

REVIEWS

combine in some way to produce victory: decisive leadership, winning against the odds, innovation in technology, organisation and tactics, deception, courage in the face of fire, and of course luck. Leadership and innovation are familiar factors, the importance of which are amply illustrated by a selection of examples ranging from Hannibal's brilliant pincer plan against the Romans at Cannae in 216 BCE to the critical edge that radar gave the Royal Air Force fighters against the Luftwaffe's bombers in 1940. Deception and winning against the odds are exemplified by the role of the Trojan horse in the fall of Troy (1200 BCE) and the astonishing defence of Rorke's Drift in 1879 by a hundred British infantry against a Zulu army of 4-6,000 warriors. As Overy reminds us, the prerequisite to success in battle is the courage of individuals and formations of combatants in the face of the enemy, an important factor explored through experiences as diverse as those of the Athenian infantry at Marathon (490 BCE), the Christian crusaders at Arsuf (1191) and the US Marines at Guadalcanal (1943). Battle for individuals becomes a kind of community cut off temporarily from the rest of the world, in which nothing matters more than prevailing over the enemy and avoiding death. Ultimately, chance, frequently in the form of reinforcements arriving in the nick of time or few projectiles striking at the right time and place, plays a huge part in determining who wins and who lives. The fall of Constantinople in 1453 to Sultan Mehmet owing to a door left open and unprotected by the defenders, the last minute arrival of General Blücher's Prussians at Waterloo in 1815, and the crippling torpedo attack by a few British Swordfish aircraft that doomed the battleship Bismarck in 1941, all make the point clear.

No doubt some specialists will conclude that Overy's one to two-page descriptions of his hundred battles barely penetrates beyond the surface of the complexity and brutality of war in the last 6000 years. But this book is meant to be a grand survey, a primer on the history of war, not unlike the coffee-table book of decisive battles I read in my early teens that sparked my interest in the history of war many years ago.

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Huw Bennett, *Fighting the Mau Mau, The British Army and Counter-Insurgency in the Kenya Emergency*. Cambridge, 2013. 307pp. ISBN: 978-1-107-65624-6. Paperback. £19.99.

It is always a pleasure to review a first class book of analytic history, one such work is Huw Bennett's excellent study of British counter-insurgency warfare in the Kenyan emergency from 1952-9155. It is also a timely book as recently William Hague, the then Foreign Secretary, settled out of court a long running damages claim by Kikuyu tribesmen that they were tortured by the British army during the insurgency. It is frequently argued that in the bitter conflicts that mark the post 1945 anti-colonial

struggle, Britain got it right while other countries, notably France, with its running sores of Indo-China and Algeria, and in particular the United States in Vietnam, got it wrong. For decades the mythology of Field-Marshal Templar's 'hearts and minds' policy in Malaya, designed to wean the population away from the blandishments of 'communist bandits', coupled with an emphasis, deeply rooted in the traditions of the common law, on the minimum use of force (where the greater levels of violence used by other nations failed markedly) held sway over the debate about all of British de-colonisation. *Fighting the Mau Mau* explodes this myth, in Bennett's considered view violence against insurgents was excessive and often unrestrained, while violence against the host population was also sanctioned by the highest colonial authority. Bennett's focus is on the British Army and its reaction to the insurgency, not the wider questions of British colonialism in Kenya. The 'minimum use of force' tradition comes under scrutiny only to be found wanting; unsurprising given the racist assumptions of both settlers and British conscript soldiers, which saw the rebels as fair game. 'Acceptable' levels of military violence and the weakness of international law are crucial to understanding the problems faced by the army during this conflict. There was a general ignorance about international law and its provisions in respect of insurrections, and widespread use by colonial authorities of special powers encouraged violence. To support this Bennett examines three pre-1945 colonial conflicts: Ireland, the 1919 Amritsar massacre and Palestine. In each case the British Army was clearly guilty of excesses and this continued after 1950. However, Bennett disagrees with Caroline Elkin's (*Britain's Gulag*, Jonathan Cape, 2005) suggestion that the Mau Mau war was genocidal and estimates that including the demographic deficit the total number of dead totaled some 24,000, about a tenth of Elkin's estimates. However, the scale of repression can be gauged from the number of legal executions for crimes committed by Mau Mau activists. David Anderson (*Histories of the Hanged*, Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2005) points out that 900 Africans were executed during the three years of the emergency, which is approximately two-thirds the number of executions that took place in the UK between 1900 and the abolition of capital punishment in 1964. Bennett divides the insurgency neatly into two phases: the first where the army had only a limited strategic role in direction of counter measures against the growing unrest in the central Kenyan highlands; and the second after General Erskine was appointed GOC in the summer of 1953, when a far more professional approach to the conduct of the war was adopted by Nairobi.

The army and particularly the locally recruited Kenya Regiment (KR) had been involved in military operations since the beginning of the emergency in early 1952 but Erskine, an experienced soldier (who had begun his service in WWI) imposed higher standards of discipline on the troops under his command. Erskine's subtle and successful use of amnesties, pseudo-gangs and 'villagisation' denied the Mau Mau any 'Maoist' type shelter within the Kikuyu population to the extent that by 1955 his successor General Lathbury could claim victory. However, there was a price as

REVIEWS

Erskine turned a blind eye to much brutal violence by both the KR and the Home Guard and accepted that military courts martial were excessively lenient in prosecuting criminal acts by British soldiers. Bennett cites the notorious case of Major Griffiths, who had to be tried twice for clear cases of murder before justice could be seen to be done.

This is a superbly researched book, based a tremendous amount of archival research including the secret Colonial Office archive, which has only just been released to the National Archives in Kew. It is vital reading for anyone seeking to understand the British Army's role in modern counter-insurgency actions, whether in Kenya or in Afghanistan and this book cannot be recommended too highly.

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Roger Lee, *British Battle Planning in 1916 and the Battle of Fromelles: A Case Study of an Evolving Skill*. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2015. Index, xiv + 229pp. ISBN 978-1-4724-4995-5. Hardback. Price £70.00.

Except in Australia – whose troops underwent their true Western Front baptism of fire in that sector – the attack at Fromelles on 19 July 1916 has been long overshadowed, in historiographical terms, by the concurrent events on the Somme. Until recently, the majority of accounts of Fromelles, not least in Australia, have portrayed Lieutenant-General Sir Richard Haking – the GOC of XI Corps, which conducted the operation – as a pantomime villain whose incompetence contributed significantly to the apparent failure and high cost of the attack, suggesting that his nickname of 'Butcher' was richly merited. Since 2002, however, Fromelles has received fresh scholarly scrutiny, and public attention, partly driven by the 2010 exhumation and reburial of 250 soldiers found in graves bordering the nearby Pheasant Wood. Many of these works remain generally critical of the handling of the battle, but detailed studies by Paul Cobb (2007), and Peter Barton (2014), in particular, are more considered, while Michael Senior's 2012 examination of Haking's overall performance as a corps commander has done something to rehabilitate his reputation.

This highly stimulating new study by Dr Roger Lee, former Head of the Australian Army History Unit, is outstanding both for the quality and breadth of its research and for its balanced and objective approach, which happily avoids any narrow national narrative or bias. As Professor Gary Sheffield remarks in his Foreword, the book contains the first serious overview of the BEF's planning processes in 1916, exploring in depth all its facets from GHQ down to brigade level as well as investigating how