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"Panzer Leader," and "Lost Victories"

T. L. Gatchel

Heinz Guderian

Erich von Manstein

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Have we practiced it? Have we armed them so they would have a chance to do their jobs? Perhaps the answers to these questions are all "yes." But if the answers are not "yes" we ought at least to start on these things. The armies won't insist that it be done, and, in fact, might resent it. It will upset the diplomats and politicians, and the news media as well. But if we think about war, then we really should think about it, shouldn't we? Walter Lord's book is a good starting point.

FRANK UHLIG, JR.
Naval War College Review

Guderian, Heinz. *Panzer Leader*.
Translated by Constantine Fitzgibbon. Washington: Zenger Publishing Co., 1979. 528pp. \$15

Manstein, Erich von. *Lost Victories*.
Edited and translated by Anthony G. Powell. Novato, Calif.: Presidio Press, 1982. 574pp. \$18.95

Why would two publishers choose this time to reissue the memoirs of two German officers of World War II fame? The answer that the books are military classics that have been out of print for some time begs the question. So does the answer that the publishers anticipate a market for the books. Possibly a less obvious answer to the question lies in the similarities between the conditions which faced Field Marshal von Manstein and General Guderian during World War II and the conditions that may well face American commanders in some future global war. Both authors fought the Soviets.

In today's world and one of the predictable future, a global war would certainly find Americans fighting the Soviets. After initial successes on the Eastern Front, both authors were involved in the prolonged German delaying action that ended only with the final collapse of Germany. In the initial stages of a Nato war in Europe, American commanders undoubtedly will find themselves involved in a retrograde operation until reinforcements can arrive. Finally, both authors were masters of what today has become known as maneuver warfare. Eventually, however, both commanders found their ability to conduct this style of warfare restricted by orders from Adolf Hitler forbidding them to give up territory.

Most American commanders would like to practice some form of maneuver warfare but find themselves constrained by Allied political leaders who understandably do not want to trade their nations' territory for the time and space needed to conduct the fluid style of defense advocated by Guderian and von Manstein. *Panzer Leader* and *Lost Victories* shed more than enough light on these current military issues to justify both their reputations as modern military classics and, I hope, the publishers' expectations of turning a profit.

Von Manstein and Guderian were similar to each other in many respects. Both came from Prussian military families and began their careers as infantry officers. Both served in World War I and remained as part of the 100,000-man *Reichswehr* following

Germany's defeat. Von Manstein was the stereotype of the Prussian staff officer. Many descriptions of him, for example, contain the adjectives "cool" and "aloof." Although far from being universally well liked by his contemporaries, von Manstein has enjoyed an excellent reputation among many German generals who have written about the war, military historians, and the current generation of German officers. Guderian calls von Manstein "our finest operational brain." The word "operational," in this case, refers to that middle ground between tactics and strategy that is officially unrecognized by Americans but known as operational art to the Soviets.

Unlike von Manstein, Guderian was not a member of the nobility. Guderian's image is that of a fighter rather than that of a sophisticated staff officer. Field Marshal Albert Kesselring describes Guderian as "tough and resilient." Although he was a successful field commander and later Chief of the Army General Staff, Guderian's reputation is based largely on his success as the principal architect of Germany's armored forces and the foremost proponent of their use in the *blitzkrieg*.

During the war, both von Manstein and Guderian had serious disagreements with Hitler over matters ranging from tactics to national policy. Both officers were willing to confront Hitler personally—something most German officers were afraid to do. Eventually both officers were fired as a result of these confrontations although neither suffered any

personal harm as a result.

Lost Victories and *Panzer Leader* reflect the similarities and differences of their authors. Both books are self-serving but no more than most memoirs. Both authors play up their disagreements with Hitler and both make a point of disassociating themselves from his criminal policies. Von Manstein and Guderian explain, for example, that they refused to execute the notorious Commissar Order by which Hitler ordered that all captured Soviet political officers be summarily executed. *Lost Victories* is written in the cool, professional style that one would expect from a general staff officer. The operational accounts are dry, but are interspersed with real gems of advice on a variety of military subjects including leadership, tactics, and strategy. In one particularly interesting passage, von Manstein explains why a general at war cannot simply resign if he disagrees with the policies of his political leaders. *Panzer Leader* is written in a livelier style but contains an otherwise similar combination of factual accounts and professional opinions.

Both books were originally published in the early 1950s. They obviously reflect the personal knowledge of their authors and other information available at the time of their writing. Neither author, for example, was aware of the degree to which the Allies had access to encrypted German communications during the war. Ironically, one of the illustrations in Guderian's book shows him standing in an armored

command vehicle. In the foreground are two soldiers operating an Enigma coding machine, the device through which the Germans unwittingly furnished the Allies a continuous stream of sensitive information throughout the war. Since *Lost Victories* and *Panzer Leader* were written, much new information has come to light about World War II and better books are available about the overall conduct of the war. Neither has been surpassed, however, for an understanding of the inner workings of the German military machine that produced remarkable victories and a catastrophic defeat.

T.L. GATCHEL
Colonel, US Marine Corps

Keegan, John. *Six Armies in Normandy*.
New York: Viking Press, 1982.
365pp. \$17.95. Paperback by Pen-
guin Press, \$6.95

John Keegan's second book *Six Armies in Normandy* is a puzzling work. It deals with six armies: American, British, German, Canadian, Polish, and French during the Normandy Campaign. It seeks to show how these armies, while resembling each other on purpose, nevertheless, mirrored individual national values. Keegan's technique is to describe one operation of each army. For example he deals with the American airborne drop prior to the invasion, the Canadian landing at Juno Beach, British operations

Epsom and Goodwood, the German counterattack at Mortain, the Polish stand near Falaise, and the French role in the liberation of Paris. A clear concise operational narrative helps prevent the individual engagements from being too episodic.

However, the book is strangely unbalanced. Though undeniably courageous the Poles and French formed but a small portion of the allied forces and their role, though important, was hardly decisive. The American forces included more than two airborne divisions, and the German army in France was larger than any single allied contingent. Yet Keegan treats these armies, as well as the British and Canadian forces, as roughly equal in terms of their contributions to the campaign. Nor does the author deal with differences in tactics, doctrine or command style, and unlike his first book, *Face of Battle*, *Six Armies* does relatively little with the reactions of individual soldiers. The reader does not get a sense of what it was like to be a Panzer Grenadier or Canadian foot-soldier during the Normandy Campaign and subsequent breakout.

Yet despite the shortcomings Keegan's book is worth reading—the tactical scenes are well done, and the strategic narrative is clear and concise. If little that is new about the campaign emerges, Keegan has still provided a sound and occasionally exciting view of one of World War II's major operations.

S.T. ROSS
Naval War College