

Press On! Selected Works of General Donn A. Starry. Edited by Lewis Sorley. Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2009. 2 volumes. 1,341 pages. Reviewed by **Colonel Gregory Fontenot, USA Ret.**, Director of the University of Foreign Military and Cultural Studies, Fort Leavenworth.

Together, Generals William E. DePuy and Donn Starry produced much of the thinking that led the post-Vietnam renaissance of the US Army. Donn Starry, however, is the man who succeeded in shifting and focusing Army doctrine and related acquisition efforts to frame and ground the AirLand Battle concept, the unit structure, and much of the equipment to execute AirLand Battle. General Starry did as much as any man and more than most to create the Army that won the first Gulf War. He performed much of the analysis and worked alongside General DePuy to develop the Active Defense doctrine. General Starry's experiments and thinking about that doctrine while in command of V Corps led to his consideration of how to extend the depth of the battlefield to disrupt, delay, and defeat Soviet operational echelons. This is the chief inspiration that culminated in his personal supervision of the thought process that became AirLand Battle. To these achievements must also be added his efforts in transforming the US Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) into an "engine of change."

General Starry may be said to be the exemplar of what it meant to be a Cold War soldier in Europe, which contrary to contemporary usage is not an apology. His career nearly spanned the duration of the defense of the Fulda Gap. Starry joined the 63d Medium Tank Battalion in Grafenwoehr in 1949 and moved with it to Mannheim until he returned to the United States in 1952. He served twice more in Europe, including a tour in the 3d Armored Division from 1960-64 during which he commanded 1st Battalion, 32d Armor in Friedberg. In his last tour in Germany he commanded V Corps for 16 months in 1976 and 1977. General Starry soldiered in Korea and completed two tours in Vietnam where he led the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment during its operations in Cambodia, fighting from the ground rather than from a command and control aircraft. He served twice in TRADOC, first as the commandant of the Armor school and then as commanding general. General Starry retired as C-in-C of US Readiness Command in June 1983.

An intellectually curious and prolific man, Don Starry produced an amazing and complex body of work, running the gamut from *Mounted Combat in Vietnam*, to letters on mundane matters of uniform, to thoughtful analysis on the rationale for light infantry, or reorganization of the Army division. Although Starry's work was eclectic and voluminous, it is not without structure. Dr. Bob Sorley, the editor of *Press On*, takes advantage of this characteristic and organizes the collection thematically. Instruction on how to fight, how to organize, and how to equip runs throughout chapters ranging from airpower to Vietnam, but the overarching theme is how to defeat the Soviets in Europe. General Starry's assessment of the 1973 Arab-Israeli War for General DePuy coupled with his insightful study of Soviet capability inspired him for the remainder of his career. In ten short years, he produced a compelling body of work, including contributing to the 1976 edition of Field Manual 100-5, *Operations*, and testing it during corps command. While serving as TRADOC's commanding general from 1977-81, he completed his magnum opus, AirLand Battle, and the structure to fight it—Division 86.

The underlying theme in much of Starry's thinking was what he termed the extended battlefield, the central battle, or the corps battle. The problem posed by the Soviet threat absorbed Starry. Because he understood technology and analysis and possessed a broad historical perspective, he ably served as General DePuy's second

in developing the Active Defense and defending it against all comers. In some ways, V Corps served as a proving ground for the concept of the Active Defense. In short, DePuy and Starry changed the culture of the Army from one that thought very little about doctrine to one that heartily debated it.

The resistance to the Active Defense surprised and bemused General Starry. The strident opposition seemed to him unwarranted and unmerited. He concluded that this resistance arose in part because of inadequate efforts to explain the doctrine to the Army at large. He sought to avoid a reprise of this problem and the acrimonious debate that had occurred during the development of the 1976 manual between TRADOC and the Combined Arms Center at Fort Leavenworth. Starry insisted that the replacement manual be written at Leavenworth by three mid-grade officers, Huba Wass de Czege, Don Holder, and Rich Henriques. General Starry and his writing team worked together exchanging drafts and thinking through the end result. He also sought to avoid debating the caustic commentary pundits offered against the Active Defense. This he achieved with remarkable success by using Brigadier General Don Morelli to run what is now referred to as a strategic communication effort.

There is much more to this and other stories that emerge in just over 1,300 pages in two volumes. The depth of Starry's thinking served as the basis for much of what the Army is today, and it is more readily understood as a consequence of Sorley's first-class effort. Bob Sorley, a Vietnam-era tanker and historian, was the right man to edit General Starry's papers. A biographer both of Creighton Abrams and Harold K. Johnson, Sorley understands the Army of this era and is comfortable in knowing the men who led it.

General Starry's selected works are required reading for those who seek to understand the histories of the American Army in Europe, US armor forces in Vietnam, and the Army that fought in Operation Desert Storm. These two volumes also provide an introductory education on how large institutions function and transform. Donn Starry was a leading agent for much of that change, ending with the successful culmination of Desert Storm. Sorley has done a superb job in selecting what should be included in those two volumes, and his editing is superb. His prologue is a concise and riveting summary of Starry's career and establishes the context that permits his brilliant organization of General Starry's papers. This is a masterful effort and captures the essence of a great soldier and thinker.