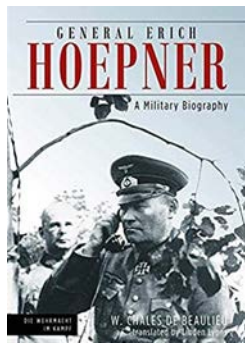


BOOK REVIEWS

General Erich Hoepner: A Military Biography by W. Chales de Beaulieu, translated by Linden Lyons; Havertown, PA: Casemate Publishers; 2021; 252 pages; \$45 hard cover.



With the United States' recent military shift from counterinsurgency operations to its more traditional role in large-scale ground-conflict operations (LSGCO), it stands to reason there will be renewed interest in examining the major conflicts of World War II. This examination should, of course, take advantage of accounts from the enemy combatant's perspective to ensure a holistic study of the battle or campaign at hand. **General Erich Hoepner: A Military Biography** provides the Wehrmacht's view of operational-level warfare in both the Eastern and Western European Theaters. While there are a number of important combat lessons within its pages, **Hoepner** is a deeply flawed book from an ethical-leadership perspective.

True, Lyons provides the first English-language translation of the original work by W. Chales de Beaulieu, who served as Hoepner's chief of staff during the German army's campaigns in Poland, France and Russia. Given his close professional relationship with Hoepner, de Beaulieu was afforded a unique position to observe both the man and his leadership in three theaters against three vastly different opponents. Throughout the work, de Beaulieu provides a balanced assessment of the Wehrmacht's performance in planning, resourcing and executing combined-arms warfare.

The reader may easily draw vital lessons-learned from the German experience, including the danger of arbitrarily changing assigned objectives or the importance of logistics and intelligence, surveillance and

reconnaissance. Perhaps the most important takeaway is the absolute necessity in LSGCO of empowering subordinate commanders through mission command.

What is entirely missing from the book is discussion of Hoepner's documented war crimes, including close cooperation with the *einsatzgruppen* responsible for killing untold numbers of Jews or his implementation of the Commissar Order directing the summary execution of captured Russian political officers. While it is not surprising de Beaulieu would avoid mention of war crimes his commander committed, I am baffled that Lyons did not include these atrocities in his translation or supplementary notes. As both a professional military officer and an author, I find this oversight completely unacceptable – especially in a book endorsed by the Association of the U.S. Army.

The book's dust jacket, for example, describes Hoepner as "a man who was committed to the military profession, who possessed a strong sense of responsibility, and who was confident enough to exercise his free will." That is strong praise for a man responsible for the murder of noncombatants and political prisoners.

LTC CHRISTOPHER J. HEATHERLY

Panzer IV by Thomas Anderson; New York: Osprey Publishing; 2021; 304 pages, including photographs and bibliography; \$40.



The search for a solution to the stalemate of World War I created a desire for battlefield mobility. The Germans were in the forefront of an effort to create a force capable of dominating a given combat zone by maneuver and firepower. Thomas Anderson's latest work discusses the successes and

failures of the German endeavor to attain this endstate by focusing on the development and employment of the Panzer IV tank.

The Panzer IV was one of six distinctly different tanks manufactured by the Germans during World War II. It was the only system to remain in production throughout the war. The author begins by explaining the pre-war development of the Panzer IV. He arranges each chapter starting with the 1939 invasion of Poland by using a standard format that provides an overview of the battle, the organization of the German tank company and battalion in the action, the total number of German tanks by type involved, the specific function of the Panzer IV and after-action comments. This same format is followed for chapters addressing the battlefield actions in Europe, Russia, Italy and North Africa.

The Panzer IV was initially envisioned as a firepower-support vehicle to augment the actions of the 37mm-equipped Panzer III. Armed with a short-barreled 75mm main gun, the tank would assist the more maneuverable Panzer IIIs by engaging enemy field fortifications and tanks. The standard tank battalion going into Poland consisted of three companies, each with 14 Panzer IIIs and one 14-vehicle Panzer IV-equipped company. Battlefield experiences would alter this basic formation throughout the war.

As Anderson details, by the end of the war the Germans produced 8,500 Panzer IVs in nine versions. Each variant was designed by a letter beginning with "A" and ending with the letter "J." The vehicle was produced by the Krupp Industrial Consortium. The initial tank weighed 24 tons, with succeeding models weighing as much as 30 tons.

Krupp designed the initial version with a torsion-bar suspension. However, due to wartime constraints, this concept was scrapped in favor of a leaf-spring double-bogie suspension system with eight rubber roadwheels per side. Each model series was powered

by a Maybach 12-cylinder 300-horsepower engine. This gasoline engine allowed the tank to reach speeds of up to 25 mph. A 53-gallon gas tank provided the tank with an operational range of some 200 miles.

The five-man crew consisted of a tank commander, gunner, loader, driver and bow machine-gunner operator who also manned the radio system. Based on combat actions against the Russian T34 and KV-1, the short-barreled 75mm main gun was replaced by a longer-barreled 75mm. This alteration caused a major adjustment in the construction process due to the main gun's recoil length. It was too great for the tank's turret. This resulted in the shortening of the recoil mechanism and chamber. When fielded, the Panzer IV carried a basic load of 28 main gun rounds. The longer main gun allowed the tank to engage personnel and armored targets at a greater range and velocity.

In spite of the designers' efforts to conserve weight, the weight of the new 75mm main gun made the vehicle nose-heavy to such an extent that the forward-suspension springs were under constant compression. This resulted in the tank often enduring a complete failure of the drive sprockets. The many photos depicting the catastrophic final drive failure, along with recovery efforts, effectively supplement the narrative. To return to battle, the tank required a detailed recovery-and-repair effort. As the war progressed, the speed and shock power by the Allies applied to the Germans made battlefield recovery and repair almost impossible. A great number of recoverable vehicles had to be abandoned, which further diminished the effectiveness of the Panzer IV. As Anderson notes, when the "H" model arrived in 1944, "the tank was clearly outgunned" by superior Soviet and Allied weapons systems.

This is a well-organized, comprehensive work on the development and employment of the Panzer IV. Although the book contains no maps, the author's description of German campaigns during World War II is impressive. By using a standard chapter format, the author allows the reader to easily compare information for each

campaign. Anderson's comments on the effectiveness of German battlefield after-action comments on Panzer IV production and employment are noteworthy.

This book is highly recommended for maneuver commanders. By reviewing the employment of this tank, maneuver commanders will gain a greater appreciation for the value of after-action reviews that improve weapons, tactics and techniques, along with a caution on manufacturing and fielding too many diverse systems.

COL (R) D.J. JUDGE

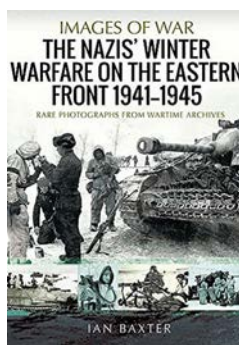
The Nazis' Winter Warfare on the Eastern Front 1941-1945: Rare Photographs from Wartime Archives (Images of War) by

Ian Baxter; United Kingdom: Pen & Sword Military; 2021; 160 pages with appendices and photographs; \$19.74 paperback.

Fieldcraft. Much like logistics, fieldcraft is neither sexy nor perhaps given the due respect it should be afforded in military literature. When you are cold, wet and immobilized, it begins to matter, and matter rapidly.

In the history of the Eastern Front from 1941-1945, most histories vividly paint the desperate plight of the Wehrmacht to survive the first winter of 1941-42 and to not disintegrate at the seams. Then we further get told of the epic sufferings of Sixth Army in the Stalingrad Cauldron and those battered satellite armies trying to find shelter while retreating.

But from September 1942 onward, most of the Wehrmacht was not in Stalingrad. How did the average German soldier survive, adapt and live in the harsh and often forbidding and primitive conditions of the occupied territories of the Soviet Union? Ian Baxter's *Images of War: The Nazis' Winter Warfare on the Eastern Front 1941-1945* will answer the questions



of how Wehrmacht survived, adapted and lived by both a photographic archive and generally germane writing to add more to the photographic archive.

In all armies, fieldcraft is almost a closely guarded secret, from how to survive in the field to how to service your weapon and your armored fighting vehicle or other vehicle. But fieldcraft is more than these things. I recall sheepishly how my first platoon sergeant in the Army extolled the virtues of Avon Skin So Soft to me. I was **cer-tain** it was a joke on me, like being sent to the battalion maintenance officer for "a box of reticles." We found out, not surprisingly, that our tank-platoon sergeant – an infantryman in Vietnam – knew about fieldcraft.

Baxter starts out on familiar grounds, showing early on the primitive road conditions the Wehrmacht endured. We get treated to pictures of summer roads that are more torrents of mud, to be followed by worse and more enduring conditions of mud in the Russian Rasputin. Yet unlike an Opel Blitz mired in mud up past its axles, Baxter pulls this book on winter warfare out of that trough and offers up such fascinating and interesting material that the book actually becomes a page-turner due to the freshness and overall organization of the material.

The overall organization is in a chronological fashion that works well with the material. It is fascinating to watch how the German soldier went from often looking like a gypsy in the Winter of 1941-42, wearing anything he could as the war progressed. Both men and equipment suffered from the lack of standardized camouflage materials, so the book illustrates the ingenuity of German soldiers in field-expedient measures to try and blend in with their snowy environment. The best parts are easily the diagrams from the Wehrmacht's *Paperback for the Winter War*, a compilation of fieldcraft tips disseminated to the field.

But seeing pictures of German soldiers building igloos for shelter? Now that said volumes about the need to overcome and adapt – or die.

What Baxter could have addressed in even a passing fashion are the issues

of railroads and Balack's hunger plan, with its goal of killing off much of the Soviet population via starvation so the Wehrmacht could live off the land. The Wehrmacht survived off the land in much of the occupied territories, harkening back to the days of foraging from Caesar to Napoleon. As well, a bit more on something other than the mobile kitchens, documenting the goulash wagons would have added to the depth of this slim volume.

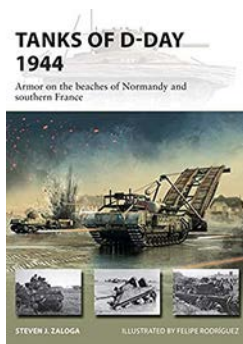
But his overlooking of the Deutsche Reichsbahn, its travails in 1941 and subsequent adaptation to keep the trains running was worthy of some space. That first winter, Deutsche Reichsbahn boilers froze up as the piles running outside the engines froze and these steam engines, not winterized at all, simply became like the Wehrmacht's equipment: so much useless junk.

Baxter also has the habit of sometimes throwing out unsubstantiated "facts" that aren't fully correct such as "The objective of Summer 1942 was to take Stalingrad."

Baxter's narrow focus on fieldcraft, and even more so how to adapt and fight in harsh climates, will add to your overall knowledge in spite of this volume's slimness. Baxter excels at putting together a compelling photographic essay of sorts, again using in most cases many heretofore-unseen pictures. But the real stars of Baxter's book are the diagrams of how to survive in the field. Those alone make this volume a fascinating read and a great addition to your personal library.

DR. (LTC) ROBERT G. SMITH

Tanks of D-Day 1944: Armor on the Beaches of Normandy and Southern France by Steven Zaloga; Oxford, United Kingdom: Osprey Publishing; 2021; 48 pages; \$18.26 paperback or \$9.99 Kindle.



Dr. Steven Zaloga's grasp of low-level

combined-arms tactics sets him apart from most standard military historians. One of his newest books, ***Tanks of D-Day 1944: Armor on the Beaches of Normandy and Southern France***, is worth adding to a Soldier's library.

Tanks of D-Day 1944 was published as part of Osprey Books' "Vanguard Series," which focuses on the development and use of weapons and weapon systems. Like other Vanguard Series books, Zaloga's work contains many photographs of tanks in action and has many carefully drawn color illustrations by Felipe Rodriguez. These drawings are rendered in great detail and show unit markings and identification numbers. If you are a hobbyist or modeler of the tanks of this period, this book is for you.

But this is more than just a book of great pictures and excellent drawings. Zaloga tells the story of the development of specialized armor for the invasions of northwest Europe by the British – and, later, the Americans. Responding to their disaster at Dieppe in 1942, the British put great effort and imagination into specialty tanks – or "funnies" – that were designed to clear mines, cross sand or ditches, and take out bunkers. Many historians have criticized the U.S. Army for lacking imagination and not developing such specialized armor.

Zaloga tells a more nuanced story. U.S. officers were actually very interested in specialized armor and went to considerable effort to develop them. Both the British and the Americans embraced "DD Tanks," capable of swimming ashore. But as Zaloga recounts, these were not particularly successful. Better, it seemed, was simply to deliver wading tanks to the beach by landing craft.

Zaloga also describes the effective (but largely unknown) American use of dozer tanks, which were part of the U.S. engineer battalions' breaching teams. Indeed, the dozers were as effective in many ways as the "funnies" and made great contributions to the success of the landings.

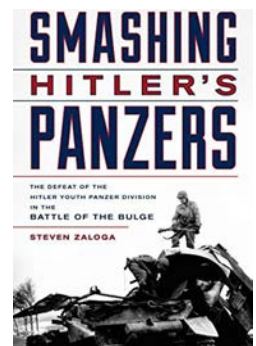
To my mind, the most interesting part of the book was Zaloga's detailed description of the activities of the British, Canadian and American tank units,

both on D-Day and in the landings in southern France. Most major histories overlook their contributions. Zaloga chronicles in impressive detail the actions of the British and American armor at each beach, and notes the specific German resistance nests and bunkers that they destroyed or suppressed.

Mobile, protected firepower played a critical role in the Allied success during these landings. Without it, the Allies would have had a much tougher time getting off the beaches. This small book tells that story well.

COL (R) WILLIAM R. BETSON

Smashing Hitler's Panzers: The Defeat of the Hitler Youth Panzer Division in the Battle of the Bulge by Steven Zaloga; Lanham, MD, Stackpole Books; 2019; 384 pages; \$21.49 Kindle or \$29.95 hardcover.



Dr. Steven Zaloga is one of the most prolific of our current military historians. An expert on World War II and on military technology, his grasp of low-level combined-arms tactics sets him apart from most standard military historians and makes his books of particular interest to professional Soldiers. One of his newest works, ***Smashing Hitler's Panzers: The Defeat of the Hitler Youth Panzer Division in the Battle of the Bulge***, is one of the most important books written in years about the Battle of the Bulge. It's worth adding to any professional soldier's library.

Smashing Hitler's Panzers recounts the defeat of the German 12th SS Panzer Division in the Elsenborn Ridge area during the Battle of the Bulge. Zaloga's central thesis is that the defeat of the German I SS Panzer Corps by the U.S. 2nd and 99th Infantry Divisions was the critical action in the battle – more important than the better-known stand by 101st Airborne Division at Bastogne. The I SS Panzer Corps was

the German main effort in the offensive, and once they realized that it had failed to achieve a swift breakthrough, the Germans essentially gave up on their ambitious aims for the offensive. Indeed, not only had their main effort failed, it had essentially gotten nowhere after taking crippling losses. Zaloga presents this argument convincingly.

He goes on to explain in convincing detail the reasons for this failure. First, he provides a thorough review of the state of the German forces participating in the attack. Their infantry divisions were poorly trained, poorly led and haphazardly equipped. The I SS Corps' two panzer divisions were in better shape but were filled with replacements. Further, their panzer regiments were only at 50-percent strength. The Germans tried to make up for their tank shortage by assigning assault guns to the attacking divisions. But these vehicles were not well suited for offensive operations. Further, the Germans selected difficult, forested terrain served by few roads for this major attack, and traffic control bedeviled them throughout. They also failed to place engineers forward in their formations that might have helped. Finally, Zaloga notes that the Germans failed to reconnoiter, misusing their powerful reconnaissance units. German operational planning was simply poor.

Making heavy use of German sources, Zaloga carefully and clearly describes the execution of the attack. The Germans intended to lead with infantry divisions, whose mission was to punch a hole into the U.S. defenses, through which the panzer divisions would pass and exploit to the depth of the defense. Zaloga recounts how the green but well-trained and equipped 99th U.S. Infantry Division inflicted crippling losses on ill-conducted German infantry attacks. After their infantry failed, the author shows how the Germans had difficulty passing their armor through the infantry on the few forest roads.

This gave the veteran U.S. 2nd Infantry Division, very well led by MG Walter Robertson, enough time to set up in the twin villages of Krinkelt/Rocherath, situated behind the wooded area

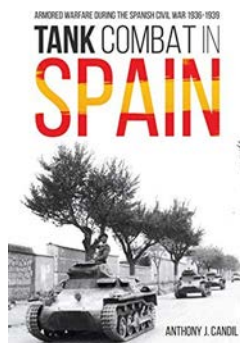
held by the 99th. When the 12th SS Panzer Division finally made their way through the woods into the open area in front of the twin villages, their panzer grenadiers were devastated by concentrated U.S. artillery fire; the 12th SS Panzer Regiment was effectively destroyed by U.S. tank, tank-destroyer and bazooka fire. Using multiple firsthand accounts from German and American soldiers, Zaloga describes this fighting with a clarity that one seldom finds in such narratives. Particularly interesting is his in-depth examination into what weapons knocked out German armor.

My only negative comment is that Zaloga does not examine the U.S. Army units involved to the level he does the German. For instance, he points out that German units had experienced great small-unit-leader turnover because of casualties. That was surely experienced by the U.S. forces as well. I would also like to have seen a more complete description of U.S. weaponry and organizations.

But this is a minor point. *Smashing Hitler's Panzers* is an important contribution to our understanding of the Battle of the Bulge and to the nature of combined-arms combat in World War II.

COL (R) WILLIAM R. BETSON

Tank combat in Spain: armored warfare during the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939 by Anthony J. Candil; Havertown, PA: Casemate Publishers; 2021; 264 pages; \$23.67 hardcover, \$15.99 Kindle.



With the onset of a new, multi-polar world order, the Great Powers are likely to use future battlefields in the developing world as research-and-development (R&D) laboratories for weapon systems and tactics. The Spanish Civil War offers a case study in what to expect and the lessons that can, and can't, be learned from intervention in

such conflicts.

The Spanish Civil War, remembered as "the last good cause," a dress rehearsal for World War II or the graveyard of idealism, was also the first major instance of Great Powers using a minor conflict as an R&D laboratory for new weapons and tactics. It could hardly have been otherwise, as industrialized-weapons R&D hardly existed before the mid-19th Century. Spain thus became a proving ground for evolving technologies, including tanks. This gives the war an importance beyond who won or lost.

Anthony Candil, a senior Spanish Army armor officer, recounts in considerable detail how Germany, Italy and Soviet Russia intervened in Spain, supplying troops and equipment to the warring sides. His footnotes and references are extensive, and the latter includes several citations from articles appearing in *ARMOR* in the 1980-90s.

Current-generation tanks, with training cadres and varying levels of logistical support, found their way to the combatants. Observers from many nations, including those like the United States and Great Britain who remained on the sidelines, drew conclusions about the value of tanks as an evolving technology, both in terms of capabilities and employment. Supplying late-model tanks to the Spanish Nationalist (Germany and Italy) and Republican (Russia) armies was a luxury not available when the tank was in its infancy during World War I. Mistakes made in combat, tank design and tactical failures did not pose a risk to the suppliers as they did to the belligerents. Often the wrong conclusions were drawn, even by those with combat experience.

These conclusions included assumptions about the tank's value as a weapons system. Franco, for example, employed his armor primarily in an infantry-support role; large, independent tank formations of battalion size or larger were a rarity during the nearly four years of conflict. Horse cavalry continued to be the primary scouting arm of both armies throughout the hostilities, and combined-arms operations were the exception, not the norm, despite its clear obsolescence.

Tactical employment of armor also suffered from uneven training of soldiers on both sides, most of whom were militia volunteers or conscripts. The Republicans also had to overcome linguistic differences among the many nationalities represented in their international brigades. Uneven training and tactical employment was also evident when German Condor Legion and Italian “volunteer” units engaged Republican militias and conscript formations. Internecine warfare between various Republican factions hobbled military planning and execution as factions ranging from social democrats to hard-line Communists fought each other for control of the Republic. Logistical support was often lacking, especially for Republican armor later in the war, as seaborne reinforcements were increasingly deflected by the Italian navy.

Nonetheless, some conclusions were drawn from this test of state-of-the-art weaponry against that of peer competitors. The Soviet T-26 tanks were so superior to the German Mark I and II tanks that the Nationalists offered bounties for captured enemy armor and ended the war with more T-26s than the defeated Republicans could muster. (Hemingway has the hero of *For Whom the Bell Tolls* mortally wounded by a Nationalist T-26.) Italian CV33/35 “tankettes” were clearly under-armored and outgunned from the start. Republican forces never bothered to use captured enemy armor the way their opponents did.

Despite what the battlefield showed, the Germans and Italians were not alarmed by Russian tank superiority and did not immediately step up development of comparable machines. Russian and Italian theories of deep battle were largely untested, and the Germans never fully implemented their blitzkrieg tactics.

The takeaway for the reader is that our weapons, even when crewed by our trainees – when operating on the far side of the world with austere logistic support and under commanders who may not fully understand their employment, in environments that may be chaotic – may not perform against peer competitors similarly hobbled by their clients’ performance

the way they would in a major war. Lessons drawn from such situations should try to isolate the constants, such as survivability and durability, mechanical reliability and individual tank-on-tank combat results. Doing so will help us avoid the mistakes made in learning the lessons of the Spanish Civil War.

SFC (R) LLOYD A. CONWAY

Advance and Destroy: Patton as Commander in the Bulge by John Nelson Rickard; Lexington, KY: The University of Kentucky Press; 2011; 725 pages including

appendices, index, bibliography and notes; \$28.85 hardcover, \$27.01 paperback, \$24.49 Kindle.

Advance and Destroy: Patton as Commander in the Bulge by John Nelson Rickard at first glance appears to be yet another turgid work on Patton and the Bulge. As a World War II buff and military historian, I am fairly familiar with the Battle of the Bulge. Even more so, I have a good working knowledge of Patton’s counterattack into the German flank to relieve 101st Airborne at Bastogne. Or at least I thought I did. Most of the readers of *ARMOR* magazine will likely think they fall into a similar category. Instead, be forewarned as the reader – you will be continuously amazed at the breadth of detail the author brings to this subject, amassing facts and data into a sweeping narrative that at times feels like an avalanche.

This work is replete with lots (and we do mean *lots*) of maps and illustrations that will assist the reader in understanding American efforts and movements to relieve Bastogne. I found it helpful to go back and consult those, and my assumption is that most of us with more than a passing familiarity of the Bulge are really weak in understanding the critical road net to the south. The inclusion of these many good maps added immeasurably to my



understanding of the difficulties presented in this movement. For unlike the famous Left Hook of Operation Desert Storm, this movement-to-contact was conducted against a far deadlier foe.

Moreover, the movement was hindered by the nature of the road network, the weather and the demolitions conducted by U.S. Army engineers to deny the Germans easy axes of advance. It is this type of extra detail that makes this book stand out, as the author’s command of the subject makes you better grasp the operational complexities involved.

Operational complexities? Rickard’s work and explanation of the employment of towed U.S. artillery is masterful as well. The 105mm gun was the standard piece used for combat support but was generally positioned back somewhat, so its use and value were lessened in many movement-to-contact engagements where U.S. forces didn’t always have forward observers embedded. As well Rickard talks about how the 155mm Long Tom was used mainly as an interdiction weapon, so its utility per our doctrine was limited – plus consider Patton’s goal, as is stressed time and time again, was one of *speed*. Artillery and artillery prime-movers would have slowed the columns, as it would have also meant, as Rickard notes, the repositioning of ammo depots.

Rickard’s work in this area is close to if not masterful, noting that the American method of fighting via a preponderance of firepower often slowed the attack.

And therein lies the book’s small problem for many readers; it almost begins to feel either pedantic or overwhelming – take your choice. For although you cannot accuse the author of not knowing his subject, the author in fact perhaps knows it a little too well. Some small things would have helped the reader here, such as: at the front of the book, the author could have done something similar to what James Holland has been doing and give a list of the prominent figures who will appear and, even better, give a small thumbnail of the key ones as an appendix. This author with his

DR. (LTC) ROBERT G. SMITH

obvious knowledge and feel for the Bulge could easily have accomplished that, which would have upgraded this book from merely a very good book on Patton in the Bulge to source material for that aspect of the battle.

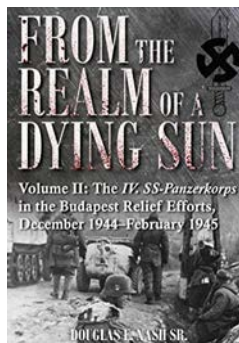
Nor does the author address that Patton's attack was perhaps more conventional than is often portrayed, more of units on-line vs. the slashing attack one might have expected of Patton. Was he was following a directive from or espousing Eisenhower's broad-front concept here in an operational sense?

The first half of the book seems by far the more interesting and exciting, as it is indeed the tale of the dramatic rescue and relief of Bastogne. Yet Rickard executes a deft touch in making the post-relief of Bastogne section the most interesting, as shown by its heading "The Incomplete Victory." It is always easy to be a Monday morning type of quarterback, but there is no sense of that here. It is clear to me that Rickard's own military service in the armed forces of our Canadian ally gives him the feel that this should have been evident to those on the ground at that time.

The conclusion at first feels like **Advance and Destroy** has great detail but at times too much detail. Too much detail swallows up or at least obscures the narrative. Worse, the key points and any teachable moments seem subsumed in the backwash of an overly detailed accounting of how Patton prepared and fought Third Army in the Battle of the Bulge. Here our author knows so much that he has some difficulty not going so far down the rabbit hole as to create his own warren.

Yet despite that, the book, with just a little tighter editing, easily goes from merely good and interesting to quite fascinating, as the rich narrative and more disciplined detail would paint a new picture of the Bulge as we understand it, particularly the early chaotic days of the German offensive. Add in the fact that the author gives us extensive notes, a series of well-crafted appendices, bibliography and a deep index; this only adds to the overall total value of Rickard's work, which should find a place in your library, as it did mine.

From the Realm of a Dying Sun. Volume II: The IV SS Panzerkorps in the Budapest Relief Efforts, December 1944 to February 1945 by Douglas E. Nash Sr.



Nash Sr.; Havertown, PA: Casemate Publishers; 2020; 552 pages illustrated appendices and endnotes; \$35 hardcover, \$22.95 Kindle, \$55.99 audio CD.

Douglas E. Nash Sr. returns to the subject of the IV SS Panzerkorps with **From the Realm of a Dying Sun. Volume II: The IV SS Panzerkorps in the Budapest Relief Efforts December 1944-February 1945**. As with Volume I of this trilogy, Volume II continues to be just as grim, gritty, yet engrossing at the tactical, operational and strategic levels as **Realm of a Dying Sun Volume I**. Many readers will have more familiarity with the overall thrust of this volume, particularly the Wehrmacht's Lake Balaton Offensive. What Nash does here, though, is to vividly expand the scope of all the German efforts to relieve the encircled garrison at Budapest with the IV SS Panzer Korps.

The IV SS Panzerkorps, after its successful series of tactical victories over the Red Army in the area of Northern Poland, specifically the defense of Warsaw, had shown itself to be the linchpin of defending the approaches to Berlin. Northern Poland is lovely tank country, and as such it simply seemed logical to have IV SS Panzerkorps defend ground it knew in both the tactical and operational sense. But when placed in the context of the impending Ardennes Offensive, the redeployment of IV SS Panzerkorps to Hungary for both military and political purposes made as much sense as anything did in the Third Reich's death throes. We noted in our review of Volume I of this trilogy that IV SS Panzerkorps was now fighting a war with very little chance of anything but

temporary tactical victories – with diminishing resources, combat strength and brittle but tactically proficient forces – yet the soldiers were still compelled to do their sworn duty. But SS-Obergruppenfuhrer Herbert Gille as IV SS Panzerkorps' commander had to wonder at the sensibility of beginning rail movement on Christmas Eve.

Nash relates how many of the panzers of IV SS Panzerkorps had already amassed more than 1,000 kilometers on their odometers. Tracks, transmissions and final drives were all in need of overhaul. SS Panzer Division Wiking would receive no new armored fighting vehicles until April 1945. Nash does an excellent job of detailing the various efforts to relieve Budapest and showing why they failed – their adversaries were terrain, weather, logistics, the Red Army, the political and military leadership of the Third Reich, and the steady diminution of German fighting power. Bodies in uniform are one thing, but trained infantry – and more pointedly, trained panzergrenadier – were not made overnight, despite an increasing quota of Luftwaffe replacements to fill the depleted ranks of Gille's command.

By the conclusion of the second volume of **From the Realm of a Dying Sun**, one professionally feels the pain of the leadership of IV SS Panzerkorps, who are hamstrung time and time again by the whims of the Fuhrer and his perceived political realities. Perceived political realities often markedly differ from the operational view of those at Ground Zero, the tip of the spear. Yet Nash notes that the leadership of IV SS Panzerkorps paid extraordinary attention to the retention of Hungarian oil wells and the small refineries in their operational sector, reminding one of how the Imperial Japanese Navy was tethered to the oil fields in the Dutch East Indies late in World War II. There was an ongoing realization that oil was indeed the femoral artery for the panzers, as Nash notes how operations often kicked off late due to late fuel deliveries.

The one thing one could have hoped for here with Nash's feel for the material was the what if: what if IV Panzerkorps hadn't been moved south to

deal with the pressing strategic dilemma of Hungary? That what if posits a fascinating counterfactual for the history of the late war period of the East Front. The likely outcome of that counterfactual is that IV SS Panzerkorps would have been most likely engulfed to little operational purpose regardless in the maelstrom that was the Soviet January 1945 Vistula Offensive.

This volume relies extensively, as Nash notes, on Army Group South's war diary and Armeegruppe Balck/6 Armee, which IV SS Panzerkorps was subordinate to in the efforts to relieve Budapest. If you gloss over the introduction, you'll miss Nash's contention that not only was IV SS Panzerkorps fighting the Red Army, it was also fighting a rearguard action against Hermann Balck.

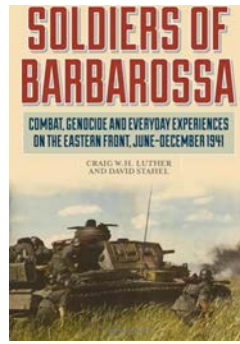
Nash's interpretation of the source record finds inexplicable Balck's argument that it was Gille's leadership that doomed all efforts to save Budapest, thereby deflecting Nash's implied thesis through his choice of records that it was more Balck's defective leadership that doomed all efforts – aside from any interference from the Fuhrer. In a period of the direst military necessity, the poisoned relationship between Balck and Gille, be it due to the antipathy between the Waffen SS and the Wehrmacht, or that Balck –heretofore a steady performer who was now perhaps out of his league in this command – was looking for a scapegoat is a theme that repeatedly has a negative impact itself down to operational levels.

Nash has without question produced another winner. It further amplifies in greater tactical detail the efforts of the Wehrmacht and IV SS Panzerkorps to produce strategic miracles. It is not for the casual reader per se but will reward those interested in how to continue to fight and produce meaningfully in a situation increasingly bereft of hope.

DR. (LTC) ROBERT G. SMITH

Soldiers of Barbarossa: Combat, Genocide and Everyday Experiences on the Eastern Front, June-December 1941 edited by Craig W.H. Luther and David Stahel; Lanham, MD: Stackpole

Books; 2020; 440 pages with appendices, notes, maps, photographs, bibliography and index; \$30.36 hard cover, \$28.99 Kindle.



Craig Luther and David Stahel have combined here in ***Soldiers of Barbarossa: Combat, Genocide, and Everyday Experiences on the Eastern Front, June-December 1941***. This small but engrossing volume works to bring to light how the German soldier perceived Operation Barbarossa, from pre-invasion to the evident collapse of Operation Typhoon. What strikes the reader immediately from the letters, diary and journal entries culled by these two historians is seemingly how much the German soldier spoke with nearly one voice across a gamut of subjects relative to the war and of operations impending and later ongoing against the Soviet Union.

It is easy to say these micro data points are just that, but Luther's and Stahel's work echoes much more of what we have read in popular histories and the volumes of the Nuremberg Tribunals. However, what comes across in these entries is that anything that contributes to victory and protecting the German folk on its civilizing mission was holy – including planning to starve millions to death without remorse.

Although there is no specific mention of the Backe Plan, the infamous hunger plan, it is evident that it was understood at the basic soldier level. As the Wehrmacht spearheads go further and further away from their logistical-supply points, the more soldiers resorted to living off the land. In the Leningrad and regions north of Moscow, where the living was harder, this was a veritable death sentence to the Russian peasant. Time and time again we read of the German soldier's rationalizations that come down to one of two points: it's either we eat or they eat. And, secondly, the Russian peasant is used to suffering and getting by, so it's ok if we take food from them.

War in the era of the nation state is exemplified by the killing of the enemy's forces. By killing enough of them, it breaks their will to resist. There is no magic formula in how many of the enemy we need to kill to achieve our strategic goal of the cessation of hostilities. Killing enemy combatants is clearly recognized in international law and various religious works, but from the outset, Operation Barbarossa clearly broke new grounds, politicizing the war in ways unfathomable to modern Western military tradition. In the book's collected letters, we see the ordinary German soldier casually rationalizing the criticality of how the rules don't apply here, from the Commissar Order to other draconian measures.

The early iron fist on Soviet Partisans and the Communist apparatchik, as exemplified by the Commissar Order, is spoken to time after time, as soldiers routinely mention shooting them. Yet even this had some roots in the history of the Prussian Army, going back to the Franco-Prussian War and World War I, and the German shooting of hostages and alleged franc-tieurs. The new politicization of the war was but a logical extension of disenfranchising the ethnic German Jews, but now with monstrous overtones.

The barbarity here is best exemplified by the mobile death squads, the *ein-satzgruppen* that followed behind each of the three Army groups. The Wehrmacht not only helped in these actions but by its own legal proclamations removed any negative military judicial actions against German soldiers for any "excesses" against Russian civilians. This was a war of genocide, of simple brute extermination, for any useless Russian mouth that was taking food from the superior German folk. Think of the hundreds of thousands of Soviet prisoners of war who were surrounded with barbed wire and left to starve or perish from the elements. Tamerlane would have felt right at home with the way the Wehrmacht operated.

Stahel's and Luther's contribution is a nice collection of materials on how German forces in the east operated. The book starts with some pre-invasion letters and goes to the initial elation and heady days of smashing the

Red Army to the disquiet that starts to become evident as the average German soldier is befuddled that the Russian continues to resist. Then comes the ominous overtones that increasingly creep in with the muds of September. Care was taken that entries follow each other in chronological fashion.

But what makes this work stand out is that its focus is not solely on the combat soldier at the point of the spear but has entries from medical staff – such as Dr. Heinrich Haape (his own recollections are set forth in *Moscow Tram Stop*, reviewed next) – construction staff, Luftwaffe folks and regional-defense-battalion personnel as just a small sampling. It is easy to overstate a small sample of micro-observations, but when it is a veritable flood, as here, it enhances not only our overall understanding, but we can begin to discern patterns in weather, morale and the maintenance status of weaponry.

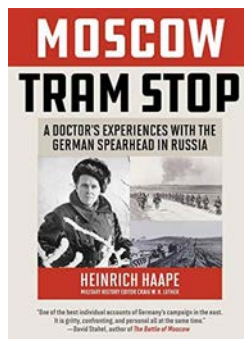
What is also just as interesting are the beginnings of a sense that maybe someone – surely not the Führer – doesn't quite have a handle on the immensity of the campaign. Just as telling is how inculcated the Wehrmacht is that Barbarossa was a holy crusade and simply had to be done now rather than later, as all leaders and soldiers feared the specter of Soviet communism.

We can only hope that Luther and Stahel will continue this fine project, with more volumes that go through the end of the war on the East Front.

DR. (LTC) ROBERT G. SMITH

Moscow Tram Stop: A Doctor's Experiences with the German Spearhead in Russia by Dr. Heinrich Haape, edited by Craig W.H. Luther; Lanham, MD:

Stackpole Books; 2020; 468 pages with appendices, historical commentary, maps, photographs, select bibliography and index; \$35.87 hardcover,



\$28.99 Kindle.

In the modern era, one is flooded with volume after volume of personal recollections by military figures, many of which offer little of substantive value or meaningful insight. These recollections are well-intended but seldom rise above “this was my war.” Then there are the real outliers like *Moscow Tram Stop: A Doctor's Experiences with the German Spearhead in Russia*, the wartime recollection of Heinrich Haape, a “fighting” doctor on the East Front.

Whether you have an affinity for the climatic struggle that was the Eastern Front in World War II, or simply want a different military history experience, this book is it and then some. Be prepared to be surprised by the recollections and actions of Dr. Heinrich Haape, who is not quite like the standard American military medical officer. Craig W.H. Luther has done a tremendous service by working to revitalize this previously published book for the modern reader.

I will note my own prejudice up front – that if the name Craig W.H. Luther is attached to a work, I will automatically give it due respect. But we had already read other snippets and recollections by Haape in Luther's underappreciated book *Barbarossa Unleashed: The German Blitzkrieg through Central Russia to the Gates of Moscow* and his current work with David Stahel *Soldiers of Barbarossa: Combat, Genocide and Everyday Experiences on the Eastern Front, June-December 1941*. Those only made me more interested, wondering if Luther had cherry-picked the best of the rest of Haape's commentary, skimming off the cream from Haape's book.

In the armor community, when we think of the battalion surgeon in the battalion or brigade field trains, that is what they are, and seldom more. We don't expect our medical folks to be combat warriors, and seldom do any of ours seem to have much affinity in tactical proficiency. What you will find instead is that the common experience of most medical doctors doesn't translate into what medical personnel faced in the Germans' war in the East – and particularly the fluid

early months of Operation Barbarossa. Indeed, it is almost an understatement to say that Haape's book is both eye-opening and almost shocking in the clinical manner in which incidents are calmly related. And then there are those like on Page 41: “We treat it as a good omen when one of the men finds a Bronze Eagle of Napoleon's army, half-hidden by the road near the water's edge”

One might find themselves surprised that Haape was aware of the infamous Commissar Order. Yet Haape treated Russian prisoners, even after having been told of the death of a friend who, while trying to treat German wounded, stood up wearing his Red Cross armband, waving his Red Cross Flag, but the Russians poured a torrent of fire into his position. That in part leads to a map as unique as any I have ever seen in a military history book: a map of the gravesite of his comrades while attached to 3rd Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment, part of 6th Infantry Division.

Haape, instead of staying to the rear, often went forward with the assaults. He received in Summer 1941 the Iron Cross 2nd Class for tending the wounded courageously well forward under fire. Yet death becomes an event more and more casually discussed, such as when his new medical orderly's shell hole is hit by a Soviet artillery barrage; Haape found that the soldier had disappeared, disintegrated by a direct shell hit.

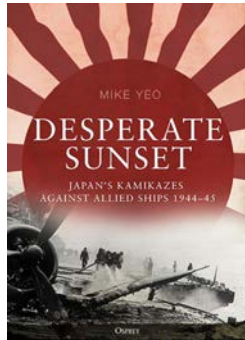
Moscow Tram Stop will offer you not only the unique perspective of a doctor serving at the front line, but a politically and more militarily astute doctor. What makes this book stand out is the unusual depictions of daily life and his interactions with local Russians, including one beautiful female fatale! As well, the efforts to survive off the land and to keep wounded soldiers alive is a tale that seems near unbelievable. Nor does Haape shy from depictions of the coarse brutality that characterized war on the Eastern Front.

Reading this account of a medical doctor decorated for heroism in combat will change your perspective on how war was conducted on the Eastern Front and the Wehrmacht's overall organization. One almost gets the

feeling that a dogma like our own U.S. Marine Corps' concept of "every Marine is first and foremost a rifleman" was either drilled into even the German medical personnel or that their military culture made them responsive to those social mores. ***Moscow Tram Stop*** is a different type of compelling military memoir that is worth your intellectual investment.

DR. (LTC) ROBERT G. SMITH

Desperate Sunset: Japan's Kamikazes against Allied Ships, 1944-45 by Mike Yeo; Oxford, United Kingdom: Osprey Publishing; 2019; 352 pages with illustrations, maps and appendices; \$45 hardcover, \$17.01 Kindle.



The desperate Imperial Japanese effort to stave off an impending and catastrophic defeat for itself had reached a military *cul de sac*. The air arms of both the Japanese army and navy were no longer competitive in terms of platforms, doctrines and – worse – trained pilots.

It is in this context that we need to consider the kamikazes, or "the divine wind," as an extension of Japanese culture and history. In our era of individual suicide bombers and vehicle-borne individual explosive devices, Mike Yeo's ***Desperate Sunset: Japan's Kamikazes Against Allied Ships, 1944-45*** from Osprey Books is both a timely and interesting read. It is also interesting to see this large volume from Osprey Books, as Osprey books conjure up a series of small but succinct overviews, lavishly illustrated, on a myriad of subjects.

Desperate Sunset is the most detailed work read to date by this reviewer on the Japanese kamikaze effort, including U.S. Navy official after-action reports in our personal collection. It is a very detailed read that can feel overwhelming unless you are like many of the aficionados of operational and logistical matters who want to know

what equipment was used and its place of origination.

Yeo gives the reader a great mental placeholder by detailing the types of planes the Japanese used in these desperate battles. You might find yourself surprised at how many types of planes were used, including "Willow" bi-plane trainers.

Truly Yeo is on sure footing here. Reading the section alone on the Kawasaki Ki-61 Tony will whet your appetite. Yeo notes that this plane was developed in testing against a P-40, a ME-109E and a Soviet LsGG-3. Yeo neatly encapsulates the critical element of the wide range of planes employed and their impact on the kamikaze campaign.

You will also grasp in a back-handed manner the importance of Formosa for the launching of these attacks and why the debates ensued in the American high command on what exactly to do about Formosa.

What any reader will find engrossing is the incredible wealth of detail that ***Desperate Sunset*** encompasses. Many times Yeo is able to tell us the exact pilot who struck a given ship. You will also see discrepancies between the actual Japanese logged flights on a given day and what the Allied fleets thought were actually in the air.

If you don't find that wealth and level of detail simply engrossing, one would wonder why you are reading such a book. For this reason alone, as well as the damage reports, the book comes highly recommended. Moreover, this is beyond the normal realm of the nice little books Osprey produces to give you some sense of a specific area of military history.

There are several things the author or the editors should have addressed. First and foremost is the unusual use of the caption text in the body of the book itself. It is a very odd practice to come across and feels like it was a device to pad the book in terms of length. Rather than use these again verbatim, Yeo could have instead shortened the picture caption or rewritten that information for inclusion in the book's body. As it is, this convention simply feels sophomoric.

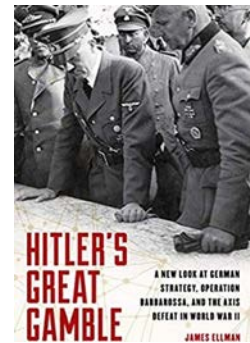
The chapter on Okinawa is brutally

long, to the point you just want it done. The reason it feels that way is it's not broken up as it could have been into the major kamikaze efforts or offensives. After each Japanese offensive effort, Yeo could have provided a recapitulation of that phase. With just a slightly more deft touch, Yeo could have made this chapter both easier to read and provided more context.

With those small criticisms, ***Desperate Sunset*** is a rare, detailed book that is richly illustrated, structured well overall and well written. It is almost numbing to read attack after attack after attack. Yeo does a superb four-page summary and analysis of the cost of the campaign to the Japanese and the Allied ***fleets***. ***Desperate Sunset*** deserves a place on one's bookshelf.

DR. (LTC) ROBERT G. SMITH

Hitler's Great Gamble: A New Look at German Strategy, Operation Barbarossa and the Axis Defeat in World War II by James Ellman; Guilford, CT: Stackpole Books; 2019; 272 pages; \$33.20 hardcover, \$24.99 Kindle.



Operation Barbarossa, like Gettysburg and Napoleon, is a topic that seems to spawn new books. One might think those topics are over-

grazed, but with personal reminiscences and sometimes new revelation in terms of discovered droves of documents or the on-and-off-again release of Soviet archival material, authors can go down new avenues. ***Hitler's Great Gamble*** by James Ellman tackles this immense topic in a manner that might raise some eyebrows. The book is written in a dynamic style with an overall emotive quality to Ellman's writing.

One of the author's theses is that Operation Barbarossa failed in part due to Hitler's failure to pursue with more foresight the diplomatic element of the diplomacy-information-military-

economics concept. This contention, though interesting, feels much like a strawman argument. It would be perhaps easier to teach a pig to whistle than to see Hitler with his intellectual framework of National Socialism pursuing a more balanced diplomatic pathway. In part this was due to his being of a very mid-European-centric outlook, having traveled little, evident by his lack of understanding other cultures except as caricatures that aligned with his National Socialistic worldview.

So Ellman failed to really sell me on this critical tenet of his book, for who was going to convince Hitler, the font of all major decisions, to go down a radically different pathway in terms of diplomacy? That one example is the reef and shoals that *Hitler's Great Gamble* can never really escape. Frankly I don't fully understand Craig Luther's comments – a historian I greatly like and whose works I have reviewed for *ARMOR* – when he wrote that *Hitler's Great Gamble* it is a “bold, fresh interpretation.”

But in one sense the thesis founders early that despite any great diplomatic initiatives, warfare had moved beyond blood and iron to one of oil and rubber, as Niall Ferguson notes in *The War of the World*. No great diplomatic initiatives were going to garner these two critical commodities for warfare dictated by the internal combustion engine from the British Empire – much less from Italy and Imperial Japan, who were resource-poor and had none to spare. As it was, Hungary and Romania were, in essence, economic satraps in terms of oil.

But then there is a tendency to simple sloppiness by the author or his proofers. Denmark and Norway are called the “Low Countries” (look it up on Page 31 of the book). He speaks in passing to the diversion in the Balkans and its impact on the invasion that has been disproven, for the reality was that hydrological conditions were not ripe due to high water that spring in Eastern Europe. Ellman talks about Germany's productive agriculture when in reality it had been in crisis for a number of years. As well, he gives Neville Chamberlain more than a bit of a pass in the appeasement

sweepstakes; Tim Bouverie in his recent work *Appeasement* simply dismantes this type of apologetic view.

Much of the material noted in the book's notes is perhaps stale or simply outdated, with heavy reliance on *Kruschev Remembers* and some on Carrell's *Hitler Moves East* (a fun but suspect read). In fact, to call “Paul Carell” an historian would make Thucydides shudder, as “Carrell” served as the chief press spokesman for Joachim von Ribbentrop's Foreign Ministry and wrote *ex post facto* a romanticized and sanitized version of the Wehrmacht's culpability on the Eastern Front. What is inexcusable is that Ellman inexplicably misses the best source material, *Germany and the Second World War*. This comprehensive 10-volume history of World War II is written from the German perspective under the auspices of the Militargeschichtliches Forschungsamt (Research Institute for Military History).

Bibliography? There is none, which makes us wonder how a respected historian like Luther ended up on the dust jacket. Amazon laughably claims the book is deeply researched.

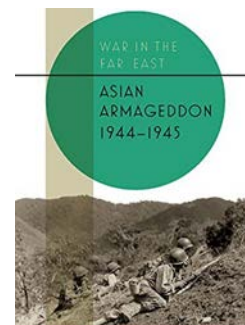
One thing you need to know is that this is not really a standalone work, as the author presupposes his intended audience is already knowledgeable on the subject. The value of this work is its different and perhaps intriguing overview of Operation Barbarossa from a non-military historian who has no substantive military background. His counterfactuals are both fun and provocative at times and will send you into your own personal library to see if the author is on target or to mull over his different interpretations of Operation Barbarossa. I found the book to be more aligned with those who accused Eisenhower of starving to death millions of Wehrmacht prisoners of war; it was in search of an angle that would require a more discerning eye or perhaps substantive military analysis.

This reader was left generally unconvinced by much of the author's work and overall thesis. As noted early in this review, the book does presuppose a certain elementary knowledge on the subject of Barbarossa. *Hitler's*

Great Gamble is a different approach to the subject that may not align with how much of the Eastern Front community views this campaign, and for that reason deserves your consideration, but I will note: your intellectual mileage may vary.

DR. (LTC) ROBERT G. SMITH

Asian Armageddon 1944-1945 (War in the Far East trilogy) by Peter Harmsen; Havertown, PA: Casemate Books; 2021; 248 pages with maps, photographs and notes; \$24.36 hardcover, \$15.09 Kindle.



Asian Armageddon 1944-1945 is the final volume of Peter Harmsen's trilogy War in the Far East. Harmsen must moonlight as an auto mechanic,

for he is hitting on all cylinders here, a rarity for any type of multi-volume work, even more so in history. He speaks adroitly to the terrible conundrum that Chiang Kai-shek was in as 1944 approached. The cruelty of this dilemma became even more apparent with the Japanese blitzkrieg, the Icho-Go Offensive. More than 800 tanks were used, and although Japanese armor was technologically vastly inferior to Allied armor, the Chinese had no armor and essentially no anti-tank weaponry or doctrine.

Moreover, Harmsen shows he has a feel for military matters, noting how the Japanese learned how to counter the previous successful defenses of Hunan Province. To appease the Allies, Chiang's best divisions were in Burma to become seasoned. Harmsen notes the assumption was made that the Japanese were so distracted by the Allied Pacific offensives that China was a backwater – for the Allies, it *was* now a backwater. However, this was an epic failure to see the war from the Japanese side and not asking the question, “What are the strategic and operational options available for the other side?”

What we see by inference is the

failure of the Allies to understand Chiang's preoccupation for the war he knew that was coming after this war. In particular, the American failure to recognize the cost of the war to China as a whole casts more than an unfair pall over the Nationalist effort to survive. Although Harmsen never comes out and condemns Chiang for the allowance of corruption, one senses a sympathy born out of the tremendous pressures on Chiang, and again, his knowledge that he had to bolster his military and political forces for the war of reckoning with the Communists.

We were surprised he didn't do more with the fighting in the San Bernadino Strait, as this was when the Japanese surface fleet burst through, led by the battleship *Yamato*, into the middle of the U.S. surface fleet of baby flat tops and unprotected troop transports. Here was the moment envisioned by all big-gun enthusiasts, as Halsey had taken the Japanese bait and took all the fast American battleships to sink the empty Japanese carriers. Such drama here, yet Harmsen doesn't work his normal magic, which is a shame, as it was the highest moment of naval drama after the Battle of Midway.

But then, when Harmsen didn't talk about how the Japanese admiral had to be fished out of the water in dramatic terms when his flagship *Atago* was sunk by submarines on the initial breakthrough efforts – which probably impacted all his subsequent fleet battle actions – one suspects Harmsen's rendering of the fighting in the San Bernadino Strait might be less than one might have hoped for.

His section on the Philippines seems thin, but in reality, the liberation of the Philippine Islands was not marked by epic battles except for the Battle for Manila. Harmsen covers well enough for the scope of this work the destruction of Manila, as it was the Stalingrad of the Pacific for the Americans. The disastrous Imphal Offensive and the British reconquering of Burma is aptly done in a few pages, and the Burma portion might be new fare for American readership.

As well, Harmsen writes about the Soviet offensive into Manchuria that overwhelmed the Kwantung Army.

More compelling, Harmsen writes movingly of the plight of the Japanese colonists there, abandoned and often left with only the option of the honorable death of suicide. Time and time again in *Asian Armageddon*, one is forced to confront the war from the other side of the hill, as we read account after account of Japanese soldiers who are starving to death – or as we euphemistically called it, “left to wither on the vine.”

The two areas the book excels is in the telling of the death throes of colonialism in Asia and the rise of China. His summation of the rise of China is quite masterful. But his telling of how Dutch East Asia and French Indo-China were already showing signs of restiveness is neatly packaged without the need to read the excellent two works (recommended) on this topic, *Embracing Defeat* and *In the Ruins of Empire*. In both cases, the death knell of European colonialism and perhaps the Allied mishandling of China continue to impact the current geopolitical realm 70-plus years after the surrender ceremony in Tokyo Bay. Harmsen seems to deftly dance around the subject though of the guilt and responsibility of Hirohito.

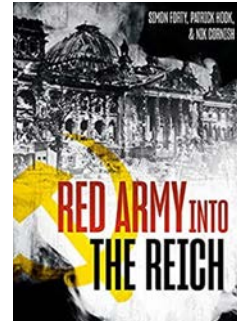
With little hyperbole, we can tell you this entire series is worth owning for its concise and objective view of the Pacific War from 1931-1945. With the final volume, Harmsen ably brings the trilogy to a close. Well researched for its size and scope, *Asian Armageddon* shows what can be done with disciplined writing and a fresh look at a subject. Our only regret is that each volume was not double in size. *Asian Armageddon* punches intellectually far above its size and deserves your serious consideration.

DR. (LTC) ROBERT G. SMITH

Red Army into the Reich: The 1945 Russian Offensive by Simon Forty, Patrick Hook and Nik Cornish; Havertown PA: Casemate Publishers; 2020; 256 pages with index, maps, photographs and illustrations; \$36.88 hardcover, \$22.95 Kindle.

Red Army into the Reich is an easy-to-overlook book with its glossy artwork on the cover of the burned, shelled

and shattered Reichstag. This substantive work by Simon Forty, Patrick Hook and Nik Cornish flies under the radar, masquerading as a coffee-table book



due to its format and apparent glossiness. No, *Red Army into the Reich* cannot be said to be anything but perhaps the best work of its kind for what it intends to do on the Soviet war-ending drive into the Third Reich. We thought so highly of this volume that we sent it as a Christmas gift to four fellow military historians, former Armor officers and Eastern Front gaming aficionados.

Casemate's well-illustrated and -researched book *Kamikaze* established a good precedence and paid off well here with *Red Army into the Reich*. Many books of this type suffer from a weak or absent thesis, a lack of overall organization or poor editing – or worse, are poorly written or sloppily translated. The death knell is if the historical facts are either wrong or there is a fanciful approach to history. *Red Army into the Reich* suffers from none of those flaws and flows seamlessly in terms of overall organization.

The book in terms of storytelling breaks up the East Front into discrete geographic areas, going from early 1945 in most cases to the end of the war in Europe, with the notable exception of the Baltic States and Finland. The long introduction will acquaint or even bring readers somewhat familiar with the material up to speed on the East Front. Chapters cover Finland and the Baltics, Poland, Hungary, the Balkans, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Germany, aftermath and “remembrance.”

We as a nation fail to do homage in any manner like the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe have done for their warriors. As I took a Viking River Cruise through Ukraine in 2018, one saw in every town square some type of memorial to the Great Patriotic War, and even better for an Armor enthusiast, many tanks mounted in an impressive manner. There is also an interesting discussion in the book on

how these Soviet monuments of a heroic and romanticized style resonate in the freed former Warsaw Pact nations of Eastern Europe.

There are also interesting aside mini-articles interspersed throughout the book such as one entitled “Fellow Travelers”: leaders who threw in with the Third Reich such as GEN Andrey Vlasov, a rising Red Army star who headed the Russian Army of Liberation, or the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, leading to the formation of the first non-Aryan Waffen SS division. There are many descriptive pages of uniforms and weaponry, including a fascinating piece on Hungarian armor efforts.

There is even a minor piece on the epidemic of rapes committed by the Red Army, noted in the book as roughly 2 million. What is not fully addressed here is the basis of how this retribution came about. Frank McDonough in *The Hitler Years: Disaster 1940-1945* addressed how the Decree on the Exercise of Military Jurisdiction, a legalistic fiction, opened the door for widespread rape, gang rape, sexual enslavement and sexual violence by German soldiers (Page 165), helping to lead to the 1945 horrors. But the fact remains that it is even addressed here is outstanding.

For a book that is as lavishly illustrated as *Red Army into the Reich*, replete with maps and many heretofore-unseen or seldom-used photographs, it serves up substantive fare, though with some minor lapses in writing. The military-simulations publisher SPI, who revolutionized the military-simulations-field industry in the 1970s, also produced one of the great lesser-known comprehensive overviews of the East Front called *War in the East*; *Red Army into the Reich* moves in a dynamic fashion past that venerated warhorse in its total approach.

But *Red Army into the Reich* is weak on current scholarship by a bit of a margin. Earl Ziemke’s two-volume series on the war in Russia for the U.S. Army Center of Military History (CMH), although still of value, is dated. There is an overreliance on the postwar pamphlets CMH has reproduced, as well on the German experience on the

East Front and on Osprey works. It is not as if there are not series of good recent works that these authors could not have readily consulted for *Red Army into the Reich* – such as popular books like Ian Kershaw’s *The End*, Pritt Buttar’s *Battleground Prussia* or Igor Nebolsin’s *Tank Battles in East Prussia and Poland 1944-1945*. Even more so, if they wanted to add overall gravitas, they could have consulted the series *Germany and the Second World War* done by the Research Institute for Military History.

If you have any interest in understanding the final cataclysm that overtook the Third Reich and delineated the hows and whys of the Cold War – and Eastern Europe after the collapse of the Soviet Union – *Red Army into the Reich* will give you a glimpse into a generally underreported past. Do not allow this lavishly illustrated volume and its infrequent grammatical lapses to not find a cherished place on your bookshelves. There is little room for fault with this book that one suspects they will find areas they overlooked in their first reading, for it is a book that will undoubtedly be consulted from your shelves. The bottom line is *Red Army into the Reich* is a small slice of heaven for the East Front fan.

DR. (LTC) ROBERT G. SMITH

General Mark Clark: Commander of U.S. Fifth Army and Liberator of Rome by Jon B. Mikolashek; Havertown, PA: Casemate Publishers; 2021; 216 pages including maps, photographs and appendix; \$24.95.



After the 1943 Sicilian conquest, the Allies were faced with a strategic dilemma. Should they invade the Italian mainland or build

up forces in preparation for an invasion of Europe aimed at the heart of Germany? Prime Minister Winston Churchill favored expanding the Mediterranean Campaign to curtail expansion of Soviet influence in the Balkans.

Churchill’s arguments won him a temporary victory; the Allies agreed to invade Italy while at the same time gathering forces together for the invasion of France.

The Italian invasion force consisted of the British 8th Army under Field Marshal Bernard L. Montgomery and the newly formed American Fifth Army under the command of LTG Mark W. Clark. Clark’s professional life, along with a detailed review of the trials and tribulations of Fifth Army, are the subject of Dr. Jon B. Mikolashek’s latest work for Casemate publication’s “Leadership in Action” series.

Mikolashek begins by examining Clark’s early years. Born into an Army family, Clark entered the U.S. Military Academy in 1913. His class included such notables as Matthew B. Ridgway and Joseph L. Collins. While at West Point, his barracks also housed Dwight D. Eisenhower, a member of the Class of 1915. They established a friendship which they would build upon in the future.

By April 1917, Clark was an infantry officer assigned to 11th Infantry Regiment. The regiment landed in France and immediately took up positions in the Vosges Mountains area. Now a captain, Clark assumed command of 3rd Battalion when the commander was disabled. Wounded two days later, Clark recovered and assumed staff duties until the end of the war.

Clark’s postwar years are described by Mikolashek as times of “slow promotion, poor pay and awful assignments.” The author provides several examples of Clark’s assignments that exemplify these characteristics. Fortunately, his outstanding staff work drew the attention of many senior officers. By 1939, Clark was assigned to 3rd Infantry Division as the intelligence and operations officer. While there, he rekindled his friendship with Eisenhower, also assigned to the division.

Mikolashek’s brief summary of Clark’s accomplishments while in the division established the basis for his rapid promotion. Clark, along with several other officers, skipped promotion to colonel and pinned on the star of a brigadier general shortly before the United States entered World War II. His

rapid promotion caused some lasting resentment and bitterness from his peers.

Once the United States entered the war, Clark assumed command of the II Corps in England. Initially the corps was tasked with training, not deploying, troops for combat. Not wishing to miss an opportunity to command soldiers in combat, Clark became Eisenhower's deputy, who was then commander of forces in England. Together, these two led the planning effort for the invasion of North Africa in 1942. As Eisenhower's deputy, Clark conducted several vital missions that are concisely detailed by the author.

Promoted to lieutenant general, Clark assumed command of Fifth U.S. Army and prepared to invade Italy. This land campaign began with landing of his troops at Salerno. His command included the American VI Corps and the British X Corps. The difficulties of this landing and the challenges presented to Clark are succinctly described by Mikolashek, as is the agonizingly slow and costly drive up the Italian peninsula.

Clark's forces entered Rome June 4, 1944. Two days later, the Allies landed in Normandy. The Italian campaign thereafter became a backwater as troops and supplies were diverted to the forces then invading France. How Clark maneuvers and supplies his forces as they drive north of Rome form the concluding chapters of the book.

While this is not a work on armored warfare, the narrative will expose maneuver commanders to several thought-provoking and controversial actions by Clark. Maneuver commanders should evaluate whether they would support or alter his conduct of the campaign. For example, the disastrous crossing of the Rapido River by 36th Infantry Division should allow present-day maneuver commanders an opportunity to ask themselves, "What would I do?"

In Clark's case, his actions resulted in a post-war congressional investigation. Was the bombing of the abbey at Monte Cassino justified? Did he handle the January 1944 landing at Anzio correctly? Should that operation have even been attempted? Probably the

most controversial tactical decision Clark made involved the breakout from the Anzio area and the drive to liberate Rome. Mikolashek has some harsh criticism of Clark's actions. After reading the section, would maneuver commanders agree with the author or dispute the conclusions?

This is an interesting and well-researched examination of Mark W. Clark. This work should be studied by maneuver commanders to understand the complexity of dealing with allies, the struggle for resources during a conflict and the political overwatch of a campaign.

COL (RETIRED) D.J. JUDGE

Day of the Panzer: A Story of American Sacrifice in Southern France by Jeff Danby; Havertown, PA: Casemate Publishers; 2021; 365 pages including maps, photographs, footnotes and bibliography; \$24.95.

During World War II the American Army sought to overcome German tactics by employing effective company-level teams of tanks and infantry. Training an effective tank-infantry team is a worthwhile but time-consuming activity. Jeff Danby's latest work tells the tale of the combined-arms team formed by attaching Company B, 756th Tank Battalion, to Company L, 3rd Battalion, 15th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Infantry Division.

Danby has a personal interest in this particular group. His grandfather, 1LT Edgar R. Danby, was a tank-platoon leader with Company B. In an attempt to better understand his grandfather's role as a platoon leader, Danby embarked on a six-year research effort. The result is a work that details close-combat operations using tanks and infantry.

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The author begins by summarizing 3rd Infantry Division's activities prior to landing in southern France, with

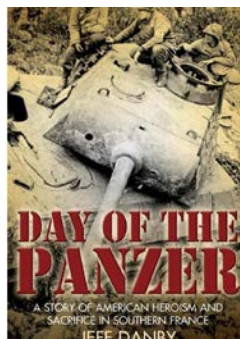
emphasis on the combat lessons Company L learned during its stay at the Anzio beachhead from January to May 1944. Breaking out of Anzio, Company L moved quickly up the Italian coast and participated in the seizure of Rome. They rested and refitted in the area surrounding Rome until August, when they were selected to land in southern France as part of the Operation Dragoon invasion force.

Danby explains the actions of the L Company team once ashore as they pursue elements of the German 19th Army, which was defending the French ports of Marseille and Toulon. His narrative describes the actions that take place, with details on the individual American Soldiers engaging the enemy, their duties and the weapon systems they used. Within days of the landing, Company L and the attached tanks find themselves attacking up the Rhone Valley.

It is at this time that Danby's grandfather reports as a tank-platoon leader with Company B. Supply difficulties limited the amount of fuel available. Given these restrictions, pursuit operations against the Germans slowed down.

Attempting to interdict the retreating Germans, a depleted Company L with two Sherman tanks and a few other vehicles engage the enemy in the town of Allan. As LT Danby's tank enters the town, a German rear-guard force of tanks and anti-tank guns takes the Americans under fire. They hit LT Danby's tank, opening a "four-inch hole ... on the left side of the gun mantle, perforated cleanly as if by a giant invisible paper punch." The subsequent explosion kills the gunner, loader and tank commander – LT Danby's first day in combat ends with his tragic death. Subsequently, a German counterattack throws the Americans off balance and several Americans are captured. The action is described in detail, along with a narrative on what happens to the men captured.

This is a fast-paced, interesting narrative on employment of a tank-infantry team. Danby is to be commended for his fine efforts. His research is thorough and well-documented in the footnote section. The author's final



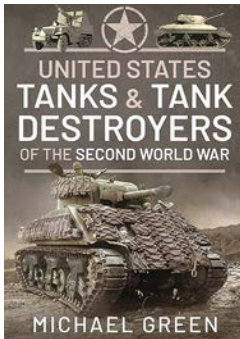
chapter lists the men consulted in Danby's painstaking research. Their post-war activities, along with a list of the decorations they earned, are detailed, along with a glossary and charts on the organization of the infantry-tank company. Maps and applicable photographs supplement the text.

Also noteworthy are the participants' many anecdotal tales of their time in combat. These range from the division commander's displeasure at seeing his Soldiers fail to maintain acceptable standards of dress and deportment; the employment of the duplex-drive Sherman tank; the shortcomings of the Sherman tank; and the marksmanship qualities of both German and American troops.

The book's title is somewhat misleading. This is not a work that addresses large tank engagements, nor is it a biography of LT Danby. Rather, this work concentrates on the performance of the tank-infantry team in combat, and, as such, it will appeal to a wide audience seeking to improve their tactical skills by reading lessons-learned by the Soldiers of World War II.

COL (RETIRED) D.J. JUDGE

United States Tanks and Tank Destroyers of the Second World War by Michael Green; South Yorkshire, United Kingdom: Pen & Sword Books; 2021; 255 pages, including photographs and bibliography; \$34.95.



World War I opponents designed, manufactured and employed tanks to gain battlefield mobility. At the conclusion of hostilities, both the victors and the vanquished sought tanks that were better designed and armed than their forbearers. In his most recent work, Michael Green, a prolific writer of military-related subjects, addresses the United States' development and employment of light, medium and heavy tanks, along with tank destroyers, during World War II.

As the author states in his introduction, "This work is only a very broad overview of the history of American tanks and tank destroyers." He begins by addressing the pre-World War II light tanks available to the U.S. Army. Funding limitation heavily impacted the design and procurement of tanks. Green begins by tracing the place of the light tank in the newly created armored force. Both the cavalry and infantry branches possessed light M2 tanks equipped with .50 and .30 caliber machineguns. As war neared, armament for the M2 series was upgraded to include the standard machine configurations and a 37mm main gun.

The Marine Corps employed a limited number of these M2A4s at Guadalcanal. The Army used these vehicles only for training. Since the M2 was unsuitable for combat operations, it was replaced by the M3.

There were some 13,000 examples of the M3 produced between 1941 and 1943. The original M3 version saw early combat in the Philippines and North Africa. Several types followed. Weighing between 14 and 16 tons, each model was equipped with a 37mm main gun and various .30 caliber machinegun configurations. Several Allied nations were also provided with this tank. As explained by the author, battlefield reports found the tank lacked sufficient armored protection and firepower.

Enhanced tank-manufacturing techniques surfaced in response to field requirements for better equipment. To improve understanding of these tank-production procedures, Green explains the differences between face-hardened armor (FHA), cast homogeneous armor (CHA) and rolled homogeneous armor (RHA). Manufacturing advances resulted in the fielding of the M5 series of light tanks. While this series had improved performance, better handling characteristics and better crew compartments, it was still armed with the inadequate 37mm main gun.

Given these shortfalls, the Ordnance Department fielded the M24 to the European Theater of Operations in December 1944. The M24 was equipped with a 75mm main gun, torsion-bar

suspension and a .50 caliber machinegun. The Army employed the M24 in cavalry units well into the 1960s.

Green next addresses the M3 and M4 medium tanks. The author relies on battlefield reports on M3 and M4 performance, anecdotal commentaries by crew members and production statistics to guide the discussion. The M3 was an interim design. It boasted a turret-mounted 37mm gun and a hull-mounted 75mm gun. British use of the tank in North Africa during the latter part of 1942 received positive comments. However, the tank's high silhouette and awkward requirement for positioning the 75mm gun limited its utility.

Using summations of the Ordnance Technical Committee finding, Green traces the creation of the follow-on tank to the M3: the M4 Sherman tank. He notes that the "first-generation Sherman tanks ... were envisioned as tank killers." They were to exploit breakthrough and go deep into the enemy rear. To perform this role, the tanks had to be mobile, reliable, durable and adequately armed.

Improved manufacturing methods permitted the casting of a turret capable of housing a 75mm main gun. When mated to a hull and engine, the M4 was a marked improvement over the M3. Weighing in at 33 tons, the M4 was easy to maintain, repair and modify. Six major models and a number of subsets of a given model were produced during World War II. The Sherman's maneuverability and reliability were impressive.

The tank was not without deficiencies. Green discusses several comments from field commanders on the inadequacy of the short-barreled 75mm main gun, the fielding of the 76mm gun system, added armor protection techniques, ammunition storage and use, along with design features for each version of the M4. Photos and descriptions explain each of the many modifications made to the basic Sherman throughout the war.

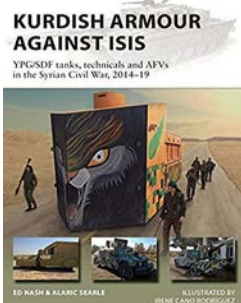
The role and use of wheeled and self-propelled tank destroyers in every theater of World War II, the doctrinal shortfall not foreseen by the Army when they first appeared on the

battlefield, and the steps taken to improve performance are addressed by Green. He concludes his work by focusing on the development and limited employment of the M26 Pershing heavy tank.

Green presents a well-researched, highly readable review of tank development during World War II. This work will appeal to maneuver commanders seeking to enhance their understanding of tank development, employment and the vital role of field feedback to improve design and modifications of a given tank.

COL (RETIRED) D.J. JUDGE

Kurdish Armour Against ISIS: YPG/SDF Tanks, Technicals and AFVs in the Syrian Civil War, 2014-2019 by Ed Nash and Alaric Searle; New York: Osprey Publishing (New Vanguard series); 2021; 48 pages; \$19 (paperback).



As I write this review, world attention is largely focused upon the large buildup of Russian forces threatening to seize the Ukraine or

upon China's increasingly hostile rhetoric against Taiwan. The ongoing Syrian Civil War and the continued danger posed by radical Islam in the form of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) rarely make front-page news.

Military professionals may, however, wish to devote an evening's study to ***Kurdish Armour Against ISIS: YPG/SDF Tanks, Technicals and AFVs in the Syrian Civil War, 2014-2019*** to brush up on the role that improvised armor might play in the future.

The book – really more of a monograph given its length of just 48 pages – covers a variety of Kurdish armored vehicles employed in the Syrian Civil War. Nash conducted primary research in a most unique manner given his service as a volunteer fighter with the Kurdish Yekineyen Parastina Gel (YPG) in 2015-2016. Readers looking for more on his personal experiences in Syria may wish to pick up a copy of his previous book titled ***Desert Sniper***.

The authors thoughtfully include a brief history on the Syrian Civil War, including a description of the major opposing factions as a scene-setter for the central subject matter. The core of the book, as the title suggests, is devoted to YPG and the multiethnic Syrian Democratic Forces' (SDF) armor development, employment and doctrine, with some discussion of the other regional forces. Unit structure and battlefield tactics receive some examination, as does the combat performance of the armored systems. The final pages address the YPG and SDF major operations against ISIS until the latter's defeat in 2019.

The book contains a surprisingly large volume of color photographs, many provided by Nash himself from his time in Syria, and beautifully painted artist illustrations. The writing is

straightforward and factual, with little attempt to develop a storyline beyond that required to explain the various armored vehicles extant in Syria.

Readers will find *Kurdish Armour* an excellent primer for how paramilitaries may employ both homemade as well as conventionally developed armored vehicles as a separate element or in coordination with conventional military forces. While there is no lack of books on the Syrian Civil War itself, Nash's and Searle's work fills an important niche assessing the types and operational performance of armor that will inform their role in other conflicts.

Restated, the U.S. military will see this threat again and should account for it in doctrine or equipment development. America's material wealth and ability to produce modern weapons platforms may blind us to the ingenuity of enemies able to rapidly develop similar, albeit less combat capable, systems from captured, repurposed or repaired systems. Improvised armor will pose a particular threat to U.S. allies in the developing world or those reliant upon motorized- or infantry-based formations due to budget restrictions.

LTC CHRISTOPHER J. HEATHERLY

ACRONYM QUICK-SCAN

CMH – Center of Military History
ISIS – Islamic State in Iraq and Syria
SDF – Syrian Democratic Forces
YPG – Yekineyen Parastina Gel