

# Book Reviews



***Germany and the Axis Powers: From Coalition to Collapse.* By Richard L. DiNardo, Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2005, 282 pages, \$34.95 (cloth).** Reviewed by Lieutenant Colonel (Retired) Rick Baillergeon.

There is certainly no shortage of World War II literature on the Allies' conduct of coalition warfare. Historians and writers have long analyzed the strengths of the relationship and keyed on the Allies' difficulty in synchronizing operations near the end of the war. However, treatment of Germany's ability to conduct coalition warfare with its partners is severely lacking. In fact, this lack of discussion could give many the erroneous impression that Germany did not practice coalition warfare at all. Richard DiNardo realized this void and seeks to dismiss these thoughts in his outstanding book, *Germany and the Axis Powers*.

It would be easy for DiNardo (a professor of National Security Affairs at the U.S. Marine Corps Command and Staff College and author of several other books on German operations in World War II) to simply rehash campaigns conducted during the war. Fortunately, he gives readers just enough background to set the conditions for the true focus of his book. Specifically, he seeks to answer the following:

■ First, did the Germans attempt to implement any lessons learned from World War I in regards to coalition warfare during their conduct of World War II?

■ Second, overall was Germany successful in conducting coalition warfare?

■ Third, were there specific periods of the war or services in which coalition warfare worked more effectively?

■ Finally, did Germany face the same problems or did they encounter different issues than the Allies in executing coalition warfare?

In answering these questions, the author relies heavily on detailed research and his superb writing abilities. In regard to research, DiNardo utilizes many unpublished sources (mainly German) and

in most cases reinforces his arguments with several distinct sources. A highly detailed annotated notes section (60 pages) allows readers to determine the credibility of these sources and provides them information for additional study if desired. DiNardo transforms this research into highly readable copy. A writer of lesser skills could have easily taken this research and made it into a very dry and dull read. However, DiNardo possesses an engaging writing style and the ability to make strong points in a minimum of words. Thus, his study is concise, yet complete.

As expected, the focal point of the book is Germany's relationship with Italy. Certainly, there is much discussion revolving around North Africa and the Mediterranean operations. Yet, the author does not neglect their connection in the Balkans and the Eastern Front. However, most readers will find the most informative sections of the book are the discussions of the operations of Germany with Finland, Hungary and Romania, which generally receive little or no treatment by historians. Each of these had a unique experience with Germany in coalition warfare and DiNardo details these experiences. DiNardo devotes little copy to Japan since their relationship dealt almost exclusively with strategic issues.

The results of DiNardo's analysis are most interesting. In particular, two points especially stand out. First, the author contends that of the three services, it was the German navy that was most successful in waging coalition warfare. Following the navy, the Luftwaffe had some minor success in operations with the Italian and Romanian air forces and the German army was an abysmal failure (except in some instances in North Africa). Second, Germany did not take to heart lessons from World War I in conducting coalition warfare. These included creating unified command structures, a complete disregard of coalition warfare in the German military education system, and a critical shortage of interpreters. The end result was Germany repeating many of the same

mistakes. In each point, DiNardo lays out strong compelling arguments for his readers.

In DiNardo's introduction he writes, "Taken together this study hopes to examine as fairly as extensively as possible Germany's conduct of World War II as a coalition at a variety of levels. Whether it will say anything 'new' is a matter that ultimately must be left to the discretion of the reader. If it broadens your understanding of the Second World War or, more important, makes you rethink much of what you had heretofore held to be true, then this book served its purpose."

I have no doubt readers of *Germany and the Axis Powers* will find that DiNardo has uncovered some new nuggets and that their overall perspective of the War is significantly broadened. Truly, DiNardo has achieved his purpose.

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***Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle,* by Stephen Biddle. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004, 312 pages, \$37.50 hardcover.** Reviewed by Lieutenant Colonel (Retired) Harold E. Raugh, Jr.

"Major warfare since 1900 has actually seen much less real change than most now suppose," asserts Stephen Biddle in this scholarly treatise, "and that the future, too, should bring far more continuity than many now expect." The author argues that the emphasis on a "revolution in military affairs" and its impact on warfare are exaggerated. The employment of forces and the doctrine and tactics used by these units on the battlefield are, according to Biddle, more important than materiel factors alone.

To support this thesis, Biddle (associate professor of National Security Studies at the U.S. Army War College) uses a variety of methods, "ranging from careful historiography to formal theory, archivally based case research, large statistical analysis, and experimental testing using a Defense Department simulation model."

Three historical case studies test this theory. The first is Operation Michael, the German offensive fought in March-April 1918 on the Western Front during World War I. Operation Goodwood, the penultimate Allied (mainly British) attempt to break out of the Normandy beachhead in July 1944 is the second paradigm. Lastly, Biddle examines the air and ground offensive in Operation Desert Storm, January-February 1991. Biddle enumerates the key independent variables of technology, numerical strength and imbalances, and force employment of the opposing armies in these operations. Analyses and assessments derived mainly from the case studies are then modeled and compared.

This provocative study will be invaluable for military strategists, theoreticians, and policy makers. It makes a significant contribution to strategic studies.

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***Given Up For Dead: American GI's In The Nazi Concentration Camp At Berga.* Flint Whitlock. Cambridge, MA: Westview Press, 2005, 283 pages, \$16.95.** Reviewed by Lieutenant Colonel Michael A. Boden.

Recent scholarship on the Second World War has focused a great deal on the actions and experiences of the common Soldier, and accounts of "The Greatest Generation" have been increasingly common. Flint Whitlock's book, *Given Up For Dead: American GI's In The Nazi Concentration Camp At Berga*, falls in this genre by detailing the experiences of a group of American Soldiers captured either during the early stages of the Battle of the Bulge or in the Vosges during the German *Nordwind* offensive. But instead of humane treatment at the hands of their captors, these Soldiers, mostly Jewish and relatively unknown until a PBS television special in 2003, experienced all the miseries of the Nazi concentration camp system.

Whitlock cites primary archival sources and secondary works seldom, and relies predominantly on survivor accounts and first person testimony from a core group of about 20 men. He pieces together their personal stories of induction, combat, and

capture. The majority of the book revolves around this final experience, when these men were a part of the German prisoner of war camp system. Following a brief period at German Stalag IX-B in Bad Orb, 350 prisoners, many of them Jewish, were separated from their comrades, sent to the labor camp at Berga, and subjected not to the rules of the Geneva Convention, but to the rules of the Nazi concentration camp system. After two months at Berga, the surviving prisoners were sent on a grueling 20-day death-march until liberated by U.S. forces in Eastern Bavaria; of the original 350, only 160 were present at liberation.

Whitlock is a plainspoken writer, and only deviates from the prisoners' narrative when discussing the German executors of the crimes committed against the American internees. The author's animated discussion of the postwar deliberations of these perpetrators, though distinct in method and genre from the rest of the book, is a necessary and welcome element of his narrative.

Though interesting and straightforward, because of his reliance on personal accounts without the enhancement of thorough archival research, Whitlock's narrative will not be considered as one of the most profound in its genre or at the forefront of historical scholarship. There are cases where reference to higher headquarters' communication and/or German sources could have enhanced his story significantly. But, as a survivor account, it is better than many, and will be welcomed by attracted readers.

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***Soldiering: Observations from Korea, Vietnam and Safe Places.* By Henry G. Gole. Dulles, VA: Potomac Books, 255 pages, \$27.50.** Reviewed by Brigadier General (Retired) Curtis H. O'Sullivan.

I became acquainted with Henry Gole as an author when I reviewed his work on our shared alma mater, the Army War College. I gave it high marks with a few caveats. This effort is different. It is a collection of individual reminiscences. As Gole himself states, participants normally see only a part of the action. Memories may

be self-serving, purposely misleading, sometimes just careless, and always retrospective and subject to the erosion of time. Personal accounts at the lower levels tend to have limited value. As you go up the chain-of-command, there is a chance of learning something about the big picture.

This is an assemblage of vignettes and anecdotes, which deliberately lack continuity and cohesion. The early '50s to the late '80s is the time frame. The book is in roughly five chronological parts which may be of varying interest to the reader — depending on personal experience and interests. For such reasons, I particularly enjoyed the disconnected takes of his two tours with Special Forces in Vietnam. Gole is a good storyteller, and I found enough sufficiently familiar to bring twinges of nostalgia. Amidst some deadly matters he uses a light tone, with an occasional flash of rollicking humor. He has a streak of cynicism with some blasts at the flaws of the establishment. This may come from the unfulfilled idealism that led to his unusual service record. He performed his patriotic duty as an enlisted man during the Korean War and later married and had a promising career as a teacher. Then he experienced an epiphany from JFK's inaugural address and decided to "do for his country" by returning to the Army. Luckily, there was a provision for someone with his qualifications to come back as a regular Army second lieutenant. Once back, Special Forces seemed the ideal place for his dreams and he describes his time there well. Selfishly, I wish he'd given more space to Benning, Leavenworth, and Carlisle so I could compare our impressions of those formative institutions.

The two maps are adequate for their purposes, and the pictures are the usual assortment of group and individual portraits with some not so standardized. The glossary is a helpful reminder of not recently used terms.

Overall, this was worth reading and should appeal to others who served during the period covered. However, I recommend it especially to those starting a career in the combat arms. There are some insights about small unit leadership worth pondering.



Gary L. Kieffer

*A squad of soldiers from Bulgaria, Romania and the United States attempts to evacuate a simulated wounded soldier during convoy-ambush training in Bulgaria July 19, 2006. The training was conducted as part of Immediate Response 06.*

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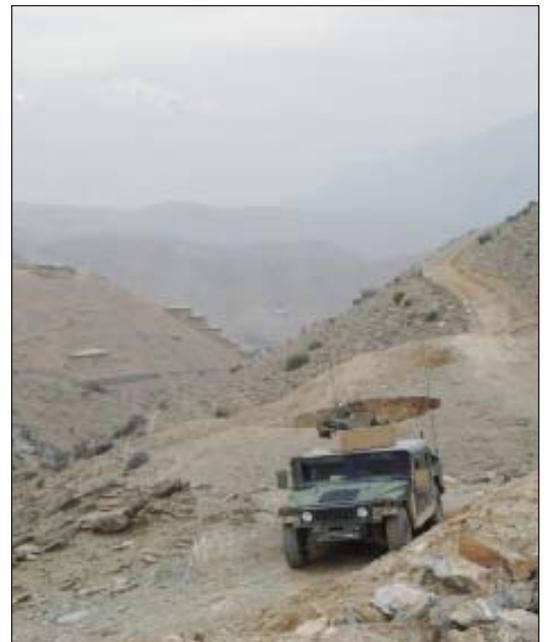
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Staff Sergeant Marcus J. Quarterman

*Soldiers with the 1st Battalion, 102nd Infantry Regiment patrol areas of Afghanistan in December 2006.*