

village. We took advantage of this and slipped out of the encirclement through the southern gap and fled to Kot-e Ashro through the mountains. One of my Mujahideen was wounded.

DISCUSSION

Given the size of the force involved and relatively limited firepower that the Mujahideen had at their disposal, it should have been possible to effectively cordon off and kill or capture the guerrillas, instead of what actually took place. The DRA was too weak to adequately secure the cave in which the insurgents had taken shelter; the one soldier assigned the task had no backup and no means of calling for reinforcements.

The cordon itself had reinforcements which could serve as reserve, strengthen weak spots in the cordon, or move aggressively to seize the opportunity offered. As a result, the Mujahideen were fixed in position until past midday armed with only rifles and one RPG. During the duration of the standoff, the rebels could move about relatively unimpeded without the DRA knowing either their true strength or their locations at any given time. Poor intelligence, particularly HUMINT, hampered any decisive action, until another Mujahideen unit opened fire to break the encirclement and allow their sister unit to escape.

The encircling DRA force lacked aggressiveness, partially because of poor intelligence, and partially because it consisted of poorly trained soldiers who had been fighting that day-in-day-out, protracted, enervating war against a more highly motivated and more aggressive adversary for years. The DRA forces were in need of replacements, but seldom got them, and the guerrillas were fully aware of the personnel, logistical, and morale problems facing the DRA.

Today, we employ air mobility assets to quickly capitalize on opportunities such as those described in the vignette, and commit sufficient forces to a cordon operation to make sure we can react quickly and decisively once the enemy has been identified and his location determined. In any operation such as this, a commander also needs to aggressively develop his HUMINT capabilities to effectively monitor enemy movements, logistical activities, and likely courses of action.

BOOK REVIEWS



Gerhard von Scharnhorst. Private und dienstliche Schriften. Band 1, Schueler, Lehrer, Kriegsteilnehmer. Kurhannover bis 1795. (Gerhard von Scharnhorst. Private and official correspondence. Student, Teacher, Warrior. From Hannover to 1795.) Edited by Johannes Kunisch, compiled by Michael Sikora and Tilman Stieve.) 864 pages, occasional sketches, index, and glossary. Reviewed by Christopher Timmers.

When those of us with any knowledge of German/Prussian army history think of Gerhard Johann David von Scharnhorst (or just Scharnhorst), we think of a brilliant man whose writings and efforts helped reform the Prussian army in the wake of the disastrous defeats at Jena and Auerstadt in 1806. But this volume of private and official correspondence covers only the first 40 years of his life, well before his reforms had made their mark and he had achieved the renown that would lead to his elevation to the rank of lieutenant general and grant of nobility from the King of Prussia.

In these 471 letters, we see close up young Scharnhorst as a cadet at the Wilhelmstein academy and a detailed listing of his course of instruction (from 1773 – 1777), a curriculum which included classes dealing with shipbuilding and principles of gunnery (both of which were drawn from English texts published in 1754 and 1742). Among the letters in this first volume are over 50 addressed to his fiancée and (later) wife Klara (nee: Klara Schmalz, whose brother Theodore was the first director of Berlin University). Letters to Klara are affectionate and frequently long. One, written in July of 1793 begins: “Don’t write me such short letters, my love, my only wife; for it is better to not write at all.” Scharnhorst’s letters to Klara are long, involved, and deal with many of the issues separated couples encounter in any dislocation.

Somewhat humorously, the greetings to men of high rank strike one as almost dickensian in their formality:

“Hochgeborner Reichsgraf Gnaedigster

Landesherr!” Oh Highborn Imperial Count Esteemed Governor (my loose translation).

And his farewells equally recall Dickens: “Ew. Hochgraeflichgnaden Unterhaenigster Knecht” Your highest esteemed count, I am your humble and obedient Servant (again, my somewhat free translation).

Scharnhorst is remembered as an army reformer, who, among other achievements, advocated and secured the admission to the officer corps of men drawn from other than the ranks of nobility. His years of service to Prussia in opposition to Napoleon can arguably be his most interesting, but these years are not covered in this first volume. Nonetheless, these letters and official correspondence shed light on a man, not an icon, who has been a fixture in western military thought for over 200 years.

One final note to those who wish to approach this work in the original German: Much of the phrasing and many of the words in German are from 200 years ago. I would ask you to think of the ease of translation from the English of many of our country’s founding documents into contemporary German. The task, I submit, would be more difficult than is apparent. Much of Scharnhorst’s correspondence relies on an older vocabulary and syntax, which is not currently accessible in present day German. Even if you regard yourself as fairly fluent in German, be advised that this volume will probably present you some problems in translation. But the results will be well worth your efforts. I would like to acknowledge the translational help of Ms. Martina Abel whose help with archaic German phraseology was indispensable.

Escape!!! The True Story of a World War II P.O.W. the Germans Couldn’t Hold. By John M. “Jack” Roberts Brundage Publishing, 2003, 237 pages, \$23.95. Reviewed by Randy Talbot.

As the current military looks for the “lessons learned” and heroes of past conflicts to draw inspiration and leadership examples for a new generation of war fighter, they should consider the poignant lessons of “Jack” Roberts and the 106th Infantry Division.

The story of the 106th Infantry Division during the Battle of the Bulge is well known by scholars of military history. Activated in 1943 by green recruits, the division was sent overseas after losing nearly 60 percent of its experienced and trained Soldiers due to unit replacement policies in World War II. Roberts entered Belgium with only one other original member of the division in his section.

Sent to a “quiet” sector of the line to relieve the 2nd Infantry Division (Captain Charles B. MacDonald), they would occupy a defensive position of nearly 25 miles, “more than three times as much territory” assigned an infantry division. After five days, and a mere 10 days after arriving in country, Jack Roberts and the boys of the 106th took the full force of the German attack. After nine days of fighting, the 106th Division lost more than 60 percent of its fighting force in killed, wounded, and missing. Following the battle, they returned to the rear, never to see action again.

Preparing for their first mission, Roberts and his forward observer section prepared to move to the town of Roth on December 16, 1944. Soon after leaving their compound, the small two-vehicle convoy was attacked by the 290th Regiment of the 18th *Volksgrenadier* Division, the lead elements of the German attack. With impeccable archival research, numerous trips to the area of his capture and assistance by local Belgium and German researchers, Roberts has recreated one of the most horrific experiences any Soldier can live through. Easily readable, Jack takes us through the terror of the ambush, watching his best friend get killed in front of him and now being responsible for the counterattack and eventual surrender of his small force to save their lives. He takes us through the terrifying decisions he had to make; struggling between his faith and killing another human being, the decision to attack and then surrender, his motivation in escaping from the Germans, and his decision to take his remaining Soldiers back to the 106th out of loyalty to the unit.

Roberts does not describe himself as a

hero. He is naive in the ways of the world, a typical teenager growing up in a typical town in America. He was the ticket taker at the local theater as he worked his way through high school. In fact, Roberts is the epitome of the troops that Steven Ambrose popularized in his World War II books about “citizen Soldiers.” And like many families in the 1940’s, Jack and his brother waited for their call to war. Jack’s call came in 1943, and within a year, would find himself in the middle of one of the greatest battles of World War II fighting, getting captured, and then escaping only to fight again.

Jack’s story follows a new genre of memoir literature from these veterans, one of openness and candor about the realities of war. *Escape!* is a highly personalized account of frailties and fears, loyalty and determination, all based in a strict family life of discipline, togetherness, and faith. At times humorous and at other times terrifying, Roberts allows us into his life, to see the horror of combat through his eyes, the uncertainty of escape, the jubilation with being reunited with his comrades, and the sadness of personal loss of close friends.

While recent literature on the Battle of the Bulge highlights large unit combat, *Escape!* tells an hitherto untold account of small unit combat in the opening actions against the 106th Infantry Division. Roberts’ book fills a void in World War II literature chronicling that attack and small unit leadership in combat, and been a welcome addition to MacDonald and Eisenhower’s works on the Bulge.

Each new book on World War II forces us to ask, “Is there anything else to learn about this war?” The answer is always “yes.” Written before the current conflict in Iraq, the lessons of the “Golden Lions” shows the deadly result of sending a partially trained unit into combat. Additionally, it also shows how intelligence failures impacted a group of “green” Soldiers heading into combat.

The Great War: Perspectives on the First World War. Edited by Robert Cowley. New York: Random House, 2003. 509 pp. \$29.95. Reviewed by Lieutenant Colonel Harold E. Raugh, Jr., U.S. Army Retired.

The echoes of World War I, fought almost a century ago, continue to be heard

to the present day. World War I — called the Great War by the British — was a watershed conflict, ushering in an era of total war and planting the seeds of World War II and the Cold War. It propelled the United States from being a minor country to a major player on the international stage. World War I also caused the demise of dynasties and empires, which released the evil spirits of ethnic strife and internecine warfare, seen most recently ravaging the Balkans and Middle East.

His volume is an anthology of 30 World War I-related articles culled from the pages of *MHQ: The Quarterly Journal of Military History*. These 30 essays are grouped together into five main sections, excluding the “Prologue” and “Aftermath,” each containing one essay. These five main sections are “Deadlock” (seven essays); “The Naval War” (four essays); “A World at Arms” (four chapters); “The First Air War” (three chapters); and “Tipping Points” (10 essays). A number of essays are about Western Front topics, and others cover (in addition to naval and aerial topics) such as the lesser known “peripheral” campaigns at Gallipoli, Salonika, and Kut, Mesopotamia — the latter in present day Iraq.

All of these essays, intended for the popular history reader, are informative as well as entertaining. Some of the essays are worth mentioning individually. Bruce I. Gudmundsson concentrates on the German-French engagement at Bertrix, one of seven division-sized battles during the German offensive in August 1914. The Christmas Truce of 1914, acts of spontaneous peace and fraternity that took place in the trenches near Ypres, is described poignantly by Stanley Weintraub. The First Battle of the Falklands, chronicled by Ronald H. Spector, took place between naval forces in December 1914 and “ended in a sweeping [British] military success.” Tim Travers based his essay, “Gallipoli: The Other Side of the Hill,” on research conducted in Ottoman military archives. The author of more than 40 books, Thomas Fleming writes a short biography of General John J. Pershing and assesses his military leadership in “Iron General.”

This collection of well-written and interesting essays on World War I topics, frequently conveying a sense of immediacy as well as considered analyses, provides interesting perspectives on various aspects of the “war to end all wars.” It deserves a wide readership.