

raelis admit this gunnery is attained only through the careful selection of gunners and extensive practice at long range—items that Marines are hard pressed to achieve because of perceived peacetime priorities.

The "Epilogue" provides a number of interesting facts but perhaps the most unusual is the statistic that of the 250 Israeli tanks disabled in action, fully 150 were rapidly returned to the fight by forward maintenance teams—an interesting thought when consider-

ing future force structure.

I have only two complaints about this volume. First, is the lack of a table of contents. This makes going back into this volume for study purposes difficult at best. Second, and much more serious, is the odd location and poor quality of the maps. Grouped together at the front of the book, it becomes a distraction to have to keep returning to the front to try to match the map to the text. Even worse, the text often refers to place names, terrain

features, and roads that are not on the maps. This makes it difficult to maintain a clear picture of the overall battle.

Yet these two problems do not alter the real strength of this book. I strongly recommend Marines read it for a concrete, personal view of that vague concept "high-intensity conflict."

USMC

> Maj Hammes is currently assigned to C<sup>4</sup>I, Headquarters Marine Corps.

---

---

## Difficult But Deserving

reviewed by Col Donald J. Myers

**UNDERSTANDING WAR: History and Theory of Combat.** By Col Trevor N. Dupuy. Paragon House, New York, 1987, 312 pp., \$24.95. (Member \$22.45)

This is one of the most difficult books I ever read; however, as a professional, one must read it. The author is well known to military readers for both his writings and research. He contends that the military is a science and not an art. From that viewpoint, he proceeds to analyze battles in search for a theory of combat.

Col Dupuy dissects battles from the Napoleonic period to the most recent Arab-Israeli conflict. His approach is fascinating as he assigns numerical weights to such factors as weather, visibility, surprise, training, leadership, types of weapons and equipment, and numbers of troops. One must labor through his style, but the effort is well worth it.

For World War II, he analyzed approximately 20 divisions of Germans, Americans, and British. According to his statistics and research, the individual German was much better in combat than any of his foes. One hundred Germans in combat were the equivalent

of 120 Americans or British or 200 Russians. Only one U.S. division, the 88th, was better than 1 for 1. Upon closer observation, the only factor that was different for this American division was the commanding general, MajGen John E. Sloan. Dupuy believes he made the difference, and his reasons are explained.

The quality of the U.S. 88th Division was not missed by the Germans. Records showed that they considered it to be composed of "shock troops" and they kept close watch on it. Whenever it was on line or moved, the Germans reacted by moving reserve units to back up those facing it.

For the maneuverists in the audience, Dupuy compares rates of advance from Napoleon to the present. Another surprise—there is little difference.

Casualties, casualty rates, and the sizes of units that sustain them also receive close scrutiny. He predicts that, contrary to popular opinion, casualty rates will decline in future wars rather than increase.

The "friction" of combat, as described by Clausewitz, receives a full chapter. Another chapter deals with

"Diminishing Returns in Combat." Dupuy's research suggests that the results do not increase proportionally as combat power exceeds a 2:1 ratio. He warns that this is not the same as a numerical superiority of 2:1; a claim that is supported by analysis of several battles.

Americans have deliberately prepared to fight the Russians with high technology weapons and weapons systems. We assume that we will be outnumbered, but that the weapons will win the day. As a result, we have not paid much attention to another aspect of preparing for war, the human side, by ensuring that our people are better. Dupuy argues, and I agree, that much can be gained by working with the people. He interviewed the Israelis and asked them what would have happened if they had Russian weapons and the Arabs had American weapons during the last war? They said that the outcome would have been the same because their troops and leadership were better.

Many bubbles are burst in this fascinating and difficult book. Read it in short sittings, and it is much more digestible. But read it you must.

USMC

> Col Myers, a frequent contributor to these pages, is commanding officer, Marine Barracks, 8th and I.

---

---

## Unveiling the Mask

reviewed by Capt Charles P. Neimeyer

**THE MASK OF COMMAND.** By John Keegan, Elisabeth Sifton Books-Viking, New York, 1987, 351 pp., \$18.95. (Member \$17.05)

*The Mask of Command* seeks to lay bare the ethos of the "heroic style" of leadership in war. In order to accom-

plish this, the author uses case study methodology to display the various heroic and antiheroic attributes of four exceptionally fascinating commanders of men at war—Alexander the Great, the Duke of Wellington, Ulysses S. Grant, and Adolph Hitler. By choosing such a diverse group of leaders from history, Keegan offers the

reader an especially broad view of the changing dynamics of leadership in war over a span of 2,000 years.

Alexander is the original hero-warrior who leads his troops by personal example on a battlefield compressed by tactics and weaponry. Wellington is the consummate professional soldier fighting for his king and most notably representing the separation of the military from the ruling class. Grant, the antipode of the Alexandrian style of leadership, is driven from the front by

the rifled gun barrel. And finally, Adolph Hitler, a civilian political leader in a technical sense but an actual modern day warlord in reality, makes decisions that are strongly influenced by his experiences on the firing line of a previous war.

The book is an exceptionally well-written study that is intellectually stimulating and easy to comprehend. Keegan's impressive command of military history is obvious from his frequent use of comparisons to other historical figures in order to add weight to his paradigmatic approach to leadership styles. Keegan uses his introduction to illuminate what he sees as the shift from the "pre-heroic" style of leadership found in primitive societies to that of the warrior-king. He cites the disappearance of no-man's lands between such societies making possible the introduction of the "proto-hero" who distinguishes himself through an aggressive, exemplary risk-taking style that becomes institutionalized in Western culture.

Because battles were now taking place in the home territory of one or the other of the combatants, the need arose for a strong central leader who could electrify people both by the

theatricality of his risk-taking and his personal prowess in battle. In this regard, Alexander can be considered the archetypal hero who erects an elaborate edifice of personality to motivate his men and exterminate his enemies. The leader of the kingdom actually leads his men in battle, taking the same risks they take and sharing in their glory. By the time of Wellington and Grant, however, the military had become professionalized and a ruler trained soldiers to do the actual fighting for the state. They even had their own system of prizes and rewards for successful service. Such leaders no longer assumed that they had to be under fire to be an example to their men and thus placed ever increasing distance between the decisionmakers and the actual fighters. By the time of Hitler, we find the "new age" warrior ensconced in various bunkers and headquarters, directing troops and equipment hundreds of miles from the front, often out of touch with reality and exposed to minimal risk from the consequences of his decisions. Thus, general officer leadership had become distinctly unheroic and antithetical to the warfaring traditions of the West.

Throughout the book, Keegan's com-

mand of military detail is brilliant (except for one frame where Lincoln's intelligence chief, Allan Pinkerton, is labeled Allan Pemberton), and this attention to detail makes for enjoyable reading. Mr. Keegan concludes his book with a discussion of ramifications of "post-heroic" command. He raises the specter of someone in command of nuclear forces, who enjoys maximum protection from the consequences of his decisions, deciding to play at the false-heroics of tactician, like Adolph Hitler. Unfortunately, because of modern technology, response time for nuclear-age leaders has accelerated, and Keegan sees a need to decelerate unfolding events and weigh responses. In this regard, Keegan sees positive value in President Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) in perhaps helping a leader gain the time he needs to make a decision that could determine the fate of the world. Keegan argues for the need for "unspectacular" leaders who "can best find the conviction to play the hero no more." The last thing the world needs is for an aspiring hero to gain control over nuclear forces. US&MC

> *Capt Neimeyer is a history instructor at the U.S. Naval Academy.*

---

---

## What Followed in Our Departure

reviewed by LtCol Gary D. Andresen

**PAVN: People's Army of Vietnam.** By Douglas Pike. Presidio Press, Novato, CA, 1986, 384pp., \$22.50. (Member \$20.25)

The People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) currently has more than one million regular troops and perhaps another two million serving in its paramilitary units. As a result, it is the third largest army in the world and is presently fending off China to the north and occupying a hostile Cambodia.

As Douglas Pike points out in *PAVN. People's Army of Vietnam*, PAVN was first formed in 1941 as Armed Propaganda Teams (APT) that went into action on Christmas Day 1944. By the end of World War II, PAVN was able to field tens of thousand troops and by 1955, after defeating the French at Dien Bien Phu, its ranks swelled to around 380,000. By the time Americans were pouring into South Vietnam in 1965, PAVN was 400,000 strong and

continued growing to about 600,000 in 1975.

Pike asserts:

the Vietnamese communists conceived, developed, and fielded a dimensional [sic] new method for making war; that in forty years they honed this method into a brilliantly innovative strategy that proved singularly successful against three of the world's great powers; and most important, that it is a strategy for which there is no known proven counterstrategy.

Like his earlier works, *Viet Cong* (1966), *War and Peace and the Viet Cong* (1969), and *History of Vietnamese Communism* (1978), *PAVN: People's Army of Vietnam* is superb in every respect and stands apart from other current works on Vietnam, that only discuss PAVN in a cursory manner. Pike is wholly qualified to deal with his subject because he is a leading expert on Vietnamese communism. He spent many years in Asia with the U.S. Foreign Service and

is currently the director, Indochina Studies Program, University of California, Berkeley.

Pike divides his study of PAVN into five sections: History and Heritage; Organization and Administration; Party, Ideology and Leadership; Strategy; and PAVN, Society, and the Future. In addition, he provides a fine glossary of Vietnamese Communist military terms and two additional appendices with biographical sketches and biographies of PAVN's general officers and senior generals, respectively.

Pike's research and analysis are thought provoking and thorough. His findings are well documented, to include both Western and Vietnamese sources, and his 17-page bibliography is nothing short of outstanding. Overall, he succeeds in his quest to "employ a double criteria of selection: that which is important and that which is interesting."

According to Pike, PAVN has a short but illustrious history. Formed in a cave within China's border during 1941, PAVN grew into one of the largest armed forces in the world. Its strategies and tactics were originally based on Communist Chinese theories