

BOOKS



Reviews of books relating to the military profession and of particular interest to Marines are welcomed. Prospective authors are encouraged to contact editor prior to submission. Preferred length 300-750 words. Any book reviewed in this section may be purchased through MCA Book-service, but prices are subject to change.

FOR THE COMMON DEFENSE: A Military History of the United States of America. By Allan R. Millett and Peter Maslowski. The Free Press, New York, 1984, 621 pp., \$24.95. (Member \$22.45)

reviewed by George W. Baer

The intent of this book, as its subtitle suggests, is to set the American military record in the context of national history as a whole, in its broadest social and technological reaches. As such the book aims to be more than a review of campaigns and operations. A "hint of gunpowder" is all the authors promise. They claim their approach is part of a "new" military history although how new it is remains debatable. Today it is common to discuss warfare in its widest social construction, a lesson taught long ago by Clausewitz. In any case, here one looks not for novelty but for comprehension, accuracy, and balance, and this the authors abundantly provide.

They took inspiration from two classics, Walter Millis' *Arms and Men* (1956) and Russell Weigley's *The American Way of War* (1973). A note on these distinguished predecessors is in order here, for they, like the present study, are well worth reading.

Millis faced the urgent task of rethinking America's military past in the new conditions of the atomic age. He argued that "military institutions and their consequences are as essential elements of our social and political history as our religious, economic, legal, or partisan political institutions." He set the development of America's armed services in sociological categories. For instance, the chapter on the revolutionary period he called "the democratization of war"; on the interwar period, "the mechanization of war"; on World War II, "the scientific revolution"; and on the postwar period, "the hypertrophy of war." He concluded that the cumulative change to total war, capped by atomic weaponry, made it impossible to think any longer that war could be used as an instrument of policy.

Weigley interpreted American strategy as "a history of ideas expressed in

action." He organized his book around the main conceptualizers and conceptions of strategic planning and concluded that conventional notions were obsolete. Henceforth any war would so alter the political environment that it would likewise change its purpose. For Weigley the war in Vietnam "brought a bitter denouement to the long search for the use of combat in the service of policy." He concluded that "at no part of the spectrum of violence does the use of combat offer much promise for the United States today . . . the history of usable combat may at long last be reaching its end."

The present work does not share the elegiac tone of its distinguished predecessors. The authors draw no such conclusive lessons. None, at any rate, beyond the sensible and general observation, which is after all the theme of their book, that military institutions are, and will remain, part of American society as necessary "for the common defense." Hence the emphasis in the title: "a military history of the United States." The authors divided the writing. Professor Maslowski wrote the chapters on colonial times up to the war with Spain. This is the more gracefully written half. Professor Millett wrote the chapters on the 20th century ending at the present. Both stick to a solid, clear narrative. Their work is thoughtful and thorough. Sometimes it is subtle; always it is reliable. And it covers the ground.

Appropriate attention is given, for instance, to the mechanization of warfare. The authors give the all too rare acknowledgement that "this dependence upon industry and technology in executing military policy has placed enormous burdens on career military officers and the defense industry complex." There is a good sense of the political context of policymaking and of civil-military relations. And there is recognition, more and more understood these days, that "despite the popular belief that the United States has generally been unprepared for war, policymakers have done remarkably well in preserving the nation's security."

Millet's treatment of the locust years

between the world wars is particularly judicious. By 1939 the Marine Corps was down to 19,432 officers and enlisted men. But it was precisely in these interwar years that the Corps did some of the most creative thinking done among the Services. War plans for the Pacific had stumbled on the absence of a defensible base system, and conventional wisdom held that amphibious attacks upon defended positions were impossible. In 1921 Maj Earl Ellis proposed to substitute naval gunfire and air strikes for the firepower that conventional artillery could not provide, giving cover for mass amphibious landings. This concentrated assault would carry Marines through beach defenses, while the Navy kept up the reinforcements and supplies. Millett shows the importance of this forward thinking. "Henceforth the Marine Corps would make the impossible amphibious assault possible, since the Navy could not advance across the central Pacific without the bases the Marine Corps would seize for it."

The book contains some superb photographs, drawn from the unfamiliar collection in the National Archives. No two are more striking than the match of a photo from the 1920s of a detachment of Marines practicing the loading of a small launch at Quantico to an aerial view of the coast of Iwo Jima in February 1945 where more than two dozen specially designed vessels nose the beach to discharge the assault elements of regiments of two Marine divisions.

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INSIDE SOVIET MILITARY INTELLIGENCE. Viktor Suvorov. MacMillan Publishing Co., New York, 1984, 193 pp., \$15.95. (Member \$14.35)

reviewed by Michael J. Crutchley

Throughout history nations have traditionally used espionage to learn military and political secrets of their potential enemies. Today, there is nothing surprising about the fact that the Soviet Union engages in espionage. However, the scope of the practice is so wide that it can be ignored only at the peril of the West. To conduct these operations, the Soviet Union has created a vast intelligence organization known as the GRU (Glavnoye Razvedyvatelnoye Upravleniye).

The GRU, Soviet Military Intelli-