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Book Review by Wayne P. Hughes, Jr. of Men Against Fire: The Problem of Battle Command in Future War by S.L.A. Marshall

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come to each action officer workshop. These estimates were low, indicating a greater level of interest than expected. The audience at the Senior Workshop seemed interested in knowing how urgently the new regulations were going to be implemented and how much flexibility they would have in implementing them. The audience at the first action officer workshop consisted mostly of COEA managers (0-6's). Their interests seemed to be oriented on learning what new or expanded requirements were being placed on their studies. The later action officer workshops had mostly COEA "doers." Their interest seemed to be on the "how to" of the COEA process.

In general, the following statements capture the Services' orientation and response at the workshops:

- Army: We know how!
- Air Force: We are not structured!
- Navy: We are not ready!
- Marine Corps: We leverage!

The Army is well structured, devotes a lot of resources, and is very experienced in performing COEAs. Their question was: "Why should we change from an effective method?" The Air Force has moved the responsibility for performing COEAs to the user commands; however, the funds, people and support have not moved with them. Their question was: "What's involved in doing a COEA?" The Navy is waiting for the CNO staff to provide implementing instructions concerning the new regulations. Their question was: "What do you want while service guidance is developed?" The Marine Corps, because of its size and acquisition process, uses other Services' systems. Therefore, it often has to compromise between its real requirements and the availability of other Services' systems. Their question was: "How do we get the best for what we need?"

Because of the large interest in the COEA workshops, the OSD participants realized that more of these workshops may be needed. Also the orientation of the workshops may need to change to include more "how to" rather than the explanatory approach that was used.

The overwhelming desire from all workshop participants seemed to be to make their COEAs the best product possible and to satisfy the new DoDD 5000 requirements. These perceptions are those of the authors. They are what we observed and picked up from talking and listening to the audiences.

PA&E Emphasis

In both Dr. Chu's comments and the summary points developed at each workshop certain themes appeared as items that PA&E will continue to emphasize in the future.

- The DoDD 5000 series regulations call for more up-front analysis, especially joint operations analysis and mission needs analysis.
- There will be a greater stress on consistency between all acquisition documents and analyses. Inconsistencies must be understood and explained to reduce uncertainty in the decision making process.
- COEAs while sharing common elements are each unique. Therefore, no "cookbook" exists or will be developed to perform a COEA.
- Independence is a must.
- Getting the analysis done on time is essential. Great analysis turned in late has little value to a decision maker at the time he must resolve an issue.
- PA&E analysts are anxious to have more and earlier involvement with the Services in conducting the COEAs. Their involvement can serve to improve COEA utility and credibility.
- The measure of a good or bad COEA is independent of whether the system in question passes or fails to pass a milestone gate.

Conclusion

How far these workshops took us down the path of improving the analysis support to the acquisition process is uncertain. However, the journey has been started. With the current environment of reduced resources, this journey is one that we are all forced to take. ■

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PROFESSIONAL READING

Men Against Fire: The Problem of Battle Command in Future War

S.L.A. Marshall, 1947. Reprinted Gloucester, MA, Peter Smith, 1978

Reviewed by Wayne Hughes

One of life's joys is to discover an author on your own and then find that he's appreciated by others. My introduction to **S.L.A. Marshall** was casual and accidental: I bought a paperback of *Pork Chop Hill* in the late 1950s and devoured it. Being first and foremost a journalist, Marshall had a special knack for describing soldiers in action, much sounder than, say, **William Manchester**. He had a cool style that I like better than that of **Hemingway** or **John Keegan**, who come across as overheated.

It is not inappropriate to compare Marshall with writers like Manchester and Hemingway, who forever cross the line between fact, fancy and fiction, or between science and spirit, because lately some revisionist military historians have challenged Marshall's fact as mere fancy or fiction. One big issue is the major conclusion that Marshall reached and stated as fact in *Men Against Fire*, which created something of a splash when it was first published in 1947: "Later when the companies were interviewed at a full assembly and the men spoke as witnesses in the

presence of the commander and their junior leaders, we found that on an average not more than 15 per cent of the men had actually fired at the enemy positions or personnel with rifles, carbines, grenades, bazookas, BARs, or machine guns during the course of an entire engagement...The best showing that could be made by the most spirited and aggressive companies was that one man in four had made at least some use of his firepower."

Philip Gold has gone around and interviewed the skeptics. One was **H.P. "Bud" Leinbaugh** who served as an infantry company commander in Europe in World War II and later in the FBI. A book he wrote around 1985, called *The Men of Company K*, expresses a low opinion of Marshall, and according to Gold is well received by military historians. In his article in Insight, March 27, 1989, Gold quotes **Roger J. Spiller**, a professor of military history at the Army's Combat Studies Institute, and Colonel **Dwight Adams**, a professor of military operations at the Army War College. Spiller said he couldn't find Marshall's research notes, and conjectured to Gold that *Men Against Fire* may have been an attempt to codify what he saw or thought he saw as a journalist rather than as an analyst with real data. Adams, who teaches operations, not history, offers comments more thoughtful and carefully expressed: "We knew that not everybody fires. Marshall stimulated a lot of good emphasis."

It is the later comment that is at the heart of the revisionist fuss. Marshall was made a Brigadier General in the reserve and is credited with having drawn attention to a severe problem that needed fixing. Marshall himself said in subsequent books, like *Pork Chop Hill* about the Korean War, and later ones about Viet Nam, that his data confirmed how the Army had taken *Men Against Fire* to heart, and observed how infantry performance had improved. A lot of Marshall's critics, however, challenge the extent to which he contributed to the new tactics and deserved the generous credit bestowed on him.

If the result of the fuss is to cause military men to read, or reread, *Men Against Fire*, then it will have been worthwhile. The book is superbly written. In it the 25% statistic (or is it 15%?) is almost a throwaway. Doubtless Marshall aimed at shock treatment, and he is not above dramatizing his case, but his sole purpose in offering a number is to establish a problem, and it seems to me he defines it well, along with the solution. There were subordinate problems in World War II, like the M-1 rifle's characteristics; a soldier armed with a weapon he believes unsuited for combat at close range tends to shift to a survival mode when visibility is limited. But the problem homed in on by Marshall was battlefield isolation. Cohesion is a complex thing and physical proximity of another soldier is important mentally and spiritually. Eighty per cent of the book's 211 pages is about recognizing the problem, and correcting it by organizing and training to fight with buddies. By World War II it was seen by combat leaders that dispersal on the battlefield was necessary for survival, but not yet seen among the Americans, so largely an army of hastily trained draftees, that fighting in little knots of companionship was necessary to get beyond survival and generate offensive fire with positive results.

Marshall wrote: "this whole subject of the will of the commander cries out for a modern resurvey and better understanding...Invariably the importance of the will of the commander is discussed as if men were like oxen, seeing but not thinking, waiting for food or the goad [or the slaughter?]...it is important that the young commander see all things in balance. Simply to exalt the will as a force without limit tends only to create delusions about what may be accomplished by the exercise of it..."*What can successfully be willed must first be clearly seen and understood.*"

It seems to me that if the post-war historians disbelieved the data gathered by Marshall, then they should -- and likely would -- have been going about gathering the data to refute him. There may be more valuable statistics to know, but it is hard to think of one. I asked the late **Wilbur Payne** what he thought of the revisionists. He had not time for them. It was true, said Wilbur, that Marshall was known to have been absent from some battles he reported, but he was not soloing and had a small staff of assistants (take note of Marshall's precise wording in paragraph two above). In his eyes, "Slam" Marshall had done a good thing, and if the data was not always rigorous, the assessment and advice were never far off the mark.

Young army analysts all ought to read *Men Against Fire*, not so much for the scant data found on page 54, but in order to put the figures up against a backdrop of combat, and see what a keen and empathetic mind can do with it. Veteran analysts could well reread Marshall if it has been awhile. Why? Because, as evidenced by the three MORS MORIMOC workshops and the CAA SCOHDA Conference on the significance of historical wartime data, operations analysts are increasingly trying to fill a data vacuum left empty by military historians. In his concluding chapter, Marshall says historians haven't looked into the trenches enough: "The body of military history is almost exclusively a record of the movements of armies and corps, of decisions by generals and commanders-in-chief, of the contest between opposing strategies and the triumph of one set of logistical conditions over another." His

message is that wars are won by fighting men, from the bottom up; if you want to improve where there is the most room for improvement, he says, improve the training, skill and determination of each fighting man. Treat physical, mental and spiritual readiness for combat as a single, inseparable entity. In part because historians have failed us, in part because operations analysts have a tradition of going to the battle where data is gathered first hand, and in part because our leaders think latter-day analysts are too enamored of the historians' look-down-from-above viewpoint and have shoved us back into the trenches in body and spirit, more and more we are probing the physical, mental, and spiritual aspects of a battle as one seamless web which all taken together can, perhaps, and as S.L.A. Marshall fervently believed, do the most to improve combat power, establishing the causes of its deficiencies and measuring its true limits. ■

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The Crowd Roars

FOR WANT OF A NAIL... On the Breadth and Depth of Military Analysis

In the December 1990 PHALANX, Dr. **William G. Lese** recounts the state of military operations research in fairly pessimistic terms. His premise, that we must continue to strive to improve the practice of our craft, is sound, but his pessimism with the current state of affairs is a bit overwhelming. One would suspect that part of this tone is spurred by a sense of unease, and perhaps frustration, that we share as the events of the "real world" leap ahead faster and faster -- rendering obsolete the comfortable assumptions upon which the work of most of our lives has been founded.

One by one we see the studies of the past become rusting relics which populate the Land of OBE. Quite naturally, our search begins for remedies to rescue these relics and make them relevant to today's realities, as well as to find remedies to keep the same thing from happening to our work in the future. I submit that the proper focus should be on the work of the present, lest we become lost in the abyss of "could have" and "should have." Let me hasten to add that we cannot ignore the past and its lessons, nor can we be blind to the future and its promises. We must be mindful, however, that progress in military OR -- as in all successful enterprises -- is measured in a multitude of incremental increases and a relatively few brilliant leaps.

As pointed out by Dr. Lese, the catalog of shortfalls is long. We also can point to notable failures of analysis that create monstrous media splashes. Buried in all this are the successes, both large and small, where analysts have done well what analysts are paid to do -- advise decision makers. It is axiomatic that bad analysis tends to lead to bad decisions. The corollary is not true. Good analysis does not necessarily tend to lead to good decisions. Our focus must be on the quality of analysis. Decisions, as we all have experienced, are often the product of considerations that lie outside the scope of what the analyst was asked to produce. True, we frequently take the fall as decision makers attempt to shift responsibility for things that don't work out quite right. When was the last time a decision maker attributed his good decision to the supporting analysis? All this is not to contribute to a general sense of hand wringing by the military analytical community, but to set a base upon which we should be building our action plans.

Our first priority is to understand the universe within which we now operate. The parameters and assumptions have changed. They will continue to change, probably faster than we can adapt. Our challenge is to understand how those changes affect our work today. We must study the environment of our decision makers and help them discover what is important in this "Brave New World." You will note the "help them discover" phrase above. This means that analysts must take an active part with the decision makers in properly framing the statement of the problem at the outset. There are two significant advantages that accrue from doing this. First, the analyst gains a much deeper understanding of the problem and the "Commander's Intent." Secondly, we reduce the probability of conducting an excellent analysis of precisely the wrong problem. If we do a better job here, I suspect that we will be surprised to find that, from an analytical standpoint, not much has changed except the venue of the relevant scenario and the degree of certainty that decision makers are willing to attach to alternative possible futures.

Our second priority is to ensure that we do not become captive of particular methodologies. The hallmark of a good analyst is his ability to ferret out that which is really important and which has impact on the decision maker's problem. Exhaustiveness of detail is not a prerequisite for good analysis -- insightful relevance is. In meeting this challenge, we must bear in mind that in the miliary bureaucracy, decisions are never made just once or by one decision maker. The good analyst will take into account all levels at which the decision will be revisited and address the issues at each such level. In short, selection of the proper measures of effectiveness (MOE) is critical to success in meeting our analytical charter.

Implicit in selecting the proper MOE is the responsibility for standing up to be counted when improper MOEs are applied to the