certainly helps us grasp the typical Union soldiers' experiences and the challenges they faced during that conflict.

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***Night of the Silver Stars: The Battle of Lang Vei.* By William R. Phillips. Naval Institute Press, 1997. 306 Pages. \$29.95.** Reviewed by Michael F. Dille.

In late 1967 General William C. Westmoreland, suspecting that the North Vietnamese were planning a major combat effort around the Lunar New Year—Tet, was determined to force them into a major set-piece action in order to decimate as many of their units as he could. He baited his trap with the Marine Combat Base at Khe Sanh, in the far northwest part of Quang Tri Province, just south of the DMZ. His strategy was to offer a target similar to Dien Bien Phu to suck them in and then pound any units that showed up with all he had at his disposal—artillery, air support, naval gunfire, arc lights (B-52 raids), and so forth. Westmoreland was also determined that this battle would end differently from the Viet Minh victory in 1954.

William R. Phillips' latest book, *Night of the Silver Stars*, deals with the events just before the siege of Khe Sanh, specifically the battle of the Lang Vei Special Forces camp, nine miles west of Khe Sanh. It was during this battle (6-7 February 1968) that the North Vietnamese Army first used armored vehicles against U.S. forces.

Lang Vei was the northernmost of the Special Forces camps in Vietnam. It was only about a mile from Laos to the west. It replaced another camp, also called Lang Vei, that had been attacked and badly damaged in early May 1967. The new camp was occupied by Special Forces team A-101, several Vietnamese Special Forces soldiers, and four Civilian Irregular Defense Group companies. Lang Vei had the outward appearance of a tethered goat, waiting for the North Vietnamese to attack, thus triggering a larger battle. And in some respects, that is

what happened. Soon after Lang Vei fell, the Khe Sanh siege started.

Phillips' account of the struggle by the Lang Vei inhabitants to hold on, then later to survive and help others do the same, and the various rescue attempts, all against overwhelming odds, is solidly paced and well told. His descriptions of the various components of the battle are concise and factual without resorting to bombast or snide criticism. The fact that one of the Special Forces soldiers missing after the battle was his first cousin may have fueled his desire to tell the story of the battle; nevertheless, his telling is of the dispassionate observer, moving everywhere on the battlefield, trying to leave nothing untold.

Only one other book, *Tanks in the Wire*, by David B. Stockwell (Daring Books, 1989) deals exclusively with the battle at the Lang Vei Special Forces Camp. This book, however, more than holds its own by comparison and stands alone as an excellent account.

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***The Nebraska Indian Wars Reader, 1865-1877.* Edited by R. Eli Paul. University of Nebraska Press, 1998. 245 Pages. \$15.00, Softbound.** Reviewed by Lieutenant Richard D. Starnes, U.S. Army Reserve, Cullowhee, North Carolina.

The United States Army campaigns against the Plains Indians were some of the most arduous and tactically challenging in American history. In *The Nebraska Indian Wars Reader, 1865-1877*, R. Eli Paul, a historian at the Nebraska Historical Society, republishes ten important essays that illuminate the missions, strategies, and tactics of the campaigns on the Nebraska frontier. Individually, these essays offer detailed treatment of individual campaigns and commanders. Collectively, they give tremendous insight into the character of the frontier army, the relationship between military authorities and the civilian population, and the strategy, goals, and missions of Native American leaders.

Until the late 1860s, campaigns against the Plains Indian tribes were not a national military priority. The area of operations was remote, the affected civilian population was small, and the pressures of the Civil War and Reconstruction dominated operations and resources. Even after the war, these campaigns were almost always undertaken with ill-equipped, poorly supplied troops who often lacked the guidance to accomplish their poorly defined missions. Yet, according to James T. King in his essay on the Republican River Expedition of 1869,

the leadership of officers seasoned in frontier warfare helped to compensate for inadequate logistics, eventually bringing about victory. In this way, these campaigns are excellent case studies for leadership and mission accomplishment under the worst of logistic conditions.

While much of the popular and scholarly treatment of the Indian wars depicts United States Army troops campaigning against the indigenous population, there is another aspect of this conflict that often goes unexplored. In his essay on the 1873 battle of Massacre Canyon, Paul D. Riley argues that conflict with federal authorities did not serve to unite Native American tribes against a common enemy. Instead, intertribal warfare continued and, in some ways, contributed to the eventual defeat of the Great Plains Indians.

In fact, Donald F. Danker argues that Army commanders astutely exploited longstanding hatred to a tactical advantage by enlisting Pawnee braves to fight Lakota Sioux and Cheyenne. These Indian soldiers rendered yeoman service fighting alongside U.S. Army regulars on campaign and protecting white settlers from attacks. By exploring these understudied aspects of the Great Plains campaigns, Paul's book offers new insight into the complexity of the Indian Wars themselves and the relationship between military forces and native populations.

While Paul does not offer an original interpretation, he does offer an excellent introduction to the important Nebraska campaigns against the Sioux and Cheyenne in the years following the Civil War. Students of military history, Native American studies, and anyone interested in this period of the American experience would benefit from these essays.

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***The Wars of Frederick the Great.* By Dennis E. Showalter (Longman Group Limited, 1996. 371 Pages. \$23.50.**

***The Prussian Army, 1640-1871.* By Jonathan R. White (University Press of America, 1996. 378 Pages. \$56.00).** Reviewed by Doctor Charles E. White, former Infantry School Historian.

Perhaps no other subject has so captivated contemporary American military personnel as the military prowess and professionalism of the Prussian-German Army. The very word "Prussian" evokes strong feelings of the warrior ethic and military excellence. The Prussian-German Army has become the standard by which many contemporary American military personnel measure their

## BOOK REVIEWS

own military prowess and professionalism. Indeed, at times it seems that we Americans are obsessed with Nazis and their *Wehrmacht*.

Two recent books that address the issue of Prussian-German military excellence are Dennis Showalter's *The Wars of Frederick the Great* and Jonathan White's *The Prussian Army, 1640-1871*.

In his superb study of the campaigns of Frederick the Great, Showalter places the reader squarely into the social, political, and military context of 18th-century Europe. This is history at its best. The author makes clear in his introduction that "*The Wars of Frederick the Great* emphasizes war-making: the behaviour of the diplomats, the soldiers, and the institutions to which they belonged." Showalter's approach is an excellent attempt to return the study of history to its original form. His book treats the 18th century on its own terms, not in the "politically correct" perspective that has plagued the writing of history for the past two decades or more.

Showalter argues that Frederick the Great brought the art of 18th-century warfare to perfection. Frederick ruled Prussia for nearly half a century, from 1740 to 1786, and military affairs consumed his attention during his reign. Prussia, it seemed, was constantly at war. Yet, upon his death, Frederick left a Prussia that was double the size it had been 50 years earlier. And Prussia was overtaking Austria for leadership of the German-speaking lands. Indeed, Frederick was one of the few men in history to be called "the Great" in his own lifetime.

More than anyone else, it was Frederick who introduced Europe to the concept of "total war for limited objectives." Frederick's campaigns were specifically designed to convince his adversaries that it was wiser for them to make peace (and keep it) than to fight him. For Frederick, battlefield success was the means to the more enduring goal of a successful negotiation and peace. This was the rationale of the Age of Reason.

Showalter offers a penetrating analysis of the political and military dynamics of 18th-century Europe. He demonstrates that Prussian "militarism" exists only in the minds of the politically correct. Two hundred years ago, Frederick's own age perceived conflict as a rational means of arbitrating differences between states. His judicial and prudent use of force earned him the respect of the world. For those seeking a book that combines narrative history with the brilliant insights of a master historian, *The Wars of Frederick the Great* is clearly the one to read.

Jonathan White's *The Prussian Army*,

*1640-1871* is a thought-provoking work that synthesizes the major works of the most prominent historians of Prussian history (Gordon Craig and Peter Paret are but two that he cites) for college-level students. As the author states in his introduction: "The purpose is to give non-historians the ability to understand Craig and the other masters."

White seeks to analyze and explain the nature of Prussian (and later German) militarism. How could a tiny state like Prussia, surrounded by large, aggressive neighbors (Sweden to the north, Austria to the south, Russia to the east, and France to the west), manage to build and maintain a powerful military force in the middle of central Europe within one century? And how could this same tradition, within two centuries, unite the German-speaking states in central Europe (less Austria) under its banner? For decades, historians, political scientists, social scientists, and others have sought the answer to these questions.

Like so many others before him, White has difficulty understanding this so-called "German Problem," simply because he assumes "Germany" is the aggressor in Europe. But look at the time period this book covers—1640-1871. This span of time included Gustavus Adolphus and Charles XII of Sweden, Peter the Great and Catherine the Great of Russia, Louis XIV and Napoleon of France, and the Hapsburgs of Austria. All of these dynasties sought to dominate Europe. Add to this group the English, who consistently fought to keep the continental powers divided and even at war with each other.

In the middle of this strife lay nearly a thousand tiny principalities, papal states, and kingdoms, collectively called "Germany" or the "Holy Roman Empire" (which Voltaire said was neither holy, nor roman, nor an empire). Where did France, Sweden, Austria, and Russia fight their battles? On German soil. During the Thirty Years' War (1619-48), Sweden, Austria, and France raped, pillaged, and plundered Germany. Eighty percent, or eight million, of the German people, were killed or died of causes related to the war. Following that devastating conflict, one dynasty decided it would never again put its subjects through such an ordeal. It would raise an army to defend its people and territory. That dynasty was the Hohenzollern, and its domain was the tiny state of Prussia.

*The Prussian Army* is beautifully written and does an excellent job of combining the secondary sources of other authors. But it needs to place Prussia in proper perspective. Throughout much of the time frame this

book covers, France was the aggressor in Europe and the greatest impediment to world peace. Indeed, England was Prussia's great ally during most of this period. And contemporaries such as Voltaire praised Prussia and her enlightened rulers; Prussia consistently drew the greatest minds of Europe to her land. Unfortunately, White does not convey this in his otherwise fine work, and impressionable young minds may come away from reading *The Prussian Army* with the "politically correct" view that Prussian militarists caused all the evil that took place in the world. This is certainly not correct.

### RECENT AND RECOMMENDED

*Combat Team: The Captains' War: An Interactive Exercise in Company Level Command in Battle.* By John F. Antal. Presidio, 1998. 384 Pages. \$17.95, Softbound.

*The Test of Battle.* By Paul F. Braim. Originally published by University of Delaware Press, 1987. White Mane Publishing (P.O. Box 152, Shippensburg, PA 17257), 1998. 247 Pages. \$35.00.

*Soldier's Guide to a College Degree.* By Larry J. Anderson. Stackpole, 1998. 176 Pages. \$12.95.

*Doughboy's Diary.* By Chester E. Baker. White Mane Publishing (P.O. Box 152, Shippensburg, PA 17257), 1998. 138 Pages. \$19.95, hardcover.

*Choppers: The Heroic Birth of Helicopter Warfare.* By J.D. Coleman. St. Martin's, 1998. 352 Pages. \$6.99.

*From the Fulda Gap to Kuwait: U.S. Army, Europe, and the Gulf War.* By Stephen P. Gehring. Center of Military History, 1998. 377 Pages. \$17.00, Softbound.

*The One That Got Away: My SAS Mission Behind Iraqi Lines.* By Chris Ryan. Brassey's, 1998. 260 Pages. \$17.95, Softbound.

*Blood Rites: Origins and Passions of the History of War.* By Barbara Ehrenreich. Owl Books, 1998. 292 Pages. \$14.95, Softbound.

*Sgt. York: His Life, Legend, & Legacy.* By John Perry. Broadman & Holman, 1997. 320 Pages. \$16.99, Hardcover.

*The Liberation of Guam, 21 July-10 August 1944.* By Harry Gailey. Presidio, 1997. 231 Pages. \$15.95, Softbound.

*A Prisoner's Duty: Great Escapes in U.S. Military History.* By Robert C. Doyle. Naval Institute Press, 1997. 400 Pages. \$34.95.

*Battle Fire! Combat Stories from World War II.* By Col. Arthur L. Kelly. University Press of Kentucky, 1997. 323 Pages. \$22.00.

*MacArthur's Jungle War: The 1944 New Guinea Campaign.* By Stephen R. Taaffe. University Press of Kansas, 1998. 314 Pages. \$35.00.

*The Company They Keep: Life Inside the U.S. Army Special Forces.* By A.J. Simons. Avon, 1998. 237 Pages. \$5.99.

*U.S. Army Patches: An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Cloth Unit Insignia.* By Barry Jason Stein. University of South Carolina Press, 1997. 233 Pages. \$39.95

*Napoleon's Invasion of Russia.* By George F. Nafziger. Originally published in 1996. Presidio, 1998. 704 Pages. \$24.95, Softbound.