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Brothers, Rivals, Victors: Eisenhower, Patton, Bradley and the Partnership that Drove the Allied Conquest in Europe

by Jonathan W. Jordan

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of the Modern U. S. Cavalry*

Jonathan Jordan knows how to tell a good story filled with colorful heroes, a well-chosen complement of supporting characters, villains, and events that permit readers to consider the protagonists' actions against the backdrop of war at the operational level. As a historian, he draws on a wide array of archival material to capture the state of mind in which Eisenhower, Patton, and Bradley went about their business, especially when dealing with each other. In fulfilling the roles of storyteller and historian, the author makes a strong case for his thesis that Allied success in Western Europe during World War II was in large part a function of the special chemistry that existed between these very different men. The author uses an attention-grabbing prologue set in the icy Ardennes as a point of departure for his argument before describing the unbroken chain of events that led to a critical meeting at Verdun in 1944 and beyond to victory in 1945.

In the early going, Jordan succinctly describes how each of the protagonists spent their time between the end of the war to end all wars and the beginning of the war that would make them into household names. Eisenhower, initially the junior partner, and Patton forged their friendship around tanks, of all things, and ideas associated with a new way of waging war that dominated the minds of so many during the interwar years, even as it was suppressed to varying degrees by the institutional army. Patton introduced Ike to Fox Connor, who, in conjunction with Douglas MacArthur, transformed a minor league coach—a tactical thinker—into one of the greatest general managers of war, writ large at the nexus of operations and strategy. Bradley, the team player, built his reputation as a trainer and solid soldier garnering the attention of the story's most important supporting character of all, George C. Marshall. Patton did what he had to in an effort to make sure he did not miss the next war; this included playing upon his personal relationships with Marshall and others. Although Patton and Bradley served together in Hawaii, and Bradley and Eisenhower were West Point classmates, there was no single context that brought them together other than their collective desire to please Marshall, thus making "brothers" an apt part of the book's title as they all vied for the attention of the Army's father on the eve of the United States' involvement in World War II.

Jordan charts the meteoric rise of all three men as the Army expanded, prepared, and deployed to North Africa and the Mediterranean theater. By the end of the African campaign and the subsequent liberation of Sicily, Patton

emerged as an able warfighter at the Army level. So much so that Eisenhower could ill afford to part with him, even in the light of the slapping incident. Bradley, once an understudy, moved past Patton only to learn that senior or subordinate, his relationship with the dashing cavalryman was always going to be complicated. Ike earned the starring role for D-Day and the associated headaches that came with it. In this story, the problems were rarely the Germans, but more often than not, the British. Chief among them, cast in the role of lead villain, was Field Marshal Bernard Law Montgomery. Jordan effectively uses Montgomery, and everything about him, as a reference point to trace the shifting views held by all three American generals, but also to track the changing nature of their dealings with one another.

Ashore in Europe, Bradley emerges as a solid choice for Army and Army group leadership. He gets high marks for the COBRA breakout and escapes serious criticism for his role at Falaise and in the Ardennes. Patton, driving through the hole created by Bradley, gets Eisenhower's campaign back on track with a dramatic demonstration of the open warfare concepts they had debated as junior officers and neighbors in the early 1920s. He delivers again in the Ardennes and beyond the Rhine, but sadly fails when asked to reinvent himself as the military governor of Bavaria. Throughout the book, Eisenhower evolves a more sophisticated coalition leader, sometimes at the expense of those who served him so well while he gained his footing in Africa and Sicily.

Patton provides the energy that keeps the pages turning. What will he do next? Did he really say that? Jordan lends more color to Ike and Bradley by reaching beyond their postwar edited and reconsidered thoughts to the papers of those closest to them when the events played out. By the end of the book, one can almost see Kay Summersby hovering at Ike's side in a cloud of cigarette smoke. Thoughts of Bradley require an uncomfortable shift in the chair contemplating his hemorrhoid surgery as a personal prelude to the invasion of Sicily. All generals emerge as something more than plaster saints.

Jordan has done an admirable job in creating balance while describing how each man's role contributed to the success of the others, but a bookshelf straining under the weight of Weinberg, D'Este, Blumenson, Ambrose, and Pogue need not make room to accommodate this newest offering. The reader searching for critical analysis of the crisis case studies—Kasserine, the failure to close the Falaise Gap, and the Ardennes—will be better served elsewhere. Someone new to the study of World War II will enjoy this readable account that should lead them in search of a broader perspective of the war and the richly detailed bibliography points the way.