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## Forged by Fire: Robert L. Eichelberger and the Pacific War

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posture came in the fall of 1948 with the preparation of the Fiscal 1950 budget. He took his case personally to Secretary of State Marshall. Marshall listened, but he was not about to support Forrestal with the president lest it interfere with outlays for the Marshall Plan. Hence, Secretary of Defense George Marshall, whom the author credits for his great efforts in the 1950-51 defense buildup, was in fact correcting his own earlier misjudgments.

With regard to George Marshall's role as defense secretary (from September 1950 to September 1951), the author correctly emphasizes that Marshall reestablished the prestige of that office following Johnson's tenure. The secretary was past his peak at this point and knew it, and let Robert Lovett, his deputy, run the department. This being a war period, defense budgets were no longer the central problem in the Pentagon. Hence, interservice tensions (then as now budgetary, not doctrinal in origin, whatever the rhetoric employed) were no longer a problem.

There was one problem that developed in Marshall's tenure as defense secretary that Lovett could not handle for him: the relief of General of the Army Douglas MacArthur. Professor Stoler handles the issue and Marshall's role in a balanced and interesting manner. There were personality issues of course (feisty Harris versus insubordinate MacArthur is the usual portrayal), but the real issues and the resultant lessons are political-

strategic—lessons which, by the way, were largely forgotten during the next decade as the Vietnam tragedy unfolded.

In sum, Professor Stoler, with style and verve, has produced an excellent summary volume on George C. Marshall and his times. As supplemental reading for courses in American foreign policy and military history, the book should prove insightful, readable, provocative, and manageable. I highly recommend it for such courses and for the general reader.

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Shortal, John F. *Forged by Fire: Robert L. Eichelberger and the Pacific War*. Columbia Univ. of South Carolina Press, 1987. 154pp. \$24.95

*Forged by Fire* is an admiring account of the accomplishments of Lieutenant General Eichelberger in the Pacific during World War II. The author, John Shortal, is a serving army officer and a former member of the department of history at the United States Military Academy. Shortal quickly sets the scene in his introduction. On 30 November 1942, at his forward headquarters in Port Moresby, Guinea, General MacArthur decided that the poor performance by American troops in their first offensive of the war at Buna required a change of leadership at the front (as much to protect MacArthur's personal reputation as for any other reason). Eichelberger, who

had last heard guns fired in anger in Siberia shortly after World War I, was summoned to the presence of the great man: "MacArthur's greeting was terse and to the point. He briefly described the tactical situation at Buna and then, looking Eichelberger in the eye, gave the following order: 'Take Buna or don't come back alive!'"

The book is organized into four chapters of approximately thirty pages each. The first takes Eichelberger from his admission to West Point in 1905 to the order he received to take Buna, and the next three describe the campaigns at Buna (December 1942), Biak (June 1944) and Manila (January 1945).

The author's views are clear. Eichelberger comes across as a rather rumpled uncle, the kind of senior officer who generally wins respect and affection rather than instilling fear. However, this is not to suggest that a comfortable old shoe cannot kick. Shortal's Eichelberger drives hard, shares the soldier's danger and discomfort, relieves old schoolmates when necessary, smarts when snubbed, and delights in promotions and awards. He is also a canny tactician, a superb trainer of troops, a believer in physical conditioning, and a fine developer of leaders. In brief, when MacArthur ran into hot situations, he called on Fireman Eichelberger to save the day.

MacArthur and his entourage are roughly treated. The aloofness that has been called arrogance, the posing as the Wizard of the Orient, the unwillingness to share the limelight

and the glory, the ego—these unkind characterizations of MacArthur have been heard before, but they do ring true. The people surrounding MacArthur are depicted as sycophants so dedicated to their chief that they competed to protect him and bask in the warmth of his smile. General Charles Willoughby, an easy target, is particularly savaged by Shortal for his absolutely consistent intelligence estimates—it seems he was always wrong—and for failing to recognize the massing for the Chinese intervention in Korea in 1950. Lieutenant General Richard K. Sutherland, MacArthur's chief of staff and another of the "Bataan Gang," is called ruthless and described as a hatchet man always prepared to lop off another head to save the reputation of his boss.

Shortal is relentless in his opinions, and therein lies a major fault of the book. The author has fallen in love with his subject. One smiles knowingly when lovers repeat words of endearment; one frowns when historians are repetitious, particularly in a short book.

We are told that at Buna, Eichelberger "learned three important lessons that would give him an edge in the future": realistic training, avoidance of frontal attacks, and command from the front where the action is. Fair enough, but our author underestimates his faithful reader's memory by repeating these three points far too often, almost as an incantation that explains the very meaning of life.

At every turn we find Good (guess who) thwarted by the emperor or his nefarious court. Eichelberger should have gotten more stars, more medals, more fame, and the bigger army with the bigger missions. We are asked to believe that the Bataan Gang spent more time polishing the MacArthur legend and spiting Eichelberger than thinking about how to defeat Japan. It is unfortunate that the author treats professional reputation as a zero-sum game requiring the diminution of other reputations to enlarge that of his subject. He overlooks in Eichelberger the very faults he condemns in MacArthur and his staff. In his first chapter Shortal tells us that Eichelberger transferred from the infantry to the adjutant general corps in his bid for promotion and to court his patron; later he transferred back to the infantry for the same reason: to get ahead. It is permissible even for the most ardent admirer to note that one's hero has feet of clay. Our concern is history, not canonization. Courting favor was not unusual behavior in the army of the period between the two great wars of this century. See George Patton's letters and diaries to learn the art of unabashed apple polishing.

It seems to this reviewer that Eichelberger is yet another fine product of the tiny U.S. Army of the 1920s and 1930s that somehow prepared middle grade officers—most of them quite ordinary men—for impressive performances of duty at the highest levels in a great crusade. Those concerned with

national security into the 21st century might ponder how it was done and ask if we are getting it right in our day. Because Shortal evokes reflections like these, *Forged by Fire* can be read profitably by both the general reader who cares about his nation's well-being and the specialist in security issues.

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Leary, William M., ed. *We Shall Return! MacArthur's Commanders and the Defeat of Japan*. Lexington, Ky.: Univ. Press of Kentucky, 1988. 305pp. \$25

Douglas MacArthur did not reconquer the Philippines alone! That does not qualify as man-bites-dog news, but if there is a theme in *We Shall Return*, it is that many of MacArthur's subordinate commanders were competent men and he had the capability to listen to them and take their advice.

Dr. William M. Leary edited this anthology of biographical essays, written by an impressive array of authors, on the principal leaders who helped in the Southwest Pacific campaign to defend Australia and then recover the Philippines.

Probably the best chapter in the book is the well-documented scene-setter by Stanley Falk on Douglas MacArthur himself. Falk clearly calls the "Dugout Doug" appellation a slander. Equally clearly he assesses MacArthur's claim to having the