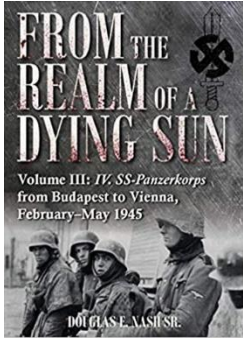


Book Reviews

From the Realm of a Dying Sun – Volume III: IV SS Panzerkorps from Budapest to Vienna, February-May 1945 by Douglas E. Nash Sr.; Havertown, PA: Casemate Publishers; 2020; 352 pages, illustrated, with appendices and endnotes; \$22.95 Kindle, \$32.62 hardcover.



Fighting a stasis war – as the Global War on Terrorism seemed to have become – is hard enough. Now imagine fighting in a lost and hopeless war for a cause soon to be extinguished, where your efforts only result seemingly each day in staving off some type of catastrophic disaster.

In ***From the Realm of a Dying Sun – Volume III: IV SS Panzerkorps from Budapest to Vienna, February-May 1945***, the reader is treated to less the sounds of combat and the clanking of tank treads than a bone-wearying tiredness and the smell of fear and desperation that permeated every day of a fighting retreat to escape Soviet captivity. Douglas Nash Sr. notes upfront that to finish the trilogy he had to datamine other sources extensively, as records relative to IV SS Panzerkorps became scarce or were lost in the

death throes of the Third Reich.

Many readers might have known little of SS Obergruppenfuhrer Herbert Gille, the IV SS Panzerkorps commander. Leadership positions in the Wehrmacht and SS had become a veritable carousel due to Hitler's attempts to find the right combination of what he estimated to be the proper National Socialist political commitment and operational combat skills. Gille obviously had met this test with his award of the Knight's Cross with oak leaves, as demonstrated by his tactical and operational savvy in the Volume I battles around Praga and Warsaw, and in Volume II, the unsuccessful efforts to relieve Fortress Budapest. Reading how he continued to navigate the political minefield of leadership in an increasingly paranoid Third Reich, always suspecting treachery, alone makes it a mindful read.

But in this the third volume, Gille and IV SS Panzerkorps are tested to almost beyond endurance in their efforts to survive in this, a lost war, while trying to still hope for some Frederick the Great *deus ex machina* deliverance at the stroke before midnight; however, Volume III shows that despite all Gille's efforts, time was running out. Moreover, as Nash notes, almost in disbelief, Gille's commanding officer, Herman Balck at 6th Army, seemed more interested in political machinations against Gille.

Nash time and time again savages Balck's poor handling of not only 6th Army but his repeated efforts to undermine Gille and to have him relieved of command. Nash never fully seems to reach a conclusion as to why their relationship was so contentious – was it personality-driven, the smoldering conflict between the Waffen SS vs. Wehrmacht, or was it more? Regardless, Nash builds a strong case that Balck's judgment served as a distraction and probably cost the lives of more soldiers due to his oft-miserly and untimely withholding of resources Gille needed.

The Lake Balaton Offensive (Operation Spring Awakening) is interesting for the insights Nash brings to this, the last major German offensive of the war. But the running gun battle from this failed offensive to the fighting retreat to Vienna is more interesting. Nash, like the reader, is stupefied that at this point in the war, no replacement tanks were sent to IV SS Panzerkorps – that only the miraculous efforts of the field-repair facilities kept them from being the shell of an armored formation. We've read too often of the Germans having to destroy tanks awaiting repair and their continual cannibalization of equipment as we watch this panzerkorps slowly begin to sink into a form of demechanization.

But the part of the book I found myself rereading was Gille's use of every tactical trick he could squeeze out to bring his unit to the north side of the Enns River and into the relative safety of captivity courtesy of the U.S. Army. Consider: how does one manage to try and scramble for safety when, on April 5, 1945, you are told the last train of ammunition for Army Group South had arrived? A fighting retreat requires ammo and, Nash relates, the Soviets had pressed Gille hard, depleting his resources.

Of particular note in the book's photographs and illustrations is one of three soldiers passing to Gille's rear, all shouldering panzerfausts. A keen eye will also see, increasingly, the faces of teen boys thrown into the maelstrom of Gotterdammerung.

Nash also treats us to a brief recapitulation of both Gille's and Balck's post-war lives. It is for readers to draw their own conclusions from what Nash presents how you judge these two.

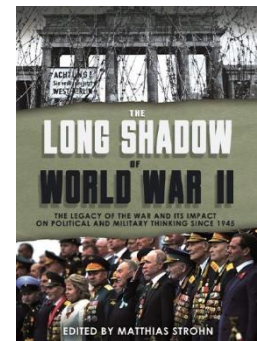
For anyone with the slightest interest in the Eastern Front, this concluding volume of the trilogy of IV SS Panzerkorps is simply a must-read. Nash has done yeoman's work in marshalling and datamining sources for this period of the war when records and record-keeping went into an abeyance, from the Lake Balaton Offensive to keeping the Hungarian oilfields. What we can only hope for is that Nash will drive on in his Eastern Front scholarly work and perhaps treat us to a long-overdue balanced biography and assessment of Field Marshall Walter Model.

DR. (LTC) ROBERT G. SMITH

The Long Shadow of World War II, The Legacy of the War and Its Impact on Political and Military Thinking Since 1945; edited by Matthias Strohn; Havertown, PA: Casemate Publishers; 2021; 269 pages; \$65 (hard cover).

Although World War II ended nearly 80 years ago, the conflict's legacy shapes global events today. How do we best interpret the war and understand these effects and – for military professionals – use this knowledge to our advantage?

One course of action is to move beyond a strictly American interpretation to study World War II from a greater variety of perspectives. ***The Long Shadow of World War II, The Legacy of the War and Its Impact on Political and Military Thinking Since 1945*** provides a primer to approaching the war from this angle. ***Long Shadow*** is a compilation of essays written by a wide range of academic and military experts from the major Axis and Allied nations as well as those regions caught between the two opposing sides.



Restated, this work is not a simple “coffee table book” rehash of well-known World War II history, but instead analyzes its impact on individual nations from war's end in 1945 to the present day.

Dr. Matthias Strohn opens ***Long Shadow*** with a personal reflection on how the war shaped his childhood growing up in post-war Germany. Strohn explains his perceptions as a boy and how those views change as he matured and learned how others, including non-Germans, understood the conflict. Using this as a solid foundation on the evolving nature of the war's impact, the book moves into the individual “national viewpoint” chapters analyzing the conflict in three broad categories: during the war, in the initial post-war era and in relation to current events.

The Russian chapter is particularly prescient, given the post-publication invasion of Ukraine, in its discussion on how Vladimir Putin's dictatorial regime uses the Great Patriotic War to advance his own agenda on the world stage.

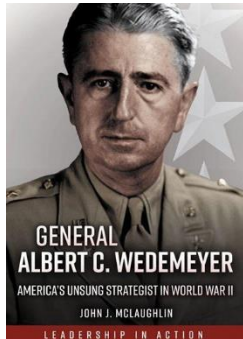
Similarly, leaders will likely pay special attention to essays on United Kingdom, French, German, Dutch and Baltic States views to explore their participation in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and European collective security.

Oddly missing from the book, however, is the Japanese perspective of World War II. While Japan receives mention throughout ***Long Shadow***, the editors did not dedicate a chapter to Imperial Japan itself. This absence is unfortunate, as Japan played a major role in the Pacific and China-Burma-India theaters and remains a key U.S. ally in international-security issues with both China and Russia today. Summed up, the book feels incomplete without a Japanese perspective.

As with any compilation work, the tone and style of the writing changes between authors with each new chapter. However, the various approaches create a harmonious narrative akin to an experienced jazz band, where each

musician enjoys his/her moment in the spotlight while complementing the other players. While no single book can possibly account for every facet of World War II, *Long Shadow* effectively offers a comprehensive analysis of the war and its continuing importance.

LTC CHRIS HEATHERLY



General Albert C. Wedemeyer: America's Unsung Strategist in World War II by John J. McLaughlin; Philadelphia: Casemate Publishers; 2012; 322 pages, including photographs, maps, endnotes, bibliography and index; \$24.95.

When discussing which American generals made major contributions to victory in World War II, Marshall, MacArthur, Eisenhower, Bradley and Patton at once come to mind. Regrettably, historians and military professionals alike have neglected the significance of GEN Albert C. Wedemeyer.

John J. McLaughlin's biography of Wedemeyer describes his importance as a visionary strategist and principal author of the America's Victory Program. This plan was the blueprint for mobilizing the Army for World War II, designing its force structure for global warfare, and the transitioning America's industry from peacetime to wartime production.

While most of the credit for planning the Normandy invasion has been attributed to others, Wedemeyer's work was the conceptual framework for Operation Overlord.

Wedemeyer's early Army career was hardly the stuff of a future grand strategist. His struggles with the sciences and mathematics resulted in mediocre academic performance at West Point. His military career nearly ended before it began; during his first assignment at Fort Benning, GA, a court martial found him guilty of drunkenness, resulting in a six-month restriction and a reduction in pay. After receiving a civilian job offer, he submitted his resignation, which was not accepted since he had not completed the terms of his sentence. According to McLaughlin, while Wedemeyer was completing his sentence "... superior officers dissuaded him from resigning. ..." In a lapse in scholarship, McLaughlin did not identify these officers.

Wedemeyer's career as a strategist and diplomat is largely the result of intensive self-study and mentorship. He attributed the beginning of his self-development to his father, who kindled a lifelong passion for history. His first military mentor was his father-in-law, COL (later, LTG) Stanley Dunbar Embick. Access to Embick's large library and their discussions expanded Wedemeyer's understanding of how military history, international relations, politics and economics are inextricably linked to national strategy.

Embick's career as a strategist and a planner was the model for Wedemeyer's career. Embick had many assignments of increasing importance at the Army's War Planning Division, culminating as its director in 1936. Later in the same year, he became the Army deputy chief of staff.

Wedemeyer's other mentor and patron was GEN George C. Marshall, who was Embick's lifelong friend. Marshall was more than a mentor to Wedemeyer; he took an active role in managing Wedemeyer's career.

Although much of Wedemeyer's success was the result of self-development and mentorship, his formal military schooling was equally significant. Wedemeyer attended the Command and General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth, KS, between 1935 and 1936. Wedemeyer did not misuse his time at Leavenworth; since he did not have to contend with advanced mathematics, he finished first in the class of 77 students. His class standing and his working knowledge of German made him an ideal candidate to attend the *Kriegsakademie*, the German Staff College in Berlin; the lessons he gleaned from the *Kriegsakademie* proved instrumental in his authorship of the Victory Program.

Marshall – newly appointed as War Plans Division chief, soon to be Army Chief of Staff – after reading Wedemeyer's report, recognized that the document accurately described German equipment, tactics, strategy and plans for future conquests. In Spring 1941, Marshall directed Wedemeyer's assignment to War Plans. GEN Dwight

D. Eisenhower, when he became War Plans Division director, embraced the Victory Program's plan for a cross-channel invasion of Europe.

However, Wedemeyer's plan was anathema to Winston S. Churchill and the British General Staff, who believed the best strategy to defeat Germany was by attacking the "soft underbelly of Europe" with offensive operations in Italy, Greece and the Balkans. McLaughlin suggests there is evidence that Churchill's abhorrence to a cross-channel invasion was the cause of Wedemeyer's banishment to the Southeast Asia Command as British Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten's deputy. Although Wedemeyer was an expert in the European Theatre of Operations, he later succeeded LTG Joseph W. Stillwell as the commander of U.S. troops in China and chief of staff to Nationalist Chinese Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek.

McLaughlin based this book on his doctoral dissertation; initially written for a dissertation committee, it is a ponderous read. The 27 pages of appendices, the gist of which is in the text, add little to the book. This book has some value for aspiring strategists now serving in the tactical or operational arenas; however, it is not a primer on strategic thinking.

The book's subtitle, *America's Unsung Strategist in World War II*, is misleading. McLaughlin devotes only a third of the text to Wedemeyer's service as a strategist and less than three pages to his career prior to attending the Command and General Staff School; the rest of the book is focused on Wedemeyer's wartime and post-war service in Asia.

LTC (RETIRED) LEE F. KICHEN

A War of Empires: Japan, India, Burma and Britain, 1941-1945 by Robert Lyman; Oxford, United Kingdom: Osprey Publishing; 2021; 560 pages, \$35 (hard cover).

A War of Empires is a long retelling of the largely ignored fight for control of the China-Burma-India (CBI) Theater during World War II. At nearly 600 pages long, this is a book requiring dedicated time to read and fully understand as the CBI campaign took place in some of the most difficult terrain in an unfamiliar corner of the war. Author Robert Lyman is a masterful researcher and storyteller adept at bringing history to life.

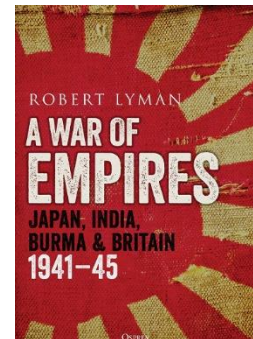
At its core, ***A War of Empires*** is a story about the importance – indeed the primacy – of logistics in any military operation but particularly in large-scale ground conflicts. Initially both Britain and Japan alike paid little heed to logistics in planning or battle, resulting in much loss for little gain.

Most egregiously, Britain's parsimonious peacetime military resourcing left Burma and neighboring India wide open to Imperial Japanese aggression. The critical difference in determining victory in Burma, however, was in how the United Kingdom brought in new leaders, especially GEN William Slim, who fully appreciated the vital role their quartermasters played in warfare.

Japan's leadership and doctrine, by comparison, continued to place little value on logistics, relying far too much upon the warrior code of *bushido* to carry the offense.

The second major lesson is the need for senior military leaders to understand that politics play an unavoidable role at the strategic and operational levels of war. Lyman's discussion on GEN Joseph Stillwell's performance as chief of staff to Nationalist Chinese politician Chiang Kai-Shek aptly proves this key point. To be certain, Stillwell accurately assessed Chiang Kai-shek's leadership challenges and personal greed. He also recognized that the winning strategy for the CBI Theater would require both Nationalist and Communist forces to fight the Japanese rather than hoard American-provided resources for the inevitable civil war in China.

That said, Stillwell suffered from a gross inability to articulate his concerns to his Allied superiors, nor did he understand the political dimension of global warfare, leading ultimately to his recall back to the United States before his untimely death in 1946.



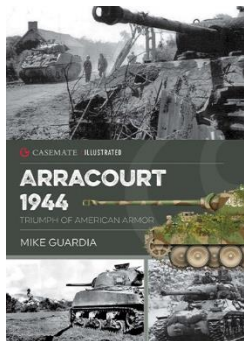
A third point gleaned from *A War of Empires* is the fool's errand of employing cheap or quick panaceas in crisis vice solid military planning and operations. The creation of MG Orde Wingate's Chindits clearly demonstrates the danger of grasping for so-called "silver bullet" solutions to solve complex strategic-level problems. Slim wrote after the war about the manpower and resource cost of special forces compared to their contribution to overall military success beyond the tactical level.

This forlorn approach to problem-solving remains a thorn in the side of the U.S. Army today, as evidenced by the number of quickly developed and just-as-quickly-discarded efforts throughout the Global War on Terrorism.

Chapter 11, titled "Rethinking Training," should be required reading for officers and noncommissioned officers alike. Here Slim offers his thoughts and advice on preparing an army for war that remains relevant in 21st-Century military operations. Slim developed in-depth training plans focused on skills required for the battlefield vice the parade field, and demanded that all Soldiers, regardless of functional specialty, be prepared for the exigencies of combat and responsible for aggressive offensive action. He expected collaborative training for all ranks, doing away with the notion that officers observed training from afar. Slim also expected tactical instruction be provided in easily understood classes or printed materials distributed across the force to all ranks.

Prospective readers will find that *A War of Empires* is a must-buy, must-read, must-share book that will find a welcome place in their home library. Like all military classics, readers will find they return repeatedly to *A War of Empires* to study the profession of arms.

LTC CHRIS HEATHERLY



Arracourt 1944: Triumph of American Armor by Mike Guardia; Oxford, United Kingdom: Casemate Publishers; 2022; 127 pages, including maps, photographs, index; \$24.95.

The Casemate Illustrated series on major World War II battles continues with Mike Guardia's in-depth analysis of the largest tank battle fought in the European Theater of Operations at Arracourt, France, in 1944. This battle should be of particular interest to maneuver commanders studying the impact of weather, logistics and tactics on armored operations.

The book follows the format of previous Casemate studies. A timeline chart displays the organization and employment of 4th Armored Division, which carried the battle for the Americans. The 4th Armored Division was the first of the "light" armored divisions. The previous three armored divisions were organized with two armored regiments and one infantry regiment. The 4th, along with all subsequent armored divisions, contained three battalions each of armor, infantry and artillery.

Each armored battalion contained three tank companies of medium Sherman tanks and one company of light Stuart tanks, and each battalion came under the control of one of three combat commands. They were designated as Combat Command A, Combat Command B and Combat Command-Reserve (CCR). CCR was the reserve command. Units could be shifted among these commands as dictated by the tactical situation. A tank-destroyer battalion often was attached to a division.

The equipment of each side is explained in detail, augmented by many photographs. Guardia discusses the pros and cons of the Stuart light and medium Sherman tank, along with various other American vehicles. Besides the tanks, the most prominent American vehicle was the M18 Hellcat tank destroyer. The same analysis is applied to the German vehicles. Their mainstays were the Panzer Mark IV and the Panther tank. They were also supported by assault guns, anti-aircraft vehicles and tank destroyers.

The author describes the fast movement of American forces as they pushed the Germans to the Moselle River. The Lorraine campaign then ensued, managed by LTG George S. Patton's Third Army. The 4th Armored Division spearheaded the drive through the major French city of Nancy and across the Moselle River, the last physical barrier before reaching the German frontier.

Given the German heavy losses in personnel and equipment during their retreat across France, they reorganized remaining assets. For the Battle of Arracourt, they employed panzer brigades, which contained "two [p]anzer

battalions: one battalion of Panzer IV tanks and one battalion of Panther tanks. The organization also contained a reconnaissance company, two battalions of infantry, an engineer company and an assault-gun company.”

While materiel assets were hastily organized, the lack of trained personnel to man the equipment was readily apparent. Reallocating former members of the German air force and navy caused a lack of “internal coherence.” As Guardia points out, two of the brigade commanders became “acquainted with their subordinate commanders only in the railroad unloading area.”

Three of these makeshift panzer brigades were involved in the Battle of Arracourt. By way of contrast, 4th Armored Divisions’ three tank battalions were functioning like a well-oiled machine. Relying on mission-oriented orders, the combat commands and attached battalions successfully engaged German armored units in a series of engagements leading up to the pivotal battle at Arracourt.

While Guardia clearly presents the battle’s essential details, the book lacks maps of the actual battle area. Consulting a map of France, one can envision 4th Armored Division’s salient extending west from the Moselle. The German attempt to envelope 4th Armored Division fails for a host of reasons that the author addresses. One, fuel shortages adversely effected movement for both sides. Also, the weather turned to rain and fog, mitigating the use of close-air support by the Americans, but also causing German units to become disoriented.

While the Sherman tank had disadvantages, its superior maneuverability and speed offset the Panther tank’s battlefield superiority. As the author notes, the Panther had a slower turret rotation compared to the Sherman. The dismal weather negated the Panther’s superior long-range target-acquisition ability. The 76mm armed M18 Hellcat, enhanced by its speed, greatly assisted the success of the 37th and 8th Tank Battalions.

Above all, the Americans attacked whenever the opportunity arose, while the Germans were slow to mass their forces. The battle ended with an American victory that further deprived the Germans of men and materiel.

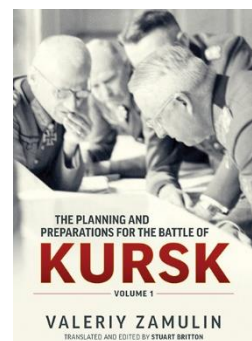
While an interesting study, the book would benefit from better editing and detailed maps. For example, as stated in the text, the Sherman was not a replacement for the M3 Stuart – rather, it was replacement for the M3 Lee/Grant tank. Despite these shortfalls, this is an interesting study of small-unit leadership that emphasizes the importance of tank-crew training, the value of a reliable logistics system and effects of weather on battlefield activities.

COL (RETIRED) D.J. JUDGE

The Planning and Preparations for the Battle of Kursk: Vol. 1 by Valeriy Zamulin, translated by Stuart Britton; United Kingdom: Helion and Company; 2021; 566 pages; \$45.63 paperback.

The first volume of Valeriy Zamulin’s ***The Planning and Preparations for the Battle of Kursk*** masterfully adds new life and energy into a largely oversaturated and stale historiography of World War II. World War II historiography has been dominated by macro-history narratives of the war and its actors from the Allied perspective. Due to the sensitivity that comes from assessing the war from the Axis point of view, there is a significant deficiency to the other half of the story. Zamulin stands out in existing historiographical assessments in that he assessed both the German and Soviet sides equally in the lead-up to the Battle of Kursk from a logistical, political and strategic perspective.

Volume 1 of ***Kursk*** is not for the novice historian. It throws the reader right into the situation facing Germany after the Battle of Stalingrad. Zamulin explains early on that regardless of Kursk’s outcome, the war was permanently on the way to defeat for Germany. Deficiencies existed at all levels of the German army and *Oberkommando der Wehrmacht*, or OKW. Ultimately, the German army of 1943 was like that of the German army of 1944 during the Battle of the Bulge. Even if a tactical victory occurred and a breakout followed, there was simply not enough men, materiel and strategic excellence to capitalize on localized gains and to win the war. After Stalingrad the war was lost for Germany, and Kursk was ultimately an exercise in futility.



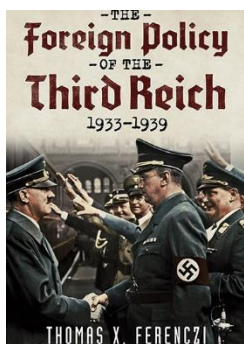
Almost entirely based on digitized primary-source documents, charts, graphs and letters between members of the respective high commands, Zamulin's first volume on Kursk is a sophisticated read. The use of these sources provides the much-needed context into the thinking of two military goliaths. Zamulin further excels in that he challenged the popular narrative of German tactical and strategic ingenuity. He highlighted the immense confusion and highly politicized nature of the OKW structure and the interbranch conflicts over resources. Zamulin argues that these senseless rivalries – combined with a disjointed command structure and no cross-branch communication – is part of the reason why Germany was destined to lose. This work examines the inner workings of this broken apparatus.

The second part of the book shifts to the Soviet side of the Kursk preparations. The Soviets were fully aware that the Germans were planning a major offensive to regain lost ground after Stalingrad. Before piecing together where the offensive would take place, the Soviets also had to undergo their own massive set of reforms and rearmament.

Zamulin sets the stage for this in the first part but dedicates more to the issue in Part 2. Zamulin discusses primary source documentation between members of the Red Army and Central Committee, along with providing numbers and charts that detail the stats of the Red Army as the day of battle drew closer. He follows the same format as in the first part; this is an effective method for the reader to track the narrative in these comparative historical studies. The only criticism I can levy against this work is the absence of chapters and the somewhat hard-to-follow timeline. This is a stylistic critique at best, but one that I think, if remedied, could allow for a larger audience to comprehend the story and accompanying argument.

Zamulin's *Planning and Preparations for the Battle of Kursk Vol. 1* is an excellent and detailed assessment of how two military juggernauts looked to the future and made plans for a showdown at Kursk. Zamulin definitively states early on that Operation Citadel was never going to be a German victory. This stands in contrast to previous narratives in that the Battle of Kursk could have gone either way. Zamulin defends his position by examining the decision-making process, logistics obstacles, composition and disposition, and moral and political situation in both Germany and Russia on the eve of Kursk. Zamulin wisely chose to not examine the battle itself, as many have done before. Rather, he focused on the many months of preparation leading up to the battle from both the German and Soviet side. *Kursk* is a must-read for those interested in the behind-the-scenes movements of massive armies.

1LT IAN A. MELENDEZ



The Foreign Policy of the Third Reich 1933-1939 by Thomas X. Ferenczi; United Kingdom: Fonthill Media; 2021; 359 pages; \$52 (hard cover).

Readers looking to expand their knowledge of Nazi Germany's international-relations strategy in the increasingly dark days before World War II need look no further than *The Foreign Policy of the Third Reich 1933-1939*. Where most history books primarily focus on the military aspects of the conflict, this work instead explores Adolf Hitler's aggressive use of diplomacy, information and economic levers to further German national interests.

Author Thomas Ferenczi is an expert on World War II as well as Canadian criminal and employment law. He approaches the subject as a trial lawyer would a case by presenting well-documented evidence of Germany's first tentative steps against its neighbors for territorial gain and its progressive hostility in both word and deed. While this is an effective way of proving a thesis, it also makes for a rather dry read. Ferenczi's writing style is a heavy serving of lengthy quotes from documented history, combined with his summary analysis of the provided information.

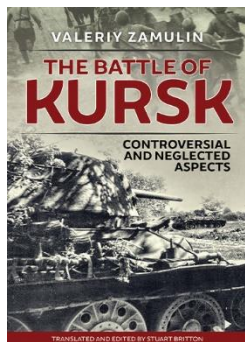
As the book progresses from chapter to chapter, it is quite easy to trace the inevitable endstate – namely a second world war resulting from the Reich's foreign policy. Hitler declared his intent to obtain *Lebensraum* through conquest in *Mein Kampf* and then used a combination of diplomatic threats and military action to achieve that aim bit by bit until he invaded Poland in 1939. Ferenczi walks the reader through this discourse using the words, speeches, diplomatic cables and private notes of the major figures in the storyline.

Readers will find that the Reich's foreign policy eerily parallels modern Russia's dealings with its European neighbors. This is particularly evident in Vladimir Putin's frequent employment of manufactured crisis and blatant

propaganda as rationale for the so-called liberation or protection of ethnic Russian minorities living outside Russia proper. There are corresponding echoes of Western diplomatic efforts by Henry Kissinger (playing the unenviable role of Neville Chamberlain) claiming appeasement to Russia as a winning strategy in Ukraine. One hopes the 2022 revival of this story has a different, and far happier, ending than the tragedy experienced in the 1930s.

The latter third of *Foreign Policy* comprises more than 70 pages of additional material in the postscript appendices and a moderate number of black-and-white photographs of the primary actors covered in the book. The appendices make a ready reference of the historical international agreements and the German Military High Command's strategic-level guidance – signed by Hitler himself – for the invasions of Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland. While *Foreign Policy* never grips the reader's attention as a true military classic, it does serve as a recommended venue for professional study on how diplomacy ultimately shapes warfare.

LTC CHRIS HEATHERLY



The Battle of Kursk: Controversial and Neglected Aspects by Valeriy Zamulin, translated by Stuart Britton; Warwick, United Kingdom: Helion and Company; revised and reprinted in paperback, 2022; 404 pages; \$49.95.

The ongoing Russo-Ukrainian War makes the Battle of Kursk, as the largest armored clash in history, relevant as an example of land combat on the Eurasian Plain, encompassing some of the same territory now in dispute. American readers of this book – itself a compilation of revised and updated articles on various aspects of Kursk – will benefit from a deeper understanding of the Russian way of war in all its aspects: the maintenance of social cohesion despite extraordinary casualty levels; how information and orders flow through the command structure; the decision-making process involved in choosing tactical and strategic goals; and Russia's willingness to expend men and materiel to achieve them.

Valeriy Zamulin's decades-long research has focused on what Russians call "The Great Patriotic War" and specifically on the Battle of Kursk. Since the opening of Soviet archives following the end of the Cold War, revisionist historians like Zamulin have been working to correct errors and misrepresentations infesting the historical record of events connected with combat on the Eastern Front. Some of these are errors of ignorance concerning what actually happened, while others arose from Soviet propaganda needs connected with successful prosecution of the war effort.

Zamulin is blunt in assessing the state of much of what passed for scholarship during the Soviet era, when censorship and fear limited expression of viewpoints that might endanger the reputation or safety of their authors – a condition that continues to plague public discussion of the past, Kursk included. He states, "Thus, even though the possibility to raise history, including the Battle of Kursk, to a qualitatively new level has expanded, the academic study of the Second World War ... was neglected and farmed out to dilettantes, ideological weathervanes and commercial interests." The unwillingness to question source material and to test it for accuracy and realism led to oft-repeated myths, such as the one about hundreds of tanks battling it out in a field encompassing only a few kilometers, continued to be taken as fact, when analysis of the terrain and tactics then in use reveal how unrealistic such reports are.

A secrecy culture obscured, for several decades, many of the failures and difficulties that went hand-in-hand with the well-documented heroism displayed by individuals and units at every stage of the battle. Suicide was a significant problem, as was fratricide. Staff operations were often incompetently managed, and coordination between adjacent and supported units was often lacking. "If you fail to take it [the objective], I will shoot you" typifies accounts of the orders, often given only verbally, for coordination between infantry units and their armored support.

As with wars the world over, there also arose in the USSR arguments about who gets the credit or blame for how events turned out. Generals whose names are as familiar to Russians as Grant, Eisenhower and MacArthur are to Americans were the creators or subjects of a heavily censored cottage industry of memoirs that often confused as much as they clarified the story of what actually happened at Kursk, and why. Zamulin offers us his take on these

writings, after decades of analysis and fact-checking, as to how the 50-day struggle around Kursk developed through its denouement. His efforts are especially welcome, as there is far more memoir literature from German commanders available in English than there is from their opposites.

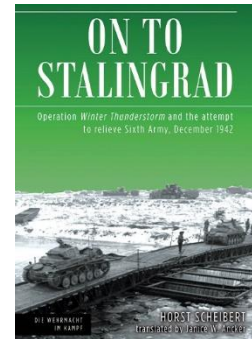
One beneficiary of Zamulin's research is GEN Nikolai Vatutin, criticized by a fellow front commander for leaving relatively thin defenses across a likely avenue of approach, later attacked by five German army corps. Vatutin's strategy was vindicated by events, as he let a deep German penetration occur to trap the spearhead by placing strong forces on each of its flanks. His use of tactical deception, though at great cost to the troops who bore the brunt of the German penetration, was as brilliantly successful as it was ruthless in expending the lives of his soldiers.

Despite all the now-revealed missteps, the sometimes-wanton expenditure of human lives and failures of planning, coordination and execution, Russian arms triumphed at Kursk against a determined and well-led foe. The lesson that readers of Zamulin's work will learn is that Russia wins, when she wins, in spite of herself. Gaining greater knowledge of Russian strengths and weaknesses in fraught times such as these is ample reward for the effort invested in often dense, technical prose translated from its original language but with much of the idiom of its native expression still intact to preserve the spirit of the author and his world.

SFC (RETIRED) LLOYD A. CONWAY

On to Stalingrad: Operation Winter Thunderstorm and the Attempt to Relieve Sixth Army, December 1942 (Die Wehrmacht im Kampf) by Horst Scheibert, translated by Janice W. Ancker; Havertown, PA: Casemate Publishers; 2022; 144 pages; \$20.49 Kindle, \$24.07 hardcover.

The trouble with many *ex post facto* memoirs or remembrances is they often tend to be of the variety "I was there" and did "important stuff." Or they seem overly detailed in terms of tactical actions accompanied by embellished remembrances of conversations. Or the micro-learning moments are so generic as to be of little real value for the tactically minded and student of history. For the historian and more serious reader, most of these books are thinly supported by unit or higher-headquarters logs, then the book is filled in by secondary sources of generic relevance.



But ***On to Stalingrad*** by Horst Scheibert is a refreshing example of when a book of this variety is done right. The book is a fresh, riveting and compelling read that left me surprised, as it became a page-turner.

Operation Winter Thunderstorm and the attempts to relieve the encircled Sixth Army at Stalingrad in December 1942 has conjectured many what-ifs. (The what-ifs of this effort by Field Marshal Erich von Manstein to relieve the Sixth Army has produced almost as much scholarly output as the what-ifs about those fateful days at Gettysburg.) Here was a moment – one of those imponderable moments where more than the fate of the Wehrmacht's Sixth Army hung in the balance – but perhaps the possibility of any type of victory that still might be achieved by German arms. Many will know the broad outlines of the relief effort, but the fresh perspective offered here by Scheibert, who was then an armor company commander in Sixth Panzer Division, will give you greater insights into the herculean effort this relief effort was for the Germans.

Scheibert – who built an enviable war record and was awarded both classes of the Iron Cross and the German Cross in Gold – also had Cold War service in the Bundeswehr, which no doubt helped him to critically focus on this academic effort. He notes in the book's foreword that seven out of eight tank-company commanders in his regiment were lost in the Operation Winterstorm failed relief effort. It is unimaginable that today's combined-arms team would suffer such losses.

Scheibert states up front that his goal is to provide a more factual account based primarily on the records of his division, Sixth Panzer Division. Because his work is documentary-based, supplemented by the author's and others' recollections, Scheibert endeavors to provide us with a tactical feel for this battle. Scheibert not only meets his goal of giving us a feel for the battle, less colored than many accounts of the Eastern Front – such as those of Paul Carrell – but gives us a useful primer in the field of military science.

Sixth Panzer was moved from soft billets in the region of Brittany, France, in November 1942 to the Eastern Front over a period of 450 hours. The author tells us this deployment prompted a bit of transport rage, as their movement conditions lacked rudimentary sanitary standards and were in freezing railcars. At this time the Soviet encirclement operation was well underway, leading to the shock of the unit detraining under artillery fire, a meeting engagement of sorts and an unexpected welcome to the Eastern Front. Surprisingly, Scheibert speaks highly of the bravery of the Romanians, who in many German accounts get blamed for the disaster on the Volga.

The author's use of 11th Panzer Regiment's war diary, contrasted with captured Russian orders and reports from units in the relief effort, paints a good picture. Scheibert shows more respect for the Russian fighting man and their equipment vs. many books that make the Soviet fighting man cartoonish.

No question, the most interesting account in the book is when the Germans stumble upon a Russian supply column conveyed by camels. Scheibert talks to the fact that the steppes offered little in the way of cover and concealment or wood for fires, meaning many firefights like in Winter 1941 centered upon the seizure of villages – except that here vs. 1941 the Soviets were better equipped, better led and more resolute.

Add in the fact that this effort was launched by only two divisions whose tanks' cross-country mobility was often restricted due to their treads not being able to get a bite into the ground to move, as well as the need to cross many bodies of water and ravines, and you have an operation meant for speed that was severely compromised from the start.

The most telling criticism of Scheibert's is that of senior leadership being out of touch with the reality on the condition of the frontline. Painfully slow radio communications only increased the difficulties of those trying to break through and take the necessary tactical risks toward greater rewards, only to find the bit and reins were pulled tight by those with a sluggish understanding of the moment.

On to Stalingrad is an easy book to pass by in the bookstore because it is so thin. Thin yes in terms of width, but rich and detailed like very few of its kind are, with a crisp writing style and critical eye for the events of the battlefield that almost makes you feel as if you were there with Sixth Panzer. ***On to Stalingrad*** is a book so compelling that it simply should not be overlooked for your personal and professional enjoyment.

There is a series of maps at the front of the book that help somewhat in tracing the relief effort. However, Casemate Publishers should have provided a translated key and rotated those maps to make them larger. Small things, but it would have enhanced the ease of following the battle. The dust-jacket cover is simply outstanding, as you see a pontoon bridge built by combat engineers with the undergunned PK II tank crossing a river choked with ice.

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Acronym Quick-Scan

CBI – China-Burma-India (theater)

CCR – Combat Command-Reserve

OKW – *Oberkommando der Wehrmacht*