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Professional Reading

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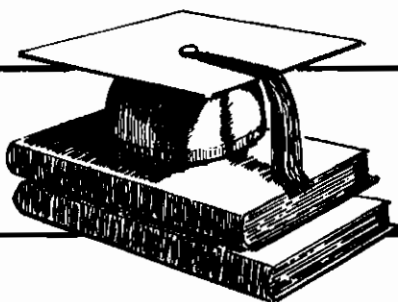
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PROFESSIONAL READING

Book Reviews

Blumenson, Martin and Stokesbury, James L. *Masters of the Art of Command*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975. 393pp.

The authors have assembled a collection of biographical essays of military leaders from the ancient past to Vietnam. Some of these leaders are of world reputation; others are unknown. All of the sketches are exceptionally well written and would interest anyone concerned with either the historical or leadership aspect of the military profession.

The general introduction by Professor Stokesbury is superb. It is a classic review of the development of the military profession over time. This introduction, the introductory essays to the major portions of the book, and the analytical chapters on "Coalition Command," "Military Obedience," "Hitler and His Generals," and "Relieved of Command" are excellent reflective essays. Without them the book would have been no more than a collection of extremely well told war stories.

The authors have grouped their essays into five sections. The first deals with "The Young Soldier at Work." Here the adventures of five company grade officers in World Wars I and II and Korea are examined. They are stories of exceptional leadership and courage, which describe well the awesome challenges of leadership faced by the young officer at the very cutting edge of the

battle, challenges often made more complex and difficult by the decisions of their superior commanders.

In the second group of essays, "Some Masters of the Art," the authors examine the various lives and times of such military personages as Sulla of Rome, Clive of India (exceptionally interesting), Thomas of the Union Armies, and Devers and Clark of World War II. This section so clearly emphasizes that famed military leaders are at least as much a product of their times and opportunities as they are of their own talents.

The third group of essays, "Masters of Mobile Warfare," is a bit of a mixed bag and, frankly, it is the least satisfying portion of the book. Crook, the Indian fighter; Iberville, the French-Canadian guerrilla fighter of the 17th century; and Wolseley, Army reformer and fighter of numerous British colonial wars pale as Masters of Mobile Warfare when compared with Jackson, Lee, Napoleon, Rommel, and Von Rundstedt; none of whom are considered. It is redeemed to a degree by an excellent essay contrasting the leadership styles of Patton and Montgomery.

By far the most interesting essays are those which address the problems of coalition warfare. The problems and complexities of coalition command are better developed here than in any comparable reading with which this reviewer is familiar. The essays include Rochambeau during the American Revolution, Patton in Morocco (exceptionally

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good), a discussion of Eisenhower's performance as the Supreme Allied Commander in Europe; an interesting essay on internal command problems facing the U.S. Army in Tunisia at the time of the Kasserine crisis, and, lastly, an interesting reflective essay on coalition command.

The last essays are collected under the heading of "Some Related Problems." They cover Military Obedience, Hitler Versus His Generals, General Stone (controversial commander of the 4th Infantry Division in Vietnam), and Relieved of Command. While the specifics of each differ considerably, they all bear in some way on leadership and command.

Those who read the book in hope of finding a systematic exposition of the nature of command and what makes some commanders greater than others will be disappointed. But, perhaps, their expectations are too high. If command, in its extraordinary dimensions, is an art, as this reviewer believes it to be, then systematic analysis of its extraordinary practitioners does not really do very much to increase our understanding of it. After all, can one really systematically contrast Rembrandt and Picasso to determine their genius? In the Introduction, Professor Stokesbury speaks of what makes commanders great: "A catalog of the virtues necessary for greatness becomes so all-inclusive as to be meaningless, with the single most essential element impossible to ferret out, and we are still left with one man an unaccountable genius, the next an obvious dud." Professor Blumenson in his preface recognizes: "Command is an art to be mastered, a craft that requires specialized knowledge, a well-developed intuition, high intelligence, and the ability to reason. The process of motivating human beings and controlling impersonal forces during a clash of arms is extremely complicated and difficult, and successful practitioners of the art of command have

been a special breed of men." They are both right.

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Bond, Brian and Roy, Ian, eds. *War and Society*. New York: Holmes & Meier, 1975. 254pp.

Although there are many books and manuals on war, the study of military history continues to be conducted as if war existed in a vacuum. Military history consists of much more than battle campaigns, a general's memoirs, a didactic warning for the future, or the juvenile tripe found in many of today's publications. Military history encompasses all of history, and to be well versed in the discipline, one must be familiar with man's economic, political, social, and diplomatic past as well. Men of arms have, at times, forgotten that the outcome of war is often decided by a complex array of political, economic, and social as well as military factors. The editors of *War and Society*, the first of what is to be an annual presentation, recognize this interplay of forces and events and have collected 14 well-written, well-researched essays which indeed provide "... a historical study of war and armed forces, and their relationship with society."

This fine collection of essays yields considerable insight into many different aspects of military history. The authors, all of them accomplished scholars, obviously know their subject. All but one of the articles are thoroughly documented—in fact, the footnotes make this volume a good starting point for further research on the subjects addressed. The only article without footnotes was written as a personal memorandum on the Czechoslovak Army and the Munich crisis by Brig. H.C.T. Stronge, who was the military attaché to Prague at the time. His cogent essay is a must for the savant of that particular period. Additionally, students