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Elusive Victory: The Arab-Israeli Wars 1947-1974

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Soviet sources are not so numerous as to interrupt a reader's thought process (although there are a few cases in which one citation might have sufficed instead of three) but are essential to understanding what backs up the authors' presentation. Closely related to a well balanced documentation is the book's careful recognition of gaps in evidence. The question of proof is always present when drawing from Soviet sources. The authors do not gloss over a problem by making categorical judgments where the evidence may be wobbly. For example, they close the section on the possibility of strategic reserves by stating that it is not possible to show that such reserves exist; rather, the literature clearly lays the basis for its existence both in principle and in logic. This willingness to recognize areas of insufficient "proof" is a mark of intellectual honesty that characterizes a truly unbiased analysis. Finally, it is clear in the later sections of the book that both writers can handle the semantic distinctions of internal Soviet communication that are familiar in academic circles but less so in policy circles. This skill is particularly evident in their evaluation of source materials (*Voyennaya Mysl*, for example) and in their discussion of texts relating to Soviet acceptance of the concept of first strike.

On the basis of both content and style, then, Mr. Douglass and Ms. Hoeber have given us a stimulating addition to our understanding of the differences between our own and Soviet strategic thinking and of the areas that remain to be explored.

RENITA FRY

Dupuy, Trevor N. *Elusive Victory: The Arab-Israeli Wars 1947-1974*, New York: Harper & Row, 1978. 795pp

Another encyclopedic work by veteran military historian Col. Trevor N. Dupuy is a welcome event for students of military history. Dupuy is thoughtful

and objective and this book displays throughout the intellectual honesty of the scholar and the objectivity of a professional with no ox to gore. With his many friends in Israel and the Arab countries, Colonel Dupuy can add the personal insights of many veterans of Middle East combat to his own through analysis of engagements, battles, and campaigns. The result is an invaluable one-volume analysis of a series of tragic wars, wars that have implications for any "near-term" war between NATO and the Warsaw Pact.

Like the Dan Horowitz and Edward Luttwak book, *The Israeli Army*, *Elusive Victory* traces the development of the modern Israeli Defense Force through its antecedents of 1948, 1956, 1967 and 1973. Unlike the *Israeli Army*, *Elusive Victory* details the development of armies and doctrines of all the antagonists, something resembling a "net assessment" in what shapes up to be a modern "30 years(?) War." While the Israeli Army and Air Force have been remarkably successful during this period, a focus on *Zahal* alone, which the Horowitz and Luttwak book provides, robs the reader of many important lessons to be relearned from the Arab experience. As there seems to be little analysis of modern Arab armies that is not classified or polemic, *Elusive Victory* provides a readily available and needed companion to a very good *The Israeli Army*. Additionally, *Elusive Victory* adds a few years perspective to the time immediately after the 1973 war when *The Israeli Army* was written. This is not to say that the conclusions of Horowitz and Luttwak are wrong, especially with respect to the 1973 war, but that Dupuy has the advantage of a more relaxed perspective and a more rational atmosphere. Nor is Dupuy trying to define an evolution of thinking in any one army; there is no overt attempt to focus upon specific operational methods as they work themselves out from theory to reality (an instruc-

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tive illustration of different approaches to historical analysis can be seen in the way *Elusive Victory* and *The Israeli Army* tell the story of Generals Tal and Yoffe during the first 3 days of the 1967 war).

Elusive Victory remains dispassionate throughout and thus will never rival the sheer verve of Chaim Herzog's magnificent *War of Atonement* or Shabtai Teveth's *The Tanks of Tammuz*. Because of its broad perspective, *Elusive Victory* cannot provide the detail of either of these works. While Herzog and Teveth describe the tactical war, a detailed picture of men directing combined arms formations and strategists trying to orchestrate a campaign in the heat of combat, *Elusive Victory* provides the "aesthetic distance" that can allow for a measure of synthesis and final understanding of the actions hidden by the press of immediacy.

In his attempt at synthesis and understanding, Dupuy does not force his own conclusions on the reader. He presents sufficient information, plans, orders-of-battle, hardware, and events so that the reader can arrive at independent conclusions. In at least one instance, I found myself in marked disagreement with a conclusion reached by the author, using the information provided in the book. This says something about the scholarly integrity of the author; Dupuy presents the information available and not just the data that drive his own conclusions. For this reason alone the book recommends itself as the one book, if one must content himself with only one, on the Middle East wars for a personal reference library.

The book has flaws, however. It is apparent that this book was pushed to press prematurely. For whatever reasons, commercial or otherwise, that Harper and Row or Dupuy allowed this to happen, a serious disservice was done the book. Rampant editorial errors and inanities nearly caused me to "write-

off" this book; no doubt many readers will not persevere. The fact is that they should not have to persevere. The "high seriousness" of the discipline demands that this sort of sloppiness not be permitted. For example: In Figure A-1, p. 623, a table listing engagements in the 1967 war, columns for the Sinai Front and West Bank Front are reversed. On p. 327, the date "mid-1957" should read "mid-1967," an error probably made clear by its context but, nevertheless, an error. A ludicrous error in captioning a photograph, made more so because the photograph is included in an expensive advertising brochure, gives us an Israeli F-4 "Phantom" fighter-bomber listed as an "Egyptian Mig-19 over the Sinai Desert." These kinds of errors exist throughout the book, none serious but all disconcerting.

Graphics can provide a great assist to an author who is describing a battle. While graphics can be expensive to produce, they are invaluable to a reader trying to follow a narrative. Many of the maps in *Elusive Victory* are good, but some are so cluttered as to be nearly hopeless. All could be improved. When a reader must pay \$25 for a book, he expects attention and care to be paid to details.

Despite the flaws, I would recommend purchase of this book. No other book provides so complete a picture. Though the errors are distracting, none should lead a careful reader astray.

MICHAEL S. LANCASTER
Major U.S. Army

Gavin, James M. *On to Berlin: Battles of an Airborne Commander 1943-1946*. New York: Viking Press, 1978. 336pp.

General Gavin's book provides an unusual look at World War II, its commanders and leaders and their relationships. It chronicles the role of the famous 82nd Airborne Division and