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On the Banks of the Suez

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by which time the political landscape had cleared.

U.S. preeminence in Western diplomacy was guaranteed after three years of self-doubt and delay by the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan, which led to the overshadowing of British interests in Europe and the Middle East, not to mention the Far East. But thirty-five years later, the United States finds itself exhibiting the well-known symptoms of decline: rampant inflation, chronic balance of payments difficulties, high taxation, and exposed positions abroad. It is no longer the arbiter of international trade, money, and investment. Some critics argue that accepting strategic parity with the Soviet Union, losing control over the world petroleum industry, and conceding regional dominance to local powers all indicate a great power in retreat. Hathaway and, as an adjunct, Anderson present the most relevant test case of a government's eroding ability to play an international role long taken for granted.

DEREK LEEBAERT
Harvard University

Adan, Avraham (Bren). *On the Banks of the Suez: An Israeli General's Personal Account of the Yom Kippur War*. San Rafael, Calif.: Presidio Press, 1980. 479pp. \$16.95

The wars of modern Israel in general and the *Yom Kippur* War in particular have spawned any number of books purporting to articulate for a large and apparently interested audience the lessons of modern combat. Given an understandable bias on the part of this writer—after all, Israel has won all of their wars at the tactical and operational levels (the strategic decision is not in yet)—most of the best of these books have come from Israel. Almost all of Israel's combat and political commanders have written memoirs at one time or another, but it is Bren's "book" that I have waited for so impatiently.

Because of the early days of confusion in the 1973 war, the Arabs on both fronts gaining strategic and tactical surprise and the unanticipated "lacklustre" performance of the IDF in those early days on the Suez front, journalists and political-military analysts everywhere began searching for scapegoats. I expected Bren's book to penetrate some of the myths created in the search and to illuminate some of the confusion: the death of the tank, the intelligence failure, the Agranat Commission, unity of command problems, and the BarLev Line. Bren does not disappoint.

Additionally, I waited for Bren's book because the Suez campaign has more to tell us ultimately than does the war in the Golan. The battle for the Golan Heights was a personal struggle of epic proportions between individual tank crews and small units and leaders against a tenacious and ultimately unlucky Syrian attack. Chaim Herzog has written the epic poem celebrating the Golan struggle—quite literally a "Gunfight at the OK Coral." Herzog has less to say about the Suez front in that his "war story" does not illuminate the confusion surrounding certain operational issues. Bren's book presents the operational view of an operational commander who is also a master tactician. Herzog's *War of Atonement* is a dramatic elegy; Bren's book is a passionate analysis. Bren's book does not fail my anticipation here either.

In the course of detailing the day-by-day combat activities of his own division, General Adan manages to cast an objective eye, to the point of self-criticism at times, across the entire spectrum of military and political concern, from strategy through front operations to the small unit tactics of combined arms formations. General Adan was in the middle of the bickering commanders: Sharon, Gonen, Tal, Elzar, BarLev, and Dayan—an unfortunate sideshow that seems endemic to high commands. Adan tells this story as

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I expected him to tell it; while he may have some personal axe to grind, he is not a politician and at no time does the reader detect any untoward motivations in his side of this story.

Adan shows tellingly how the antics of General Sharon, using his political clout to get his way, subverted the entire Southern Command of General Gonen and nearly dislocated the Command's efforts early in the campaign. Even BarLev was unable to completely control Sharon. The resulting lack of unity of command was very costly at times. It is in this recognition that the reader also senses that the small unit cohesion so characteristic of the IDF, so lovingly shown in Chaim Herzog's work, held sway. General Adan also is at pains to show that Israel and the world ought never question the abilities of Israeli soldiers and tactical commanders even as it is sobered by the brilliance and sometimes excesses of the high command.

General Adan casts an equally searching eye at operational and tactical issues. He discusses the vulnerability of the main battle tank (very expensive) to the precision antitank missile (relatively inexpensive). While not minimizing this vulnerability, Adan suggests how the problem is overcome, that is, how it is lived with. In presenting the operations and tactics of the breakout, Adan gives the lie to the whole issue, showing what tanks are for—overrunning the intermediate air defense networks, logistics lines of communication, and command and control networks. Even the most resolute tankers will admit the weaknesses of armor against equally resolute dug-in infantry with the wherewithal to defeat individual tanks. Armored and mechanized forces ought to be used to drive deep into vulnerable rear areas of enemy formations, dislocating the enemy's tactical and operational plan, not assaulting dug-in infantry.

tively if not in detail, has to do with mechanized formations in urban areas. Adan's armored foray into Suez City was a disaster—at least for the tank battalion that went in. But Adan's hindsight and "lessons learned" will not strike a particularly resonant chord among *our* infantry tacticians. Adan agrees that tanks alone do not operate well in cities. He argues, however, that dismounted light infantry are not dazzling either. Rather, as he puts it, his most effective force was mechanized infantry, *mounted* and firing in all directions from their fighting vehicles—a slightly spruced up version of our current mechanized infantry carrier, the M113. Since urban warfare will be very characteristic of any war undertaken by NATO in Europe, we need very carefully examine General Adan's experience and assertions born in this experience.

Of necessity, only snapshots can be presented here; I have given you some. General Adan also discusses training, combat engineers—the Suez crossing and countermine warfare, Israeli style, have infatuated any number of our own generals—reconstitution, and, most importantly, unit cohesion. The war on the Suez Front is more characteristic of armored warfare than the slugfest on the Golan; General Adan presents this war patiently, with an eye to operational lessons learned. Our business must be to come to grips with these lessons and adapt them to the war that we must prepare to fight.

MICHAEL S. LANCASTER
Major, U.S. Army

Stein, Janice Gross, and Tanter, Raymond. *Rational Decision-Making: Israel's Security Choices, 1967*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1980. 398pp. \$25.00

Janice Stein, author of eight of the ten chapters of this volume, evaluates the substance and process of Israeli decision making on the eve of the Six Day War.