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Paratrooper: The Lift and Times of General James Gavin

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country, and that with a lower level of technology than at present.

I personally disagree with Cheeseman's thesis and, indeed, have been doing so for some years. For instance, I feel he misunderstands the defense relationship with the United States and the value Washington places upon its alliance with Australia. Moreover, the defense policy Cheeseman would have Canberra adopt would leave it ill prepared for military operations outside Australia's immediate region—activities that successful Australian governments have traditionally been very keen to undertake.

However, Cheeseman is a careful scholar and analyst of Australian defense policy, and while his recommendations do not seem to have much support in the defense bureaucracy, ADF, or even the analytical community, some of his arguments are valid. For example, his contention is dead-on that the objective of self-reliance is undercut by the refusal of the defense bureaucracy and successive governments to acquire sufficient combat service support capabilities. In addition, his assessment that the Labor government has given the defense forces much more in the way of missions than of resources to achieve them is also accurate.

Moreover, as a critical analysis of the evolution of Australian defense policy and strategic thinking since 1972, the book has important value to readers of this journal. Consequently, notwithstanding the problems I have with Cheeseman's thesis, he has written a strong critique of recent Australian

defense policy. As such, this book should not be dismissed.

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Booth, T. Michael and Spencer, Duncan. *Paratrooper: The Life and Times of General James Gavin*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994. 494pp. \$27.50

James Gavin was one of the most colorful and effective troop leaders among the American generals who served in the European theater during World War II. In January 1946, at the age of thirty-eight, Major General Gavin led the New York City victory parade at the head of his 82nd Airborne Division. Thereafter he had a most interesting career in and out of the Army, but the high point of his life, as described in this nicely written biography, had been the thirty-month period that ended with the victory parade. In many respects, notwithstanding, it is the later period of Gavin's life that might be most instructive to those serving in the military today.

Born in 1907 and graduating from West Point in 1929, he had an undistinguished junior-officer career, and an unhappy marriage, but he achieved a great deal of personal development that was to pay dividends later. In the summer of 1941, while serving as a tactical officer at West Point, Captain Gavin volunteered for parachute training, which was just getting under way in the U.S. Army. He was highly motivated and effective in this new and exciting milieu. By mid-1942 he was a full colonel, commanding the 505th

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Parachute Regiment, which he built from the ground up. The regiment became part of the newly formed 82nd Airborne, commanded by Matt Ridgway with Maxwell Taylor as chief of staff and, later, artillery commander. Together they became the three most famous American airborne generals of World War II.

Gavin's wartime experiences as a member, and later commander, of the 82nd constitute about 60 percent of the book. The authors describe the operations of Sicily, Italy, and Normandy, the failed MARKET GARDEN attack, and the Battle of the Bulge in a lively, informative, and dramatic style. Gavin emerges as the stuff of instant legend. He became a major general at the age of thirty-seven.

There is little question that Gavin was a courageous, dedicated, highly successful leader in World War II. At the moment of the victory parade in New York, most people believed he was destined at least to head the Army, perhaps something even higher; but it did not happen that way. What did happen is what much of the remainder of the book is about, and it is no end of a lesson.

The 1950s were the Eisenhower years. As president he tightly controlled American strategic policy, defense budgets, and the organization for and process of defense policy making. Ridgway and Taylor served in these years as successive Army Chiefs of Staff, and both ran afoul of Ike and retired to write their memoirs. At a lower level, Gavin too had problems with Ike's "New Look" strategy, with its heavy reliance on Air Force technology at the

expense of the manpower-intensive views of the Army hierarchy.

During this period, Gavin held two key Pentagon positions: first G-3 (plans and training), and then, from 1955, chief of Research and Development, in the rank of lieutenant general. The visionary Gavin fought against tight budgets and bureaucratic constraints, and although he was involved with Army technology, the atomic battlefield, missiles (including the Soviet Sputnik challenge), early Vietnam problems during the Indochina conflict, etc., he could never make the successful adjustment to the realities of Pentagon infighting and politicizing. In the end, it was bureaucratic politics that brought him down. The authors' coverage of this period is brief but insightful.

With his old friend Taylor serving as Chief of Staff but providing little personal support, and at odds with the administration's strategy, Gavin found himself out on a limb from which a more cautious bureaucrat would have retreated. As the authors point out, Gavin's public positions caused problems with the White House and two secretaries of defense; he was made to look like someone bargaining for a fourth star. In short, he had no choice except to walk the plank. He retired in 1958 and made public his dissent with his *War and Peace in the Space Age*, published the same year. The balance of *Paratrooper* is concerned with Gavin's twenty active years after his retirement from the military.

The authors could have stressed more the rationale of those whose ideas clashed with Gavin's during his postwar

career, Dwight D. Eisenhower in particular. Nonetheless, this book will, I believe, be the definitive work on James Gavin—a heroic general, a tragic bureaucrat. Booth and Spencer have done an excellent job. They portray the times and the man clearly and interestingly. What emerges is a Horatio Alger tale in which the principal did in the first part of his life most of what he was to become famous for. The book is a good read.

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Cameron, Craig M. *American Samurai: Myth, Imagination and the Conduct of Battle in the First Marine Division, 1941–1951*. New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1994. 297pp. \$24.95

In this deconstructionist assault on the mindset of the First Marine Division in the Pacific and Korean wars, Cameron draws heavily on the work of his intellectual heroes Michael Geyer, Omer Bartov, John Dower, Bruce Cumings, John Keegan, Michael Sherry, Akira Iriye, Paul Fussell, Glenn Grey, and John Shy. What is Cameron and what is borrowed is difficult to say, but the result is obvious—PC meets the USMC.

Cameron, an ex-Marine officer of the 1980s, will never be accused (as he accuses this reviewer) of excessive enthusiasm for the Corps. He argues that anti-Asian racism, male chauvinism, seething resentment of all sorts against the U.S. Army, and irrational fantasies about prior Marine operations turned the First Marine

Division into a horde of crazed killers who barbarized the Pacific War as much as did the poor, misunderstood Japanese. He likens U.S. Marines to the Wehrmacht on the Eastern Front or the frontiersmen who “exterminated” the native Americans. The effect is much like discovering at Peace Park, Hiroshima, that the Pacific War began and ended with the atomic bomb.

Cameron argues that the demonization of the enemy drove the Marines to intolerable ferocity on Guadalcanal, Peleliu, and Okinawa. Despite an institutional effort to keep the mythic momentum rolling in the Korean War, the Marine Corps could not keep the troops at a frenzied pitch, and the division lost its sharp edge in combat by June 1951—which will be news to the survivors of the fighting of September of that year. Not surprisingly, Cameron pontificates about the Vietnam War and connects its “barbarization” to the dysfunctional myths of past Corps glories and to the ways that they reflect cultural values retarding domestic reform and international harmony.

Other than using the bodies of brave men as a bully pulpit, Cameron commits two errors: he has not done appropriate research, and he does not write proper history. He begins with a legitimate concern: How did the organizational culture of the First Marine Division affect the way it fought? One can then subsume related questions about visions of the enemy, allies, other services, leadership, weapons, comrades, training, and psychological indoctrination. In fact, he does not get off to a bad start with his discussion of Guadalcanal, but