

Book Reviews



***Shake Hands With the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda.* By Lieutenant General (Retired) Romeo Dallaire. Carroll and Graf Publishers, New York, 2004, 562 pages, \$16.95.** Reviewed by Lieutenant Colonel Rick Baillergeon, U.S. Army, Retired.

“Thousands of people of all ages, carrying what they could, lined dirt paths, huddled beside streams, built small shelters among the banana trees or simply sat in total despair. Everywhere one looked, children were crying, their mothers and sisters trying to console them. The putrid smell of decaying bodies in the huts along the route not only entered your nose and mouth but made you feel slimy and greasy. This was more than smell; this was an atmosphere you had to push your way through. Attempting to move bodies out of the way of the vehicle without touching them with our hands was impossible. With no real protection and amongst a population that had epidemic levels of HIV/AIDS; with every body that we moved our hands became more covered in pieces of flesh. It seemed that traces of this blood stayed on my hands for months.”

The above haunting passage taken from Romeo Dallaire’s superb book, *Shake Hands With the Devil*, is characteristic of the intense emotions captured throughout the book. It is a book that at various times will disturb and horrify the reader. It is a book that will bring many questions to the reader’s mind, yet may not bring any immediate answers. It is a book I highly recommend.

Shake Hands With the Devil is Dallaire’s memoirs of his experience as the United Nations Force Commander in Rwanda during the 1993-1994 period. While in Rwanda, Dallaire witnessed a horrific genocide, which saw more than 800,000 people killed. The effect on him was indescribable. After his command was finished, Dallaire could not move past these tragic events. He struggled with life, and although asked frequently, would not put his experience on paper. Finally, Dallaire was persuaded to begin writing his account.

In his preface, the author states, “This book is long overdue, and I sincerely regret that I did not write it earlier.” As you begin to read his account, the reader begins to see why it took Dallaire almost 10 years to tell his story. Within almost every page, the reader will share the painful emotions Dallaire felt in an environment filled with constant horror.

I believe *Shake Hands With the Devil* will be of great interest and importance to a very diverse audience for many reasons. First, although there are other published books on the subject, Dallaire truly gives a different perspective. The author pulls no punches on his thoughts of key events and decisions (made and not made) that occurred while he was in command and with the leadership he dealt with. As can be expected, Dallaire allows his personal feelings to influence his interpretation of the history. However, his reflection and thought will aid tremendously to one’s understanding of the tragedy in Rwanda.

Most readers should additionally find the command aspects of the book intriguing. I found myself numerous times questioning what I would do in the various situations Dallaire faced. Throughout his command in Rwanda, he dealt daily with problems in logistics and personnel, vague command and control relationships, negotiating with warring factions, and working with United Nations and NGOs (non-government organizations). The list is seemingly endless. Dallaire superbly describes his challenges and the decisions he made. Perhaps, more importantly, he is brutally honest in discussing his mistakes or lack of action. *Shake Hands With the Devil* is an outstanding study in the art and science of command.

Dallaire’s conclusion will also be extremely beneficial to readers. In it, the author gives his thoughts on how the genocide in Rwanda could have been prevented. Again, as throughout the book, Dallaire does not mince words when laying blame (he includes himself). Perhaps, some readers may disagree with this analysis. Additionally, he discusses how society as a

whole can prevent another Rwanda from occurring. Again, I found the conclusion clearly thought provoking and valuable.

The final major area of interest involves Dallaire’s references to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Dallaire openly speaks about the subject and how it inflicted him in his latter days of command and for many years after leaving Rwanda. (This included a suicide attempt and living with chronic depression for an extended period). This discussion is very relevant to the current environment our Soldiers face. The author’s honesty to admitting the disorder is honorable and may break some barriers regarding discussing the subject. Through his words, readers will develop a better understanding of the disorder and how devastating it can be on the battlefield and years after.

In conclusion, after reading *Shake Hands With the Devil*, I have no doubt that readers will agree it is a book fully deserving of the recent accolades (including many book-of-year awards) received in Dallaire’s native Canada. Dallaire’s book will benefit and enlighten not only Soldiers, but people in all areas of society. There is no doubt that this book will leave a dramatic impression on all who read it. It truly is an important work.

***Boots on the Ground, Stories of American Soldiers from Iraq and Afghanistan.* Edited by Clint Willis. Thunder’s Mouth Press, New York, 2004, 304 pages, \$16.95.** Reviewed by Major Keith Everett, U.S. Army, Reserve.

Clint Willis, with more than 30 anthologies to his credit, edited this anthology of 22 accounts of men at war in Iraq and Afghanistan. Ten of the stories are reprinted from nine different national magazines, seven stories are reprinted from four big city newspapers and the last five stories are taken from private sources. All of the stories combined tell the day-to-day struggle of getting a difficult job done at the Soldier level. There is no grand strategy

or theoretical war planning in this collection.

Reading through the hodgepodge of stories of Soldiers, Marines, Special Forces Soldiers, Canadian soldiers and journalists, the common theme is the experience of war at the ground level. Here, simple mistakes cause disaster. The ground-level Soldier keeps doing his job throughout. Looking closely, lessons can be learned from these men. One story tells of an Air Force tactical air control airman calling air strikes on his own position. Defense officials later concluded the airman changed the batteries in his GPS and then failed to reenter the target's coordinates. The GPS automatically displays its location after a battery change. Simple. The story introduces the Special Forces Soldiers killed by this simple mistake.

One of the uplifting stories tells of Specialist Eddie Rivera of the 10th Mountain Division working his medic magic, running from Soldier to Soldier to patch them up, saving lives. Rivera discovers the bonds of the brotherhood of warriors, as he practically saves his unit, one Soldier at a time. *Boots on the Ground* is a good place to start for a ground level introduction to modern war.

An example of close combat is seen in a story written by *San Francisco Chronicle* reporter John Koopman, who was embedded with a unit of U.S. Marines. Six of these Marines were killed during Koopman's tour. He remembers vividly a Marine named Evnin shooting a 203 at enemy positions and getting shot. His sergeant major helps drag him to safety. As first aid is rendered, the SGM makes a wise crack and Evnin calls the SGM an A _____ shortly before being medically evacuated out. Marine Evnin later dies of his wounds and the SGM is a bit haunted by this exchange. The SGM and his Marines keep fighting, fighting through resistance, insurgent attacks and their feelings for their fallen Marines. You can feel the effect on Koopman as well. He has gotten a taste of war.

The primary contribution of this collection is this small taste of war. There is no other common theme than this, combining experiences of Canadian soldiers, Special Forces, Marines, Afghani coalition forces and correspondents. Some

of the writers do bring their preconceived idealistic ideas of war. These correspondents walk alongside, but never set foot on the warrior path to realize just how hard just staying alive can be. Paul Roberts, writing for *Harpers* magazine wrote a story slanted negatively against U.S. forces as he makes American troops appear as buffoons trampling a mistreated, misunderstood culture clumsily underfoot. His story is lost among his cheap shots.

The few stories slanted against Soldiers are smothered in the many other stories reported and told. One key lesson emerges as two different stories told of American Soldiers killed by friendly fire. Two of these Soldiers were shot because they had their helmets off. Both were shot in separate incidents after they were mistaken for Iraqi soldiers.

***MacArthur's Victory, The War in New Guinea, 1943-1944.* By Harry A. Gailey. Presidio Press, 2004, 281 pages, \$14.95.** Reviewed by Brigadier General Curtis Hooper O'Sullivan, U.S. Army, Retired.

It's hard to beat the official U.S. histories of World War II — the Army's Green Books by various authors; the AAF Grey Books by Craven and Cate; and Samuel Eliot Morison's multi-volume dark blue work on the U.S. Navy. Gailey makes good use of these and an excellent selection of other secondary sources in a four-page bibliography. He mentions archives but the notes don't show what he used from them. He is professor emeritus of military history at San Jose State University and has written 20 books. Pertinent to this one is *MacArthur Strikes Back, Decision at Buna, New Guinea 1942-1943*, which lays the groundwork for this story. In addition, the first five chapters are devoted to operations leading up to the campaign in 1943.

The remaining eight chapters cover in adequate detail that campaign. Despite the title ("New Guinea"), there is enough coverage of related operations in adjacent areas to show that the war was not too compartmented. There are several features that make this book more useful and readable than others on this period. Enemy actions and the rationale therefore are given

more than usual attention. During the year in question they remained offensive-minded, though willing to conduct strategic withdrawals. There was ample space for this purpose. The contributions of the Aussies (and the lesser ones of the Kiwis) are too often neglected or minimized. The official histories are naturally Yank-centric. Here, Blarney and the forces under his command are treated in an evenhanded fashion — as they deserved while they were doing most of the fighting while MacArthur was building up his forces and a tremendous logistical tail. Attention is also called to the fact that Australia may have been a junior partner but was still the sovereign host nation with her own agenda (not one dictated by London or Washington). This included imperial ambitions not only in Dutch and Portuguese territory but in nearby British colonies. Apparently they were not as covetous of the French domain. Papuan troops are given an appropriate mention. More frequently on stage are the native carriers who performed a variety of roles and who were indispensable for some missions. They brought up a variety of critical supplies, evacuated the wounded, and helped to build roads and airstrips.

Official accounts are too often hesitant to delve into interpersonal relationships. There is no such constraint here. There was a fascinating cast of characters in this theatre. You only wish that Gailey had expanded on this. The seven maps generally serve their purpose but the shaded background (indicating topography) makes it difficult to find some places mentioned in the text. An introductory one, showing the bigger picture, would have been useful. There is a short list of abbreviations at the start of the book whereas the definition would have been handier where first used.

There tends to be a retrospective belief in the inevitability of success in every battle in which we engage. In World War II we took a number of calculated risks. In some, the outcome was up for grabs or touch and go. Midway was the best known, but we also have Guadalcanal, Salerno, and Anzio. On New Guinea there was no guarantee of victory with every assault; no triumphal march of conquest. We were often on the defensive.

This is a good, compact story of the bad

with the good — including errors in judgment and intelligence estimates.

***Leave No Man Behind: Liberation and Capture Missions.* By David C. Isby. Weidenfield & Nicholson, London, 2004, 416 pages, \$32.95.** Reviewed by Lieutenant Colonel Rick Baillergeon, U.S. Army, Retired.

In *Leave No Man Behind*, David Isby critically dissects more than a dozen U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF) raids and rescues conducted in the past 60 years. These operations range from the Los Banos raid in the Philippines in 1945 to recent raids and rescues conducted during Operation Iraqi Freedom. In between, Isby analyzes among others the Son Tay Rescue, Desert One, and Operations in Grenada, Panama, and Somalia. In combination, they make for an outstanding read and a first class book in many aspects. I would like to highlight these aspects below.

First, Isby is not satisfied with simply telling the reader what happened. The author, a well-respected defense analyst and frequent contributor to *Jane's Intelligence Review*, utilizes these skills to give credible analysis throughout the book. It is this analysis that truly sets the book apart from others in this genre. Isby gives credit where it is due and places blame where necessary. His candor is refreshing and make for intriguing reading.

Second, the quality of photographs, maps, and sketches within the book are superb. Isby places two sections of photographs inside his book. Included in these are 13 color photographs of events in Panama, Somalia, Afghanistan, and Iraq. Perhaps these color photographs were not necessary, but they are a nice additional touch for the reader. In regards to the maps and sketches, they are truly special. In fact, the sketches utilized are the best I've seen in a book. They are extremely detailed and bring the author's words to life. The old adage, "a picture is worth a thousand words" is clearly prevalent in *Leave No Man Behind*.

Third, in addition to analyzing each specific operation, Isby utilizes them to give readers a story of U.S. Special Operations since the end of World War II. As the author

progresses through the book, he adds discussion on the development and changing role of SOF since the last operation. Although several books have been published regarding this history, Isby's ability to tie in this history with his aforementioned analysis again sets his effort apart from others.

Finally, Isby concludes his book with an excellent discussion on the future of raids and rescues and the role of Special Operations in conducting them. As Isby suggests, these types of operations will not go away in the 21st century, nor will the significant risk attached to them. Perhaps, most importantly, in the future the incredible political ramifications will also remain constant. The author's conclusion is an excellent tie-in of his thoughts and analysis.

In conclusion, *Leave No Man Behind* is a superb book that will keep readers focused throughout its pages. For those who enjoyed William McRaven's *Spec Ops* there is no doubt you will find Isby's effort at least on par. Perhaps, the key difference being that McRaven focused on operations conducted by various countries, while Isby solely concentrates on U.S. operations. Regardless, Isby has written a volume that superbly analyzes the past with a clear look to the future.

***The Myth of the Great War: How the Germans Won the Battles and the Americans Saved the Allies.* By John Mosier. Perennial Books, 2002 (HarperCollins 2001), 389 pages, paperback edition, \$14.95.** Reviewed by Randy Talbot, Staff Historian, USA TACOM.

In his book *What is History?* E.H. Carr warns readers to study the historian before they study the history. This cautionary note is an apt warning for John Mosier and his book, *The Myth of the Great War: How the Germans Won the Battles and the Americans Saved the Allies*. An English professor by trade, Mosier has taken his affection for the French and, combined with interwar period course development, has written a controversial, revisionist history of the western front in World War I. Debasing the official archives of the

combatants, railing against the utility of memoir literature and previously written source material, and pointing out that previous translations were incorrect, his reliance on French secondary source material might lead one to be highly skeptical of his work. But Mosier's book adds to the debate on the history, historiography and the telling of the massacres on the western front.

Like any ambitious work on military warfare, Mosier's work has both strong and weak points but offers little new in the telling. He simply reiterates the ineptness of both the Allied military and political leadership of the war; the crisis of doctrine as the tactics of Jomini met modern warfare with disastrous results, and the failure to grasp the technology of modern warfare and the concept of operations ingrained in the German army. Instead, the Allies relied on the simplistic strategy of attrition, which in essence is an absence of strategy, and as Mosier points out, inflated enemy casualty statistics to show they were winning. Sadly, those that fell during these suicidal attacks might have a different view.

Where Mosier's strength lies is in pointing out in battle after battle the "gap" between reported versus actual casualties. To prove the discrepancy in reported casualties, Mosier relied on medical casualty reports as opposed to archival or official military records. The impact of these reports and visits to nearly every cemetery in Europe, presents a highly irrefutable "body count" showing the Allies suffered three times the casualties as the Germans. Another discrepancy that he brings to light is the poor quality and inaccuracy of the maps of the time. Taking battlefield maps and tourist books of the era with him, Mosier visited the battlefields and conducted "terrain walks" showing that towns on the maps were misplaced, elevations were suspect and the trench lines could not have been where previous historians believed they were. And this brings Mosier to believe that if the maps are wrong and the casualty reports are wrong, what else could be wrong about the reporting of the war?

Particularly insightful is Mosier's interpretation of the Allied prosecution of the war. Mounting massive offensives, they drove into the strongest point in the

German lines following a consistent pattern of war: massive bombardments, advancing “on line” with fixed bayonets, poor planning and security. The Germans either attacked before the planned allied offensives or taking shelter in their bunkers, bore sighting their machine guns when the allies went “over the top,” destroying entire divisions. By 1917, the British had destroyed their army, the French refused to fight and the Germans conducted a “strategic withdrawal.” Enter the American Expeditionary Force; arrogant, fiercely independent and two million strong. They fought relentlessly against and defeated the Germans.

Particularly troubling, Mosier never fully develops the “why” of the American victory. While he points out that the American “doughboys” attacked and did not give up the fight, he dismisses the German reaction to the Americans’ reckless attacks. And this is where his book really lacks the depth of strategic and operational wisdom that comes from a complete study of available resource material. He argues that the American Army, trained by the remnants of the French Alpine Corps, employed identical tactics that von Mudra perfected in the German Army, and that is why they were able to defeat the Germans.

The argument is simplistic. There is no mention of German munitions shortages, an absence of discussing the impact of food shortages both at the front and at home, and finally he never explains why the Germans, winning the war, retreated and later sued for peace. Mosier uses the argument that the Germans were facing another two million man army and that hastened their suing for peace, knowing the cause was lost. But it begs the question that if the Germans were winning every battle, and had defeated the French, British and Russians, why stop now? Was it a bankruptcy of operational ability that they suddenly lost? Was it because the German troops were starving — and offensives stopped at the trench line to eat their enemy’s food? Were pressures at home, both economic and domestic impacting Hindenburg and Ludendorff’s ability to support and supply their forces in the field? Or was it simply, as Mosier argues, because the untrained, untried and unequipped American army entered the battle?

Myth of the Great War should be read carefully and not only with E.H. Carr’s warning in mind, but also with the pronouncement of General Giap when confronted by an American officer after every time the American and North Vietnamese armies fought in open battle, the American won. Giap’s profound response to the American “true, but irrelevant” holds true for Mosier’s book title and presentation.

***Sixty Days in Combat.* By Dean P. Joy. Random House Publishing Group, New York, 2004.** Reviewed by Major Keith Everett, U.S. Army, Reserve.

Dean Joy is not only the author and an ex-infantryman, but he is also a talented illustrator, supplying this World War II account with quality pencil drawings throughout the story. The story starts with his dream of flying fighter aircraft, and follows the reality of three and a half years of wartime service in the U.S. Army from June 1943 to November 1945. The author uses his wartime diary and the book, *The History of the U.S. Army 71st Infantry Division* to guide his recollections. Sixty days in combat may not sound like much too some, but in the hotly contested areas, all too many friends are killed and wounded.

At a time when many WWII experiences are lost each day, this account is a gift. While *Sixty Days in Combat*, will not be studied by future tactical leaders, any infantryman can gain insights on the life of an infantryman and the use of mortars in combat. The author vividly describes his transformation in the crucible of training and combat from the life of a civilian youth to veteran platoon sergeant, a leader of men under extreme stress.

The disappointment of failing an eye test thrust the author into the infantry as this disqualified him for pilot training. An IQ test and one year of college got him into a program for specialized training. As so often happens, the needs of the Army interfered with the assignment and Joy ended up on the front lines as an infantryman. Although it took 20 months from induction, the author started his combat period on March 6, 1945, and came out of the combat zone on May 8, 1945,

when the war was over. The Army’s replacement policy during WWII is politely assailed as stupid. Replacements could not learn fast enough to stay alive. Unfortunately, the U.S. Army repeats that mistake in Vietnam some 20-plus years later.

The value of an infantryman’s experience is the key to this book. Everyday answers to everyday infantry problems are highlights. Soldiers pissing into their helmets, then dumping it off the back of the truck because a convoy will not stop is an example of the everyday mundane details covered. The details on a near friendly fire incident saved only by a clamping collar not properly fastened is an example of the timeless experience anecdotes which could make a difference by knowing even today.

Preventable deaths are a tragedy in any war and WWII has its share. G Company’s first casualty is shot by mistake by nervous American Soldiers; this and the death of Alfred Feltman are examples of preventable deaths. A lieutenant orders Feltman to walk back to an aid station to get first aid for his wounded arm. Feltman is killed by a sniper’s bullet as soon as he stands up to walk back. That any leader’s order can send Soldiers to their death is a lesson best learned before combat. Other lessons are mixed with the mundane throughout the book, such as Joy using tracer rounds in his M1 to mark where enemy troops were for his team member wielding a BAR, a quite deadly combination.

Atrocities occurred as anger built to a crescendo as buddies were killed along the route of advance. The author describes his own hatred for all Austrians and Germans building throughout the war. Finally, and only because of a long occupational duty, did these feelings of hatred subside. A friendship with a young German ex-infantryman, who was also an amputee, helped clean these feelings of hatred.

In the grand scheme of things, the experiences of Dean Joy as a 60mm mortarman in an infantry unit are a minor contribution to the vast number of books available on the subject. These experiences are a valuable gift to an infantryman as a Soldier can never know enough about the everyday, sometimes mundane and sometimes dangerous existence in a combat zone.



Tech Sergeant Andy Dunaway, USAF

Iraqi troops and a U.S. Soldier from the 327th Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division, conduct a joint patrol in the village of Hechel.

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