

MR Classics Revisited

The Centurions, Jean Lartéguy, translated by Xan Fielding, reviewed by Colonel Peter R. Mansoor, Director, U.S. Army/U.S. Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Center, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

A conventional Western army is defeated by Vietnamese insurgents in a brutal, decade-long conflict. The soldiers return home to an indifferent public and reflect on their experiences. Sometime later, the same army is engaged in another guerrilla war—this time against an Arab revolutionary movement—that it is ill-prepared to prosecute. After suffering severe setbacks due to its conventional mindset and tactics, the army eventually adapts to the unique conditions and requirements of counterinsurgency warfare. Certain units excel by changing their organization, tactics, techniques, and procedures to meet the needs of the irregular battlefield. Along the way atrocities are committed, prisoners abused, and ethical dilemmas abound.

No, this is not the story of the U.S. Army as recounted in Thomas E. Ricks' *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*.¹ It is, rather, the story of the French Army in Vietnam and Algeria in the 1950's as told by Jean Lartéguy in his classic historical novel *The Centurions*.²

Lartéguy's heroes are a tough band of French paratroop officers led by an irascible Basque colonel by the name of Pierre Raspéguy. Their story begins in the spring of 1954, at Dien Bien Phu, where the French are defeated in a set-piece, conventional battle by a supposedly third-rate, rag-tag Vietnamese army. Taken prisoner by the Viet Minh, Raspéguy and his paratroopers suffer their own version of a death march hundreds of miles through the jungle to an internment camp, where they undergo months of reeducation under the tutelage of the communist cadre. The lessons they learn, however, have little to do with the economic theories of Karl Marx. Instead, they discover the truths of "modern war." Reflecting on his situation as a prisoner, Captain Jacques

de Glatigny, an aristocratic officer, realizes that the previous rules of war have been overturned. "In 1914 cavalry officers used to shave before going into action," he muses. "In modern warfare all those rites were ludicrous; it was not enough to be well-born, smart and clean; first of all you had to win."

The officers embark on a deep, almost mystical journey of self-discovery. The French Army lost in Indochina, they reason, by applying a conventional mindset to an unconventional war. It failed to reorganize itself to fight effectively in the hills and jungle, and instead remained tied to its clunky logistical tail and system of fortified bases. More damaging, it failed to involve the Vietnamese people in their own defense, "corrupting them with modern amenities instead of keeping them wiry and alert with the offer of some valid purpose in life..." Yet what purpose could the French colonialists offer? Independence? Freedom? Revolutionary war is 80-percent political, Mao famously proclaimed. The French officers realized too late that in modern war the people are the prize, and words that can bring them to one's side matter a great deal: politics, propaganda, faith, and reform are more important than aircraft, tanks, and artillery.

Repatriated to France after the Geneva armistice, the officers find themselves strangers in their own homeland. While they were fighting and bleeding in Vietnam, the French people had turned against both them and the war. Old friends, lovers, and family cannot relate to their experiences or understand their changed outlook on life. Stodgy officers who never set foot in Vietnam proclaim an end to the French Army's participation in revolutionary warfare. "The army has finished with 'operations' of that sort," an elderly general remarks to Glatigny. "It must recover its former position, resume its traditions..."

If the French Army was finished with insurgents, however, insurgents were not finished with the French Army. In the end, the

bonds of combat and Prison Camp One prove stronger than those of love and genetics. When Raspéguy reunites the group in Paris and tells them he is forming a new unit to fight in Algeria, to a man they sign on to follow him and become the cadre of the 10th Colonial Parachute Regiment.

In Algeria the paratroop brotherhood fashions an elite fighting unit from a misfit group of reservists and recruits, one capable of fighting the Arab guerrillas on their own ground. Raspéguy reorganizes his staff for the requirements of counterinsurgency warfare. He understands the unique needs of this kind of war: "For our sort of war you need shrewd, cunning men who are capable of fighting far from the herd, who are full of initiative too—sort of civilians who can turn their hand to any trade, poachers, and missionaries too, who preach but keep one hand on the butt of their revolvers in case any one interrupts them... or happens to disagree."

If one were to write this passage down as a job description for a counterinsurgent, it would not be far from the mark—although the words might appear a bit strange on an Officer Efficiency Report. Raspéguy comes to the conclusion that France's only hope to win in Algeria, or anywhere else in the struggle against communism, is to build a revolutionary army that can wage revolutionary war.

The 10th Colonial Parachute Regiment's drive to win at all costs, however, leads it down a dark path to moral bankruptcy. When a popular lieutenant and his driver are captured by the insurgents and gruesomely executed, their comrades exact revenge by slaughtering the male inhabitants of a nearby village. Ironically, this massacre works to the paratroopers' advantage. With a French unit in the neighborhood equally ruthless as the insurgents, the population's support for the guerrillas wavers. Good intelligence work, combined with torture of key suspects, leads to the unraveling of the entire insurgent network and,

ultimately, the destruction of the main guerrilla force in the region controlled by Raspéguy's paratroopers.

It is in Algiers, however, where the full extent of the French Army's slide into the ethical abyss is revealed. Ordered to do whatever it takes to secure the city from the urban terrorism that threatens to paralyze it, the paratroopers seize suspects, torture those believed to have critical information, and shatter the terrorist network with a series of lightning raids. A general strike is averted through cold-blooded measures. The French Army wins the battle of Algiers, but loses its soul in the process. What the paratroopers have not discovered is that in modern war it is not enough to win—you must win while maintaining the humanity and ideals that form the basis of modern civilization.

For the U.S. Army and Marine Corps, *The Centurions* is not just a timeless story, but a timely one as well. In Lartéguy's novel one can find many of the principles and para-

doxes of counterinsurgency warfare. The primacy of politics, the need to secure the population, the criticality of good intelligence (which can only be obtained by engaging the people), the requirement to adapt conventional units to fight in an unconventional manner—all of these lessons and more can be found in Lartéguy's masterpiece. The novel also explores the dangers of going too far in the quest for victory. The moral dilemmas of the French in Algeria echo only too loudly in Iraq and Afghanistan today. *The Centurions* is a compelling story and a good read, too, one that I highly recommend be included in an officer's program of self-study and professional development.

Although the threat of communist revolution has all but ended, the use of insurgent methods is on the rise. Until the West can show itself capable of defeating insurgents, it will continue to be challenged in this manner. Lartéguy, in a sense, foretells this when one of Raspéguy's officers, a French-Algerian taken

prisoner at Dien Bien Phu, reflects that he may soon be a rebel himself, but on behalf of Islam, not communism. The reflection is meant to foreshadow the looming conflict in Africa, but it speaks to our own predicament 50 years later, in the Middle East. **MR**

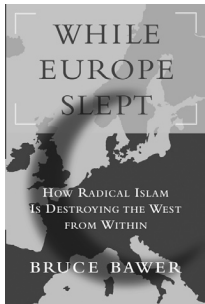
NOTES

1. Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq* (New York, Penguin Press, 2006).

2. Jean Lartéguy, *The Centurions*, trans. Xan Fielding (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1961).

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MR Book Reviews



WHILE EUROPE SLEPT: How Radical Islam is Destroying the West From Within, Bruce Bawer, Doubleday, Westminster, MD, 2006, 237 pages, \$23.95.

Some of our European allies have joined the long war against radical Islamic terrorists, but for them the battles are also at home in London, Madrid, and in an ever-growing number of communities. Muslim immigrants have flooded into European ghettos, challenging the continent's tolerant culture and stretching its cradle-to-grave social welfare systems. In his latest book, *While Europe Slept: How Radical Islam Is Destroying The West From Within*, journalist Bruce Bawer presents a riveting account of the clash between a naïvely elitist Europe and a rapidly expanding minority of Islamic fun-

damentalist immigrants demanding accommodation.

Bawer, a prolific author, provides an American view of Europe's Islamic crisis. He informs, challenges, and entertains with his detailed and well-documented accounts of Islamic confrontation and Europe's too-tolerant cultural response to intolerant Islamists.

Not one to shy away from controversy (he has criticized fundamentalist Christianity and written on behalf of "mainstream" homosexuals), Bawer immersed himself for this project in European culture by learning several languages, working with the European media, interviewing government officials, and experiencing the native's lifestyle in order to provide a behind-the-scenes view of Islam's assault on Europe and the continent's cultural passivity.

Military officers will find *While Europe Slept* a great primer on

the ideological challenges posed by a rapidly growing European Islamic immigrant population and its all-too-successful efforts to force post-Christian Europe to tolerate and, more frequently, to embrace, *Sharia*. Bawer argues that the Islamic cultural assault on Europe could be replicated in America if the latter were to abandon its long-held foundational values.

Bawer documents the heroic actions of Europe's few "Paul Reveres" who are publicly warning fellow citizens that they will pay a high price if they ignore the rapidly expanding minority of Muslim immigrants who refuse to integrate. One of Bawer's Paul Reveres, the now acclaimed Dutch cultural maverick Wilhemus Fortuyn, author of *Against The Islamicization of Our Culture* (book information not available) was murdered, according to his killer, for views that "stigmatized" Islam.

Fortuyn dared to criticize Muslims for their so-called anti-Dutch values. Young Muslim men growing up in Holland, according to Fortuyn, are taught throughout childhood that infidels (non-Muslims) are beneath respect, that Western women are whores, and that the only response to the West's godlessness is the fury of jihad. Fortuyn complained, "I refuse to hear repeatedly that Allah is great, almighty and powerful, and I am a dirty pig."

While Europe Slept juxtaposes Europe's naïve treatment of radical Muslims with its widespread anti-American views to illustrate cultural blindness. Both public views appear to be prompted by liberal media and multicultural elites. But those very same American values that Europeans attack—courage, patriotism, and religious faith—are widely lacking and in part explain why radical Islam is overtaking the continent. European elites do not understand the motivation of deeply held Muslim religious views, nor do they appreciate love of country.

Europe has remained silent about fundamentalist Muslims' unequal treatment of women and their lack of respect for people of other faiths. But the same restraint isn't evident when the topic turns to America. European elites and the average media-believing Europhile see Abu Ghraib

as representative of America's presence in Iraq. Guantanamo Bay's jihadist detainee prison has become a cynical caricature for America's role in the War on Terrorism. The 9/11 attacks on America are portrayed suspiciously by a sizable minority as an elaborate conspiracy. Perhaps not surprisingly, nearly one-third of Germans under 30 believe the U.S. set up the attacks.

Bawer warns that America-bashing and uncritical tolerance for Islamic radicalism are symptomatic of a confused culture and are contributing to a possible future populist backlash reminiscent of the rise of fascism in the 1930s. He argues that Europe is at a Weimar moment—the post-World War I era when Germans grew frustrated with social-democratic elites and drifted away to Nazism on the right. As evidence of Europe's possible Weimar slide, he cites the 2005 populist rejection of the European Union's constitution. Three issues fed that rejection: elitist mocking of national pride, a burdensome taxation system that supports inefficient welfare systems, and reckless immigration policies.

According to Bawer, moderate European Muslims should find their voices to fight radicalism within their own communities. They must disavow and discredit radicalism

as an extreme expression of Islam while "discover[ing] more liberal ways of understanding their faith."

While Europe Slept offers native solutions for the clash with Islam, such as educating Muslim women, who will influence the next generation. But as Bawer states, Europe's enemy is not Islam, but Europe itself. The continent has a values crisis that could lead either to surrendering to radical Islamists like the proverbial frog that refuses to jump out of the pot of boiling water, or it could give rise to another round of populism that could lead to fascism or worse.

Bawer bemoans the course the emblematic Dutch (read "most Western European countries") have taken as "tragic." He points out that the Dutch have done much to bring Western civilization to "its utmost pinnacle in terms of freedom and the pursuit of happiness," yet they have "turned a blind eye to the very peril that would destroy them." Bawer hopes Europeans will awaken to the tragedy of their course, embrace time-tested American values, and vigorously oppose intolerant Islamic views before the continent becomes ground zero for a future Islamic caliphate or another Lebanon, torn by civil war.

LTC Robert L. Maginnis, Retired, Alexandria, Virginia

BLOOD MONEY: Wasted Billions, Lost Lives, and Corporate Greed in Iraq, T. Christian Miller, Little, Brown and Company, New York, 2006, 293 pages, \$24.99.

T. Christian Miller, an investigative reporter for the *Los Angeles Times*, clearly states that he wrote *Blood Money* to ask how the United States could put a man on the moon in 1969, yet cannot make toilets flush in Baghdad in 2006. He examines what happened in the aftermath of the Iraq war, as America attempted to stabilize and rebuild a country that had been devastated by the initial Gulf War, the decades-long rule of a tyrant, and a dozen years of U.N.-imposed sanctions. What he finds are multiple major mistakes that have helped foster a corrupt, anything-goes environment not at all conducive to building a functional democracy.

Miller presents compelling evidence to support the by-now familiar claim that civilian leaders, military commanders, and planners from the top down gave little thought to the post-combat phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom. He discusses the disarray caused when the head of the newly created Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance, retired Lieutenant General Jay M. Garner, was replaced within three weeks of his arrival. Miller claims that Garner's successor, U.S. Ambassador Paul Bremer, made two quick decisions that dramatically damaged the reconstruction process: to remove all Ba'athists from public office, and to immediately disband the Iraqi Army.

That Miller's chronicle of Iraq's reconstruction period is generally

unbiased comes as a bit of a surprise, given the book's title. One might have expected a relentless attack on Halliburton, for example, yet this is not the case. Miller criticizes Halliburton when its performance is poor (e.g. maximizing Iraqi oil production), but in the end he acknowledges that the company more often than not delivered its promised goods and services.

Blood Money really stands out from other recent critiques of the war with its emphasis on the role contractors play on today's battlefield. Miller notes that contracting work is nothing new; after all, who but Brown and Root (Halliburton) built our airfields and hospitals in Vietnam? These days, however, much more work is being contracted, and some of that work is considered essential to the

war effort. What would happen if that work wasn't done? Soldiers cannot refuse a mission, but contractors can; critical supplies could be held up in transit if individual contractors decided that delivery was too dangerous. Miller provides a thought-provoking discussion of contractors in combat zones, particularly in the area of security. On more than one occasion, contractors (who were authorized to conduct only defensive operations) found themselves engaged in lengthy battles with insurgents. What, then, is a contractor's status on the battlefield? How do their actions as combatants affect a military commander's plans? What happens if they commit a war crime?

Miller makes a compelling point that reconstruction is destined to fail in a country whose environment is as unstable as Iraq's. He cites as a case in point the Parsons Corporation's attempt to build forts along the Iran-Iraq border and several health clinics and hospitals elsewhere in Iraq. One of the world's most prestigious engineering and construction firms, Parsons hasn't performed to its usual high standard. Miller explains that because Parsons was so concerned about its employees' welfare, the company

kept many of its workers back in secure areas. It subcontracted most of its work to locals and rarely conducted onsite inspections.

In an effort to show just how problematic our operations in Iraq have become, Miller uses both his opening and closing chapters to discuss the plight of Army Colonel Ted Westhusing, a philosophy professor at West Point who had enthusiastically deployed in January 2005 to train Iraqi security forces. Westhusing apparently committed suicide in June of the same year, disillusioned with what he had seen and fearful that his own reputation would be blackened. This is a heart-rending narrative, one that captures a dramatic change in personality occasioned by Westhusing's struggle with people he described as greedy contractors, senior officers interested only in themselves, and Iraqis unworthy of trust. Miller, however, does not seem to have captured all of the story. He quotes from Westhusing's suicide note, but does not answer the accusations made in the note; instead, he merely observes that the Army's investigation revealed no significant issues with the organization's command climate, and he does nothing with Westhusing's observation about

untrustworthy Iraqis. The book's two most powerful chapters, the first and the last, seem to leave more questions unanswered than answered, especially when Miller hints that Westhusing might have been killed by contractors who feared that he would report their misconduct. One of the Army's leading ethicists apparently committed suicide and left a note saying "[I] came to serve honorably and feel dishonored." Miller should offer more here.

In the end, *Blood Money* is very much worth reading, though at times it is a bit of a challenge. Wading through its detailed narrative of the behind-the-scenes fight to secure a cell-phone contract for the Iraqi police, or reading about oil pipeline failures and other infrastructure problems, may not excite everyone. Still, it is important for one to appreciate the problems caused when massive money—some \$30 billion—is handed out with minimal oversight. Miller concludes with the observation that this war has turned into a corporate affair, where companies battle for contracts and life-and-death decisions are based on the bottom line.

LTC James E. Varner, USA, Retired, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

Featured Review

FOR PROPHET AND TSAR: ISLAM AND EMPIRE IN RUSSIA AND CENTRAL ASIA, Robert D. Crews, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 2006, 463 pages, \$29.95.

Stanford historian Robert D. Crews examines the relationship between the Russian empire and its Muslim constituents from the reign of Catherine the Great to the Revolution of 1917. In particular, Crews advances two intertwined propositions. The first is that administering the population by dividing it into communities of faith, a governing strategy referred to as "confessionalization" that Crews attributes to Catherine, did much to maintain calm and order within the empire. Second, he asserts that this approach "allowed the state to govern with less violence and with a greater degree of consensus than historians have previously imag-

ined." In effect, the author contends that a kind of symbiosis evolved between the state and Islam.

Crews develops these assertions over a daunting historical expanse of time (two centuries) and territory (the Caucasus to Central Asia). Basing his extensive research on court, police, and other official records, he effectively dispels perceptions that the state was simply an instrument for the repression of Islamic cultures or that those cultures, in turn, were seething with animosity toward the Russian Empire. By implication, a "clash of civilizations" was neither a permanent nor inevitable feature of Russo-Muslim relations. Rather, the Tsar's regime sought to forge a relationship that in significant ways paralleled the one it enjoyed with the Orthodox Church.

In constructing this relationship, the state found opportunity in the demographic diversity and dispersal

of the Islamic communities it encountered. Because Islam in Russia and Central Asia did not have an elaborately developed hierarchical organization for managing the populace, the state stepped in to help establish one. A sterling example was the Orenburg Ecclesiastical Assembly, which was roughly analogous to the Orthodox Holy Synod, whose membership was approved by the state. Established by Peter the Great, the Holy Synod became an ideological pillar of the regime, binding spiritual authority to temporal in the person of the Tsar in a manner that accorded nicely with emerging Enlightenment political theory in the West. In turn, the assembly regulated Muslim affairs in a manner that was at least tolerable both to the Tsar and the community of faith it served. In the resultant concordance, the call of Muslims to worship in the empire normally in-

cluded a prayer for the preservation of the Romanov dynasty. The Islamic hierarchy benefited substantially, as state support afforded government-approved senior clerics a level of legally enforceable authority they had not previously possessed.

Ultimately, one of Crews' key findings is his rejection of the traditional explanation of Russian historians that imperial arrangements in the administration of its Muslim population were in large measure a reflection of "undergovernment," a simple lack of administrative reach into distant portions of the empire that in turn necessitated limited reliance on native institutions. On the contrary, Crews contends that new forms of societal interactions in Muslim areas were in reality a product of governmental influence. The state sanctioned an official clerical estate and in exchange shaped interpretations of the *shar'ia* to its occasional advantage. The author documents this assertion throughout the book, noting innumerable instances in which Muslims appealed to state authority to resolve disputes.

Although persuasive, this line of reasoning does not fully sustain the author's intent to discredit the thesis of "undergovernment." The effective, as opposed to theoretical, power of the state was in fact extremely limited, if only by virtue of the treasury's inability to cover the cost of maintaining the requisite network of bureaucratic offices and civil servants. An equally valid indication of the true state of assimilation into the imperial system was the status of most Muslims in regard to military service. Even the Bashkirs and Crimean Tatars, Muslim peoples long subject to Russian authority, were exempted from a new law on universal conscription in 1874. In general, St. Petersburg regarded its Muslim subjects warily, while the Muslims acceded to the legitimacy of Tsarist rule only within implicit limits. Russia's disastrous attempt to conscript Central Asians in 1916, even for military service in noncombatant capacities, was a vivid instance of the state's attempting to exceed those limits.

In fact, Crews' demonstration of a certain symbiotic arrangement between government and Islam is

not incompatible with the older thesis of a weak state presence in the borderlands. Indeed, Crews' own observation that reliance on Islam was crucial to imperial administration can easily be construed as indicative of the precarious foundation of the Tsar's authority. To be sure, the carefully nurtured relationship with Islam afforded the government two considerable advantages. It certainly mitigated the threat of native hostility to Russian rule based on a popular sense of religious persecution. For example, the affirmation by many indigenous clerics that the empire enjoyed status as *dar al-Islam* (a House of Islam) was of inestimable value. Then, too, official support for a cooperative domestic spiritual authority constrained the influence of potentially troublesome foreign Muslims within Russia's borders.

Overall, this is a fine work that sheds valuable new light on the processes of empire and the management of cross-cultural governmental relationships. In this sense especially, Crews' research has considerable contemporary relevance.

**Robert Baumann, Ph.D.,
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas**

ENDURING THE FREEDOM: A Rogue Historian in Afghanistan, Sean M. Maloney, Potomac Books, Washington, DC, 2005, 336 pages, \$27.50.

There have been several books published recently about the current events in Afghanistan. Most are by journalists, who often do a good job with surface reporting but lack the background to do in-depth analysis. Many journalists, for example, have never spent a day in uniform, so they do not really understand the military; nor do they typically have post-graduate degrees in history, anthropology, archaeology, or regional studies, so they do not understand the region. Sean Maloney is a former Canadian Army combat arms officer who teaches in the Canadian Royal Military College War Studies Programme and is the strategic studies adviser to the Canadian Defence Academy.

In Afghanistan, Maloney spent time with Canadian, Dutch, German, Irish, Romanian, and other

International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) members, went on operations with the 82d Airborne Division, and met with prominent and ordinary Afghans. He provides a military historian's perspective of Afghanistan's history from before 9/11 through his first visit in 2003.

Enduring the Freedom is a history, a travelogue, a look inside the mysterious ISAF, a positive Canadian view of the U.S. military, and a hoot to read. Maloney is a serious, yet irreverent, historian who gathers his data from the war zone, not the dusty tome. Blunt, uncompromising, and a brilliant analyst without a speck of political correctness about him, he covers the good and the bad with a measured sense of proportionality.

Maloney has provided a good look at the ISAF mission through 2003 and at the changing U.S. mission as Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) began pushing out from the airfields and into the countryside. Not surprisingly, the book is stronger when it discusses ISAF and OEF than it is when discussing the Afghan perspective. That said, I have no real qualms about recommending *Enduring the Freedom* to historians and military professionals alike.

**LTC Lester W. Grau, USA, Retired,
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas**

WAR AND THE ENGINEERS: The Primacy of Politics over Technology, Keir Lieber, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 2005, 226 pages, \$39.95.

The title of Keir Lieber's latest book could have been more appropriate: *War and the Engineers* is really not a book about war or about engineers; it is about the latest scholarship on the offense-defense theory in political science. This quibble aside, Lieber's study breaks new ground by openly criticizing and eventually refuting the theory.

The book's introduction outlines the foundations of current offense-defense theory. Broadly, the theory holds that war and peace depend on technology and perceived power. If a country has offensive capabilities, it will attack and expand, overthrowing the status quo. When

defense predominates (ideologically, technologically, or otherwise), cooperation and peace are more likely. In subsequent chapters, Lieber considers both military and political outcomes to discredit the theory. By analyzing offense-defense using its own vocabulary and definitions, Lieber deconstructs it persuasively. He uses two case studies of offensive mobility (trains in the wars of German unification and tanks in WWI), and two case studies of the evolution of defensive firepower (small arms in WWI and the nuclear revolution), to turn the theory against itself. Lieber argues effectively that neither offensive nor defensive capabilities pushed or prevented war in the time periods he examines.

The book's conclusion offers an overview of the theory and Lieber's argument, and it presents an alternative argument, "technological opportunism," which provides just enough information for readers to look forward to Lieber's next project.

War and the Engineers is the latest contribution to the ongoing debate in political science circles about war's causes. It is well-written, well-argued, and concise, and its extensive bibliography provides a wealth of information on the field. Historians, political scientists, officers, and analysts, all of whom should be familiar with offense-defense theory, should read this book. I give it my highest recommendation.

S. Mike Pavelec, Ph.D., Hawaii Pacific University

BETWEEN LEGITIMACY AND VIOLENCE: A History of Colombia, 1875-2002, Marco Palacios, Duke University Press, Durham, NC, 2006, 299 pages, \$22.95.

Marco Palacios' *Between Legitimacy and Violence: A History of Colombia, 1875-2002* is an analysis of how social, economic, and political conditions combined to create a hyper-violent outburst that has reverberated like shock-waves through Colombia's history. Palacios, a leading Latin American expert, organizes his work according to relevant historical events instead of the strict chronological sequence usually used in histories

of Colombia. This technique allows readers to concentrate on the events, essentially grasping the relevance and impact of each.

The work begins by describing political struggles prevalent in the late 1800s, a period that saw three civil wars, as a contest between federalist radicals and centralist conservatives, both vying for constitutional control. Palacios then illustrates how the Catholic Church's strong influence led to reforms, now known as "the regeneration," which amounted to nothing more than the church regaining its control over society. He also examines the period between 1903 and 1930, years dominated by the struggle between capitalist entrepreneurs and their workers. According to Palacios, Colombia experienced economic growth during this period by opening up to foreign investments and entering the international trade arena.

Palacios then shifts his focus to the period from 1930 to 1944, when conservative power collapsed and the global economic depression set in. This was the precursor to the period of riots and war known as *La Violencia*. Palacios surmises that as the masses gained more rights and privileges, they desired even more, which exacerbated friction between them and the "Plutocratic elites." Palacios' account of this period is by far the most detailed modern work on *La Violencia* to date. He claims that "the political system could not digest the new levels of political participation that Gaitan [the populist chief of the Colombian liberal party] had wrought." The work finishes by focusing on the consequences of the compromise between the two major parties that eventually led to what the author calls "savage capitalism," in which drug lords commonly intervene in presidential elections.

Palacios has packed a huge amount of historical data into this very palatable work. He provides his readers with insight into the root causes of Colombia's violent past and connects those causes to its current instability. *Between Legitimacy and Violence* is an intellectual multi-tool for any military member struggling to understand the complex socioeconomic prob-

lems of the contemporary operating environment in Colombia.

MAJ Douglas C. Judice, Monterey, California

THEY JUST DON'T GET IT: How Washington is Still Compromising Your Safety and What You Can Do About It, David Hunt, Crown Publishing Group, Random House, Inc, New York, 2005, 252 pages, \$25.95.

David Hunt has written a book about a subject that should make every American reader angry and rightfully so. Unfortunately, his tone, his personal attacks on leaders at every level, and his use of profanity for profanity's sake combine to produce a book that should not have been published in its current form.

Hunt introduces compelling information to support his position that the government is not making much headway in the War on Terrorism mainly because individuals and government agencies simply do not understand the problem. However, by making personal attacks on government officials, Hunt causes the reader to question his objectivity. For example, when he introduces Sandy Berger, the former National Security Advisor, Hunt refers to him as Sandy "I Ain't-Going-to-No-Stinking-Vietnam" Berger. What does not going to Vietnam have to do with Berger's ability to perform his duties?

If the reader is willing to wade through such ad hominem, this book is full of convincing examples of how commanders, government agencies, and national leaders missed opportunities to snatch or kill terrorist leaders. For example, Hunt shows how we wasted actionable intelligence by allowing Al-Qaeda operatives to escape two weeks into the invasion of Afghanistan. He cites the case of Osama bin Laden's deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri, who was spotted in a convoy and then tracked for three hours by a CIA-owned, U.S. Air Force-operated, Central Command-controlled Predator unmanned aerial vehicle. Both the CIA and the Air Force had eyes on target, but final clearance had to come from Central Command Headquarters in Tampa, Florida. After

considerable deliberation, Central Command scrapped the mission because of concerns that Zawahiri's family members or other non-terrorists might also be in the convoy. While concerns about collateral damage can and always should be taken into account, Hunt argues that they should not be allowed to thwart an opportunity to take out the number two person in Al-Qaeda.

Hunt is a patriot who is attempting to motivate people to demand substantive change. He chronicles how the government wasted time and money on a series of reorganization efforts that have yet to cause any real improvement in effectiveness—a fact that ought to make any American taxpayer mad. Unfortunately, through his frustration, Hunt has produced a book that is hard to recommend in its current form.

LTC John C. Barbee, USA, Retired, Fort, Leavenworth, Kansas

UNRAVELING VIETNAM: How American Arms and Diplomacy Failed in Southeast Asia, William R. Haycraft, McFarland and Co, Jefferson, NC, 2006, 263 pages, \$35.00.

Unraveling Vietnam is a revisionist work that attempts to refute the idea that the war was a result of flawed foreign policy. William R. Haycraft argues that the war was necessary and would have been winnable under better circumstances and with better leadership. His purpose is to provide comprehensive coverage of the period from 1946 to 1975, and to challenge the orthodox position that the Vietnamese Communists were nationalists fighting to unify Vietnam while the United States immorally supported a separatist South Vietnam.

As a basis for refuting the view that the Viet Cong were nationalists, Haycraft presents a plausible version of what the enemy might have been thinking. He uses the Democratic Republic of Vietnam's Resolution 15, which placed the highest priority on achieving unification by revolutionary war in the South, as evidence of the Communist North's control of the Viet

Cong. This connection, however, is more implied than proven.

Although Haycraft tries to put both sides' actions into context, he periodically misses the mark. For example, when addressing Pham Van Dong's four points for negotiation, he makes no reference to President Lyndon Johnson's complementary speech at Johns Hopkins University. Haycraft also states that during Tet there were "some PAVN [Peoples Army of Vietnam] attacks around the DMZ [demilitarized zone]," but he does not discuss Khe Sanh. Johnson's speech and Khe Sanh are covered later, but by then we have lost their connections to other events.

Another weakness of the book is its coverage of the subject of diplomacy, which is ironic considering its subtitle. Haycraft provides only limited discussion of U.S. efforts to get the South Vietnamese Government to change its policies on such issues as land reform. Nor is there much discussion of U.S. national strategy, which Haycraft should have cited to connect diplomacy to the use of military power. The book does, however, underscore U.S. failures to understand the enemy and the type of war the Nation was fighting—failures that kept the United States from developing a viable political and military strategy.

Despite its flaws and the fact that its conclusions lack solid cause-and-effect relationships, Haycraft's book ultimately succeeds in calling into question much of the orthodox positions. *Unraveling Vietnam* does not broach much new information, but it is well-written and provides a good overview of the war. In short, this is a good work for the undergraduate and general reader, as well as those who want to gain an appreciation of the myriad issues involved in Vietnam.

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BATAAN: A Survivor's Story, Lieutenant Gene Boyt with David L. Burch, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, OK, 2005, 237 pages, \$24.95.

First-person accounts such as this are gems in a genre often filled with works that are well-researched, but that lack the emotional depth of a personal memoir. *Bataan: A Survivor's Story* is simply one of the best first-person accounts of the Death March that I have read. Gene Boyt, a survivor who endured the march and three ensuing years of captivity, tells his story in the fire-side-chat style that marks the very best of published memoirs.

An engineer lieutenant assigned to the Philippines before the onset of war, Boyt was not a particularly remarkable man. He was a son of the Great Depression, an Oklahoma boy who worked in the Civilian Conservation Corps and earned a college degree through sheer willpower and determination. He was proud to serve his country and yearned for the adventure of an exotic assignment far from the shores of America. His retelling of the days before the war is not overly exciting, but just the kind of story you'd hear on a Friday night at the American Legion or the local VFW post. It's the way he tells his story, so ordinary in so many ways, that captures and holds the reader's attention. By the time he gets around to the events of 7 December 1941, the book is literally impossible to put down. His characters come to life. You can sense the electricity in the air and take in the scents of the Philippine jungle.

There is no self promotion, no grandstanding, and no posturing in *Bataan*. Boyt's story is amusing at times, tragic at others, but always enthralling. He is a simple man telling a story that is anything but simple. To read this book is to step inside the world of Lieutenant Gene Boyt and live the events of the time through his eyes. With the able assistance of David L. Burch, Boyt presents a marvelous account of his experiences in the Pacific Theater during World War II. More than worth its modest price, *Bataan* will make a fantastic addition to any bookshelf.

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