scholar's conscience and formal style while Manchester's recognition rests to a great degree on his storytelling talents. It follows, of course, that all kudos must go to James for personal, painstaking research of primary sources, specifically more than 180 interviews with many MacArthur associates and others at the highest levels who are now long gone. The value of this primary source material and of James' research in general can be judged from the fact that of Volume III's 848 pages, fully 100 are taken up with notes to the text.

Definitive though James' biography of MacArthur may be, there are MacArthur facts and figures yet untold, many residing in the facile mind of Jean MacArthur, the general's widow, still wonderfully winsome at 86. A born storyteller and lovable lady, her recollections of those many years as prime confidante and companion must be recorded to complete the picture of this enigmatic giant of American history. Other books are in the mill, to be sure, including Robert Sherrod's look at MacArthur and the media. Even for James the present volume may not be his last, for locked within those 180 interviews is bound to be material too fanciful or speculative to be brought out in writings that strive for authenticity but may make marvelous grist for later use.

Because of its scope and detail, it is no exaggeration to call *The Years of MacArthur* Churchillian in sweep, a comparison James may have sought to invoke by subtitling the final volume *Triumph and Disaster*, but neither word seems uniquely appropriate here. There was abundant triumph in MacArthur's earlier life and in this later period nothing to be regarded as a long-term disaster. Red China's temporary domination of the Korean battlefield when MacArthur was relieved of his four commands in 1951 was far short of disastrous in any permanent sense. Hence, one must wonder why this volume, alone among the three series, was given a subtitle of such catastrophic tone. Has James in using this judgmental additive conveyed a personal antagonism or has he merely strayed from the cherished objectivity of the historian to voice his personal regret that a career so lengthy and illustrious as was MacArthur's should terminate on the bitter note of Presidential dismissal?

Perhaps, on the other hand, the publisher thinking of sales, insisted upon this little bit of pizzaz.

COMMAND IN WAR. By Martin Van Creveld. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 339 pp., $20.00. (Member $18.00)

by LtGen B. E. Trainor, USMC(Ret)

Readers familiar with the military reform movement will not be unfamiliar with Martin Van Creveld. A history teacher in Israel, Van Creveld's lectures and writings are used to support the reform campaign against the rigidity and recipe mentality that presumably marks the U.S. military approach to war.

Command in War takes a case study approach to war in the modern world (Napoleon to the present) to help us understand the nature of command. In broad terms Van Creveld concludes that centralization is bad and decentralization is good. This generalization rests on the premise that the nature of battle is such that the upper echelons of command will always be plagued by uncertainties and unknowns. It is therefore better to allow this battle to develop naturally in the hands of trusted subordinate commanders. The author concedes that this approach creates its own confusion and uncertainty but that odds of success favor those who follows this prescription.

The battles Van Creveld analyzes to reach his conclusion illustrate that the changing face of war brought on by technology in no way alters the truth that top heavy commands contain the seeds of failure. Sophisticated C^3I and elaborate staffs can serve to inhibit more than help.

Jena-Auerstadt constitutes the first of a series of battles to be dissected. Its usefulness lies in illustrating the Napoleonic command system in the face of great uncertainty. Overall direction of the battle was highly centralized in the person of the Emperor, but Napoleon's organization of his Army into self-contained mission-oriented units, complete with staff and balanced arms allowed for decentralized execution. This marked a radical departure from the Frederickan legacy of disciplined mass movements of nonintegrated arms.

Koniggratz represents war in the industrial age. Railroads, the telegraph, larger armies, and the breech-loading rifle, all added new and more complex elements to war. On one hand they enhanced war fighting, but at the same time inhibited the exercise of command. For example, railroads and the telegraph allowed for rapid movement, massing, and control of forces while at the same time limited command options by virtue of their fixed and semi-fixed nature. Moltke triumphed over the Austrians by overcoming the limitations imposed by modernization while exploiting the potential. The Austro-Prussian war also saw the emergence of the general staff, which was later to be so slavishly copied by most Western nations. Moltke and the staff followed in the footsteps of Napoleon by concentrating on strategy and leaving tactics to his somewhat impetuous and ill-informed unit commanders. Good strategy, Moltke reasoned, would offset tactical blunders.

World War I is represented by the battle of the Somme and by Ludendorf's final offensive in 1918. Van Creveld uses both these battles to illustrate the difference between the British and German approach to the employment of mass armies in an increasingly sophisticated environment. Under the British approach, uncertainty was to be factored out of warfare by highly centralized detailed planning. This approach sought success by the application of regimentation and of a precise mechanical formula to the attack. The result of course was an unmitigated disaster. Ludendorf on the other hand regarded confusion as the normal state of the battlefield and sought to cope with it from below rather than from the top, i.e., he stressed decentralization and the lowering of decision thresholds. The purpose of the staff was to facilitate this process. Although the final German offensive ultimately failed, it did make impressive gains, and the "Hutier tactics" foreshadowed the blitzkrieg warfare the Germans were to later practice in World War II.

The selection of these two offensives well serves to illustrate the author's point, but it should be remembered that the British were disadvantaged at the Somme with a green Army and a command apparatus totally unprepared for massive continental operations. A more appropriate comparison would be with the other major continental power—France. If that is done one immediately thinks of Verdun, and neither side can take much pride in the way that battle was "commanded."

Strangely, Van Creveld skips World War II and moves to the 1973 war in the Sinai for his analysis of mobile warfare in the modern age. He takes as his specimen the Israeli 8 October counterattack against the Egyptians on the Israeli side of the canal. The later and ultimate Israel success and entrapment

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of the Third Army should not obscure the Israeli failure in their first counterattack attempt. Van Creveld holds this up as an example of how command can be mishandled in a situation where neither decentralization nor centralization dominated the command process. In this instance the command setup was plagued by mistrust, lack of definition, and the absence of intelligence. Confusion and poor execution were the consequences.

The final cameo of command is reserved for a treatment of the U.S. effort in Vietnam. Unfortunately, the author here departs from his techniques of analyzing a single battle to illustrate his points. He tries to take the entire Vietnam experience in one bite, and while his observations are most interesting, the analysis is clearly incomplete and inadequate. Van Creveld criticizes the systems analysis approach to war wherein a highly centralized decisionmaking apparatus became hostage to a largely meaningless and misleading plethora of information. From bottom to top the command structure was cumbersome and chaotic. In the McNamara attempt to apply Harvard Business School techniques to warfare, the quest for cost effectiveness led to one of the least cost effective wars known to history. Van Creveld's exasperation with command as it operated in Vietnam leads him to conclude that it is "almost enough to make me despair of human reason; we have seen the future and it does not work."

Van Creveld's concluding reflections on the history of command in battle naturally returns to his theme that decentralization is superior to centralization and the technical progress made in C^3I systems in no way alters this conviction. Decision thresholds must be as far down the command structure as possible. This calls for balanced, self-contained units that can exploit freedom of action. Critical and credible information must flow up and down the chain in both formal and informal channels. With regard to the latter, Van Creveld throughout the book stresses the need for a "directed telescope," i.e., an informal but reliable source of observation whereby the senior commander can see what is occurring at the point of action. In one form or another, all the successful commanders cited had such a telescope. Normally the telescope was a trusted lieutenant who floated freely about the front to act as the senior commander's eyes and ears. He warns, however, that it is a delicate instrument, which if misused will cause resentment in subordinates and worse yet provide a faulty perspective. Indeed the helicopterborne "squad leader in the sky" technique of senior officers in Vietnam is cited as a classic case of misuse of a good thing. Gen William C. Westmoreland is criticized for using the helicopter to enable him to be his own telescope, but his very stature as senior commander resulted in his being shown and told only what his subordinates believed he wanted to see and hear.

Serious students of command will find Van Creveld's book required reading. He provides important insights into the exercise and abuse of the command process over the two centuries of modern war. He is at his best in analysis. He is at his worst in his narration of events, which frequently get bogged down in unnecessary detail of a running commentary. Perhaps his contribution would have been more useful if he eschewed detailed treatment of selected battles in favor of a more general continuum of warfare. The reader could then reflect the issues raised against the background of more comprehensive data.

Van Creveld's conclusions, particularly on the issue of centralization versus decentralization are difficult to reject. If, in fact, the preconditions that he establishes for such an effective process are present, one would be hard put to argue against him. However, meeting these preconditions is a task of considerable proportions for any army. One must be careful, therefore, not to make oversimplified judgments on his thesis. Decentralization out of control can be as disastrous as the paralysis that comes from its converse. In the final analysis the *system* of command used may be of significantly less importance than the *quality* of the command at all levels.

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