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Red Storm Rising

David G. Clark

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GEORGE CASWELL
Milford, Connecticut

Clancy, Tom. *Red Storm Rising*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1986. 652pp. \$19.95

Last year, Tom Clancy's first effort, *The Hunt for Red October*, was selected as a textbook for the introductory session of the Naval War College's Operations Course—not because every detail of modern submarine and antisubmarine operations was precisely depicted, but because on the whole it was the most readable and accurate piece available on one facet of contemporary naval operations outside wartime. *Red Storm Rising* could easily provide several sessions more—again, not for its precise depiction of future history, but because this new novel is so thoroughly researched and authentic that it provides a plausible overview of warfare in the Atlantic and NATO, available nowhere else.

Criticisms? Certainly. There are a few obvious stereotypes; Soviet hats may be too black and those of the Americans too white. The scenarist could argue with Muslim terrorists blowing up a refinery on the Ob River. A strategist could argue with any Soviet plan to attack NATO as distraction during a move toward the Gulf's oil fields. A literature major could criticize Clancy's shallow character development and his use of a portfolio of snapshots across the

land and ocean battlefields, rather than creating a smoothly flowing motion picture. A modern naval or military professional might take offense at the number of mirrored personalities in the book whose primary emphasizing adjective is an inarticulate participle implying that inanimate objects are attempting procreation. With those trivia declared behind us, let's look at Clancy's war game scenario as a whole.

The time of the *Red Storm* is today and the forces arrayed exist here and now—with the possible exception of F-19 "stealth" fighter-bombers which you cannot see anyway. The date is not specified but becomes clear as Clancy's Soviets propose unilateral decommissioning for 20 (of their current 27) Yankee-class SSBNs for *maskirovka*. Hence, one would be remiss not to compare the strategies and scenario of *Red Storm Rising* with *The Maritime Strategy* as spelled out, for example, in the U.S. Naval Institute's special edition of last January. Again Clancy has done his homework thoroughly. His characters express current U.S. doctrinal views on how the Soviet Navy would be expected to deploy during the "transition to war." However, Clancy's Soviet Navy does not always cooperate with NATO expectations. Their strategists are not as wedded to doctrine as some other writers would have us believe. Rather than placing their SSBNs well north, bastioned near the polar ice cap, the Soviets husband this strategic deterrent force in fjords behind mine and ASW barriers. Rather than threatening northern

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Norway, Soviet Naval Infantry embark in a LASH ship disguised as a Lykes liner, and leapfrog straight to Iceland. From there the Soviets base Backfires, Bears, and Badgers, threatening to sever the Atlantic SLOCs. The United States "swings" amphibious forces from the Pacific, a move that is inconsistent with today's exposition of strategy. A major factor in turning the tide is "Operation Doolittle," a sub-launched Tomahawk strike on Soviet Backfires at their bases, using dispersed munition warheads. Early in the conflict high technology weapons, e.g., precision-guided munitions, become scarce and the battle stalemates. Both sides face a war of attrition which will be extremely difficult to support logistically at the front or with the population at home. The Soviet strategists were sufficiently prescient to consider this. The temptation to preempt with chemical weapons was analyzed by Clancy's Soviets and that option rejected. And what about tactical nucs to break the stalemate after a few weeks of fighting? That would give away too much of the plot.

Tom Clancy has earned the title of "Operational Artist" who comprehends strategy, tactics and the wide operational void between. Dating from the translation of Soviet writings 15 years ago (Colonel V. Ye. Savkin), the term "Operational Art" has gained evermore prominence among U.S. military theorists, especially in the U.S. Army. The term has also come into vogue among dilettantes and reformists in Washington who see themselves as occupying the

only position sufficiently Olympian that both strategies and tactics can be observed. Clancy has shown the rare capability to think in terms of a theater campaign to include options covering both failure and the unexpected. He even raises the issue of changing war aims over time, and examines necessary and sufficient conditions for termination of hostilities.

Seminarians are taught that sermons are like love affairs; any fool can start one, but it takes a wise man to end it in a satisfactory fashion. Wars (and, perhaps, novels about wars) suffer from the same difficulty. Once the war machine is set in motion, how is it stopped, even slowed, maneuvered or otherwise refocused? Did Tom Clancy write the ending first then build his novel to match? Or, did he get the tanks, Backfires, submarines and carriers all moving, then wonder how to stay under 700 pages? Even more thought provoking, where does Clancy go next? Having expanded from submarines and ASW to world war III and concluding that campaign, has he left himself any stone unturned? Let us hope not. Whatever scenario and locale he chooses, we stand to learn much about ourselves from examining our strengths and flaws through his discerning eyes.

Red Storm Rising should be fascinating reading for those in uniform, those who used to be in uniform, and those who dabble in strategy. Especially, it should be digested by those in Washington who would abhor realpolitik, assume a benign enemy,

ignore the Soviet war machine, and slash defense budgets to balance the checkbooks they have overdrawn. Warfare is still an accepted extension of politics. If, due to perceived weakness, deterrence does fail and we must face the Soviet Military, the budget will be balanced in blood.

Clancy's short world war III costs thousands of lives. However, the losses he shows are low compared to those of previous world wars when viewed in the light of today's massive weapons of destruction.

DAVID G. CLARK
Captain, U.S. Navy

RECENT BOOKS

Aker, Frank. *October 1973: The Arab-Israeli War*. Hamden, Conn.: Archon, 1985. 185pp. \$19.50

This book approaches the October 1973 war from both an Arab and Israeli perspective. The author analyzes the background, planning, and preparation for war and includes a narrative of the campaigns during the attack, the holding actions, counterattacks, flanking attacks, and breakthrough phases. He also includes sea and air operations of the combatants, and it is his view that the great military significance of the war lies in the insights it provides as an alternative warfare in a nuclear age. With superpowers reluctant to use the ultimate weapons, future conflicts could, as was the case in the October 1973 war, become strategic contests where the best use of high-tech and traditional weaponry would determine the outcome.

Blitzer, Wolf. *Between Washington & Jerusalem: A Reporter's Notebook*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985. 259pp. \$15.95

In this volume, a journalist's view of the U.S.-Israeli relationship, the author outlines the limits of the relationship, showing why neither country can afford an all-out confrontation. He gives special emphasis to the way decisions are made in Washington and the varied roles of the foreign policy bureaucracy, the Congress, the press, the American Jewish community, the Arabs and their supporters, and the official Israeli presence. Particularly illuminating is his explanation of the rarely understood strategic and intelligence cooperation between the two countries.

Dupuy, Trevor N. et al. *Dictionary of Military Terms*. New York: H. W. Wilson Co., 1986. 237pp. \$30

This volume emphasizes the military meaning and derivation of terms widely used in literature dealing with national security affairs. It covers official designations and nicknames, and lists terms dealing with all aspects of military and naval affairs—