
Bud Hannings’ long awaited history of the Korean War has arrived, and it was well worth the wait. Those of us who have found his earlier chronologies of the First and Second World Wars useful as research sources will not be disappointed in this, his latest opus. Hannings sets the user-friendly tone for the texts when he takes the time to enumerate and explain the contemporary acronyms and abbreviations which follow in all three volumes. The tables are not repeated in the succeeding two books, but this is not a problem, since the reader would have the acronyms pretty much under his belt by the end of Volume 1.

Lavishly supported by photographs, appendices and tables, this three-volume set has some of the best maps I have seen in any book on World War II or the Korean War. They are large, clear, and well-supported by the text. For any student or teacher of Korean War history — assuming he is able to obtain permission to reproduce them for classroom use — these maps can readily be converted into superb overhead projection slides or scanned and digitized for instructional purposes. McFarland and the author have cooperated to publish an appendix and tables, this three-volume set are written is captured in the superb Chronology. The real reason the books were written is captured in the superb forward crafted by General P.X. Kelley, the 28th Commandant of the Marine Corps. Read it, think about it, and then dive into The Korean War: An Exhaustive Chronology; it is worth the read.


In September 1944, optimism filled the air in Allied headquarters all across northwest Europe. Many Allied commanders (primarily U.S. and British) believed their units could easily continue their advances into the heart of Germany against little or no organized resistance. Edward Andidora, writing in the December 1987 issue of Parameters, gives an even sharper picture: “But optimism had reached euphoric proportions in the allied camp, bolstered by an almost universal belief that German morale was ready to crack.”

But it was not to be, as Harry Yeide, an international analyst with the U.S. Government and author of this book, and Charles MacDonald (The Siegfried Line Campaign, a volume in the Army’s official WWII History series) point out. Suffice it to point out — the allied advances across Europe and southern France that began in July 1944, were brought to a virtual halt in mid-September 1944 by hastily thrown together German forces. Particularly was this true north of the Ardennes.

Although Yeide says his book “shows some bias toward the allied perspective,” I could not find any sign of this. For some reason, he believes that Allied “dreams of quick triumph” only added to the arrogance shown by many U.S. and British high-level commanders in the seeming supremacy of their forces, that nothing could stop them, and total defeat faced the Germans.

Yeide’s aim, therefore, is to show that the Allied forces — particularly those from the U.S. — were not invincible, and a badly weakened German army, fighting from bunkers and strong defensive positions in towns and villages (a lesson it had learned on the Eastern front) and using its armor in the best possible way, proved more than a match for our GIs.

Accordingly, he concentrates on the fighting that waged in those small villages and in one large urban area: Aachen (think Iraq and Lebanon). He stays clear of the Huertgen Forest debacle because he believes it “is a tale of military command stupidity with its own internal dynamic that deserves separate treatment.” (And it has been covered by several authors, plus a lengthy treatment by MacDonald.)

Aachen was a costly U.S. success, but the Huertgen Forest and the dams were not, at least for several months. I do not understand why he chose to pay so little attention to the U.S. XIII Corps and its actions. I commanded an infantry rifle company in the 84th Infantry Division in that corps from late November 1944 (I was the company XO for six months prior to taking over) to late March 1945, and I know how the Germans fought and what tough opponents they were. I became quite familiar with such towns as Beeck, Lindern, Linnich, and with both sides of the Roer River. Seldom did we fight the Germans in the open.

Yeide likes to tell his readers how well Germans fought and the difficulty our troops had in overcoming the resistance. He
doesn’t hesitate to give U.S. casualties but seldom gives German losses. I can assure him the four-buckle overshoes did little to help us with our cold weather injuries. We figured out the answer as we went along even though we were wearing the worse combat boot the Army has created in modern times, and our clothing was not much better. Tanker jackets were prizes; look at the photos of many of our general officers and see what they were wearing!

Yeide does not give us much credit for our crossing of the Roer River in February 1945 and dash to the Rhine River. After all, he believes, the Germans had little to fight with after Hitler’s Ardennes counter-offensive in December 1945-January 1945 had been defeated.

I certainly give the German soldiers credit for being tough fighting men. And I give Yeide full credit for his location of, research in, and use of that German material shown by his chapter notes and bibliography. I only wanted him to give the U.S. Soldier equal treatment.

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An individual as complex as Ike, and with such a varied career, can’t be covered in much depth in 216 pages. The intent here seems to be to identify the qualities and events that brought him to success in two fields. Enough time has gone by to reach a dispassionate judgment. The verdict is given with a series of high points linked by anecdotal material — some apocryphal. Heroes tend to gather myths like moss. This leads to an oversimplification and missing the essential issue in a few cases.

The first of these is the illegal receipt of quarters allowance for a son who was not occupying them. Misunderstanding the regulations was a weak defense. Aside from the basic legal “the ignorance of the law is no excuse,” common sense says that you shouldn’t be paid for something you don’t receive. As for “others are doing the same,” no parent would let a child get away with that. In this book and elsewhere, it is suggested that Eisenhower was discriminated against by the Chief of Infantry, MG Charles Farnsworth, for espousing tanks in the *Infantry Journal*. It is also possible he didn’t like his ethics. The record is not clear why Ike was not selected for the advanced course of his branch at Fort Benning. Under the pattern of that time, about 50 percent of those in the zone of consideration would be chosen. He had performed well enough to be promoted to temporary lieutenant colonel during WWI and had graduated from the Infantry Tank School at Camp Meade in 1921. It is obvious why, a few years later, he was not in the Infantry quota for the Command and General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth. Only about 25 percent made this, and he had not completed a normal prerequisite — the Advanced Infantry Officer Course. His mentor and patron saint, BG Fox Conner, pulled an end-run by getting him on the quota for the Adjutant General’s Department. To some, this was a neat way of beating the system, but to others it was flagrant favoritism. He did well at the school, graduating #1, in part to the solutions his friend, George Patton, had shared with him from the previous class. This was not considered unethical. It was similar to what every fraternity in the country did for its members. Being at the top helped, but there were 20 others who had been #1 in the inter-war period and none others made it to be supreme commander of Allied Expeditionary Forces in Europe.

His next mentor was General/Field Marshal Douglas MacArthur, and the highlights of this period are well covered. Not so well covered were the factors that brought him to Washington after Pearl Harbor. Though Len Gerow was from VMI rather than to the Academy, the two of them became very close friends at Fort Sam in 1915 and were classmates at Leavenworth. Gerow became chief of the War Plans Division (WPD) of the General Staff as a BG in December 1940. Eisenhower was known to CSA Marshall but perhaps not on the front pages of his Little Black Book. It was Gerow who called attention to the special background that made Ike ideal for an emergent assignment, getting help to U.S. Army forces in the Far East. His knowledge of the Philippines and long association with MacArthur suited him for this and he did his best, which convinced Marshall he was qualified for more. Gerow was pretty well burned out and was sharing some of the guilt for the War Department failure December 7, 1941. He was promoted to MG and given the 29th Infantry Division. Eisenhower followed him as chief of the WPD and made MG in March 1942. His next assignment as CG of the European Theater of Operations was generally considered to be as a placeholder until things were right for the Chief of Staff to take the field, and his rapid ascent to LTG in July 1942 was necessary to deal with the Allies. Operation Torch in North Africa created an unexpected path and four stars in February 1943, after overcoming the perils on Darlan and the delay of getting to Tunisia. Wukovits summarized this well, and the subsequent operations in the Med, though he doesn’t clarify the command structure. The same is true of Overlord, where a new reader might think that Patton reported directly to SHAEF.

He brings out the facets of the arguments between the broad and narrow-front approaches. He passes over the possibility of an early crossing the Rhine by the 6th Army Group. Ike didn’t like Jake Devers; considered him a rival for Marshall’s affection and attention; didn’t want him as an AG CG; didn’t pay much attention to his advice. Ike’s brief tenure as Chief of Staff of the Army is covered even more briefly. His terms as commander in chief are covered in a short chapter which doesn’t say much about National Security Council document 162/2, Massive Retaliation, or the New Look.

There are a few unfamiliar items in the photo section. It’s unfortunate there’s not one of Ike’s second mentor, Fox Conner (though he has some space in the text) or the less well-known, Ira Welborn, chief of the Tank Corps in WWI.

This book is based mostly on secondary sources and doesn’t reflect any new research. It could be useful in a high school class for someone just meeting Ike. The twopage bibliography has some excellent ideas for learning more, including two of Ike’s own works.

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When one thinks of the Roman Empire, it
is difficult not to be impressed. For more than 500 years, the empire commanded armies in the hundreds of thousands on three continents, managed public affairs at home and in the provinces, and did all this work without the benefit of the internal combustion engine, telephones, a developed road network, or computers (not even pocket calculators). And what did the Romans leave us once their empire fell? Architecture in the form of monuments, public buildings, aqueducts (some of which are still in use to this day), paved roads, a system of laws, and widespread use of the Latin language, which formed the basis of a number of modern languages. Colossal empires require similar leaders. Caius Julius Caesar fit the bill in every respect.

Caesar did not just live in tumultuous times—he was born into them (in 100 BC). In the first 20 years of the last century BC, Rome was plagued by three civil wars (more would follow). During his time as military commander, consul and dictator, he would expand the empire into Gaul (most of present-day France), Britain, expand holdings in present-day Turkey, and North Africa. His legions would defeat both well-trained armies and barbarians.

Goldsworthy’s chronology of Caesar’s life is told with accuracy and sympathy, but he never lets the reader forget that Caesar was a highly ambitious ruler, even as a young man and could be, by turns, engaging, treacherous, forgiving, and brutal. And like most successful leaders, he was well impressed with himself. Without going into too much detail, one can cite as proof of his self-confidence (others might say arrogance) his dispatch to Rome after the battle of Zela in August of 47 BC when, after routing the army of Pharnaces II of Pontus, he proclaimed: “Veni, Vidi, Vici” (I came, I saw, I conquered).

Perhaps the most engaging chapter is the Ides of March, a detailed account of Caesar’s final days. On March 14, his wife, Calpurnia, had warned him of calamity through a dream she had had the previous night. Morning rituals at home had revealed bad omens. On his way to address the Senate, he ordered his personal bodyguard to stay at his residence. Why? We’ll never know. We do know that he was scheduled to leave Rome in three days to campaign in the Balkans. The conspirators in the Senate had to act soon.

How could this excellent book have been better? I have only two comments here, and the first concerns maps: they are too few and depict hardly any ebb and flow of battle, especially with Gallic tribes. Second, on page 205 Goldsworthy, quoting Caesar from his De Bellico Gallo, states that in 58 BC when Helvetian tribes were moving to Cisalpine Gaul, Caesar moved his legions from Rome to the bank of the Rhone in eight days. The rate of march was 90 miles per day. That rate is impossible. At a 12-hour per day march rate, this would equate to an 8-minute per mile rate of advance. Legionnaires carried weapons, helmets, water bottles, packs with food and utensils (figure 20 pounds minimum), wearing sandals, and marching on paved and unpaved roads. This rate of march, with combat gear is equivalent to three-plus marathons per day for eight straight days. Research on a present day army’s rate of march from sources such as the French Foreign Legion, British Parachute Regiment, and the U.S. Army state that 30 miles per day is optimal.

But these objections are small stuff. For now, if you want a book on perhaps the greatest Roman of all, latch on to Goldsworthy’s work.


Derek Zumbro’s work, _Battle For The Ruhr: The German Army’s Final Defeat in the West_, is not so much a history of the battle to close the Ruhr Pocket in March and April of 1945 as an account of the German experience in this area during the closing weeks of World War II. The focus is not on tactical combat actions, but on the personal struggles of the German people, from high-ranking military leaders to villagers, town leaders and children as the Third Reich collapsed around them. It is a fascinating look at this period of the war, hampered only by the periodic lack of contextualizing the situation.

Zumbro relies almost completely on participant accounts when shaping together his history. American and other Allied forces are the supporting cast in his work, providing the backdrop against which the populace of Western Germany was at the forefront. He begins his study somewhat prior to the traditional starting point for studies of the Ruhr fighting (the seizure of the Remagen bridge), by examining the strategic air campaign’s effect on the German rear areas in the early months of 1945. He progressed through the key elements of the land campaign: the aforementioned Remagen bridge episode, followed by the dash to Paderborn and the eventual link up of the U.S. Ninth and First Armies. Field Marshal Walter Model features prominently throughout this book, and Zumbro’s examination of his final hours is the most thorough to be published in decades.

The pattern of the work is fairly predictable, and follows the experiences of those in the path of the advancing Allied forces. Initially, these people experienced the terror of strategic bombing. Then, they faced the uncertainty of initial encounters with the American and victorious forces. Finally, they suffered through the despair of released prisoners, forced laborers, and retreating German soldiers during the final days of combat. Zumbro’s focus remains on these aspects throughout the book, with military perspectives limited to the German side, specifically to the activities of FM Model and his staff, as well as a select number of individual German key leaders. There is very little discussion of Allied plans, strategy, or operations.

While a worthy book, and one of the best studies of the impact of warfare on the German civilian populace in a number of years, the book does not necessarily stand alone. The progress of the action could prove problematic for one not on familiar terms with the military aspects of the battle for the Ruhr pocket. One should have no trouble finding a brief overview of the fighting, and in particular the Allied perspectives of operations. Allied operations were not simplistic, and, especially during the fighting around Paderborn, conditions were very confusing. Once the reader understands the broader historical context within which Zumbro’s work is situated, he will have a much greater appreciation for what Zumbro accomplishes here—a telling and worthwhile account from the German perspective of the war’s final months in the Ruhr.
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A Soldier with the 10th Mountain Division’s 2nd Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment, leads a combined patrol with Iraqi soldiers in Doura, Iraq.