

Opening of Russian Archives Enriches New Book on Kursk Battle

The Battle of Kursk by David M. Glantz and Jonathan M. House, University Press of Kansas, Lawrence, 1999; 476 pages; \$34.95.

While several books have related the epic battle of Kursk in July 1943, this work provides a myriad of details from newly released Soviet archival sources. David Glantz, founder and former director of the U.S. Army's Foreign Military Studies Office, and Jonathan House, Professor of History at Gordon College in Georgia, have both previously written and collaborated on works about the Red Army.

The Kursk salient begged for a pincers attack to eliminate it, as proposed by Field Marshal von Manstein in the early spring of 1943 following his riposte to Kharkov, but such an offensive was postponed until July to await the deployment of the new Tiger and Panther tanks. This allowed the Soviets to fortify the salient with minefields and pakfronts, a defense in depth that ensured that German Operation Citadel would be a struggle of attrition. Hitler wavered as Guderian, Manstein, and Model turned against the offensive, but he was persuaded by Zeitzler, Keitel, and Kluge. As with many other fatal decisions of the war, all of these generals subsequently blamed Hitler alone for the error (as he was conveniently dead). Moreover, "There is absolutely no basis," conclude the authors, "for assuming that Citadel would have succeeded had it been launched in spring 1943" as maintained by Manstein, given the new armies and strategic reserve it is now known that the Soviets had been able to create.

While the Germans focused on *Fall Zita-delle*, the Soviets saw the battle as merely a prelude to their own counteroffensives that would attack the shoulders of the German pincers and drive to the Dnieper, and the book ends with Operations *Kutuzov* against the Orel salient and *Rumiantsev* against the Belgorod-Kharkov sector. Marshal Zhukov, who "used the Red Army as a club rather than a rapier," was balanced by the intellectual keenness of Colonel General Vasilevsky, Chief of *Stavka* (the General Staff), and the two "formed a superb team."

Although previous authors have made astute use of Soviet memoirs and other sources, Glantz and House provide additional information, as the arguments with *Stavka* before Vatutin was allowed to dig in Katukov's armor against Hoth's drive from the south. Leading up to the clash at Prokhorovka, however (note COL Frederick C. Turner's article in *ARMOR*,

May-June 1993), Rotmistrov's intention to charge the longer-ranged gun power of the Tigers and Ferdinands of Hausser's II SS Panzer Corps with his T-34s and "engage in hand-to-hand fight and board them" is from his 1984 memoirs. An analysis of battle losses does result in the authors arguing that "hind-sight has permitted myth to inform legend," and that actually 572 tanks and assault guns clashed around Prokhorovka, not up to 1,500 as frequently stated (as in Caidin, Carell, and Jukes). In the Kursk salient battle, the Soviets suffered three times as many casualties as the Germans (177,847 to 49,822), and **five** times the number of tanks and assault guns totally destroyed (1,614 of 5,128 to 323 of 2,928 German); but the Russians could afford these huge losses, and commanders on both sides recognized that the initiative had now passed irrevocably to the Red Army.

The book's focus is on the detailed movements of the ground forces, with dramatic descriptions from Carell ("vivid and accurate"), Mellenthin, and unit histories. But close air support and tank busters like Hans Rudel's Stukas with 37mm cannon and the IL-2 Shturmoviks (see Von Hardesty's *Red Phoenix*) are not mentioned, though an attack by German HS-109s (actually Hs-129Bs) left "a hideous, burning wasteland." Mine warfare and the teething problems of the Panther (suspension, final drives, optics, fuel system vulnerability, and no bow MG in the initial D model) are also not discussed, and Glantz's older 1990 *Soviet Military Intelligence* book is referred to regarding Soviet intelligence, where he concludes that the Dora, Lucy, and Werther sources were "contradictory and often unreliable," and that the network of *razvedka* (combat intelligence) sources "was the most important."

There are 52 pages of very thorough German and Russian orders of battle, including numbered battalions and companies, and another 50 pages of tables of strengths and losses and some key German and Soviet documents. There are 32 detailed and progressive daily maps of the Central and the Voronezh Fronts showing regimental units, though these overlay the topography and town names, which are a bit muted. For the student of these Red Army ground operations in particular, this book is to be highly recommended.

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Thucydides on War and National Character by Robert D. Luginbill, Westview Press, Boulder, Colo., 1999; 232 pages; \$55.00, hardcover; ISBN 0-8133-3644-9.

The ancient Greek general and historian, Thucydides (460-400 B.C.), has been called "the greatest historian that ever lived," and his classic work *The History of the Peloponnesian War* is a masterpiece of military and political history. As a staple at the war colleges and resting comfortably on the book shelves of most officers, Thucydides' book presents a vivid portrayal of the long and bitter war between Athens and Sparta from 431 to 404 B.C.

The Peloponnesian War was much more than just another barbaric hack and slash conflict so common in that era. It was a titanic struggle between a democracy and an oligarchy, a war for cultural and imperial supremacy which had profound impact on the Hellenic Age and Greek civilization. Thucydides lived through the war, first as a participant, then as an astute observer and chronicler of the military, political, and social aspects of every event. He was a "man of action and intense political interests," and his work vividly reflects the human nature of war.

Robert Luginbill, an associate professor of classics at the University of Louisville, has written a book which seeks to explore Thucydides' views and conclusions about war and national character. As a student of Thucydides, Luginbill's effort here focuses on three points — humankind's tendency to war, personal and national behavior in times of stress, and the origin of war as it involves individual and collective behavior.

Unfortunately, this book has all the earmarks of a stuffy doctoral thesis. It is scholarly and verbose, is loaded with the academic jargon of the classical age, is boring and difficult to read, and worse, it presumes the reader has already read and digested Thucydides' work. In fact, if a reader has not previously read Thucydides, then this book will make no sense at all, and even then it will be a chore to finish.

That said, Luginbill's study of Thucydides' history of the Peloponnesian War does provide some insight into war as "a product of the human psyche." Leaning heavily on the babble of psychology, he identifies the national characters of Athens and Sparta as being either based on hope or fear, which in turn

relates to the degree of risk-taking each city-state will accept. Luginbill also asserts that Thucydidean scholarship reveals the dual imperatives of human nature — “the desire to rule over others, when possible, but to be free from the rule of others at all costs.”

Luginbill goes on to discuss risk and reason, hope and fear, the balance of power and necessity, and national and battlefield leadership, as well as the inevitability of war when collective hope or fear overwhelm capability and reason. Sadly, his observations and explanations are so clouded with pedantic mumbo-jumbo that the reader may as well be trying to read Thucydides in the original Greek. In fact, many of the numerous footnotes are useless because they *are* written in Greek!

Clearly, this book is not for the casual reader. It deserves a pass by anyone not a Greek scholar. Instead, it is recommended that readers pick up one of the many outstanding translations of *The History of the Peloponnesian War*, and reach your own conclusions about war and national character. You will also be delighted to read about strategy, tactics, sea power, land warfare, diplomacy, politics, the ethics of war, leadership, national will, and the perils of prolonged warfare. And that is all good stuff.

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Russia's Air Power In Crisis by Benjamin S. Lambeth, Smithsonian History of Aviation Series, Smithsonian Institution Press, 1999; 256 pages; \$29.95.

Benjamin Lambeth is a RAND senior staff member, who was the first Westerner invited to fly a Soviet combat aircraft inside the USSR in 1989, according to the dust jacket of this book. He has a great interest in the Russian (and old Soviet) Air Force, and he looks at an institution in an ongoing severe crisis. The U.S. Army's “hollow Army” and “Vietnam malaise” of the '70s and early '80s were nothing compared to what Soviet/Russian air power experienced.

Imagine the U.S. breaking up into multiple nations; divide the states any way you want (they have to be contiguous), but make sure that no one new nation has all types of aircraft manufacturing capability. Also, parcel out the existing air power to the various new entities, but not equal distribution by type or age of aircraft. Now, assume all these countries are destitute, corrupt, some have border disputes, and there are external and internal threats that have to be addressed. Overlay all this with a REALLY serious left-wing, crony-dominated, intellectually/morally corrupt elitist bureaucracy where all wisdom flows from the top down to the Great Unwashed, and which doesn't want to give up power. You now have a rough idea of what the Russian military pilots faced in the 1990s.

The first six chapters describe the problems in the late '80s through mid-'90s, with emphasis on reality versus paperwork. A “zero-defects” mentality, an overt stifling of initiative, endless forests lost to make blizzards of directives about inconsequential items, lack of training time, few operational funds, “eyewash” projects, training plans turned upside-down due to higher headquarters' whims, commanders' needing to look good; wait, is this the *Russian Air Force* or the peacetime U.S. military? Never mind. Some things never change throughout history and the world.

The loss of experienced pilots to resignation or forced retirement, the lack of flying time for everyone (try 40 hours a year!), poor simulators with much down-time, coupled with the need of each fighter air regiment to train newly arriving pilots from the various pilot academies, had to reduce the effectiveness of almost every regiment in the Soviet/Russian Air Force. With the emphasis on highly scripted planning of every mission, overall control vested in the ground controller, rather than the pilot in the sky, and a need to not have problems or accidents, a pilot's life was not very happy. And it mattered not whether the regiment was Air Defense (VPVO) or Tactical Air (VVS).

Chapter Seven was an eye-opener. Western fighter pilots have what I call a “white scarf” mentality, the flair of WWI fighter pilots looking to become aces. They look on non-fighter pilots as lesser beings (How many want to fly ground attack aircraft (other than the Marines and A-10 pilots?), even though it's those aircraft that put power where it is needed: on the ground. The Soviets were focused on one thing: winning a ground war with NATO in Europe. Air power was for naught if the tanks didn't make it to the Rhine on time. Again, I am reminded of Fehrenbach, and others, who have remarked on the eternal truth of warfare in many eloquent ways, but which can be stated simply, if ungrammatically: “It ain't yours if you ain't standing on it.” The Soviets weren't afraid of NATO air power; it would be interesting, as Lambeth says, to find out why.

Chapter 8 is on the Chechnya campaign, and its effects on the VVS and the Russian Army. The VVS came out of the fighting with a better understanding of what its future role might be in other military problems, but without the means (funding) to accomplish its mission. It tried to look candidly at its problems and offer solutions, but the single biggest problem was/is no money. Lambeth offers “lessons indicated” that affected the whole campaign: bad planning, financial starvation, no force integration (jointness) among the operational military forces, with no CINC on the spot able to direct and control events, and the limits of air power in irregular (guerrilla) war in urban areas. Can you say MOUT, my brothers? Also alluded to was the depletion of war reserve munitions, especially the expensive ones; the same problem NATO faced in Kosovo, by having to limit the use of PGMs

and cruise missiles, just to have some on hand if needed elsewhere.

The rest of the book deals with the chances of the Russians to field a 5th generation fighter (Chapter 9), how the VPVO and VVS merged into a single Russian Air Force after the funding crisis reached catastrophic depths (Chapter 10), and the future, which indicates a Russian Air Force with only 10 percent of the aircraft the Soviets had a scant 12 years ago to fight wars like Chechnya (Chapter 11). The fact that the Russian government has not articulated a national strategy for its goals contributes greatly to the uncertainty of the Russian Air Force as to its missions.

What I found interesting is what was *not* covered. There was no mention of the threat an expansionist China poses to the Far Eastern Province and Siberia. How would a Russian Air Force fight a long-distance war? How would the Russian Army do against a more modern foe? Would the Russian government use nuclear weapons, or do they feel the threat of such weapons are enough to keep the Chinese out of Siberia? But if the Chinese encouraged people to move into an area claimed by, but not effectively controlled by, Russia, what would the Russian government do? Is the Russian government resigned to being a second-level European power, in the throes of modernization, and view their mission as holding on to what they have?

It does appear that in a conventional war, any modern air force would have a lot of aces quickly if they fought the Russians, and the skies would be cleared rapidly of brave, but unskilled, Russian pilots in poorly maintained aircraft. Again, maintenance separates the West and all the other armed forces in the world.

It was an interesting book, but I can't recommend it as a must-buy to the average *ARMOR* reader. It fails to focus on our concerns as soldiers: how would a Russian Air Force, allied with a hostile nation, affect our ability to wage maneuver warfare to achieve victory, and what would be our countermeasures?

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NCO Guide, 6th Edition by CSM Robert S. Rush, USA (Retired), Stackpole Books, Mechanicsburg, Pa., 1999; 379 pages; \$18.95.

In the past 12 years, I've read through a version of this manual at least five times — not so much for reading enjoyment, but as a resource for professional development. This book is slightly different than the versions I remember. It has a more personal feel to it than its sterile predecessors. CSM (Retired) Rush put an exceptional amount of time revising this edition, placing personal experience to

good use, particularly in the leadership chapter. His insight and knowledge clearly show in all sections of the book.

The layout for the book is typical of professional development guides, beginning with leadership and the issues that face sergeants daily. The role of the NCO, history behind the stripes, and basic NCO traditions can all be found early on. Key points of interest are the NCO responsibilities section (mandatory reading), and the contemporary leadership issues. The Army's new Fraternalization Policy, Equal Opportunity, Sexual Harassment and Gender Discrimination, and Extremism are all discussed and referenced, to name a few.

The second part of the book is specifically focused on training soldiers and self-development. What I found most useful was the list of available web sites with URLs that deal specifically with military issues. Sites listed cover the Army homepage, *ARMOR* Magazine, the Army Institute for Professional Development, the Army Training Support Center, the Battle Staff NCO homepage, the University of Kansas Military History site, the Pentagon Library, *PS Magazine*, and the Center for Military History. In all, 77 sites are listed that can provide invaluable information to the NCO for his soldiers and his personal growth.

In the final part of the book, the topic is quick reference. Everything from wear of the uniform, awards and decorations, and the Army Physical Fitness Test standards can be found easily. Pay and entitlements, promotions and reductions, and how to get the next assignment are also covered. This is the section of the book I found most useful on a daily basis. (I found this book replaced quite a few regulations that are normally on my cluttered desk.) It also includes 16 color pages of awards and decorations authorized for wear, plus a detailed list (IAW AR 600-8-22) describing criteria for submission, approval, and wear.

I found this book very easy to read and, for the most part, reminiscent of the Common Leadership portions of our NCOES system. This book can easily be the course outline for any of the common leadership training areas taught in today's Noncommissioned Officer Education System.

After finishing this book, I found very few shortcomings. CSM (Retired) Rush omitted the requirements for Master Gunner School in his *Training at Service Schools* section, didn't cover Temporary Lodging Allowances, and failed to mention differences in deferred vs. concurrent travel. All but the Master Gunner Course requirements I didn't mind too much (the seventh edition should correct the oversight).

After getting past the steep price (\$12.00 would provide a wider audience through affordability), I would highly recommend this book for the young specialists and corporals prior to attending the Primary Leadership Development Course. As for sergeants and

staff sergeants, I highly recommend this book as a quick reference for any general military topic. And, most importantly, I would definitely recommend this book for senior noncommissioned officers as a quick reference guide and a tool to format professional development classes.

Lastly, I would recommend this for leaders who care about making a difference. Use it as a loaner to train the young specialist or private first class. Use it as a desk reference, or as a guide to training, but use it.

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Arms for Spain: The Untold Story of the Spanish Civil War by Gerald Howson, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1999; 354 pages, notes, bibliography, index; \$25.95.

Not too many of *ARMOR*'s readers can remember the Spanish Civil War, a nasty but relatively insignificant turbulence that took place from July 1936 to March 1939. While insignificant in itself from a world perspective, it was a precursor to the ambitions of Hitler and Mussolini that would shake the whole world. Today's *ARMOR* types are probably more familiar with Hemingway's book, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, which described a brief episode of that war. No matter; this book is not about the war but about the efforts of both sides to acquire weapons and ammunition in the face of an international arms embargo.

In 1936, both the rebels' Nationalist army and the government's Republican army were too ill equipped and disorganized to conduct any kind of serious operations in what came to be known as "The Time of Chaos." This was a collective madness of hate, murder, and revenge that swept across Spain when people were killed for any reason or, too often, for no reason at all. Most affected was the Republican government, which was unsure which way to turn and ended up failing to do anything to stem the uprisings. Franco took advantage of the turmoil and began to ferry his Army of Africa to Spain by air. Today, we think in terms of air fleets bringing airlifted divisions to a combat zone; Franco had only three Fokker trimotors, two Dornier flying boats and a Douglas DC-2 and he moved his troops a platoon at a time! But in that time of great confusion, it was enough.

Franco, and many others, believed the airplane was the weapon of the future and started immediately to acquire more. He applied first to Italy, then Germany, England and France. At the same time, the Republican government requested aid from both France and England. After numerous delays and excuses, France, England and other democracies decided on a non-intervention policy and a general arms embargo, but Italy and

Germany promptly began to send equipment and personnel to Franco. The United States had its Neutrality Acts, which made it a felony to export any weapon to a country at war with another. Since this was a civil war, however, President Roosevelt felt he had no power to prevent any arms sales, but called for a "moral embargo" that threatened any violator with the grave displeasure of the State Department. This didn't do much to dissuade anyone. And even France, in 1937, after a change in government, decided on a policy of "relaxed non-intervention," i.e., discreet smuggling of war materiel in small quantities could continue.

Naturally, there were considerable logistical problems: entrepreneurs saw a hot market selling weapons to both sides but had to get the weapons first, Germany had to find a way to ship equipment to Franco without going through France, and both sides had to find both funds to purchase war materiel and sources to supply it. And that's what this book is all about — lots of "buccaneering traders of genius" conning every government and scanning everyone in sight for a quick buck.

Both sides connived with weapons merchants, paying exorbitant prices and outrageous bribes to acquire antiquated weapons and ammunition. The stories of these transactions read like grade B movie scripts and the ripoffs were horrendous. Ammunition, when it was delivered, wouldn't match the weapons; crates supposedly filled with weapons contained bricks and stones; deliveries already paid for were delayed on the flimsiest of excuses until more bribes were paid; and Russia, thought to be the foremost support of the Republican government, defrauded it of millions of dollars by manipulating the ruble exchange rate! one example: the 49,000 rifles of Soviet origin delivered in 1936 were from eight different countries, ten different types, and six different calibers, and over 13,000 of these were the 11mm Vetterlis, designed in 1868 with a caliber obsolete for over 40 years, and shipped with only 185 rounds each!

There isn't much about Armor here, mostly because tanks didn't play a significant role in the war. Russia sent 280 of its T-26 tanks (a 9.5-ton vehicle with a 45mm gun) and 50 BT-5s, the predecessor of the famous T-34. But there weren't enough tanks and the logistical support was essentially nonexistent. And Spain had no Guderian!

Howson has a casual, relaxed manner of telling these tales. It's almost as if you were sitting in his living room after dinner, listening to him talk. This informal, anecdotal expression lends itself to easy reading. Howson spent several decades researching this book and the expansive and detailed notes show it. This is a comprehensive adjunct to a military library and an interesting weekend read.

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