

REVIEWS

From Normandy to the Ruhr: With the 116th Panzer Division in World War II by Heinz Gunther Guderian, Aberjona Press, New York, 2001, 648 pp., \$39.95.

The English-speaking student of military history — and armored warfare — is well served by numerous thoughtful and stirring accounts of the fighting in France, the Low Countries, and Germany during 1944-45. Building on the base established by definitive official histories, these accounts, collectively considered, illuminate virtually every aspect of the Allied experience at every organizational level. The translated picture of the German experience is less complete, however, and generally has been refracted through the prism of Allied interpretation. Eyewitness anecdotal accounts from private German soldiers and reflective memoirs from senior German leaders are reasonably available, but treatments concerning the broad middle range of how brigades, divisions, and corps put together their battles — the subjects



This photo of a hunting Panther tank destroyer of Panzer Regiment 16 in the Ruhr Cauldron in April 1945 appears in *From Normandy to the Ruhr*.

Photo used by permission, Heinz Guderian and Kurt Wendt

most of interest to our own mid-grade officers — are woefully thin.

From Normandy to the Ruhr: With the 116th Panzer Division in World War II by Major General (then Major) Heinz Gunther Guderian, the son of the famous panzer visionary, does much to fill this need. The younger Guderian was the division's First General Staff Officer and, in that capacity, weathered such epic struggles as those in Normandy, Argentan, Falaise, Arnhem, Aachen, the Hürtgen, the Ardennes, the Reichswald, and the Ruhr. The 116th Panzer Division was organized in 1944 from elements of other units and fought exclusively on the Western Front. Its adversaries included such famous outfits as the American 1st, 4th, 28th, 29th, and 30th Infantry Divisions and 2d, 3d, 5th, 7th, and 8th Armored Divisions. Its engagements were some of the most famous of the war.

Guderian went on to a distinguished career in the Bundeswehr and writes in a clear, straightforward style. In his candor, he provides a useful antidote to those prone to uncritical adulation of the fighting skills of the

Wehrmacht. Mistakes are as clearly analyzed as successes, and Guderian does not flinch from describing the suffering that soldiers endured to compensate for the miscalculations of their leaders. The accounts of Mortain and the Ardennes are particularly gripping in that regard, and the discussion on handling armored reserves during the Normandy landings is particularly instructive. I was also fascinated by the account of the division's twin efforts at Aachen to fight off American attacks while simultaneously sheltering its commander from apprehension by the Gestapo. This vignette provides a vivid illustration of the damage the Nazi regime routinely inflicted on the German army.

The quality of the translation bears favorable comment as well. Ulrich and Esther Abele have done an excellent job, and Guderian himself approved the English text when complete. Ulrich Abele previously translated *Five Years, Four Fronts: The War Years of Georg Grossjohann, Major, German Army (Retired)*. Readers who have enjoyed that

fine piece of work can anticipate what they have to look forward to in *From Normandy to the Ruhr*.

From Normandy to the Ruhr is a must read for the serious student of WWII or armored warfare. It should not, however, be the first or only book one reads about the Wehrmacht's Western Front. The tactical detail that is the book's greatest strength could be lost on a reader who does not have a reasonable appreciation of the larger campaign. Similarly, the cartography — featuring 26 maps — is detailed, in black and white, engagement specific, and uses European military conventions. Maps or atlases depicting the flow of the campaigns will be helpful to the reader as well. That said, I strongly recommend this book to anyone who truly wants to understand the campaigns in France, the Low Countries, and Germany, and to anyone who wants to understand how battles are fought at the division level.

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Battleground Europe: Cambrai - The Right Hook by Jack Horsfall and Nigel Cave, Pen and Sword Books Limited, South Yorkshire, England, 1999, 176 pages, \$16.95.

If you've ever attempted to conduct a staff ride, you have no doubt asked yourself this question on one or more occasions: "Why doesn't some smart guy gather all the relevant historical data and some good maps of this battle and put them all into a single source book, preferably one that will fit in my pocket?" Apparently, the folks at Pen and Sword Books have also asked that question. Fortunately for those with an interest in World War I, Pen and Sword went one step further — they hired smart guys to actually do the work.

The result is a series of compact guidebooks to the major battlefields of World War I in Europe. The series is organized with major battles broken into small increments, creating three series within a series of guidebooks. Currently, the publishers offer guidebooks for three major battles: the Somme (1 master book and 15 individual guidebooks), Ypres (1 master book and 5 individual guidebooks), and the Hindenberg Line (1 master book and 4 individual guidebooks). Each guidebook fits easily into a large pocket, contains significant historical background, provides plentiful maps, includes photos of the battlefield as it existed then and as it looks now, and provides information about parking, lodging, and dining in the battlefield area.

Cambrai represents the series. The authors devote 110 pages to the story of this relatively short battle, which marked the first massed use of tanks. The historical material includes more than a dozen maps with overlays, short character studies of the more significant participants, orders of battle for both forces, and a surprisingly detailed account of the battle itself. The remainder of the book is devoted to five separate battlefield tours. Each tour includes additional historical information, one or more maps with recommended stops identified, a short discussion of the significance of each of the recommended stops, and photos of both the modern battlefield and the war zone as it existed during the battle. The guidebook also provides specific information about local facilities to support each tour, including addresses and phone numbers.

The only drawback to this excellent resource is that it is currently limited to only those battles fought in Europe during World War I. Compact, easy to read, and full of the most important historical data, these guidebooks should be high on the list of priority purchases for any military professional traveling to Europe. They are also great examples of a staff ride handbook.

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The Decorations, Medals, Ribbons, Badges, and Insignia of the United States Army: World War II to Present by Colonel Frank C. Foster (Ret.), Medals of America Press, Fountain Inn, SC, 2001, 148 pages, \$24.95 (softcover).

Colonel Foster sets out to write a fairly comprehensive, but still manageable, reference to the plethora of awards and devices used by the U.S. Army since WWII and succeeds admirably. He describes most medals, ribbons, and badges authorized since WWII, including the criteria for earning the device and a brief history of each. Also discussed are some of the most common patches and other uniform insignia over the same time period. The material is well organized and contains a surprising amount of detail given the publication's brevity. It is a decidedly thorough guide to U.S. Army and joint awards since WWII and, although clearly not intended as a particularly rigorous historical work, it is still an informative reference for every soldier.

This book contains full color reproductions of every award or other device mentioned in the text, is serves as a useful guide to award precedence, and contains black and white illustrations of many other items discussed in text. While the author fails to cite the sources for his historical information, he does provide a solid bibliography, and a casual reader will find little controversy in his information. This is a laudable effort by a reliable field expert, and a book that should find its way to every soldier.

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April 1865 by Jay Winik, HarperCollins Publishers, New York, 2001, 461 pages, \$32.50.

Jay Winik believes that America faced a fork in its historical path during the last month of the Civil War. One road, the road eventually taken, led to national reconciliation and a real peace. The Reconstruction Period, albeit troubled, nevertheless laid the foundation for modern America — unified, rich, and powerful. The other road led to continued conflict; rather than the honorable surrender of Confederate arms, a smoldering, endless guerrilla war that impoverishes the North and devastates the South. The implications of endemic warfare, weakening the Republic, delaying westward expansion, and exacerbating, rather than extinguishing, regional hatreds would have had incalculable consequences for American and world history.

Winik argues that either outcome was possible, and that the hinge of fate turned on four key events: the decisions by Robert E. Lee and Joe Johnston to eschew partisan warfare and surrender the last two Confed-

erate armies in the field; the lenient policy toward surrendered rebels, formulated by Lincoln and implemented by Grant; the capture of Jefferson Davis and the fleeing Confederate government; and the assassination of Lincoln — or rather the failure of this shattering event to derail the closure of hostilities.

The author certainly captures the grand dramatic sweep of the last month of the war, and forces even the knowledgeable reader to rethink the significance of individual actions on subsequent events, but this reviewer ultimately found his argument unconvincing. While Winik demonstrates that a dystopian outcome was possible, he fails to prove that it was likely — I still do not believe that the South possessed the material or spiritual resources (or the motivation, for that matter) by mid-1865 to continue the fight, even as bushwhackers and guerrillas. However, though he indulges in breathless prose from time to time, this is a good read and a refreshing interpretation of a momentous period.

Readers looking for a military history of the last days of the Confederacy may be disappointed. Though he does provide a good overview of the final campaigns — particularly of Johnston's fight in the Carolinas — there is little new here and his analysis of tactics and strategy is simplistic, to say the least. Winik concentrates instead on personalities, so that the fighting becomes something of a dramatic backdrop for the protagonists.

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The T-72 Tank: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow (in Russian) by Sergey Suvorov; a Tekhnika-Moledzhi/Tankomaster Publication, Moscow, 2001, 64 pages, \$17.95 from East View Press (ISBN 5-93849-002-7).

The book's advantages include good, clear photos of the most recent T-72 models. It's disadvantages include mundane text with totally unsourced and unimpressive history; no English captions or translations.

The Unknown T-34 (in Russian) by I. Zheltov, M. Pavlov, I. Pavlov, A. Sergeev, and A. Solyankin; Eksprint Publishing Center "Military Museum" series, Eksprint, Moscow, 2001, 184 pages, \$31.95 from East View Press (ISBN 5-94038-013-1)

The book's advantages include clear, concise history of the creation and use of the T-34 tank, covering many unknown models of the tank and its combat history. The only disadvantage this book has is that only the photographs are captioned in English.

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, many of the secrets of the former Soviet Union — "enigmas," as Winston Churchill once described them — are becoming common

knowledge due to access to the once-secret state archives. Historians, researchers, and even enthusiasts have taken advantage of that access to write a wide number of books and pamphlets covering a myriad of subjects, and military history has fared very well at their hands. The only sad thing about it is that too much of it remains in Russian, and too few people in the West read the language to enjoy how the Russians have taken advantage of this change to write about the missing pieces in their own history.

Armor history is a good case in point, as many past mysteries are being sorted out regarding the history of Russia's mighty tank industry. The former Soviet Union produced more tanks than anyone else prior to WWII, and overall, they probably account for more than 50 percent of all the tanks ever built. But until researchers gained access to the archives, people in the West only saw very convoluted histories — most of which read like U.S. auto ads from the 1950s — bigger, stronger, faster, best in the world.

Most of these publications have a set format: a history of the development of the machine which is the subject of the book, a detailed description of the most common version's interior workings and design, and a short combat history of the vehicle. This is usually accompanied by a large number of photographs, cutaways from the original operating manual for the vehicle with callouts, and plans of the vehicle in either 1/35 or 1/76 scale, which are extremely useful to modelers. They may have a small number of color views of the vehicles in service to show their service markings and paint schemes as well.

In the first book on the T-72, the author (who appears to have been on the Soviet General Staff at one point in his career) sticks to the classic Russian formula, providing a very sketchy overview of the developmental history of the T-72. It was created from the T-64 as a backup using the V-45 12-cylinder vee-type diesel, the evolutionary follow-on to the legendary V-2 diesel of WWII. But the design team, headed by Leonid Kartsev at the Nizhniy Tagil tank plant, hated most of the features of the T-64 and replaced them with ones of their own design, which resulted in a totally different tank. Equipped with the V-46 production version of the big vee diesel, and Nizhniy's own design of autoloader and running gear, the T-72 emerged as a competitor to the T-64 rather than its consort.

All of this is glossed over in the book, and Suvorov does cover it in passing. He also covers many of the foreign-built versions and the modifications made to them — if you want to dramatically improve a T-72, think France.

The history section is awful, as it reads like Soviet propaganda from 1955. Most U.S. tankers, especially those from B Company, 4th Tanks, USMC, would be interested to know that Iraq only lost 14 T-72 tanks in combat, the rest were either blown up by

their own crews or destroyed by naval gunfire. Those lost in Chechnya were lost due to overwhelming odds, not poor protection. Overall, it would seem Suvorov failed to obtain information relating to honest reports on the tank's failures, and the fact that the T-72BM tank had to be renamed after Desert Storm (to T-90) as sales fell when the Coalition took the Iraqi army apart in 1991. He simply states that T-72BM and T-90 are virtually the same tank.

To its credit, the book does have a lot of nice color photos of recently seen T-72B and T-72BM tanks, as well as currently offered variants such as BREM-1 and foreign variants.

The T-34 book, on the other hand, covers much more — it's three times as long with smaller print. But the T-34 book is a "warts and all" view of the tank, and covers its protracted development history from 1937 to the end of WWII. It uses the classic formula, but much better and with more respect to its subject than to the book's propaganda value.

The authors of this book are all Russian armor enthusiasts, which means they do not bring a lot of corporate baggage into their writing and analysis. They cite the CC CPSU resolutions that brought the T-34 into being, as well as all of the letters and documents that cover the vehicle's convoluted production path.

The history section covers the tank's use during WWII, from the first battles on the Western Front through its high watermark at Kursk, and on to its final battles in the East against the Japanese. The reader gets an idea of just what the T-34 really meant to the Red Army as both a weapon and a symbol of its determination.

The casual reader and armor enthusiast can at least follow the history of the vehicle because the photographs are captioned in English. Modelers will be delighted with the fact that it contains nice, fresh 1/35 plans for six different stages of the life of the T-34 from its beginnings as A-32 tank prototype Number 2 to T-34-85 Model 1944.

It's just a shame that they are not all available in English, and the Russians have shown only lukewarm interest in translating them or having them translated. The information is really quite useful, and when presented honestly, as in the T-34 book, clears up many myths that are still taken as fact today.

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The Long Walk by Slavomir Rawicz,
The Lyons Press, Guilford, CT, 1997,
242 pages, \$14.95 (paperback).

Rawicz's humility might briefly mislead readers who find the most recent version of his WWII struggle for freedom, but they will begin a journey that represents the most thorough warning against an overthrow of free-

dom. He takes them through the depths of imprisonment and returns them to an exalted paradise. His book seems modest in presentation, dominated by the deceptive title and a simple, blurred picture of barbed wire. At first glance, Lyons Press has produced an unobtrusive journal of a man's search for freedom, not unlike many others. However, Rawicz captures the reader as easily and decisively as the barbed wire on the cover, which readers abruptly realize imprisons them. The wire blurs, and the distance fades, before it reaches more than a few inches; the rest of the world does not exist.

Lyons Press designed the few pages leading to Rawicz's journal to draw the reader further into Rawicz's state of mind as he begins his trek. It begins with a simple two-word quote on the cover, "Positively Homeric," solidifying the project's sense of scale. Opening the cover and finding the title helplessly scrawled on an overwhelmingly white page, the massive sense of isolation settles on the reader. Lyons Press follows with the only illustration — a map spread across two austere pages, encompassing the whole of Asia. A 7,000-mile black line represents the hard odyssey of a man into and out of freedom, which stretches from Moscow to Siberia, and down to India.

Richard Downing, the original translator, introduces us to Rawicz briefly and quietly, preferring to leave the weight of the warning to Rawicz, whose carefully chosen words create a more lush image than any photograph could. "I had to tell my story as a warning to the living, and as a moral judgment for the greater good (Rawicz, xii)," adds Rawicz in his foreword. Then we delve swiftly into the story of a Polish cavalry officer captured by the Soviets on his return from fighting the Germans, tried at Lubyanka Prison and convicted of spying for Poland, and finally sentenced to 25 years in a Siberian prison camp. The extraordinary displays of endurance, just to survive the deadly journey to imprisonment, across the whole of Russia, goes a long way to establish that the Soviets threw many decent men into Siberia.

Throughout the resulting escape, untarnished by time and unblemished by vain-glory, Rawicz unflinchingly turns the lives of his companions into his warning, and much more. He sends the reader through Siberian winter nights, the Gobi Desert without food or water, across the length of China, over the crests of the Himalayas, and into the liberty of British India. He successfully avoids painting a pessimistic view of the whole of humanity. Rawicz unassumingly presents a story of great men overcoming tragic events, forcing us to wonder what those men could have achieved in the absence of tragedy. Rawicz very successfully presents his warning.

Rawicz's *The Long Walk* should sit on every person's shelf, not just those of us in the military. His journal not only provides us with ample warning and motivation for our

unfailing will, but also with a glimpse at the heights of our own endurance. Undoubtedly, no reader can set down this book before completion.

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China Attacks by Chuck DeVore and Steven W. Mosher, Infinity Publishing, Haverford, PA, 2001, 415 pages, \$19.95.

Historically, victors do not learn nearly as well as losers. Generally, battlefield embarrassment or looming threats make military transformation easy. The post-9/11 environment proves we have both criteria. Terrorists executed unthinkable acts and *China Attacks* provides a clear depiction of a looming threat.

China Attacks is an astonishing novel portraying a People's Republic of China (PRC) invasion of Taiwan. The authors describe nuclear-driven, electromagnetic pulse bombs — ICBMs. Post-9/11 perspectives must preface that these are no longer unthinkable acts but dangerous courses of action, making *China Attacks* a realistic and bracing look at the threats to the United States and her allies. Moreover, the depicted actions on part of the PRC match what many analysts suggest as the outcomes of actual PRC actions. Fortunately (for Taiwan), the American fighting spirit and ingenuity repulsed the PRC's plans to reclaim its "renegade province."

As an intelligence officer, DeVore has done his research and has portrayed the most dangerous course of action. As a reported member of Congressman Christopher Cox's staff, the portrayed weapons capability of the PRC leads me to believe that he was involved in creating the January 1999 Cox Report describing the acquisition of United States' nuclear secrets by the PRC. Perhaps he used the report to highlight the effects of PRC intelligence activity against the United States. Mosher's regional expertise probably picked up where DeVore's background left off, providing the extensive cultural background for this endeavor.

A lesson learned from *China Attacks* is that, when preparing for future operations, we should not focus on how we could better do what we have tried. We must look at our actions through a transformational lens. We must ask how we can do things differently. Militaries on the losing end of historical turning points fail because they did not adapt to new environments. The terrorists of 9/11 wrote the new history. They executed the unthinkable. *China Attacks* provides us with looming threats of immobilizing tactics. In *China Attacks*, the PRC stole the initiative. Transformation is on us; we must maintain the initiative.

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