

BOOK REVIEWS



***The War Within The Union High Command: Politics and Generalship During The Civil War.* Thomas J. Goss. University Press of Kansas, 2003. 300 pages. \$34.95.** Reviewed by Command Sergeant Major James Clifford.

Thomas J. Goss takes a fresh view of an old argument regarding the selection of Union generals in the Civil War. The traditional view is that Abraham Lincoln passed out general's stars liberally based on political considerations. The argument holds that these political generals were necessary in order to entice large ethnic and political groups to enlist, thereby turning the Civil War into a "peoples" war. Any other approach would have ensured a quick and certain end to the Civil War resulting in the permanent establishment of a Confederate States of America. An extension of the argument is that the political generals were mostly failures as military leaders, and as Lincoln's political position strengthened he began to jettison them in favor of the professional officers produced by West Point. The professionals from West Point, according to this line of reasoning, provided the battlefield victories that resulted in the restitution of the Union.

Goss has no quarrel with these conclusions, but he comes to them from a different perspective. His goal was not to revise any historical conclusions, only to lend some clarity on Lincoln's motivations regarding particular leaders. He finds that Lincoln appointed generals with individual mandates for each. While some historians judge generals by only their military accomplishments, Goss recognizes battlefield performance as just a part of the equation. The author's approach is indeed fresh, unlike any others found in Civil War literature. He departs slightly from the typical Jominian angle in favor of a more Clausewitzian view. While recognizing the military aspects of the war, Goss emphasizes Clausewitz' dictum that warfare is politics by other means.

It would be inaccurate to say that at the outset of the Civil War America had a professional officer class despite the existence of the Military Academy. It is more accurate to observe that Americans considered warfare the purview of any reasonable intelligent, hard-working man. Therefore, Americans expected its leading citizens to step into a military role when the situation called for such. Americans considered warfare to be no more complicated an endeavor as any other in society such as running railroads, engineering projects, banking or politics, and that the incumbents would be successfully inspired in battle. Given this pervasive attitude in American society it is not surprising that so many neophytes would confidently offer their services as generals and arrogantly expect to rise to high rank and responsibility even in the face of poor performance.

The War Within the Union High Command also analyzes West Point trained officers and breaks down the commonly held belief that as a group they were professionals. In reading this book, one will learn that although West Point at that time trained officers they hardly created a professional class, as we know it today. The author illustrates how most West Pointers played politics, using their contacts in Congress and the cabinet to secure positions of responsibility. He skillfully explains how many of these "professional" officers acted in decidedly unprofessional manners, failing to support Lincoln's strategy. They frequently undermined their own President by inserting their own political judgment while exercising their military responsibilities. He also points out how such behavior was hardly out of the ordinary; on the contrary, it was considered normal and expected. Under such conditions it seems to be splitting hairs to label some generals as professionals and others as politicians in uniform.

This book is part of the publishers

"Modern War Series" that has provided several other significant works of military history. The author is an active duty Army officer, former history professor at West Point, and current planner in the United States Northern Command. His thoroughly researched, well-written book is sure to elicit discussion and argument among students of the Civil War even though his ultimate conclusions agree with most others. However, no future analysis of Union general officer performance will be complete without considering the arguments found in *The War Within The Union High Command*.

***Mao's Generals Remember Korea.* Translated and edited by Ziaobing Li, Allan R. Millet and Bin Yu. University Press of Kansas, 2001. 303 pages. \$39.95.** Reviewed by Lieutenant Colonel Mike Davino.

The intervention of the People's Republic of China (PRC) saved North Korea from total defeat in the Korean War. Despite its characterization as a "forgotten war," the strategy and tactics used by the United States and its United Nations Command allies have been well documented. General of the Army Douglas MacArthur and his successors published their memoirs, and numerous commanders at lower levels have done so as well. Most Americans interested in the Korean War have not however, had access to similar accounts from the Chinese commanders of the so-called Chinese People's Volunteer Force (CPVF). The editors of *Mao's Generals Remember Korea* have translated memoirs of key commanders to include those of Marshal Peng Dehuai, the CPVF commander and commander-in-chief of the Chinese-North Korean combined force.

To give some perspective to the first hand accounts of Mao's subordinate commanders, editor Bin Yu, a former

People's Liberation Army soldier and current professor of political science, provides an excellent short history of the war from the Chinese point of view. Using Chinese sources, Yu summarizes the pre-intervention preparations of the CPVF. He examines the planning and execution of the five campaigns the Chinese fought against UN forces in the first eight months of Chinese combat operations. More importantly, Yu details the lessons learned by the Chinese and how they applied those lessons as the CPVF adjusted its goal from pushing the UN forces off the peninsula to one of achieving a truce and defending China.

The accounts by the Chinese general officers are somewhat uneven and, as an American reader would expect, tend to exaggerate CPVF accomplishments and put their setbacks in the best possible light. In addition to Marshal Peng, the recollections include those of Marshal Nie Rongzhen, acting chief of the PLA general staff; General Hong Xuezhai, chief of the CPVF logistics; and General Yang Dezhi, who held a series of high-level commands within the CPVF. From a strategic standpoint, Marshal Nie's analysis of the decision to launch and prosecute the "War to Resist America and Aid Korea" provides some insight into Chinese thinking at the highest levels of government. General Hong describes how the CPVF met the challenge of supporting a war outside of Chinese territory and also provides details on the death of Mao Zedong's son in a UN Command air strike. General Yang provides a comprehensive account of the Battle of Shangganling (known to Americans as Triangle Hill). Chapters by leaders involved in political mobilization, Soviet arms purchases and the armistice negotiations round out the book.

Fifty years after the armistice that halted the war, the PRC still plays an integral role in the survival of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. This book fills a void in the available English language literature about the Korean War from the Chinese perspective. It is relevant today because as the editors explain, the Chinese continue to draw upon lessons learned during the war and have a renewed interest in those lessons as they shift their strategy from one of preparing to fight a total war to the conduct of more limited conflicts.

The Challenge of Change: Military Institutions and New Realities 1918-1941. Edited by Harold Winton and David Mets. University of Nebraska Press. Lincoln, Nebraska, 2000. 246 pages. Reviewed by Lieutenant Commander Youssef H. Aboul-Enein, U.S. Navy.

How nations adapt, confront, or deny change in military and political events is of vital interest to our own country. Secretary of Defense Mr. Donald Rumsfeld speaks a great deal about transformation. This is a concept in which the U.S. armed forces are shaped, funded, and molded not only from the fleet, brigade, or wing level but also the way we allocate and fund projects within the Defense Department to meet the rapid changes in the 21st century. Many nations have adapted or failed to see changes in the world environment in which they exist. This book has a collection of well-written essays on this subject. It focuses on how France, Germany, Russia, and the United States dealt with the realities of military and political change. As you read the chapters of the book, think about how our own force structure and doctrines are to change in light of the attacks of September 11th. The editors are prolific writers. Professor Harold Winton teaches military theory at the School of Advanced Airpower Studies at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. David Mets has written several books with an emphasis on airpower on military doctrine.

The first chapter by Eugenia Kielsing, opens in France in the interwar years. Readers will understand more about why France was caught surprised and then defeated by the Germans in the spring of 1940. French military leaders were confident in how the Germans were defeated in World War I and invested heavily in a civilian army. The Third Republic feared a standing professional army, and there was hostility between politicians and army leaders over reform of the military. A few dissenters argued for mechanized armor like General Maurice Gamelin and a young Major Charles De Gaulle, but politicians refused, deciding to side with theorists of *élan*, that willpower would defeat any army. In essence, coming out of World War I a victor and not analyzing the dreadful cost of victory led

to France's defeat in World War II.

The second chapter is an intriguing look into the German army during the interwar period by James Corum. It is astonishing how a defeated nation can become so innovative in war. Typically most people associated the development of Blitzkrieg and new tank warfare methods to the Nazi army. But what is truly revolutionary is the reform of the German military education system. In 1920, the Germans required every officer to be university educated or undertake such advanced education. One-year cadet schools were extended to three and a half years that included several months duty as an enlisted soldier. Studying battles of World War I and other campaigns such as the Russo-Japanese War, they ascertained that the German military leadership did not have an appreciation for technology and failed to apply it properly. The Reichswehr made learning a foreign language mandatory and directed soldiers to study foreign military journals and observe other nation's military maneuvers. The result of all this education is concepts like maneuver warfare, air-ground cooperation, Blitzkrieg and Schwerpunkt (the decisive moment to strike an enemy weakness). The German air force was a separate arm of the military and enjoyed tight cooperation with the army. This is due to politics of favoring a separate air force that the German navy did not want, but that — ironically — served them well.

Jacob Kipp wrote an essay entitled, "Military Reform and the Red Army." From 1918 to 1941, several Russian military theorists emerged to become advocates of the tank and careful observers of using Russia's size and terrain to defeat an enemy. Mikhail Tukhachevsky resented arguments that a mass, mechanized force with artillery and air was the means to strike deep into Poland before Germany could reach Russia. V. K. Triandafillov argued for shock armies that would disrupt an adversary's logistical lines and mobilization sites. Had Stalin paid close attention to some of these thinkers instead of worrying about military coups, he would've been better prepared for Hitler's assault in Operation Barbarossa.

This is an excellent book which demonstrates the importance of constant innovation and thought about the business of warfare.