

The Great Military Historians and Philosophers



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BY a curious paradox military history is one of the oldest and most prominent fields of history, yet only recently has it acquired respectability in the academic world. Indeed, in a very real sense history began as military history, for the frequent wars in classical times provided a popular theme for the historian no less than the poet. Herodotus gave Greek warfare an epic quality in his work on the Persian wars, and Thucydides, who has taught us most of what we know about the Peloponnesian wars—and has much to teach about problems that plague a democracy at war in our times as well—is a military historian of the first rank. One has only to think of Xenophon's *Anabasis*, Caesar's *Commentaries*, and vast portions of Polybius and Livy to appreciate the significance of military history to the ancients. The literary style of many of these old books may lack the appeal of a Bruce Catton or S. L. A. Marshall, but the authors of these works were often surprisingly modern in their outlook. Their motives, their fundamental assumptions about human nature and war, their enlightening descriptions of the minutiae of military life, and their analysis of problems that they faced can make for fascinating reading.

Each generation, it is said, writes its own history, which means simply that each generation is preoccupied with its own problems and is inclined to read its own experiences into the past. But the past, even the remote past, can also speak directly to the present. In his delightfully unpretentious *Pen and Sword in Greece and Rome* (1937), Col. Oliver L. Spaulding reminds us that the ancient warrior didn't realize that he was an ancient warrior; he thought of himself as a modern warrior, and as such he has much of interest to tell us.

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Certainly this would be true of Thucydides, whose *History of the Peloponnesian War*, written in the fifth century B.C., remains one of the great works of history, military or otherwise. As an Athenian general Thucydides was ideally qualified to describe Greek tactics, siege operations, the construction of warships, and even flame throwers. His treatment of Periclean strategy was "so well and clearly detailed," a soldier in the eighteenth century has stated, that the modern general could learn from it how to frame his own plan of campaign.¹

In addition to providing interesting details of weapons and tactics, Thucydides explains much about human nature. Describing the great plague, he gives not only the physical symptoms of the disease but also the psychological damage to the population of Athens. Citizens lost respect for their gods and for the law, the two major restraints in Greek civilization. "Zeal," Thucydides observes on another occasion, "is always at its height at the commencement of an undertaking," and apparently it was true then, as it is of the political debates in our own day, that "it is the habit of mankind to entrust to careless hope what they long for, and to use sovereign reason to thrust aside what they do not fancy." "The strength of an army lies in strict discipline and undeviating obedience to its officers." "Self-control is the chief element in self-respect, and self-respect is the chief element in courage." "Peace is best secured by those who use their strength justly, but whose attitude shows that they have no intention of submitting to wrong." To these and many similar aphorisms are added Thucydides' profound insights on societies at war. In his day, as in ours, "society became divided into camps in which no man trusted his fellow." An assembly was persuaded to go to war to prevent a series of allies from falling like dominoes; governments experienced delay, mistrust, and difficulty in negotiating an end to conflict; democracies were "very amenable to discipline while their fright lasted."² In many respects Thucydides is as relevant today as he was to the next generation of Greeks.

The officer interested in tactics and leadership in the Greek armies should become acquainted with Xenophon, whose *Anabasis* (written about 375 B.C.) relates the story of the march of the Ten Thousand deep into Persia and back again into Greece. This book is more than a record of incredible adventure; it is a fascinating study in command, and the character sketch of Cyrus

1. Marshal de Puysegur, *Art de la Guerre, par principes et par regles* (Paris, 1748), I, 36.

2. Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War* (New York: Dutton, 1935), pp. 88, 90, 243, 266, 390.

would pass for suitable reading in any leadership laboratory. The resourcefulness shown by Xenophon and the other Greek commanders in bringing the army intact 1,700 miles through hostile territory has inspired generals for centuries. In his monumental *Art de la Guerre* (The Art of War) published in 1748, Puysegur mentions the practical lessons Xenophon's book contains for the eighteenth century, and a few years later British General James Wolfe confessed that the inspiration for a maneuver of his light infantry came from Xenophon's description of a running battle with the Kurds in 401 B.C., when Greek spearmen successfully negotiated a mountain range defended by lightly armed troops.

Xenophon also wrote what probably is the most famous Greek treatise on military theory and practice. In *Cyropaedia* he described an imaginary war in which he gave free rein to his own ideas on organization and administration, tactics and training, weapons and armor. We learn, for example, why the Greeks failed to develop an adequate supply system, which limited their concept of strategy. Frequently they were subject to civil discord, there was no such thing as a trained staff, and the commander, lacking both maps and an accurate method of determining time, found it impossible to coordinate the movements of two or more detachments.³

In battle the Spartan general usually kept his principal officers—the equivalent of the modern battalion commanders—close at hand in order to consult with them and issue his orders. Once he had determined the best course of action, these officers returned to their troops and passed the word down the chain of command to the leaders of what today would be called companies, platoons and sections. In the Greek phalanx each file was a self-contained unit led by an officer in the front rank. Each officer knew his men by name, which Xenophon assures us is essential in motivating the common soldier. "Men who think that their officer recognizes them are keener to be seen doing something honorable and more desirous of avoiding disgrace." No officer who could recognize his men "could go wrong." Thanks to Xenophon the figures who comprise the phalanx emerge as modern soldiers. They move, they must eat, they generally respond to orders, they require discipline, and they respond to motivation, and he explains carefully how these things were done. "No one can be a good officer," he comments,

3. Xenophon's imaginary "battle of Thyrrbrara" is skillfully analysed by J. K. Anderson, *Military Theory and Practice in the Age of Xenophon* (Berkeley: Univ. of Calif. Press, 1970), pp. 165-91.

"who does not undergo more than those he commands," and he understood the eternal truth that Baron von Steuben later demonstrated again at Valley Forge. "Willing obedience always beats forced obedience."⁴

For a comparable look at the Roman military system, the student should start with *The Histories* of Polybius written in the second century A.D. His treatment of the Punic Wars ranks alongside the history of Thucydides. Convinced "there is no more ready corrective for mankind than the understanding of the past," this unusual Greek prisoner of war combined sound historical research with the insights gained from his own experience in politics and war. Few books have contributed so much to our understanding of the past. His description of the constitution of the Roman Republic had a direct influence upon the framers of our own constitution, and his treatment of the Roman military system influenced military thinkers nearly twenty centuries later. Most of what we know about Scipio Africanus and Hannibal, for instance, comes from Polybius, and his treatment of organization and tactics was sufficiently detailed to encourage a prominent French theorist in the eighteenth century to write six volumes of commentary—Folard's *Histoire de Polybe . . . avec un commentaire* (1727-30). This work in turn triggered a running fight between exponents of the *ordre profond* (deep column) and the *ordre mince* (line). Was depth to be the basic combat order, as it had been with the Romans, or should infantry deploy into lines to take advantage of firepower? In answering this question some eighteenth- and nineteenth-century soldiers still looked to the Romans.

Polybius describes military operations in sufficient detail to permit later historians to reconstruct the battles intelligently, and sometimes with a practical purpose. Although we do not know exactly where Hannibal's elephants crossed the Alps, enough is known of his dispositions at Cannae to have inspired a German general a little over seventy years ago. At the strategical level, Count Alfred von Schlieffen devised a plan for enveloping the French army employing the same principles that Hannibal evidently followed in enveloping Varro's legions. Convinced that Germany must win a quick victory over France before the Russians had time to concentrate overwhelming numbers for an invasion of East Prussia, Schlieffen found his inspiration in the first volume of Hans Delbrück's *History of the Art of War* (1900).

4. Robert D. Heinl, *Dictionary of Military and Naval Quotations* (Annapolis: U.S. Naval Institute, 1966), p. 217.

Delbrück's account of Cannae suggested to Schlieffen's fertile imagination the idea of a battle of annihilation through envelopment. Later he developed his own doctrine in a series of articles, many of which were later translated and published in a work entitled *Cannae* (1913). The Schlieffen plan was the ultimate result, and if it would be naive and misleading to claim any sort of cause and effect relationship, we may at least point to Schlieffen as an example of a strategist who discovered that the classics remain instructive even in modern times.

The military student would expect to learn something from the first of the Great Captains to write of his own campaigns, but Julius Caesar's *Commentaries* is disappointing in this respect. Whereas Thucydides and Polybius wrote for the enlightenment of future generations, Caesar intended his book to serve a more immediate purpose. He hoped to convince his fellow Romans not only that he was a great general but also that his policies in Gaul were less violent and rapacious than his political opponents charged. For centuries his work has been useful in teaching young boys Latin, but as for imparting anything of value to the professional soldier we can believe Frederick the Great when he claims that Caesar "scarcely teaches us anything."⁵

A more fruitful source for the student interested in problems of command in Roman times is Onasander's monograph *The General (Strategicus)*. Written in the first century A.D., this interesting treatise contains many pithy remarks upon generalship in all phases, from the selection of officers and staff to specific formations to be used on the march and in battle. Onasander deals with the use of terrain, matters of camp hygiene, the value of drill, and the conferring of rewards. Although he wrote primarily for other Roman soldiers, his observations on the character, temperament, and training of a good commander are so generally philosophical that many of them are valid even today. Translations appeared in England, Spain, France, and the states of Germany and Italy by the sixteenth century. Marshal Maurice de Saxe, one of the foremost commanders of the eighteenth century, testified "that he owed his first conceptions of the conduct of a commander-in-chief to Onasander," and Frederick the Great almost certainly was familiar with the work. Captain Charles Guischart, a member of Frederick's military retinue, included a translation of *The General* in his own *Memoirs militaires sur les Grecs et les Romains* (1760), and Frederick's own *Military Instructions*

5. Jay Lúvaas, trans. and ed., *Frederick the Great on the Art of War* (New York: Free Press, 1966), p. 52.

written a few years earlier resemble Onasander's treatise both in subject matter and treatment, although this could be said of much of the military literature that appeared in the eighteenth century. Problems of command and control had not changed much between the time of Onasander and Frederick, which might help to explain why the cult of antiquity was common among soldiers at the time of the Enlightenment. Indeed, on the eve of World War II, Oliver L. Spaulding observed: "We can read Onasander in the regulations of many countries, and hear him in the lectures of many school commandants to their successive classes."⁶

Of all the military works from antiquity, *The Military Institutions of the Romans* by Vegetius is probably the best known. Certainly over the centuries it has been the most influential. Copies were carried by Charlemagne's commanders and by at least two English kings in the Middle Ages, Henry II and Richard the Lion Hearted. Even before the advent of printing the book was translated into several vernacular languages, and published editions appeared in Cologne, Paris, and Rome and in England before the end of the fifteenth century. Vegetius inspired Machiavelli and Saxe, both of whom borrowed heavily from his description of Roman military institutions, and his work was an important element in the theoretical education of many later commanders. A well known Austrian general in the Seven Years' War, the Prince de Ligne, wrote facetiously that God had not inspired the legion, as Vegetius had claimed, but He probably had inspired Vegetius.⁷

Vegetius made no such claim. His information came from a careful and systematic reading of all the military works of antiquity, and by making this collective wisdom available he hoped to contribute to an improvement of the Roman army in his own day, late in the fourth century A.D. Because he failed to distinguish between the armies that won the Punic Wars, or conquered under Caesar, or pacified the later Empire, Vegetius is not a reliable source about the military institutions of the Romans for any particular period in history. What he wrote about the cavalry is more relevant to the Roman forces after the battle of Adrianople (A.D. 378) than to the legions at the time of Marius nearly five centuries earlier (106 B.C.). On the other hand his description of Roman methods of recruiting, training, and

6. Oliver L. Spaulding, *Pen and Sword in Greece and Rome* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1937), p. 90.

7. Thomas R. Phillips, *Roots of Strategy* (Harrisburg: Military Service Publishing Co., 1940), p. 67.

building discipline may well reflect practices that lasted for several centuries. The modern reader will find that his maxims have no time limit upon them at all: "Who wishes peace, let him prepare for war." "What is necessary to be performed in the heat of action should be constantly be practiced in the leisure of peace." "Few men are born brave; many become so through training and force of discipline." "Valor is superior to numbers."⁸ (This last idea, however, can be carried to excess, as many Japanese commanders demonstrated in World War II.)

The wisdom of the ancient military writers finds ultimate expression in Sun Tzu's *Art of War*. Introduced to the West only in the late eighteenth century, this Chinese classic has attracted wide attention in our own day, especially now that it has been established that Sun Tzu "strongly influenced" Mao Tse-tung and the recent doctrine of revolutionary warfare.⁹ The book is surprisingly modern in outlook, perhaps due as much to Brig. Gen. Samuel B. Griffith's translation as to the timeless quality of Sun Tzu's thought, but it is rich in insight and loaded with striking aphorisms. The book is probably as instructive, in a general sense, today as when it was written nearly twenty-five centuries ago.

The Middle Ages produced no military treatise to rival that of Vegetius and the other Greek and Roman studies on war or Sun Tzu. Even though military institutions formed the foundation for political and social institutions and the eventual decline of feudalism was directly influenced by military developments, western Europe from the fourth to the fifteenth century offers no military literature worthy of the name. The student will get a much better feeling for warfare during this period by reading the secondary works by John Beeler, Charles Oman or R. C. Smail (see Chapter 5) than by clawing his way through some medieval chronicle. "Nothing is to be learned" from all of the medieval wars, declared Frederick the Great contemptuously. And in his erudite treatise on the art of war, Puységur jumped from Vegetius to Montecuccoli, an Imperial general of the late seventeenth century.

Like the gentler and more cultured arts, the art of war was transformed during the Renaissance. The French army of Charles VIII that invaded the Italian states in 1494 was medieval in its organization, equipment, tactics, and above all in its outlook, but by the end of the Italian wars some thirty-five years

8. *Ibid.*, p. 71; Spaulding, *Pen and Sword in Greece and Rome*, p. 101.

9. Samuel B. Griffith's Introduction to *The Art of War*, by Sun Tzu (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1963), pp. 45-56.

later kings were served by trained standing armies, firearms had become as common among infantry as the pike, cavalry had diminished both in relative numbers and in importance, and artillery had forced changes in fortifications. As the pilgrim still journeyed to Rome and the apprentice painter to Florence, military engineers from northern Europe now visited Italy to learn the latest developments in their profession. The increased importance of fortifications can be seen in the writings of Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527), who in 1513 claimed that a ruler with a strong army had no need for fortresses; yet seven years later Machiavelli considered it necessary to devote an entire book in his *Art of War* to the subject.

Machiavelli's treatise on war is the first modern military classic. Like the typical humanist in his day, Machiavelli looked to the classics for inspiration and most of his ideas on training, tactics, organization, and command are little more than attempts to adapt practices described by Livy, Polybius, and Vegetius to conditions prevailing in the fifteenth century. Looking over his shoulder at the Romans, it is scarcely surprising that he failed to appreciate the importance of firearms, nor was he any better than Vegetius in distinguishing between the military institutions of Republican and Imperial Rome. Machiavelli therefore is not a particularly good source for the military practices of either the Romans or their Italian descendants.

His unique contribution is his recognition that war is essentially a branch of politics and that armies normally reflect the qualities of their respective societies. Convinced that he lived in a decadent age, compared with the Roman Republic, Machiavelli called for a citizen army to replace the mercenary forces hired by most Italian princes. He considered citizens more reliable politically and more efficient in tactics and also hoped that a citizen army might become an instrument for restoring civic virtues lost to society. Already in *The Prince* he had urged his patron to discard the undisciplined and unreliable mercenary armies in favor of a militia. In *The Discourses* he wrote at length upon the citizen soldier of Republican Rome. *The Art of War* reveals his plan for a citizen army that would infuse the other citizens with *virtu*, that hard to define characteristic of the good soldier embracing such qualities as courage, discipline, loyalty, obedience, and self-sacrifice.

This is an intriguing theory, particularly coming from a man whose political maxims have been distorted by oversimplification into a philosophy of "might makes right," and "the end justifies the means." Instead of viewing the soldier and the

civilian as two separate and distinct individuals, often with conflicting aims, Machiavelli saw them as two sides of the same man. The soldier served the citizen, but each citizen was at some time a soldier. This argument that the army can serve as the school of the nation resurfaced in the nineteenth century, when advocates of the nation in arms used it to justify universal military service.

Machiavelli should be consulted, therefore, for the insights he can provide on war as one of the collective activities of mankind. It is not necessary to accept his theory that military power is the foundation of civil society to appreciate the relationships he established between war and politics three centuries before Clausewitz blazed a new path in military literature by discussing war as an instrument of policy.

Not until the French Revolution, in fact, did other military writers dwell on the reciprocal action of political and military institutions, although the idea is implicit in the reforms suggested in Saxe's *Reveries* (1757) and is the point of departure for Jacques Guibert in his *General Essay on Tactics* (1775). Probably the most profound military writer of the eighteenth century, Guibert began his study with an account of the ways in which the character of a people and the nature of their government influenced tactics. No significant improvement in armies was possible, he contended, until there first occurred some fundamental changes in society. But let there "spring up a vigorous people, with genius, power, and a happy form of government," a people with virtue in a state where the subjects are citizens, "where they cherish and revere government, where they are fond of glory, where they are not intimidated at the idea of toiling for the general good," and armies would become invincible.¹⁰ The army of Guibert's dreams did in fact materialize fifteen years later as a result of the French Revolution.

Nearly all of the military books written between the time of Machiavelli and Guibert belong to the realm of theory, although authors usually did not bother to distinguish between military history and theory. Saxe and Guibert drew heavily upon history in formulating their theories; Frederick wrote history for the purpose of instructing his successors just as he wrote military theory for the purpose of instructing his generals. And General Henry Lloyd, an Englishman who fought for the Austrians against Frederick, in his *History of the Late War in Germany* (1766-81) was concerned as much with examining the art of war

10. Comte de Guibert, *A General Essay on Tactics* . . . (London, 1781), Vol. I, pp. vii-viii; xxiii-xxv, lxvii.

as narrating the facts of battles and campaigns. Those who endeavored to write military history and ignore theory had so little to say that Guibert once wrote of historians: "I see nothing in respect to military events that can be relied on but the names of Generals and the dates of battles."¹¹

On the other hand, the use of the word *theory* in describing the military literature of the eighteenth century is somewhat misleading. The Chevalier de Folard created his system of tactics from a study of the classics, while another well known military writer, Mesnil-Durand, reduced tactics to a series of mathematical formulas. But most of the so-called theorists were merely practical soldiers trying to record their knowledge, acquired largely through extensive personal experience, for the benefit of younger officers. They described in detail their camps and sieges; they specified the correct practices to follow in surprising enemy posts and convoys; they explained the problems often encountered in skirmishes and ambushes; and they discussed the various methods to be employed in conducting marches to and from cantonments, flank marches, or retreats. Above all they were concerned with practical matters in tactics and organization. Strategy as we use the term did not attract much attention.

The reasons for this neglect of strategy are varied. The word itself had not yet been coined, and when military writers turned their thoughts from the mechanical movement of bodies of troops to that "higher art" of generalship known to later generations as strategy, the term they used was "plan of campaign." And here, instead of establishing any theoretical framework or body of knowledge, they treated each "plan" as a unique project that had to be shaped according to a particular enemy, the terrain, the nature of the war, and the rivers and fortified cities serving as obstacles or as lines of communication and depots. In each instance, just as in the deployment of armies for battle, rules decreed by experience had to be followed—effective ways to defend a river line, established methods of determining the order of march, basic problems to consider when establishing camps, and so forth. There were general rules for offensive and defensive warfare, for the use of detachments, and for precautions to avoid being caught by surprise. Frederick even listed fourteen measures to prevent desertion, perhaps the most consuming concern of an Army commander before the French Revolution transformed subjects into citizens with a cause.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

There is, however, no body of theoretical knowledge about strategy in these eighteenth-century treatises; for that it would be necessary to imitate Jomini and study the actual campaigns. Puységur and Frederick were typical of their day when they resorted to hypothetical situations to communicate their thoughts on strategy, one describing the measures to be taken in a theater bounded by the Seine and the Loire and the other depicting imaginary wars against the French and the Austrians. Frederick in fact wrote his *History of the Seven Years' War* in 1763 primarily to "leave an authentic record of the advantageous [military] situations as they occurred in the provinces . . . where war was made." He hoped that his successors in the next war with Austria (and he always assumed that there would be another) would benefit from his experiences. "All positions, all camps, all marches are known and made. It is only a question of using them correctly and playing everything to its advantage."¹²

It follows, then, that most eighteenth-century treatises, reflecting then current military practices as well as useful "lessons" gleaned from recent campaigns, will provide the modern reader with a clearer insight into the spirit and nature of eighteenth-century warfare than he might hope to gain from the average secondary account of some war or battle. Indeed, this literature should be approached solely with this purpose in mind, for Frederick and his contemporaries were far too pragmatic to worry about formulating maxims that would apply for all time. Occasionally they did glimpse some eternal principle, but this has been true of every military writer of substance since Sun Tzu. One should read Frederick, Saxe, and Guibert for what they tell us of military problems in their own day, for that was their persistent purpose in writing. If their observations provoke reflection upon some similar problem today, this merely proves the wisdom of Emerson's observation a century ago: "Tis the good reader that makes the good book."¹³

Among the military writers of the eighteenth century, Vauban and Frederick the Great stand out because of their practical accomplishments. Vauban designed over one hundred great fortresses and harbor installations and conducted nearly fifty sieges, establishing in the process the basic rules that came to dominate strategy in the "war of positions" until the day of Napoleon. And Frederick, easily the foremost field commander of his age, represents the apogee of the military art as it was practiced before Napoleon.

12. Frederick the Great on the Art of War, pp. 48-49.

13. *The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 12 vols. (Boston, 1930), 7:296.

Saxe's *Reveries*, on the other hand, are a refreshing curiosity. Although his ideas for improving military efficiency did carry considerable weight with nineteenth-century reformers, his influence upon Napoleon is often exaggerated. "Among many extremely mediocre matters" in Saxe's *Reveries*, Napoleon did find "some good ideas" on ways to make the enemy pay for the French war effort.¹⁴ Guibert, who has properly been called a military philosopher, is well worth reading, but the only English edition was published late in the eighteenth century. Unless the student has access to a good rare book collection or possesses a reading knowledge of French, he is not likely to become acquainted at first hand with the most important of all military writers of eighteenth-century France.

Fortunately Vauban's *Manual of Siegecraft and Fortification* is available, the most recent translation being in 1968; this major work contains his formula for the attack and defense of fortified cities. Perhaps, in order fully to appreciate Vauban's contribution, one should also read Eugene Viollet-le-Duc's *Annals of a Fortress* (1876), which traces the evolution of fortification to 1870 by describing in detail seven sieges representative of the successive stages. A casual visit to any fort constructed in this country before the Civil War, when the introduction of heavy rifled artillery made the existing system of coastal defense obsolete, will reveal the debt that our own military engineers have owed to Vauban. And aerial photographs of German defenses on the western front in 1916 demonstrate the application of Vauban's principles even in our own century: The bastions and curtains were made of barbed wire rather than brick or stone, but the trace (ground plan)—and the principle—remained the same.

This is true also of siege warfare. A hundred years after the death of Vauban, sieges were being conducted in the Spanish peninsula exactly as he prescribed, and a glance at any military map of the siege of Sevastopol in 1854-55, the approaches to Battery Wagner in Charleston Harbor in 1863, or the works thrown up by the Japanese at Port Arthur in 1904, will reveal that Vauban's principles were still applicable in the modern era. His *Manual* should be read therefore not only for the light it throws upon military operations in the eighteenth century but also because of his persistent influence upon fortification and siegecraft.

Vauban's influence is also evident in the writings of Frederick

14. Lt. Col. Ernest Picard, *Précipites et jugements de Napoleon* (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1913), pp. 545-56.

the Great, who applied these same rules of siegecraft to tactics and strategy in the field. To Frederick the attack in battle was similar to the attack against a modern fortress:

Anyone in a siege thinks of beginning not with the third parallel, but with the first. Provision depots are laid out and all the works that are pushed forward must be supported by those in the rear. Similarly, in battles, the only good dispositions are those that provide mutual support, where a corps of troops never is risked all alone but is constantly supported by the others.¹⁵

Frederick would treat strategy in the same way, advancing methodically with a river, a mountain chain, or a line of fortresses serving the same purpose as Vauban's parallels, each sure step bringing his army closer to the object of his plan of campaign, which he compared to the breach in the enemy's walls. Above all, Frederick contended, avoid making a deep penetration into enemy territory with an army or even with a detachment—to do so is as fatal as to rush an enemy fortress without first laying siege to the place, establishing parallels to bring the guns close enough to blast a breach in the fortress walls, and moving troops forward in relative safety to a point from which they can rush the breach.

Frederick is best known for his *Military Instructions*, which he wrote early in his military career, before the close of the Silesian Wars (1740-45). His mature thoughts are to be found only in a recent translation of selected writings from his collected works entitled *Frederick the Great on the Art of War* (1966). Here we find Frederick's views on mobility, discipline and firepower, his peacetime experiments with new tactical forms and maneuvers, his penetrating analysis in 1759 of the changing Austrian methods of waging war, and his belated recognition of the new role of artillery and the growing importance of intrenched camps in what is probably his most significant work, "Elements of Castrametation and Tactics" (1770).¹⁶

Frederick wrote more to clarify his own thoughts than to contribute ideas to ours, and he never presented his ideas in a unified system. Nevertheless his views are essential to any understanding of eighteenth-century warfare, and none of the others Napoleon considered Great Captains—Alexander, Hannibal, Caesar, Gustavus Adolphus, Prince Eugene, or even Turenne—has enabled us to share his thoughts and the motives

15. *Frederick the Great on the Art of War*, p. 312.

16. *Ibid.*, pp. 276-305, for the most significant portions of this essay.

underlying his actions. Napoleon himself never wrote fully on the subject of war. Although the thirty-two volumes of his published *Correspondance* contain a wealth of information on tactics, strategy, organization, logistics, command, and the military occupation of conquered territories, Napoleon's thoughts on these subjects are generally expressed with some specific situation in mind.

In contrast, *The Military Maxims of Napoleon*¹⁷ is nothing more than a collection of random thoughts expressed by Napoleon at St. Helena (1815-21) and compiled by an admiring general. We do not know the basis for General Burnod's selections, whether he chose passages that seemed to him an honest reflection of Napoleon's views or whether he selected those maxims—some of them out of context—that he thought would have lasting value. In any event the *Military Maxims* represent Napoleon's final thoughts rather than his reactions to military situations as he confronted them over a period of twenty years. If read on the heels of Frederick's *Military Instructions*, which appeared near the beginning of an even longer career, the reader can easily exaggerate the differences between the two generals. In many respects Napoleon's earlier thoughts on such subjects as artillery represent a logical extension of Frederick's last views on the subject.

Napoleon's *Military Maxims* were quickly translated into German, English, Spanish, and Italian, and in one form or another they permeated the formal education of most soldiers in the nineteenth century. Stonewall Jackson always carried a copy in the field. Others were introduced to Napoleon's maxims through secondary works like Henry Halleck's *Elements of Military Art and Science* (1846), P. L. MacDougall's *Theory of War* (1856), Sir Edward Hamley's *Operations of War* (1866), and a host of lesser but similar works that attempted to recast the great campaigns of history into a mold formed by the principles of Napoleon and his worthy opponent, the Archduke Charles.

The most celebrated and influential student of Napoleon's generalship was of course Baron Henri Jomini, who in numerous books endeavored to distill from Napoleon's campaigns the essence of his tactical and particularly of his strategical doctrine. Napoleon's greatness as a commander resulted above all from his preeminence in the field of strategy, and it was not until his day that military writers began to think in strategic

17. There have been many editions of the *Maxims* since this small book was first published in 1827; the most readily available is probably that contained in Phillips, *Roots of Strategy*, pp. 407-41.

terms. Jomini was the first to grasp the significance of Napoleon's new methods and the principles underlying his actions; indeed, it was Jomini who gave to the nineteenth century a working definition of strategy. Originally the term was taken to mean "the science of military movement beyond the visual circle of the enemy, or out of cannon shot," but Jomini expanded it to signify "the art of bringing the greatest part of the forces of an army upon the important point of the theater of war, or of a zone of operations,"¹⁸ and so it was understood by the generals who guided the armies in the American Civil War and the German wars for unification.

Indeed, Jomini commanded the field of military theory to such an extent in the nineteenth century that no student of military history can disregard either his ideas or influence. The claim that our Civil War generals surged into battle with a sword in one hand and a copy of Jomini in the other is a naive but pardonable exaggeration; whether or not most officers in 1861 were familiar with the writings of Jomini, nearly all of them initially shared his fundamental assumptions about tactics. Formal instruction in military art and science at West Point had been based largely upon the study of Napoleonic warfare as analyzed in the writings of Jomini and his American pupils, and the ideal battle in the mind of the average general in 1861 probably differed little from the classic Napoleonic formula. The drill manuals in use at that time prepared each arm for its role in the kind of battle envisaged by Jomini, and it required several campaigns before most Civil War tacticians could appreciate the fact that American terrain, increased firepower, and a faulty organization made it impossible to fight the kind of battle described so enticingly in the pages of Jomini or Halleck.

The railroad, telegraph, and steamboat were similarly destined to change the dimensions of Jomini's strategy, but here the transition was far less abrupt. Jomini would have been delighted with Lee's generalship during the Seven Days' battles, when the Confederate commander tried "to throw by strategic movements the mass of his army upon the communications of the enemy" (a cherished principle of Jomini), and where McClellan, in changing his line of communications to Harrison's Landing, had pulled off the type of maneuver Napoleon himself had described as "one of the most skillful of military maneuvers."¹⁹ And surely he would have been delighted with Jackson's Valley

18. Baron de Jomini, *Summary of the Art of War* (New York, 1864), p. 326.

19. Phillips, *Roots of Strategy*, p. 413.

campaign, in many respects an "instant replay" of Napoleon's early campaigns in Italy when it came to the exploitation of "interior lines."

But what sense could Jomini have made of Grant's unorthodox movements before Vicksburg, when he deliberately disregarded Jomini's one great principle: "To throw by strategic movements the mass of an army . . . upon the decisive points of a theater of war, and also upon the communications of the enemy as much as possible *without compromising one's own*."²⁰ How would he have reacted to Sherman's march through Georgia, or explained away the fact that in 1862 and 1863 Lee occasionally had violated Jomini's principles and still had managed to win convincing victories? Granted that Jomini recognized that every maxim has its exceptions, the fact remains that the battles of the Civil War were won by generals who wrote their own rules.

And in 1866 the Prussian generals took further liberties with Jomini's maxims. "Let history and principles go to the devil!" one of them snorted when confronted by an unexpected situation a few days before the crucial battle at Königrätz. "After all, what is the problem?"²¹ Moltke himself described strategy as "common sense applied to the art of war," and his formula for victory was simple: seek out and destroy the enemy army with superior forces made available by mobilization of the nation's manpower, meticulous peacetime planning, and the well-developed German rail system. The military student may understand Napoleon's campaigns after reading Jomini, but the Swiss theorist could easily distort a person's view of the Civil War and would be of no help whatever in explaining the generalship of Moltke. For this the writings of Karl von Clausewitz are more instructive.

Jomini and Clausewitz are often contrasted and usually it is Jomini who suffers by comparison. This is manifestly unfair, for each wrote with a quite different purpose in mind and each has contributed uniquely to our knowledge of war. Jomini's *Art of War* is a systematic treatise on strategy; Clausewitz's *On War* is essentially a philosophical inquiry into the phenomenon of mass struggle. Jomini seeks to explain, Clausewitz to explore. You could probably compare both of them to instructors you have seen in the classroom. Jomini is the lecturer concerned with explaining his material in well-organized, practical lessons. Clausewitz, on the other hand, is the ivory-towered scholar

20. Jomini and his *Summary of the Art of War* . . . , ed. J. D. Hittle (Harrisburg: Military Services Publishing Co., 1947), p. 67.

21. Quoted in Marshal Ferdinand Foch, *The Principles of War* (London: H. K. Fly Co., 1918), p. 14.

constantly wrestling with some challenging and perhaps insoluble problem, in the classroom as well as in his book-lined study. Jomini is popular for the tidy lectures he delivers year after year (every fraternity has a set of his notes, often yellow with age but still helpful in the course). Clausewitz is constantly fumbling for his notes, never seems well-organized, and rarely if ever completes his course because he is perpetually adding new material. You can feel comfortable with Jomini; Clausewitz will remind you of your own inadequacies. You leave Jomini convinced that you have mastered "the course," but probably not until you are an old grad will you appreciate the wisdom of the old Prussian professor. Jomini seemed relevant at the time, but as the years pass, and conditions change, and as your interests and responsibilities grow, it is probably some passage from Clausewitz that will march to your assistance when needed. For Clausewitz did not look for any fixed laws or principles, and his conclusions therefore were less exposed than the maxims of Jomini to the progressive totalitarianism of warfare and the acceleration of technical invention in industrial society.

Clausewitz made a profound impression upon the Prussian army. Contending that war properly belonged to the province of chance rather than calculation, he convinced a generation of Prussian generals that the overriding aim in war should be the destruction of the enemy's armed forces and that this was best achieved through the offensive, provided the army enjoyed the edge in numbers and moral and intellectual forces. He did not leave behind a rational system of maxims such as those expounded by Jomini, but his penetrating insights into the nature of modern war helped to educate the judgment of Moltke and his disciples, and Moltke's doctrine as it was understood and applied after 1871 was built upon the foundation laid originally by Clausewitz.

This is not to say that Clausewitz was completely understood even in his own army. German generals, generous always in the lip service they paid to his theories, often tended to overlook, if not deliberately overturn, his basic premise that war is an instrument of policy. Moltke, for example, insisted that strategic considerations should determine policy in time of war. And Prince Kraft Hohenlohe, one of the most respected German theorists in the late nineteenth century, insisted that national policy must go hand in hand with strategy, which places him closer to Ludendorff than Clausewitz in this respect.

Even in the purely military sphere, the meditative ideas of Clausewitz have served many interests over the years. For

instance, convinced that "battle is the only argument in war, therefore the only end that must be given to strategical operations,"²² the future Marshal Foch responded to those passages in Clausewitz that seemed to reflect his own beliefs. A generation was convinced that the next war would be an immense armed drama, beginning with the mobilization of vast armies, their strategic deployment along the frontiers, and then a rapid and sustained advance to those bloody acres where victory would follow short, violent combat. Clausewitz did indeed appear as the prophet if not the uncompromising advocate of total war. It would be strange if he had not evoked this brutal response.

But read *On War* with different assumptions in mind, read Clausewitz for what light he can cast upon our recent experience in Vietnam, and a quite different set of passages will snap to attention: "The probable character and general shape of any war should mainly be assessed in the light of political factors and conditions." Clausewitz points to significant differences between wars: "Every age has its own kind of war, its own limiting conditions and its own peculiar preconceptions,"²³ and he has something relevant to say about the peculiarities of war in our time, the relationship between war and politics, even the distinction between limited and total war. Like Machiavelli or Plato, he can always reward the thoughtful reader although his speculations, like theirs, are easily distorted.

After 1871 the military world was inundated with technical and theoretical literature. New professional journals gave soldiers everywhere an opportunity to air their views; new military schools stimulated the study of war and gave direction to doctrine; revised tactical manuals tried in vain to keep pace with technological change; and even military history became the captive of historical sections of the various general staffs or else served as a vehicle to prove the validity of some particular point of view. The unwary reader who picks up a campaign history written anytime between 1871 and 1914 would do well to remember Bronsart von Schellendorf's observation, "It is well known that military history, when superficially studied, will furnish arguments in support of any theory or opinion."²⁴

22. *Ibid.*, p. 43.

23. Karl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1976), pp. 593, 607.

24. Quoted in Prince Kraft Hohenlohe, *Letters on Artillery* (London: E. Stanford, 1890), p. 108.

Most of this literature was inspired by some recent development or problem and can safely be set aside by today's soldier without any sense of loss. A few titles, however, are worth remembering for the comprehensive insights they continue to give into the military thoughts and institutions that dominated the period. Jean Colin's *Transformation of War* (1912), for example, remains indispensable for understanding the evolution of warfare since Napoleon. Sir Frederick Maurice's essay "War" (1891), which he wrote originally for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, contains a useful annotated bibliography of the best of the military literature produced in the nineteenth century. Spencer Wilkinson, *The Brain of an Army* (1890), is a gem that remains the best source for the ways in which the German General Staff functioned under Moltke. Elihu Root, the American Secretary of War who was instrumental in founding our own Army War College and the general staff, has acknowledged his indebtedness to this unusual book. Anything by G.F.R. Henderson will repay reading. Henderson excelled both as historian and military critic. He used history to stimulate independent thought rather than to illustrate conventional views, and he wrote with unusual sensitivity and imagination. *The Science of War* (1905) is probably still the most original and provocative book on the development of tactics during the Napoleonic wars, the Civil War, the German wars for unification, and the South African war, while *Stonewall Jackson and the American Civil War* (1898) remains a military classic, embodying Henderson's own views on tactics and command and representing a novel approach to the study of strategy.

Probably the most complete tactical studies are Arthur Wagner's *Organization and Tactics* (1895) and William Balck's *Tactics* (1897-1903). The latter is a useful compilation of tactical thought and practice in the major armies of Europe, and illustrates the hold that the Prussian campaigns against Austria and France had upon soldiers thirty years later. Prince Kraft zu Hohenlohe-Ingelfingen's popular *Letters on Artillery* (1890), *Letters on Cavalry* (1889), and *Letters on Infantry* (1892), are more original and less technical essays on the performances of the three arms in the German wars for unification. Useful summaries can also be found in E.M. Lloyd, *A Review of the History of Infantry* (1908), George T. Denison, *A History of Cavalry* (1913) and A. F. Becke, *An Introduction to the History of Tactics, 1740-1905* (1909).

In the field of military history, in contrast to the theoretical and technical literature, Hans Delbrück's *History of the Art of*

War (1900-1920) still stands in the front rank. The first volume was published appropriately in 1900, for Delbrück's work is at once a synthesis of the best military and historical literature of the nineteenth century and a bold first step in the direction of a more sophisticated and scholarly brand of military history.

Delbrück shared Clausewitz's interest in the relationship between war and politics, and indeed in many respects his research on the links between the state and tactics and strategy from the time of the Greeks until Frederick and Napoleon tend to confirm the more selective observations of Clausewitz. He did not, however, agree with what the enthusiastic disciples of Clausewitz were writing about the total nature of modern warfare. Whereas most professional soldiers, at least on the continent, were advocating a strategy of annihilation by the end of the century (and distorting much of what Clausewitz had to say in the process), Delbrück advocated what he called a strategy of exhaustion. For his study of the campaigns of Pericles, Belisarius, Wallenstein, Gustavus Adolphus and Frederick the Great revealed that battle was not necessarily the only pay off in war: It was but one of several means to the end, that being the achievement of the political objectives of the war. Great commanders like Alexander, Caesar, and Napoleon had aimed at the complete military subjection of the enemy, and most soldiers in Delbrück's day were similarly committed to the doctrine that the enemy army was the main object of strategy and that there was no alternative to the decisive battle. Delbrück outraged conventional military opinion by constantly pointing to campaigns and wars where the destruction of a detachment, skillful maneuver, and a successful blockade or siege were likewise effective in bringing a war to a successful conclusion.

The reader today will not be so much interested in Delbrück's debates with the German General Staff over strategies of exhaustion and of annihilation as in Delbrück's unusual approach to the study of military history. What he can best learn from Delbrück is that military history is but one of many branches in history: It has the same values, the same shortcomings, and to be understood properly it must be studied in much the same way. Delbrück maintained that the value of military history was enhanced when it was treated as but one of many branches of history that "flow together . . . and cross-fertilize one another,"²⁵ which probably explains why he was the first to

25. Hans Delbrück, *Geschichte der Kriegskunst im Rahmen der politischen Geschichte*, 4 vols. (Berlin, 1900-1920). Col. Walter J. Renfroe of the Military Academy has recently completed his excellent translation of the first volume with the others to follow: *History of the Art of War Within the Framework of Political History* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1975), quotation from p. 11.

establish military history as a respectable academic discipline.

The reader will also benefit from Delbrück's methodology, for by combining meticulous research with the practical military knowledge of his own day he demolished many of the legends that survived antiquity. Thus when Herodotus claimed that the Athenians charged into the Persians at Marathon after running for some 1,500 meters, Delbrück consulted his own experience as a reserve officer and the most recent pamphlets on military training and tactics before stating this to be a physical impossibility. A large unit in his own day could cover at most 150 meters at a run during maneuvers (Prussian regulations in fact permitted the soldier with all field equipment to run for only two minutes, or 350 meters). From his study of Greek society he knew that the Athenian army comprised men of fifty as well as youths in their prime, and personal experience taught him that a closed mass (the Greek phalanx) runs with much more difficulty than an individual. Finally, an incident in the 1864 war between Prussia and Denmark provided a useful example of what can happen when a body of troops enters hand to hand combat after a forced run of 400 paces. He rejected therefore the version of Herodotus, and a personal study of the terrain enabled him to revise the traditional version so that it might make more sense to the modern soldier.

He similarly used his knowledge of demography and of Persian and Greek society to demonstrate that instead of being outnumbered six to one, the Athenians probably fought the battle with something approaching even odds. Only then, he contended, do the tactical decisions of both commanders make the slightest sense. Delbrück's method enabled him to reject the story that ten years later the Persians returned with an army of 4,200,000 men! Instead of merely scaling down the numbers to a more reasonable figure, which most modern historians have done, Delbrück shows why this too was an absolute impossibility:

An army corps of 30,000 covers, in the German march order, some 14 miles, without its supply train. The march column of the Persians would therefore have been 2,000 miles long, and when the head of the column was arriving before Thermopylae, the end of the column might have been just marching out . . . on the far side of the Tigris.²⁶

In this manner Delbrück worked his way through 2,300 years of military history, providing fresh insights on familiar campaigns

26. *Ibid.*, p. 35.

and leaving behind a work that is as valuable today as when it was first written.

No survey of military literature can ignore Adm. Alfred Thayer Mahan, who approached the past with an entirely different point of view than Delbruck. Mahan treated the history of sea power as "largely a military history," and he searched the period from 1660 to 1815 for "inferences applicable to one's own country and service." Jomini provided his methodology, although he was a far better historian than the Swiss pundit. Mahan's principles of naval strategy are comparable to Jomini's maxims for land warfare; both believed that "the organized forces of the enemy are ever the chief objective," and Mahan shared Jomini's faith in the validity of unchanging principles. "The battles of the past," he claimed, "succeeded or failed according as they were fought in conformity with the principles of war."²⁷

Because Mahan wrote didactic history, it really makes little difference which of his books on the influence of sea power one reads: The lessons will be the same. *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660-1783*, which appeared in 1890, and its sequels dealing with the wars of the French Revolution, Napoleon, and the war of 1812, had a profound influence upon both naval theory and history. Mahan constantly applied his principles to contemporary military and commercial control of the seas. Because he made the past speak to the present in meaningful terms, his theories became immensely popular not only in the United States, then emerging as a major naval and colonial power, but also in Germany and England, where there was an intense interest in naval power. No American military writer—and few American authors in any field—can match his international reputation. Mahan found naval history "a record of battles, and left it as a subject that was intimately connected with foreign policy and the general history of the nation state."²⁸

Works devoted to strategy before 1914 are disappointing and surprisingly lacking in originality. In *The Development of Strategical Science During the 19th Century* (1904), Rudolf von Caemmerer traces the influence of Clausewitz, Jomini and Moltke but deadens the interest of the student in the process. After 1871 strategy became pragmatic and nationalized as most writers turned away from the purely theoretical and focussed attention upon specific problems that their respective military

27. A. T. Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History 1660-1783* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1890), pp. 1, 9, 83.

28. D. M. Schurman, *The Education of a Navy: The Development of British Naval Strategic Thought, 1867-1914* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1965), p. 82.

forces faced. Strategy also became increasingly dominated by tactics, which is suggested by the title of one of General Jules Lewal's treatises, *Strategie de Combat* (1895). According to Lewal, familiar definitions seemed to have lost their meaning; old rules could not be extended to cover the new conditions created by the railroad, telegraph, mass army, and modern weapons. "The unexpectancy of combat is inevitable, and in view of this fact he who invokes the memory of the glorious maneuvers that led to Marengo, Austerlitz and Jena is open to censure. . . . Now one arrives on the ground and one fights there: that is the war of the future."²⁹ As the alliance structure and arms race increased international tensions and limited the options of strategy, the significant work in the field was inevitably directed toward the elaborate plans produced in the operations sections of the various general staffs. German strategic thought finally came to rest in the much publicized Schlieffen plan, while the spirit of the offensive that dominated French military thought by the turn of the century found its ultimate expression in the ill-fated Plan XVII.

There are some excellent studies of the soldier in modern battle. In his famous *Battle Studies* (1880), Ardant du Picq examined the Latin classics to gain fresh understanding of men and morale in ancient combat, which he then applied to modern battle. By the use of a questionnaire which he sent to many of his fellow officers, he acquired much the same kind of data on the behavior of soldiers in the Crimean War and the Italian War of 1859 that S. L. A. Marshall was later to glean from his extensive after-action interviews in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam.

The infantryman of World War I is the subject of Lord Moran's fascinating account of his medical experiences on the Western Front, *The Anatomy of Courage* (1945). Easily overlooked, this book should be required reading for all who would understand what men went through in the trench war of 1914-18. More recently John Baynes has investigated the morale of the front-line soldier in a work entitled *Morale: A Study of Men and Courage* (1967). Commencing with the 2d Battalion of the Cameronians in 1914, he follows the men of his father's old unit through the battle of Neuve Chapelle.

By far the most stimulating study of human behavior in battle is John Keegan's *The Face of Battle* (1976). This is not just another book about battles. Keegan has re-created the fighting at Agincourt (1415), Waterloo (1815), and the Somme (1916) to

29. J.L. Lewal, *Strategie de combat* (Paris: Baudion, 1895), 1:3, 35; 2:189.

demonstrate how soldiers have reacted to three sorts of weapons, namely the sword and lance, the musket, and the machine gun and poison gas. How did men in such varied circumstances "control their fears, staunch their wounds, go to their deaths"? Unlike the others, Keegan is not a professional soldier nor has he seen combat, but he has made brilliant use of his sources, and his approach will influence the thinking of any serious scholar interested in battle.

Any soldier who takes his profession seriously will benefit from these studies, for as Napoleon reminds us, "morale makes up three quarters of the game." "Remember also," Admiral Farragut advised his son, "that one of the requisite studies for an officer is man," and General George S. Patton, Jr., wrote long before his name became a household word, "wars may be fought with weapons, but they are won by men."³⁰

For the problems inherent in the mass army, the curious student would be well advised to browse through General Friedrich von Bernhardi's *On War of To-day* (1912). Written only three years before the outbreak of war in 1914, this work gives probably the best insight into the assumptions that guided soldiers into the first battles. In two surprisingly readable volumes, Bernhardi probes the secrets of modern war—the relation of force to numbers, technical appliances, march techniques, supplies and lines of communication, principles of command, and the essential elements of superiority in war. His discussion of military operations includes fortress warfare and naval warfare. His mistakes are the mistakes of the generals who fought the First World War, but it is always well to remind ourselves that had the Germans won the first battle of the Marne—and it was a near thing at that—military writers like Bernhardi would probably be honored as prophets today.

World War I produced a flood of analytical literature, much of it prophetic, about the nature and shape of wars to come. Giulio Douhet, an Italian artillery officer who early developed a belief in air power as the dominant factor in modern war, was such a writer. Douhet was not alone in his observation that in a war of attrition it is not so much armies as whole populations that determine the outcome. Despite their military victories, the Germans had eventually suffered a complete general collapse, which could only have happened as the result of "a long and onerous process of disintegration, moral and material, of an essential nature—a process which came about almost independently of the purely military conduct of the war."

30. Farragut and Patton are quoted in R. D. Heinl, *Dictionary of Military and Naval Quotations*, p. 178.

According to Douhet, the airplane could strike an enemy far behind his fortified lines without every having to repeat the ghastly assaults seen on every front in the 1914-18 war. In the future a massive air assault against enemy population centers would destroy civilian morale and hence win the war. Command of the air was as fundamental in his thinking as command of the sea had been to Mahan, and while he urged that the military, naval, and air forces should be "thoroughly co-ordinated," he insisted upon an independent air force which could "always operate in mass." And once this independent air force had won command of the air, "it should keep up violent, uninterrupted action against surface objectives, to the end that it may crush the material and moral resistance of the enemy."³¹

Douhet's theories may seem old hat to the military reader familiar with the great bomber offensives of the Second World War and the more recent experiences in Korea and Vietnam, although few informed soldiers today would share Douhet's faith that civilian morale and even enemy ground forces could be destroyed as easily as bridges and buildings. But Douhet makes good reading, both for his insights into the nature of the First World War and the reasoning that led him to believe completely in the victory of air power in any future conflict.

There is, however, a pitfall here that is by no means unique to Douhet. The casual reader of history often is likely to assume a cause and effect relationship between an idea that is forcefully articulated and some subsequent event. While Douhet undoubtedly reinforced the arguments of apostles of air power in other countries, his book, unlike those of Mahan, did not change the direction of military thinking. The United States Army after all had its own Billy Mitchell, and the printed evidence makes it clear that Douhet had no influence upon British doctrines of air bombardment that evolved between the two wars. The complete version of *Command of the Air* was not even translated into English until 1942.

The next two writers whose books belong on the shelf of any well educated officer are deservedly recognized as prophets who, shortly before their deaths, had won high honor even in their own country. J. F. C. Fuller and B. H. Liddell Hart are easily the most prolific, controversial, and influential military writers produced by the First World War. Lifelong students of war, they dedicated themselves to the cause of army reform and mechani-

31. Giulio Douhet, *The Command of the Air* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1942), pp. 128-29, 151. First Italian publication 1921.

zation. They attempted to find order in history as a realistic basis for their theories; between them they developed the concept of *Blitzkrieg*, which made them true revolutionaries.

Liddell Hart bears a striking resemblance to Jomini. Both were interested primarily in strategy, both assumed that their historical studies could be boiled down to a few basic principles valid in all times and under most situations, both were addicted to method and fond of coining words (Jomini is responsible for *logistics*, Liddell Hart for *baited gambit*, *alternative objectives*, and the strategy of *indirect approach*). Above all, both believed in their theories to the extent that they taught the same lessons throughout their long and prolific careers. It is almost true that if you have read one book by Jomini you have read them all, while Liddell Hart's celebrated strategy of indirect approach provides a consistent theme in practically every one of his writings after about 1928.

Both theorists, incidentally, prided themselves on the influence they exerted from time to time on military policy and strategy. Jomini was an adviser to the Russian Tsar and probably more than any other individual was responsible for the French strategy in the war of 1859 against Austria. Liddell Hart's advice was solicited by several governments and frequently by friends in high places within the British military and political establishment. As a theorist, military correspondent, historian, and reformer he exerted a powerful influence upon military developments throughout his active life.

Fuller on the other hand may be compared with Clausewitz. He was interested more in the phenomenon of war than in the elements of strategy. He too approached the subject philosophically, relying upon Hegel rather than Kant and, like Clausewitz, Fuller never completely synthesized his dissonant and roving thoughts on war. *The Conduct of War* (1961) represents his mature reflections on war and policy, but it does not show the unconventional staff officer wrestling with our modern principles of war (which he recovered, incidentally, from the *Correspondance of Napoleon*), searching out solutions to military problems aggravated by industrialization, or endeavoring to comprehend the universal meaning of war as a scientist, social scientist, philosopher, and historian. Here perhaps Fuller would differ from Clausewitz, for his writings have a basic integrity that transcends the worth—or the weakness—of any single volume, whereas the essence of Clausewitz is contained, if not necessarily in final form, in *On War*.

Since between them Fuller and Liddell Hart wrote some sixty

to seventy volumes, it is possible here only to suggest those that are more representative of their thought—or provocative in stimulating the thought of others. *On Future War* (1928) more than any other single book imparts the spirit of Fuller's inquiries in the 1920s, when he was struggling to formulate a theory of mechanized warfare and at the same time to induce the British army to catch up with the march of technical civilization. *Armoured Warfare* (1943), known originally as *Lectures on Field Service Regulations III* (1931), remains his most important work on mechanization. Although most of Fuller's basic ideas were realized in the Blitzkrieg of 1940 and the subsequent campaigns in North Africa, the reader should remember that he wrote before 1931 and that significant improvements were made in both tanks and aircraft before his theories could be put to the test of war. *The Army in My Time* (1935) shows Fuller at his irreverent best (or worst, depending upon the degree to which one associates himself with the Establishment). Better than any other single work, this book gives Fuller's devastating criticisms of the institutions and leaders of the British Army from the Boer War to the time of his retirement. None of Fuller's books merited attention as history until he produced his monumental three-volume *Decisive Battles of the Western World and Their Influence upon History* (first edition, 1940). After the Second World War he was less interested than before in using history as a vehicle to carry his own theories to the public.

Liddell Hart's *Great Captains Unveiled* (1927) provides a fascinating glimpse of the actions of Ghenghis Khan, Saxe, Gustavus Adolphus, Wallenstein, and Wolfe; it also reveals the thought of the author as he sought to apply certain lessons from history to military problems of his own day. This book effectively illustrates the use of historical analogies in the evolution of armored warfare. His biography of *Sherman* (1929) remains the best military study of Sherman's campaigns, but it is of even greater importance in tracing the development of Liddell Hart's own theories. In the process of writing this volume, Liddell Hart first worked out the elements of his strategy of indirect approach, which he then developed by searching history for proof of the validity of his theories. *Strategy* (first edition, 1954), perhaps his best-known work today, is the last of a long line of philosophical (rather than strictly historical) works illustrating by well-chosen examples the successful application of the strategy of indirect approach. His good friend and admirer, Field Marshal Archibald P. Wavell, once chided him gently for searching for "the military philosopher's stone" and suggested

rather slyly that with his intelligence and command of the pen, Liddell Hart could have written just as convincingly on the strategy of the direct approach. *The British Way in War* (1932) and *Thoughts on War* (1944) contain Liddell Hart's reflections on nearly every aspect of war; *The Tanks* (1959) is a superb history of the evolution of the tank, the development of a theory of mechanized warfare, and the role of the Royal Tank Corps in World War II. *The Ghost of Napoleon* (1933), which Wavell once described as "an excellent mental irritant," is a provocative series of lectures on military thought in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and *The Real War 1914-1918* (1930) remains one of the finest single volumes on World War I. Unlike the great majority of earlier writers, both Fuller and Liddell Hart wrote autobiographies that contain not only the essence of their respective theories, but also a revealing glimpse of the trials and tribulations of the military reformer.

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