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Review Essays

From *Parameters*, Autumn 1999, pp. 134-50.

Henry G. Gole, "[Leadership in Literature](#)," pp. 134-47.

Alan Cate, "[The Deadly Brotherhood and Other Looks Back at Our World War II GIs](#)," pp. 147-50.

Leadership in Literature

HENRY G. GOLE

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Military journals, the popular press, and glossy copy from the Department of the Army tell us that high-tech is in. Photos of soldiers with one each of everything from RadioShack draping their bodies confirm it: scientism, voiced in New Age incantations--like "total information dominance"--is the right stuff of future wars. High-tech solutions, promising bloodless victories in war, are attractive in the homeland of Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Alva Edison, and Bill Gates. Americans willingly spend dollars to spare lives. But if antiseptic victory via missiles entering doors and windows without knocking seems too good to be true, it probably is.

Exaggerated claims for high-tech tend to characterize war as gallery games played by warm, dry, and well-fed geeks. Icons, feeling neither fear nor discomfort, zap other icons, or are themselves gezapped. Reality becomes blips on screens accompanied by audio dissonance, obscuring a brutal fact: decisive combat sooner or later pits our tough kids against their tough kids in one of the world's back alleys, where the weather is always bad, communications always break down, and the action always occurs at the junction of four map sheets. Bad decisions can put our warriors in the wrong place, and poor leadership can squander elite formations. Victory in war requires more than gadgets. And it is seldom bloodless. *Menschenführung*, one of those clumsy-precise German words, means leading human beings. That is our subject.

Field Manual 100-5, *Operations*, says what leadership does: it provides purpose, direction, and motivation in combat. And it is important. Combat power comes from the courage and competence of soldiers, training, equipment, doctrine, "and above all, the quality of their leadership." Field Manual 22-103, *Leadership for Senior Leaders*, defines leadership as the "art of direct and indirect influence and the skill of creating the conditions for sustained organizational success to achieve the desired result." We once learned a simpler formulation, that leadership was gaining the willing cooperation of our troops, but the definitions are compatible. The former reflects the organizational concern of high command, the latter the eyeball-to-eyeball relationship in which leaders share with their soldiers the hazards and hardships of combat. Definitions, axioms, pet theories, and checklists abound, but leadership, like sex, is a doing thing.

Command Climate

The US Army War College's 1970 *Study On Military Professionalism* addressed the difference between saying and doing, finding a command climate "in which there is disharmony between traditional, accepted ideals (summarized as Duty, Honor, Country) and the prevailing institutional pressures." Here is a pregnant excerpt:

A scenario that was repeatedly described in seminar sessions and narrative responses [to questionnaires] includes an ambitious, transitory commander . . . engulfed in producing statistical results, fearful of personal failure, too busy to talk with or listen to his subordinates, and determined to submit acceptably optimistic reports which reflect faultless completion of a variety of tasks at the expense of the sweat and

frustration of his subordinates.

The damning study rocked Army leadership, not least because respondents were front-runners in the grab for the brass ring, not embittered losers. They were faculty and students at the War College, students at the Command and General Staff College, and others deeply knowledgeable of the officer corps. The Army published the findings and briefed them to US Army audiences around the world.

The rot revealed in the 1970 study antedated our war in Vietnam. "Zero defects," white rocks, starched fatigues, and spit-shined jump boots worn in the field were some of the manifestations of the victory of form over substance, a constant and insidious military proclivity. Scientific management and graduate study for officers were in vogue. In the 1990s, the outward signs of form over substance are field grade officers grinding out slick PowerPoint briefing charts (a task once performed by junior enlisted soldiers or the people in "graphics"). This show-and-tell is accompanied by a highly centralized system which, in unholy alliance with the selling of high-tech in the glib language of advertising, tends to reward brisk performance of narrowly prescribed tasks. The cost is initiative, the sine qua non of military leadership from squad to field army.

We should not await the shock of violent combat to reveal our defects. It is time to restudy the Army's command climate, a subject of inquiry more pertinent to the health and effectiveness of the Army than fixation on the latest gadget or viewgraph. Until we have conducted, digested, and acted upon such a restudy, imaginative and historical literature remains the laboratory of military leadership. What makes literature more useful to leaders than lists and axioms is context. Leadership functions or fails in the real world, a world best replicated in fiction, memoirs, biographies, and histories in which leaders play the cards they are dealt. Immersion in this literature is second only to actual combat leadership experience in shaping leaders.

Apprentice to Generalissimo

Rudyard Kipling's *Stalky & Co.* is a delightful boys' story and a penetrating insight into the source of British leaders in those days when the sun never set on the empire. The setting is the British public school, that peculiar institution which shaped the youths who later manned the ramparts in every corner of the empire as Her Majesty's professional officers and civil servants. The public school produced Wellington's officers, by his own testimony, and the youngsters who led British troops over the top through more than four years of trench warfare in World War I, if they survived. Among the latter were poets and writers of prose still in print, men like Sigfried Sassoon, Robert Graves, and Wilfred Owen, who created the picture in our heads that is the Western Front of World War I. The subculture of the public school instilled in most of the boys a permanent value system of *noblesse oblige* (in addition to producing some world-class spies and scoundrels; see George MacDonald Fraser's "Flashman" novels for a laugh a minute). Somehow the schoolmasters (see James Hilton's *Goodbye, Mr. Chips*, and weep with Mr. Chips as the names of the old boys killed are read out at Chapel, 23 on a single Sunday after the Somme), tradition, social pecking order, games, and a liberal arts curriculum transformed filthy little beasts into patriots unable to let their side down. Privileged treatment in a rigid class system produced its share of self-centered fops, but in extremis the public school boy distinguished himself by caring for his soldiers and dying well. A wounded and decorated "old boy," just two or three years out of school and known to most of the boys still in school, returns from India and addresses the school community. The reader witnesses the transformation of street urchin to aspiring winner of the Victoria Cross. Readers soak up the ambiance of the public school, enhancing their appreciation of how Britain cultivated apprentice leaders who would maintain a great empire for a long time.

Soldiers, like much of humankind, dream of advancement, as suggested in the sardonic toast of young officers stagnating in grade: "Here's to a bloody war and a pestilential season." (See Byron Farwell's *Mr. Kipling's Army* for a penetrating look into that army and chuckle on every page.) Few of us are sufficiently introspective to ask if we are up to the demands of high command. Being "up to it" is one of several important issues raised by Correlli Barnett in *The Swordbearers: Supreme Command in the First World War*, an absolute gold mine for the student of leadership at the top. His theme, "the decisive effect of individual human character on history," is personified in four national commanders-in-chief at critical decision points: two Germans (Colonel-General Helmut Johannes Ludwig von Moltke and General Erich Ludendorff), one Frenchman (General Henri Philippe Omer Pétain), and one Englishman (Admiral Sir John R. Jellicoe).

Moltke, Chief of the General Staff and de facto Commander-in-Chief of the Field Army of the German Empire for nine years, said of himself in 1905, when he knew he was the likely successor to Count Schlieffen:

I lack the power of rapid decision. I am too reflective, too scrupulous, and, if you like, too conscientious for such a post. I lack the capacity for risking all on a single throw, that capacity which made the greatness of such born commanders as Napoleon, or our own Frederick II, or my uncle.

He was right. Though the bold German offensive conducted in 1914--designed by Moltke to knock the French out of the war before the Russian offensive in the east became decisive--was nothing if not a single throw of the dice, Moltke was still correct in his self-assessment. Barnett describes Moltke during the critical phase of the battle as "visibly prostrate with worry, with his almost hallucinatory awareness of all the moral and general issues at stake." He goes on to say:

It mattered nothing now, in the crude business of leadership in war, that Joffre was an intellectual pigmy. . . Equally it mattered nothing that Moltke had a first-class intelligence and a brilliant staff record; he could no longer control his army for he had lost control of himself.

Moltke was effectively relieved of his duties on 14 September 1914--"effectively" because, as he told the Kaiser, "It wouldn't make a good impression in the army abroad if I were to be dismissed immediately after the retreat of the army." He remained at his headquarters pro forma, but, as he expressed it, "Everything was taken out of my hands and I stood there as a spectator." Formal relief was on 3 November 1914, and he died in 1916.

Several works dealing with Moltke's wartime experience describe the temper of Europe as war began as well as the particulars of combat at the cutting edge. Barbara Tuchman's *The Proud Tower* captures the mood of the various classes in Europe before the war, and her *The Guns of August* brings home to the reader the massive sweep of the initial German offensive. See also at the point of the arrow the opening gambit from the perspective of Walter Bloem, a German reserve officer and rifle company commander, in *The Advance From Mons*, and through the eyes of French intellectual Marc Bloch, a sergeant of the reserve positioned to blunt that arrow at the Marne, in his *Memories of War, 1914-1915*. Erwin Rommel, in *Attacks*, shows the initial clashes on the Western Front--and close combat on two other fronts later in the war--through the eyes of the reflective professional soldier, while Alexander Solzhenitsyn, in *August 1914*, shows combat between Germans and Russians--and how not to lead. See also Emilio Lussu, *The Sardinian Brigade*, for combat between Italians and Austrians in the high Alps a little later in the war.

Barnett calls Jellicoe a "sailor with a flawed cutlass." Highly regarded for his knowledge, skills, and "profound self-confidence," Jellicoe had been chosen long before 1914, by Admiral-of-the-Fleet Sir John Fischer and First Sea Lord from 1904 to 1910, as the man who would one day lead the British Fleet to victory over the German High Seas Fleet. Early in 1914, Jellicoe was appointed Commander-in-Chief designate of the Home Fleet, to assume his post in December when the term of Admiral Sir George Callaghan expired. On 31 July, with war imminent, Winston Churchill told Jellicoe to be prepared to assume his new duties instantly. Jellicoe's reaction was curious. It is not "profound self-confidence" that one sees in his reflection later, nor in the flurry of messages exchanged at the top of the navy's hierarchy. "This intimation came upon me as a great surprise, and I protested against such an appointment being made on what might possibly be the very eve of war." In fact, told to "do it," he protested to his superiors not once but four times: on 1 August--to Churchill, First Lord, and to the Marquis of Milford Haven, First Sea Lord--and on 2 August, on 3 August, and on 4 August.

But he assumed command of the Home Fleet and fought the German High Seas Fleet in the Battle of Jutland, a battle described by Barnett as high drama. To appreciate the stakes involved in the only great fleet engagement of the war, reflect on Churchill's view that it was possible for Jellicoe to lose the war during the afternoon and evening of 31 May 1916. The details of the battle and debates following the battle are fascinating, as are the connections Barnett draws between national character, education, the soul of the military, and the character of leaders. Some critics charge Jellicoe with indecisiveness for not pursuing the German fleet that broke contact; others praise his prudence in not risking the British Fleet through a charge into the literal and figurative fog of war. Leaving the debate to sea dogs, one still must note the German tactical victory (British loss of 111,980 tons of warships, German loss of 62,233 tons; 6,945 British casualties, 2,921 German) though coupled with strategic defeat. The German High Seas Fleet did not venture

out of its protected harbors again until 1918, when German sailors mutinied rather than play a role in a Wagnerian *Twilight of the Gods*.

The *Generalissimo*, like the poker player, must know when to hold and when to fold. Despite almost two million French casualties by the end of 1915, despite the 362,000 lost at Verdun alone in 1916, the French bloodbath continued. The failure of General Robert Nivelle's offensive (16 April to 17 May 1917) resulted in the replacement of Nivelle with Pétain as Commander-in-Chief. This failed offensive, the inability to defeat the German submarine threat, and paralysis caused by the March revolution in Russia combined to raise the question: Could France hold on? The sacrifice without benefit that caused despair in Russia brought mutiny to the French army in May 1917. Half of the French divisions experienced mutinies, the *Internationale* was sung, and leaflets were distributed saying, "Down with the war! Death to those responsible for it!" The only good news was the entry of the United States in the war in the spring of 1917.

Pétain expressed his policy in a single sentence: "We must wait for the Americans." He decided "to wear out the enemy with the minimum losses to us." Because Pétain had seen the realities of modern war as a brigade, division, corps, army, and army group commander, and because of the mood of disillusionment after the failed offensive, his realism was acceptable.

The British and Germans took far better care of their troops than the French, of whom Barnett says: Their food was scanty, "welfare and recreational facilities of a Crimean standard, sanitation and washing facilities medieval. . . . All they got were floods of cheap wine--upon which so many of the mutinies were to be fueled." He notes that France had slipped far behind Germany in population and industrial strength, and it fell to Pétain to repair the mistakes of 40 years while in a great war. He turned promptly to the morale of French troops with a two-pronged approach: swift and severe punishment of ringleaders in the mutinies, and a more humane treatment of French soldiers exemplified by the liberal leave policy beginning 8 June 1917. Transportation was provided from the front to rail station, and in a clean uniform. Information and welfare stations were established, and canteens and barber shops--all things the British and German soldier took for granted. These measures, and the suspension of the pure waste of sending troops "over the top" to be ground up by machine guns and rapid-firing artillery, allowed the French army to stay in the field until the Americans arrived. Pétain nursed his army back to health and saved it from collapse.

Barnett calls the final section of *The Swordbearers*, dealing with General Erich Ludendorff, "Full Circle," because, "as the war had opened, so it was about to close--with the nervous disintegration of another de facto Supreme Commander of the Field Army of the German Empire." In deft sketches, Barnett reveals the personalities and roles of the German high command late in the war. The Kaiser was titular Commander-in-Chief of the Field Army, a role he thoroughly enjoyed playing in victorious peacetime maneuvers, but he was passive during the war, leaving matters almost entirely to his generals. (Barnett calls the German government a "slothful front organization" for the military.) Hindenburg was Chief of the General Staff, and Ludendorff was *his* Chief of Staff, taking the title First Quartermaster General. The calm, dignified Hindenburg, feudal in his dedication to his monarch, filled the classic Prussian role of *Feldherr*, while the intelligent, restless, driving Ludendorff served as the General Staff's brain and catalyst. Their "military marriage" was nurtured by their spectacular early victories in the east against the Russians that propelled them to command in the stalemated west in 1916.

In early 1917, German submarines adopted a sink-on-sight policy that brought the United States into the war on 2 April 1917. Millions of fresh American soldiers would go to Europe. The Russian-German armistice in the east ended German military operations there on 16 December 1917, thus permitting some German troops from the east to join the war in the west. At a conference on 11 November 1917, Ludendorff decided on a German offensive in France in the spring of 1918, before the Americans could arrive in force. It is noteworthy that the conference deciding German national strategy was not held in Berlin with the Kaiser or Imperial Chancellor presiding. It was held at an army headquarters in Mons, chaired by Ludendorff and attended by General Staff officers.

He would attack the British using tactics developed at Riga and Caporretto based on infiltration by storm groups--riflemen, light machine guns, flame-throwers, mortars, engineers--up to battalion size. They would take paths of least resistance, not worrying about flanks or maintaining a continuous front line. "The reserves must be put in where the attack is progressing, not where it is held up." These tactics required first-rate junior leadership at the cutting edge and

the best soldiers the attacker possessed. At 0440 on 21 March 1918, the dice were rolled in "a desperate final gamble" whose outcome would decide the war.

Barnett's description races along. "British accounts agree on the paralyzing effect," reducing the Fifth Army, and to some extent the Third Army, to uncoordinated elements of gassed and blasted troops. The Germans "achieved overwhelming tactical as well as strategic surprise," while the British experienced "complete anarchy, a chaos of rumors and ignorance" as their artillery suffered "a total breakdown of coordinated counterfire owing to the smashing of tele- and radio-communications." In a single day the Germans had broken clean through into open country, and Haig expresses concern in his diary entry of 23 March that "the British will be rounded up and driven into the sea!" On the 21st he had asked Pétain for three French divisions; on the 23d he asked for 20. The Kaiser returned from the front bursting with news of German success: "The battle is won, the English have been utterly defeated." (From the British side, see the protagonist in C. S. Forester's novel, *The General*, a corps commander on the receiving end of the initial German success on 21 March. Not quite sure what is happening or why, he instinctively mounts up in the best British tradition--*with his sword*--and rides to the sound of the guns prepared to die for King and Country.)

But the Kaiser's pronouncement was premature. While German assault troops were successful at many points, they were in constant danger, exhausted, and unsupported. (See Ernst Juenger's *The Storm of Steel* to appreciate how brave and skilled they were. Further, Juenger and others loved the wild abandon of close combat, an attitude in sharp contrast to the pacifistic tone of most other personal accounts, including Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*.) The motorized and mechanized forces and supporting arms of 1940 were simply not available to the German assault teams of 1918, and the torn-up terrain at the front meant that local successes could not be translated to victory as British and French reserves, advancing on roads, arrived faster than German reinforcements. Further, as Ludendorff spent 348,300 men in his offensive, 179,703 Americans had arrived in France. He pressed on in May, this time against the French, but again was unable to make strategic victory out of his local successes. He called off the offensive in June.

The massive French offensive that followed in mid-July, after the last of so many supreme German efforts, produced Allied success. On 26 October 1918, Ludendorff asked to be relieved. The Kaiser obliged him.

Barnett writes of Ludendorff's "disintegration," but one suspects that the dramatic effect of beginning and ending with a similar human frailty in Moltke and Ludendorff involves some poetic license. Moltke never made it through the first inning; Ludendorff offered his resignation when the German army was demoralized and defeated in the field after the throw of the dice came up craps. The lesson of *The Swordbearers* for prospective leaders is a question few ask as they reach for the brass ring: Am I up to it? (See also Barnett's *The Desert Generals* for excellent portraits of five generals under the strain of high command in battle in the Middle East theater, 1940-1943. The 1982 version is subtitled *New and Enlarged Edition*, incorporating commentary on documents released since the 1960 original. Barnett contends that Winston Churchill and Field Marshal, First Viscount Montgomery of Alamein, created a myth that "scorned" British Commonwealth Forces before Montgomery's advent, doing "a grave injustice to Sir Claude Auchinleck.")

Three Levels of War in One Theater

Your reviewer confesses to a loss of academic detachment as he reexamines William Slim's *Defeat Into Victory*, John Masters' *The Road Past Mandalay*, and George MacDonald Fraser's *Quartered Safe Out Here*, each of which combines masterful use of language with the essence of British-Japanese combat in Burma in World War II at one of three levels: that of the commanding general, the general staff officer, and the squad leader ("section leader" in the British corruption of the American language). My self-assigned messianic task is to tell soldiers to read the books for professional development and for the good of their souls. Only a conscious act of self-discipline prevents your reviewer from extensively quoting from the first-rate prose.

William Slim was a great soldier and a great teacher of soldiers. He fought at Gallipoli and in Mesopotamia (see his laughing-out-loud account of his World War I experiences as a junior officer in the Middle East, *Unofficial History*), rose to brigadier in the Indian army between the wars, and began World War II commanding in Sudan, Iran, and Iraq. The focal point of *Defeat Into Victory* is the retaking of Burma from the Japanese, first as corps commander and then as commanding general of the 14th British Army. It is a textbook on generalship, but two lessons seem particularly

pertinent.

The first might be anathema to contemporary American professional officers conditioned to egalitarianism, mired in correctness, and subject routinely to unreasonable expectations. Slim played tennis, enjoyed a gin and tonic at sundown, and made a point to get a good night's sleep when he commanded an army. Because tens of thousands of lives and the fates of nations are affected by his decisions, the decisionmaker should be clear-headed. Furrow-browed intensity, fear of failure, the quest for perfection (when the good would do), looking over one's shoulder for approval, and shows of puppy-like enthusiasm are not characteristics Slim demonstrated or recommended in a commander-in-chief. His soldiers knew that Slim, reacting to the darkened reputation earned by the chateau generals of World War I, preferred to lead from the front and that he was a modest man.

Fraser reports that once, after Slim addressed a unit preparing to go into action in Burma, a soldier actually shouted out, in an un-British manner: "We'll follow you, general!" Slim responded: "Don't you believe it. You'll be a long way in front of me." Fraser says Slim was

the only man I've ever seen who had a force that came out of him, a strength of personality that I have puzzled over since. . . . [I]t was that sense of being close to us, as though he were chatting offhand to an understanding nephew. . . . [H]e had the head of a general with the heart of a private soldier. . . . [W]hen it was over and he spoke of what his army had done, it was always "you," not even "we," and never "I."

Masters reports Slim's initial remarks as he assumed command of the 10th Indian Infantry Division in Iraq. The regulars expected the usual lecture from "a pompous old blatherskite," but Masters was struck by the division commander's observations about morale. "The dominant feeling of the battlefield is loneliness, gentlemen, and morale, only morale, individual morale as a foundation under training and discipline, will bring victory."

The second lesson for the prospective general is to recall how he obeyed as a private or cadet: He saluted, followed by "Yes, sir" and about-face, and then did what he was told to do. Douglas MacArthur and Mark Clark forgot that. MacArthur could accept neither the "Germany first" strategy that made the war in the Pacific in World War II a secondary effort, nor later, in Korea, could he accept the primacy of civilian leadership in our American system of government. Clark, similarly, had difficulty in accepting that the invasion of France and the Allied charge into Germany took precedence over the campaign in Italy, his campaign. Ego, arrogance, even hubris, stood between these two American generals and our ideal of greatness. Slim, the good soldier, understood that political decisions established the priorities of Allied strategy: defeat Germany; win the war in the Pacific; and only then, with the resources left over, win in China-Burma-India. He saluted, endured, and ultimately whipped the Japanese with what Clement Atlee called "the scrapings of the barrel." He later served as chief of the Imperial General Staff, was made field marshal in 1949, and served as governor-general of Australia from 1953 to 1960 when he was created viscount. Greatly admired by Masters and Fraser, true soldiers both, his stolid dignity and compassion stand in sharp contrast to the bullies and shouters of more recent vintage.

John Masters fought like a lion, wrote like an angel, settled in the United States after World War II, and dedicated *The Road Past Mandalay* to "those who remained on the paths, on the hills." Is there an old sweat out there who could read those words and not read on? Or not recognize the truth of this, about eating in the bush with danger not far away: "It was not the food that refreshed and renewed us as much as the occasion." (See his *Bugles and a Tiger*, an autobiographical account of how the "schoolboy became a professional soldier of the old Indian Army"--a Gurkha--before the big show opened in 1939. See Byron Farwell, *The Gurkhas*, to learn why British officers loved leading their Gurkhas, and Farwell's *Mr. Kipling's Army*, for an insider's view of that army and his witty descriptions of it, such as calling it "a social institution prepared for every emergency except that of war.") Masters experienced combat in the Middle East before being sent to Staff College in Quetta, a rite of passage about which he wrote: "You may laugh more than you ever have, but you'll never laugh as lightly again. In military terms you are about to become a field officer; in civilian language, a responsible adult."

The bulk of *Mandalay* takes place in Burma, where Masters serves as Brigade Major (principal staff officer) and later commander of 111 Brigade, a component of Orde Wingate's Chindits, a deep penetration force that engaged in hard walking and bitter fighting against a tough foe. Later he is the principal staff officer in 19 Division during the bloody

concluding phase of combat with the Japanese, who refused to surrender. Masters tells a war story and a love story (his wife-to-be is in India) even while rendering valuable professional instruction, including an appendix that is an ops order. His reflections on commanders and upon assuming command of 111 Brigade will be read twice by pros; his love of soldiers, pride in British accomplishments, and investment of self in service are moving. He writes, "We--but I have called this a personal narrative; why do I use the impersonal `we'? I must, because the `I' had disappeared." This is wise, powerful, literate stuff about service and leadership; it continues in George MacDonald Fraser's *Quartered Safe Out Here*.

Fraser joins an infantry "section" (a ten-man squad) as a replacement to engage in close combat in Burma for a year before leaving as a corporal to attend officer school. Attachment to mates, what makes squads work, and why soldiers fight have been done before, notably by Cornelius Tacitus, Stephen Ambrose, James Jones, Norman Mailer, Erich Maria Remarque, Hans Hellmut Kirst, Robert Graves, Willi Heinrich, Jean Larteguy, and others, but no one does it better than Fraser. Corporal Hutton, squad leader when Fraser was new to the squad, says of their company commander as the men watch him "looking as though he hadn't a care in the world" just before an assault: "Happy as a pig in shit. E's a lad, oor John." Fraser adds:

That, incidentally, is about as high a compliment as a Cumbrian soldier can pay, and was a just reflection of the company's feeling. They didn't give their admiration lightly, but they wouldn't have swapped Long John for any officer in the Army. He was a wildcat in action and a gentleman out of it; forty years on I watched him finding seats for latecomers to a memorial service in Carlisle Cathedral, mild and unobtrusive as he handed them their hymn-sheets--and remembered him coming out of the dark with that bent bayonet on his rifle.

As Fraser leaves the company in Burma for the selection boards in India that will send him to officer school, his commander offers this sage advice: "Well, good luck, and remember not to scratch your arse or giggle--they can't stand gigglers." And finally, seeing the squad for the last time from the back of a truck:

But if I couldn't call good-bye, there was something else I could do. It came to me as I looked back, the thought: you must never forget this moment. Fix it in your mind forever, because it's the ending to a chapter of your life, and you'll never see anything like it again. Salt it away in your memory, so that you'll always be able to close your eyes and see the single file of dark green figures in the dusty sunlight, marching at ease, the bush-hats tilted, the rifles slung. That's something you must always remember.

Well-told tales of proud service as a subaltern with a Highland regiment in the Middle East after World War II are found in Fraser's short stories in *The General Danced at Dawn*, *McAuslan in the Rough*, and *The Sheikh and the Dustbin*. The stories evoke alternating spasms of loud laughter and quiet tears as the reader is guided to steal peeks into artfully crafted case studies in morale. For erotic and exotic misadventures of the most dishonorable cad, craven coward, and shameless bully ever to serve His Majesty (and land on his feet with honors and reputation as better men die doing their duty), see any of the many *Flashman* books by the same author.

Lest this screed become an uncritical paean to British leadership and the regimental system, one notes the evacuation of British troops at Dunkirk in 1940 and their ignominious defeat at Singapore in 1942. Within a decade, saved only by Inchon, the US Army would come close to experiencing something like its own Singapore, or repeating its own ignominious defeat in the Philippines in 1942.

Korean War and Unpreparedness

The war in Korea did not produce a literary canon. The Great War gave us Graves, Sassoon, Owen, and Hemingway, to mention just a few who wrote in English; World War II put Wouk, Mailer, Shaw, and Jones on at least American must-read lists; but there was little writing about the Korean War and even less first-rate writing. After Fehrenbach, Marshall, Michener, Frank, and Russ, there wasn't much more.

T. R. Fehrenbach's Korean War book, *This Kind of War: A Study of Unpreparedness*, has held up remarkably well, particularly in its reference to the ill-fated Task Force Smith, the initial American force sent to repulse the North Korean invasion of South Korea in 1950. The debacle--the North Korean People's Army whipped the US force,

revealing both the unreadiness of the troops and the inadequacy of their weapons, most notably the basic infantry antitank weapon--so impressed top army leadership in the mid-1990s that "no more Task Force Smiths" became a mantra stressing the need for readiness for the first battle. Boy Scouts know to "Be Prepared."

S. L. A. Marshall's *The River and the Gauntlet* confirmed Fehrenbach's litany of Army failures early in the war and some deficiencies that persisted until the war's end. Among the policies he questioned was the rotation system, insuring that American rookies fought Chinese veterans. He shows us leadership--some deplorable, some effective, even noble--and GIs both bugging out and hanging tough. It is clear that neither troops nor leaders were ready for the war they found in Korea early on.

Cushy living in occupied and pliant Japan ill prepared combat troops for "this kind of war," close combat in terrain requiring physical fitness, basic military skills, and the will to persevere and win. Belief that American air supremacy and possession of atomic bombs would deter any enemy was a disincentive to conduct training requiring grunts and sweat. A sense of superiority pervaded the Army and the country that had imposed unconditional surrender on Germany and Japan. America was riding an unprecedented and seemingly endless upward economic spiral as the rest of the world--including the British Empire, the European Continent, and the Soviet Union--was down and almost out. The sure knowledge that God is an American created an arrogance verging on hubris.

Fehrenbach's subtitle concerns preparedness, but the "this kind of war" in the title also differentiates what Dwight D. Eisenhower called a crusade from another kind of war: the nasty and protracted war for which conscripts might not be suited; the kind of war fought in Korea, French Indo-China, and Vietnam; the kind of war that is indeterminate; the kind of war that does not end with a parade. Perhaps only old sweats and mercenaries can be expected to put their lives on the line at the Khyber Pass, in the Pusan Perimeter, at Khe San, and in the Falklands.

Early in the war there was some good news, but not much. Pat Frank's novel, *Hold Back the Night*, shows a Marine Corps rifle company commander overcoming the temptation to simply close his eyes and die. His company executes its mission, providing flank security for the main body as it retreats south while fighting off relentless Chinese infantry and the apathy-inducing frigidty of a Korean winter. The book is fiction, but it is not a far cry from the actual performance of Marines fighting their way south.

The protagonist in James Michener's *The Bridges at Toko-Ri* is a veteran naval aviator of World War II, a man who resents being taken from his law practice and young family to fly hazardous missions in Korea. He is the quintessential American. He had done his bit in The Big One and was ready to retreat to privacy, home, and hearth. Thus his loyalty to a junior shipmate, the chopper pilot who flies under all conditions to pull downed air crews from icy waters, is a mystery to the pilot's wife to whom the concept of shipmate is foreign. She fails to understand her husband's readiness to sacrifice the few hours they have together in Japan--for a drunken ne'er-do-well jailed for disorderly conduct, fighting, and whoremongering--before he must return to the pitching flight deck and the war. Nor does the admiral understand how our self-indulgent society produces warriors like the lawyer-pilot. The reciprocal is the readiness of the roughneck chopper pilot to lay down his life for the lawyer-pilot, which is precisely what he does in the novel's denouement, exposing the wet-eyed romantics among the readers (including your reviewer).

Martin Russ's *The Last Parallel* is a young marine's accurate account of the World War I-like trench warfare that characterized the static phase of the Korean War. Night patrols, minefields and barbed wire, the manning of outposts and listening posts, contending with nature, and exchanges of artillery and mortar fire constituted the daily routine of the war after the frenetic movement ended in 1951.

In the past decade several first-person accounts of combat in Korea have appeared, presumably intimations of mortality as soldier-scribes get it down while they still can: it's been almost 50 years. In that connection, we can expect a spate of Korean War books as the years 2000 to 2003 mark the half-century since this or that event of the war. The more recent books are commended less for literary merit than for getting it right, but none is an embarrassment.

Harry J. Maihafer's *From the Hudson to the Yalu* focuses on the 574 members of the author's 1949 class at the US Military Academy, many of whom served in Korea during the war of movement, and many of whom went to the newly established United States Air Force. His personal need to write the book uncovers a talented writer. Maihafer was in direct contact with classmates in Korea, corresponded with others, and heard of the fates of still others from

classmates and their wives. He recalls the leisurely somnolence, a kind of vestige of the pre-World War II "old Army," which ended with Korea and the realization that the Cold War required a high state of training and readiness. (One recalls a remark by a member of the class of '45 who later said that he could no longer regret having missed World War II upon graduation; he would have his fill of combat with a tour in Korea and a couple in Vietnam.)

James Brady (he of the "Personality Parade" column in Sunday's *Parade* magazine) wrote *The Coldest War*, a fine account of his experience as a USMC platoon leader and rifle company executive officer in Korea in 1951-52. It rings true in the details of combat in that static phase and in references to the omnipresent cold that pervades all soldier accounts of the war. A bonus effect is his unstinting praise of the quiet leadership provided by his company commander in Korea, Senator John Chaffee of Rhode Island, former governor of that state and a Marine Corps combat veteran of World War II.

John A. Sullivan's *Toy Soldiers: Memoir of a Combat Platoon Leader in Korea* is a clear, bitter, and provocative account of brief, intense fighting late in the war before the author was wounded and evacuated. Filled with ideals as he joined a rifle company of the 7th Division, he soon chafed under the military bureaucracy and became scathingly critical of what passed for leadership in the echelons above him, depicting his battalion executive officer as a knucklehead and martinet of the worst kind. His accurate depiction of close combat at night (see Brady and Russ for similar descriptions of the static war) wins credulity and raises a question: where, *at the end of the war*, were the pros? If comfortable living in occupied Japan and arrogance bordering on hubris set Task Force Smith up for the slaughter early on, why was the US Army still a collection of amateurs at the end of the war? My memories are of unimpressive leaders and rookies, mostly conscripts, who outclassed the "regulars," most of whom were bums, drunks, jerks, and fakes. Perhaps, believing Korea to be a feint--and Europe to be the big geopolitical prize--the first team was sent to Europe. Perhaps the old boy net, which would have the lifers run the clubs in Vietnam, saw that in 1950-53 members were sent to Munich instead of the 38th Parallel. In any event, Sullivan was singularly unimpressed with his leaders in Korea. So was I.

Journalist Rudy Tomedi, a Marine Corps veteran of Vietnam, tells us in *No Bugles, No Drums: An Oral History of the Korean War* that in interviews with Korean War vets he was struck by their sturdy attitudes regarding service that so sharply contrasted with those expressed by Tomedi's contemporaries only a decade later. The Korea vets, perhaps influenced by the recent heroics of big brothers in the great crusade of World War II, believed it was their duty to go. Many in the draft-vulnerable cohorts of Vietnam vintage entertained various ways to evade the certainly inconvenient and possibly deadly task. (For ambiguity about the war in Vietnam, see, among others, William Broyles, Jr., *Brothers in Arms*, in which the combat veteran who returns to Vietnam in 1984 as a journalist tells us in clear, powerful prose how close he came to deliberately missing shipment to Vietnam as a Marine lieutenant. Recall that President Jimmy Carter later granted amnesty to those who opted out of the war in Vietnam.) Tomedi conducted 100 interviews, pegging them to the several phases of the war. His observations regarding generational differences should move the serious student of war to reflect on that theme and its implications regarding service, which, in turn, bears on the question of leadership. (See Stephen Ambrose's *Citizen Soldiers* and Gerald F. Linderman's *The World Within War*. For a sense of what it was to be 19 and caught up personally in World War II, see Samuel Hynes's *Flights of Passage*. For a mature reflection on bearing witness to modern war, see Hynes's *Soldiers' Tale*. See also Tom Brokaw's recent best-selling song of praise to the World War II generation, *The Greatest Generation*. One infers from the reflections on World War II that the men of that war were stars and didn't know it, while the young of later years think of themselves as punk stars for doing the safe and ordinary. They are half right.)

Conclusions

Armies can and do require recruits and prospective leaders to learn leadership by memorizing lists and passages from manuals and whatever else the current general-in-charge favors. Desirable leadership traits have been identified from biblical tales of King David through Tacitus and his admiration of the leadership style of barbaric Germans, from epic tales of El Cid and Roland down to Medal of Honor recipient Sergeant First Class Randy Shughart, who put it all on the line in Somalia by laying down his life for his friends. The traits surely include tactical and technical competence, character, leading by example, personal courage, self-sacrifice, a judicious balance of prudence and risk-taking, and other noble qualities to be found in the Ten Commandments and the most recent checklists from Fort Benning and Fort Leavenworth; but to fully engage the learner, such traits must be shown in context. Lists and mantras won't do.

The best leaders get the mission done and care for their soldiers. The essence of military leadership is to understand the mission clearly, plan carefully, train soldiers well, and create a climate in which soldiers willingly subordinate their individual well-being and private wishes to the well-being and mission of the team, crew, or squad. The latter may be the most important and the greatest challenge to commanders. How one establishes the bonding vital to morale can be found in archives and official records, but it is more readily available to the conscientious leader in good literature that transports the reader to the time and place of decision. Since authors give their works beginnings, middles, and ends, the reading of whole books, not the literary equivalent of sound bites, should be encouraged. The titles in this essay barely scratch the surface.

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Review Essay

***The Deadly Brotherhood* and Other Looks Back at Our World War II GIs**

ALAN CATE

With the publication of *The Deadly Brotherhood: The American Combat Soldier in World War II*, John McManus wants to rescue the World War II ground combat soldier from those who have belittled his fighting ability and achievements or inadequately conveyed the grim existence and experiences of riflemen, tankers, and combat engineers. He seeks to answer three broad questions about the GI: How well did he fight? What was it like? Why did he fight? He is perhaps a trifle late in taking the field, notwithstanding his disclaimers to the contrary. And everyone from Stephen Ambrose to Steven Spielberg seems to have answered a similar call lately.

Of course, for a generation or so after the war, the GIs' fighting reputation didn't appear to need rescuing. Getting up off the deck after Bataan and Kasserine Pass, the GIs bested their enemy in innumerable battles and campaigns on the road to Tokyo and Berlin. Ernie Pyle's reportage captured the prevailing image of decent, ordinary Americans who, while hating war, were remarkably effective at waging it. Nice guys and heroes too, slow to anger but formidable in purpose, they outfought the Aryan "supermen" and fanatical Japanese at every turn, beating them at their own game on their home turf. Reinforcing this view in the popular culture were any number of films--*Battleground* and *To Hell and Back* to cite just two--and even television series. Who else remembers *Combat!* and *The Gallant Men*? And even when literature provided some less than flattering depictions of the GIs and, especially, their leaders--for instance *The Naked and the Dead* and *From Here to Eternity*--the movie versions either were box office poison or had to be sanitized to accord with popular conceptions of the Good War and Our Boys--or, in the case of James Jones's *The Thin Red Line*--both. Terrence Malick's recent, highly regarded film is Hollywood's second try at James Jones's novel of Guadalcanal combat; an obscure earlier attempt sank like a stone over 30 years ago.

If such was the orthodox portrayal of the World War II GI, then the revisionist conclusion was that the American fighting man generally failed to measure up to the opposition, particularly the Germans. The verdict of scholars, exemplified in Trevor N. Depuy's *A Genius for War*, Martin van Creveld's *Fighting Power*, and Russell Weigley's *Eisenhower's Lieutenants*, was that man for man, the Germans fought harder, were better led, and displayed more initiative, aggressiveness, and resiliency than the GIs. The Americans won thanks to air superiority and an overwhelming preponderance of materiel and men, not to mention Hitler's bungling interference with his generals and the exertions of the Red Army. Not that a great deal of evidence undergirded this conclusion beyond some arcane calculations by Depuy, S. L. A. Marshall's "ratio of fire"--his notorious dictum that no more than 15 to 25 percent of American infantrymen ever fired their weapons in combat--and, naturally, the scholars' back-scratching footnoting of each other. This condescending notion of GI ineptitude and amateurishness crept into the more general literature as well, whether in the work of an Englishman otherwise well-disposed toward Americans such as John Keegan or that of his snide compatriot, Fleet Street's Max Hastings, who never misses a chance to slight American fighting men. The historical lesson for serving soldiers was that the US Army should be more like the Wehrmacht; those of us on active duty in the mid-1980s recall that it was an unfortunate officer indeed who couldn't pepper his conversation with confident references to *auftragstaktik*, *schwerpunkt*, *fingerspitzengefühl*, and the like.

Refuting this pernicious myth about American soldiers' combat performance is one of the major objectives that McManus sets for himself. Other writers have previously attempted much the same thing. Harold Leinbaugh, along with his wartime comrade John Campbell, the author of a classic "autobiography of a World War II rifle company," *The Men of Company K*, was so incensed by Marshall's "ratio of fire" statistic, which he suspected was false and felt unjustly maligned the GIs' fighting ability, that he enlisted military historian Roger Spiller to help investigate Marshall's methodology. The result was a thorough debunking of this aspect of Marshall's work. More recently, Kit Bonn's monograph on the US Seventh Army's Vosges Mountains campaign, *When the Odds Were Even*, and Michael Doubler's more general study of how the GIs fought the Germans, *Closing With the Enemy*, have documented the GIs' high fighting quality. McManus lists Bonn and Doubler among his sources, and traces the historical detective story regarding Marshall's made-up "findings" at the start of his chapter titled "The Fighting"--really the book's heart. The balance of this particular section, like most of the entire work, consists of soldiers' reminiscences strung together to buttress the author's summation that the GIs "did their jobs well enough to win. . . . Without their proficiency and courage, the war could not have been won."

McManus's second major theme centers on capturing what the World War II American ground combat soldier's

existence was really like. He explicitly dedicates more than half his pages to "The World of the Combat Soldier" with chapters devoted to a demographic portrait, "Food, Equipment, and Weapons," the physical environments in Europe and the Pacific, and "Becoming a Casualty," in addition to the aforementioned treatment of combat itself. The conclusion that McManus wants us to draw, if we had entertained any doubts previously, is that the frontline soldier's life was nasty, brutish, and painfully prolonged until he was either killed or wounded. The testimony he adduces from numerous veterans is that war is hell. In doing all this, he plows a well-worn furrow, most notably and lately worked by Gerald Linderman in *The World Within War*, as well as sociologist Samuel Stouffer, historian Lee Kennett, and in the many, many vivid, first-person accounts we have.

Finally, McManus sets out to reveal "The Soul of the Combat Soldier," part two of the volume, helping us discover why that soldier fought so well under such appalling conditions. The answer, of course, inheres in his title--the fraternal bonds the GI forged with his fellows. They fought for each other.

In addition to these large thematic elements, running as a subtext throughout the book is McManus's powerful urge to give voice to what he apparently believes have been his heretofore mute subjects. "Now it is the dogfaces' turn to talk" he proclaims in his introduction: "The story of the ordinary man who carried out the policies and did the fighting has not been adequately related or understood." All this is belied by any moderately stocked professional soldier's bookshelf and by McManus's own bibliography. Incidentally, this last includes, in addition to numerous well-known authors and titles, several lesser known or out-of-print gems that handsomely reward reading or rereading. Among these are Marine Corps veteran E. B. Sledge's gripping *With the Old Breed at Peleliu and Okinawa* and James C. Fry's memoir of fighting in Italy, *Combat Soldier*. Fry's book could with justification have been titled "Regimental Commander," serving admirably as a counterpart to Charles MacDonald's classic *Company Commander*. It should be required for all prospective brigade commanders.

Ultimately, all the author's bombast about the freshness of his approach and "history from the bottom up" are doubly tiresome, because they are both patronizing and unnecessary. *The Deadly Brotherhood* can stand on its own merits as a solid, workmanlike effort. Not unlike the dogfaces themselves, this serviceable synthesis is noble in purpose as it slogs forward in a soldierly, unheroic, straightforward manner.

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