

BOOK REVIEWS



***Dawn of D-Day: These Men Were There, 6 June 1944.* By David Howarth. Stackpole Books, 1959 (rpt 2004). 255 pages, \$19.95.** Reviewed by Command Sergeant Major James Clifford.

Dawn of D-Day tells the story of the allied invasion of Europe at the Soldier level. This is an easy read that gives one a sense of what it was like to be a Soldier jumping out of an airplane in the dead of night, crashing to the ground in a glider, or splashing ashore at dawn. Originally published in 1959 by war correspondent turned author David Howarth, it is reprinted as a Greenhill Military Paperback on the 60th anniversary of the invasion. A short introduction by the author's son puts the book into perspective.

The author covers all the major stories of D-Day from the airborne drops to the amphibious assaults. His descriptions of the confusion, fear, heroism, brings the reader into that action like a fine work of fiction. His individual portrayals bring the characters to life as if they are our own family, friends, and neighbors. Even some fairly sympathetic stories of German soldiers are told here. He intertwines the preparation in England, the trip over the Channel, and the invasion itself in an entertaining style that focuses on Soldiers rather than senior leaders. Only a few generals make it briefly into the narrative and those are fighting generals like Gavin, Ridgeway, and Roosevelt. All others, including Eisenhower, Bradley, and Montgomery are only mentioned in passing.

The strength of this book is in its understated nature. Students of military history are used to lengthy studies with copious notes, a lengthy bibliography, and an index. *Dawn of D-Day* has none of those. Rather than this being a weakness, their absence frees the reader to just follow and enjoy the stories. It is a book that one can read at leisure rather than feeling like

it is a chore as some other works of military history can become. Anyone with some basic knowledge of the period will enjoy the book. It is just a well-written story that has stood the test of time. The passage of 45 years since it was published has not dimmed the brilliance of this book one bit. It is just as good today as it was when originally written.

***Storm of Steel: The Development of Armor Doctrine in Germany and the Soviet Union, 1919-1939.* By Mary R. Habeck. Cornell University Press, 2003, 309 pages, \$35.** Reviewed by Randy Talbot, Staff Historian, USATACOM

Every once in a while, a new work comes along that sustains our belief that the hours of research, writing, and frustration military historians go through has relevance; not only in adding to the historiography of our chosen subject, but also direct relevance to contemporary military thought. *Storm of Steel* is one such work.

The major themes of *Storm of Steel*; incorporating developing military technology into operational war planning, developing military doctrine to face current military challenges, transforming force structures to face offensive threats, transforming change in strategic, operational and tactical thought to incorporate developing technology into war planning, are as poignant today as they were in the interwar period. A careful reading of this work, and the debates formulated following World War I, are as similar as the debates current military organizations and their political leadership face today as they transform from a cold war military to one that is more focused on a light, maneuverable and lethal force steeped in technological advancements to face the wars of the future.

Although fascination with *blitzkrieg* has produced numerous volumes chronicling the

development of German armored doctrine, little literature has surfaced to chronicle Soviet "deep battle" doctrine, and none has compared, contrasted and chronicled the development of both armored doctrines.

Habeck details three distinct periods of armored development; the first period (1919-1926) ended with the introduction of the lighter, faster Vickers tank. A far cry from the slow behemoths that broke down on western front, the speed of the Vickers meant that the next war would be fast paced and mobile, not stagnated in trench warfare. The Vickers became the impetus for the serious development of armored forces, mechanized units and developing armored doctrine. The second period in the continuum (1926-1934) centered on military collaboration between Germany and the Soviet military and a void of rethinking armored doctrine as both countries tried to incorporate the technological advancements of the faster tanks. The final period (1933-1939) was the simultaneous adoption by the Soviets of deep battle doctrine and Hitler's seizure of power in 1933. Within a few years, Germany and the Soviet Union were at war with each other, testing out their armored doctrine in the bloodiest battles of World War II.

Well-researched and exhaustively chronicled from formerly unavailable secret and top-secret post-Soviet archive sources recently available, Mary Habeck details both military establishments internal debates and external challenges in developing an armored doctrine during the inter war period. Similar to the debates raging in Britain and France regarding the employment of armored forces — tactics, formations, combined arms cooperation and force structure — these debates not only had a profound effect on Germany and the Soviet Union, but British armored doctrine would be the genesis of their tactical and doctrinal writings of the period after 1926.

The basis for these debates was the changing nature of warfare that the tank, airplane and other technological advances ushered in during World War I. Central to the debates on force modernization and military transformation centered on “new thinking” regarding the nature and future of modern warfare and how best to face this impending threat. The radical improvement in tank technology forced a reassessment of traditional, aristocratic views on warfare, and previously held negative beliefs regarding machine warfare. At the core of this reassessment is the argument of morale versus materiel that directly impacted the use of armor, infantry, cavalry and artillery formations, their place on the future battlefield, and incorporating their tactics into combined arms warfare that would guide armor development and doctrine in both countries. Finally, the contributions of people like Marshal Tuchachevskii, Vladimir Triandafillov, and Georgi Zhukov in the Soviet Union, and Hans von Seeckt, Joachim von Stülpnagel, and Heinz Guderian in Germany were only influential as long as they had the support of the political leadership of the country.

While the military establishment debated the “theoretical” versus the “practical,” other factors contributed to both limit and shape doctrine development. Germany faced strong external pressures resulting from the Versailles treaty that prohibited all development of technological weaponry. Germany’s economy during the war had stretched industrialized productivity to its limits leaving its economy in a shambles. Additionally, political instability in the Weimar period would continue to hamper armor development until Hitler’s seizure of power.

The Soviet Union, on the other hand, not bound by Versailles, faced a civil war and the establishment of the Bolsheviks as the leading political force in the country. Fighting a civil war and allied intervention — with captured machines that gave Russia its first tanks—the Soviets then embarked in another war against Poland. This internal political struggle would put industrialization and the development of a military-industrial complex on hold until the middle of the 1920s. Through each five-year plan developed by the Soviet leadership, industrial mobilization failed to meet not only grandiose projections of the military, but fell far short of fulfilling basic military requirements in tank

production until late in the 1930s.

While the debates regarding the use and structure of forces would continue, and the focus of the debate would change during the inter war period, certain characteristics would continue to be the crux of military thought. For the Germans, it was the primacy of the infantry as the main force in battle, which had to cooperate with other branches of the military incorporating “stormtroop” tactics developed in World War I. Finally, mission tactics or *Austragstaktik*, — empowering local commanders to employ tactics as he saw fit — was essential to any doctrine. The Soviets focused their doctrine on offensive capabilities, striking at the strongest point of the enemy front and searching for a proletarian method of warfare that would incorporate ideological concepts.

Storm of Steel is a comprehensive, comparative study and analysis detailing simultaneous and similar armored doctrine development in both Germany and the Soviet Union following World War I. The arguments and debates, centered on transforming a military and doctrine, are as relevant today as they were 80 years ago and are repeated in the hallowed halls of military war planners.

***The Battle of Mogadishu: Firsthand Accounts From the Men of Task Force Ranger.* Edited by Matt Eversmann and Dan Schilling. New York: Ballantine Books, a Presidio Press Book, 2004. 221 pages, \$25.95.** Reviewed by Lieutenant Commander Youssef Aboul-Enein, USN.

It has been over a decade since U.S. forces have intervened in Somalia and yet books on Operation Restore Hope are timely and filled with the needed combat wisdom for the current war on terrorism. Little did Task Force Ranger know, but they would be in the midst of the earliest opening shots of a new asymmetric war. Osama Bin Laden trained Somalis in his camps in Sudan on the techniques learned fighting the Soviets in Afghanistan. Among the skills learned by fighters loyal to Mohammed Farah Aideed were methods to bring down a Soviet Hind Helicopter. These Soviet-Afghan war tactics would be employed to bring down to the U.S. Army Black Hawk helicopters in Somalia.

Six Soldiers tell their story and treat readers to the sights, smells and urban tactics of the Battle of Mogadishu. The book begins with Matt Eversmann discussing Operation

Gothic Serpent. Eversmann was with the first group of Rangers to fast rope from Black Hawk helicopters into Mogadishu October 3, 1993. As chalk leader, he was the last to descend and saw one of his Soldiers laying crumpled on the ground. Eversmann describes how he and his Soldiers evacuated the wounded Soldier while Somalis attacked, which made the task of stretcher bearing exponentially more difficult. The chapter is a valuable lesson in the emotions and adrenaline of urban battle.

Sergeant Raleigh Cash writes about the rescue convoy of Task Force Ranger. He would be the primary forward observer in an eight-vehicle convoy charged with rescuing the Americans who went down in the Black Hawk. They could hear the radio transmission as the Black Hawks were downed and he writes of how he and his group grabbed extra IV bags, ammo and ammo pouches full of flash grenades, as well as the Remington 870 sawed-off shot gun rounds to breach doors. Readers will learn how Somalis organized urban fighting and managed the chaos with the objective of slowing down the American convoy just enough to direct rocket-propelled grenade shots. Somali scouts would inform a guerilla force ahead of the convoy, which would set up makeshift roadblocks of tires and other materials to block the route.

The first attempt to reach the trapped American force failed with Cash describing the casualties his convoy took. After returning to base, they hosed down the HMMWVs, restocked, and returned with a Malaysian force of armored personnel carriers and a Pakistani peacekeeping force who brought tanks with them. The second attempt would see ferocious fighting but would be successful in breaking the siege the Somalis had achieved against Task Force Ranger.

The book continues with chapters by Mike Kurth and John Belman, who is critical of the use of Black Hawks to provide sniper cover. Tim Wilkinson, a pararescuer, contributes a chapter about conserving life under intense Somali fire. The final chapter was submitted by Dan Schilling, who made several forays into Mogadishu to rescue two of his closest friends and literally be the “Last Out” of Somalia.

This is an excellent book that is gritty and may provide insight for those participating in Operation Iraqi Freedom or Operation Enduring Freedom.