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Ridgway's Paratroopers: The American Airborne in World War II

Stephen F. Ambrose

Clay Blair

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American edition, to explain the confusing British regimental nomenclature of the day. More attention to these things might have made this a memorable book; as it is, it is well worth reading for incident and atmosphere of what was in any case an incoherent battle.

J.L. MOULTON
Major General, Royal Marines (Ret.)
Surrey, England

Blair, Clay. *Ridgway's Paratroopers: The American Airborne in World War II*. New York: Dial Press, 1985. 588pp. \$19.95

Clay Blair, formerly the Washington correspondent for *Time* magazine and editor in chief of the Curtis Publishing empire, has written extensively on World War II, most recently as a collaborator with Omar Bradley on *A General's Life*. In this latest effort, he traces the parallel development of Matt Ridgway and the American airborne in World War II.

It is a stirring story, filled with legendary heroes (James Gavin, Max Taylor, Tony McAuliffe, among others) and lots of battles (Salerno, Anzio, Normandy, Arnhem, the Bulge, crossing the Rhine). Blair is not only a good writer who brings these men and their actions to life, but one who does not hesitate to assign blame when justified. He is merciless in pointing out the manifold shortcomings of the Army Air Corps in carrying out its mission of dropping paratroopers on target; the drop in

Normandy, as he demonstrates, was a scandal. It was so badly done that there should have been numerous courts-martial, and the truth was that Ridgway's boys were lucky to survive at all. The key problem was that the Army Air Corps simply would not take its mission seriously and refused to properly train its pilots for the job. There was no excuse, because the drop in Sicily, in July 1943, was as bad, but the airmen refused to learn from their mistakes.

Fortunately, Ridgway had done such an outstanding job of preparing the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions for their mission that the paratroopers were able to overcome the problems stemming from the scattered drops and accomplish their objectives. How it was done is Blair's real story, and he tells it well. Highly recommended.

STEPHEN E. AMBROSE
University of New Orleans

Miller, Stephen E., ed. *Military Strategy and the Origins of the First World War: An International Security Reader*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985. 186pp. \$25.50 paper \$6.95

This collection presents five interpretive essays on the origins of the First World War and its contemporary significance, originally published as an issue of the journal *International Security*. Two contributions treat general questions; the remaining three concentrate on the cult of the offensive prior to 1914.