

# REVIEWS

**Fighting for the Future: Will America Triumph?** by Ralph Peters, Stackpole Books, Mechanicsburg, Pa., 1999, 224 pages, \$19.95.

To many readers of *ARMOR*, retired Army Lieutenant Colonel Ralph Peters is probably best known for his periodic "Back Talk" columns in *Army Times*, or as the author of any of seven military fiction novels he published in the past ten years. In either format, Peters has never been known to shy away from a controversial topic or to abandon an intellectual position just because it wasn't politically correct. This book is a collection of essays, previously published and expanded upon in concept if not verbatim, in professional journals such as *Parameters*. It is a book professionals will want to read.

In *Fighting for the Future*, Peters is, by his own admission, waging a war of attrition upon the Army establishment and bureaucracy. This collection deals in issues of political affairs, international relations, U.S. military force structure and the nature of the Army's relationship to technology, among other things. More often than not, it reads like a "how-to" manual for the U.S. in the 21st century. Peters is willing to take on just about any sacred cow, and he does so here with a decidedly irreverent wit. Warning: If you are a rabid nationalist, a tribal warrior, or a screaming fundamentalist, this book may offend you. Since many of the chapters apparently originated in *Parameters*, they are fairly short and therefore easy to digest in a single sitting. The origin and focus of the essays might put some readers off at first glance. This should not be the case.

*Parameters* is the journal of the U.S. Army War College. It deals with issues at the strategic, not tactical, level. The authors are almost exclusively lieutenant colonels, colonels, and Defense Department civilians, and generals writing for each other. Because of this focus, it would be easy to assume that Peters' topics and style would be well above the heads of the average *ARMOR* reader, this reviewer included. Happily, this is not the case. Peters writes in an easy, almost conversational style that would alienate neither the majority of civilians nor the average soldier. In short, he writes about global issues in a manner that would be equally appropriate in *PM Monthly*. Reducing complex topics to their basics, even issues of international affairs make sense when explained and dissected by the author's acid wit.

If there is a chink in Peters' armor, it is in the chapter when he deals specifically with the future of armor. Peters' contention — that much of future combat will be dominated by the urban terrain of expanding cities — is one that has been repeated over and over in the past two decades, but we have yet, for some reason, seen this as a reality. It is beyond this reviewer to postulate why that is so, merely to observe that this has been the case in very few instances. Peters may be wrong in this. Yet he takes this as the starting point for his foray into what can only be described as science fiction. Peters sets no dates on his fore-

cast, but it is decidedly in the far future. This is Peters' weakest chapter because it deals with non-issues of an impossibly distant future. (Impossibly distant, that is, given our current and forecasted budgets.) In just about every other chapter, Peters is both entertaining and informative. His personal theories of international relations and military conflict are appropriate for a professional of any pay grade. I strongly recommend this book.

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**Warmaking and American Democracy: The Struggle over Military Strategy, 1700 to the Present** by Michael D. Pearlman{PRIVATE }, University of Kansas Press, Lawrence, Kansas, 1999, 442 pages, 11 maps, \$45, hardcover.

The issue of how a democracy conducts war is complex and as relevant today as it has ever been. Since the founding of our country, the political system of the United States has profoundly affected the manner in which the United States has waged its wars — it is a story literally as old as the republic itself. Somewhat surprisingly, however, as central as the topic is to American military and political history, it has rarely been addressed effectively in recent scholarship. Dr. Michael D. Pearlman, an associate professor of history at the United States Army Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, has written a broad ranging and insightful account of how American military strategy has developed due to domestic considerations. Expansive in scope, yet concise in its prose, Dr. Pearlman's book is an absolute delight to read.

What is most striking about *Warmaking and American Democracy* is its very premise: although war is most effectively waged as a united effort of political, military, and popular will, the American experience has been quite different. Dr. Pearlman argues that the method by which wars have been waged throughout the history of the United States has had less to do with overall grand strategy and more to do with a continuous struggle between competing governmental and military factions. In the beginning of the work, the author makes it clear that the book is not about political, diplomatic, or military history but instead the area where these fields overlap. The topic is a challenging one and Pearlman's unique approach is up to the task.

Structured around the major military conflicts of American history, each of the nine chapters of *Warmaking and American Democracy* is superbly written. The chapter devoted to the Second World War is arguably the strongest of the book because it starkly reveals the degree to which our national strategy against the Axis powers was the consequence of competing and often contradictory interests. Dr. Pearlman dispels many misconceptions about how the United States fought the Second World War, often remembered as the "last good war" in which the enemy was

clearly evil and the nation banded together in response. Rather than being a unified and consensual military, political, and popular effort, Dr. Pearlman reveals just how difficult it was to implement a coherent strategy since inherent domestic divisions remained throughout the duration of the war. Because Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan posed such a dangerous threat, they had to be soundly and permanently defeated, and thus required a concerted struggle and inspired military leadership. On the other hand, domestic opinion demanded that military reversals be avoided and casualties be minimized, which in turn discouraged risky military options. One of the more surprising revelations from the chapter is the astonishing "lack of wartime fervor, even during wartime" that affected mobilization, strategy, and operations.

It is hard to find fault with this book. A welcome addition would have been an analysis of the American involvement in the Balkans beyond a few thoughtful lines in the final chapter. It is in this part of the world that many of the points raised by *Warmaking and American Democracy* are most starkly demonstrated. As a whole, however, Dr. Pearlman has made an important contribution to our understanding of the intersection of politics and strategy. As the line between war and peace seemingly becomes more confused with each passing year, recognizing how domestic factors shape strategy has never been more important.

The excellent sources and extensive notes make this a work of scholarship of the first order, while the simple and informative maps are an added bonus. *Warmaking and American Democracy* is essential reading for the military professional and anyone interested in how America goes to war. Dr. Pearlman has aptly proved his point that "Constructing military policy in a pluralistic society has never been a bed of roses." Although the notion is simple to understand, explaining the difficulties involved with formulating American military strategy so clearly is indeed a remarkable achievement.

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**Seven Roads To Hell: A Screaming Eagle at Bastogne** by Donald R. Burgett, Presidio Press, Novato, Calif., 1999, 225 pages, \$24.95.

It is always professionally rewarding to read a good memoir written by a soldier who has served in combat. Donald R. Burgett's account of his experiences as a private in the 101st Airborne Division at Bastogne, *Seven Roads to Hell: A Screaming Eagle at Bastogne*, is no exception. But it is his depiction of the more mundane and ordinary events of a soldier's life, not the story of battle, which makes this book important and worthwhile.

As far as personal accounts of combat go, Burgett's is average in terms of scope and emotional influence. His accounts of the battles around Bastogne, fought by various elements of the 101st, are compelling to be sure, but there is nothing that sets them apart from

other personal narratives in either intensity or poignancy. There are, however, two aspects of Burgett's work that distinguish it. First, he does an exceptional job of relating to the reader the daily trials and travails of the average GI, ranging from the simplistic implications of a lost entrenching tool to instructions on keeping a foxhole dry. The author's portrayal of the long periods of relative inactivity and anxiety between brief minutes of furious combat bring home to the reader the life of the average GI in a way that complements the writings of Stephen Ambrose.

Second, the reader can actually see and feel this young soldier mature as the battle progresses. Although this is a very recent publication, Burgett wrote the original manuscript shortly after the events occurred. A veteran of the European Theater since Normandy, Burgett had seen plenty of combat by December of 1944, yet his words and actions relay some of the jocular and cockiness found in many elite units before the German counteroffensive. When his platoon first hears about the impending operation, he remarks casually that, "We were gonna stack bodies. Germans, give your souls to God, 'cause your asses are ours." (28) This cavalier attitude fades as the campaign progresses. It is replaced by reflection on combat and by realistic appraisals of the fighting and the author's relation to it. While the initial arrogance never completely disappears, it is tempered by the trials of Bastogne. The process is both interesting and thought-provoking.

Thumbs up to Burgett. He does an admirable job relating an original account of a proud moment in American military history.

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**Storm Over Iraq: Air Power and the Gulf War** by Richard P. Hallion, Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, 1997, 352 pages (paperback), \$17.95.

I received this 1997 paperback reprint of Dr. Richard Hallion's analysis of the Gulf War air campaign during the second week of the NATO air campaign against Serbia. I thought that his work might provide me with a keen insight on the conduct of a decisive air onslaught. However, much as the air war over Serbia has so far been a disappointment, so too is Dr. Hallion's book. (*This review was received before the Serbs agreed to withdraw from Kosovo.* — Ed.)

Hallion puts forth the premise that the advent of precision air-delivered weapons has allowed nations the ability to strategically target things instead of people. As a result, he believes, air power has turned the tide of decisive battle in favor of air forces; that navies and armies (to include their air power, to a great extent) are obsolete in the context of modern war. While Hallion could have argued his point by examining the effects of precision air power across the broad spectrum of war-

fare and environments, instead he falls too often into service parochialism, indeterminate statistics, and vague language.

*Storm Over Iraq* begins with four chapters dedicated to an overview of air power since its inception in World War I to the eve of battle in August, 1990. While Hallion provides a worthy compact survey of the origins and development of modern air power and its weaponry, he uses 120 pages — half of his text — to do so. This leaves the author with very few pages to review the Gulf War. His haste to do so becomes evident as the reader toughs through much techno-speak and little substance. Virtually none of his figures are referenced in the text and many of his facts and tables seem superfluous to his arguments.

Hallion closes with a sparse chapter of analysis derived from the Gulf War. In it, he attempts to validate his concept that precision air power has risen to become the primary, dominant form of war. While it is difficult to contend with the idea that air power is indeed decisive and necessary for successful campaigns, Hallion's blatant parochialism (even against the Navy) is often too strong to garner agreement with his "determinant of victory" and "primary instrument" arguments.

Hallion also fails to acknowledge how external factors affect the logic of his argument in a non-ideal environment. Iraq was an open desert with a cooperative enemy and relatively decent weather. How about the effects of terrain, weather, finite ordnance resources, political limitations, enemy tenacity, and the increasing media impact of even small numbers of collateral casualties, on the effectiveness of air power relative to land power? Hallion dismisses the need for decisive ground forces at all when he states that air power "can hold territory by denying an enemy the ability to seize it...and can seize territory by controlling access to [it] and movement across it." I find this hard to believe!

The paperback edition of this book includes a new preface that mentions the Bosnian air campaign, but offers no modifications to the original text. However, the course of events in Serbia and Kosovo are, by themselves, challenging Dr. Hallion's theories. As Slobodan Milosevic holds out and the talk of ground troops in Kosovo grows, the balance of air to ground power is proving to be more tenuous than the author would have us believe. In a theoretical world, maybe Hallion's theories would hold up, but our world will never be this way. Just as Douhet and Tedder failed to deliver on the promise of the singular decisiveness of strategic air bombardment, so too does Richard Hallion.

*Storm Over Iraq* does provide a good survey of the development of American air and missile power since the First World War. The 44 pages of appendices outlining the development of numerous high-technology systems are a useful reference. This book is worth reading to better understand how our Air Force thinks and operates in the stealth era of air warfare. However, I do not recommend keeping it on your bookshelf. Borrow it from

your local library, read it once, and save your money for a more balanced view of modern warfare.

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**Zhukov's Greatest Defeat: The Red Army's Epic Disaster in Operation Mars, 1942** by David M. Glantz, University Press of Kansas, 1999, 421 pages, \$39.95, hardcover.

While the long-term consequences of the fall of the Soviet Union remain open to debate, one of the most positive short-term effects has been an ever-increasing insight into Soviet military history. As more and more previously unavailable primary sources have been attained by military historians, our view of Soviet military history has been steadily corrected as historians compensate for our earlier reliance on sources outside the Soviet military. The result has been a much more balanced history in the books published since the fall of the Soviet Union.

David Glantz takes advantage of many previously unavailable unit histories, personal memoirs, and other primary sources to bring to us the little known story of a major Soviet offensive in 1942 that failed miserably and was subsequently ignored by official Soviet history. The sister offensive to the famous encirclement of German forces in Stalingrad, Operation Mars, was at least as broad in purpose and resources, but until now was almost completely forgotten to history. Glantz brings the story to life in vivid detail, and offers the student of military history not only an interesting story of war on the Eastern Front, but considerable insight into the difficulties and perils of warfare at the operational level. He devotes almost 100 pages to notes and extracts to support his reasoned and articulate view of the campaign.

The military reader is likely to find fault with *Zhukov's Greatest Defeat* on only two issues. First, the maps, although well-drawn and plentiful, do not use standard NATO conventions for unit symbols, and it takes some time to become comfortable with the way units are represented (the size of the type corresponds to the echelon of the unit). Second, Glantz attempts to infer the inner thoughts of several key Russian and German commanders, but this is purely speculation and adds little to the worth of the book. The value of this work is in the detailed record of Soviet operations and the underlying decisions that drove them.

*Zhukov's Greatest Defeat* is well written and extremely well researched. Military professionals need this work, and others like it, to balance our former reliance on German sources as the basis for our view of warfare on the Eastern Front during World War II. Glantz has written a history that offers fresh insight while managing to be enjoyable reading at the same time.

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