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Red Wings Over the Yalu: China, the Soviet Union, and the
Air War in Korea (review)

Kenneth P. Werrell

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is only partially answered in the books given as references.

Overall, the discs are an excellent source for anyone studying the war from a military point of view. Two books written after the war might have been included, to round out the sources, *The River and Gauntlet*, by S. L. A. Marshall, and *MacArthur's War—Korea and the Undoing of An American Hero*, by Stanley Weintraub. However, I would suggest that any scholar of the Korean War would also need to consult *The Forgotten War*, by Clay Blair; *Korea, the First War We Lost*, by Bevin Alexander; and *Refighting the Last War—Command and Crisis in Korea 1950–1953*, by D. Clayton James.

D. Randall Beirne

Baltimore, Maryland

Red Wings Over the Yalu: China, the Soviet Union, and the Air War in Korea. By Xiaoming Zhang. College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2002. ISBN 1-58544-201-1. Maps. Photographs Appendixes. Bibliography. Index. Pp. xii, 300. \$39.95.

This is an important book. For over fifty years the fighter battles during the Korean War have captured the imagination of writers and readers and produced a seemingly endless stream of books on the subject. But almost all have rehashed the same material and have covered the subject from the U.S. perspective: little new has appeared since the publication of Frank Futrell's official USAF history, *The United States Air Force in Korea*, in 1961.

Zhang breaks out of this cycle by using Chinese and Soviet sources. These include not only documents, but also interviews with Chinese air force veterans of the Korean War. Zhang discusses the historiography and highlights the areas where the documents are unavailable. The author also provides the context of how a ground-oriented military quickly created a large air force. He does an excellent job of showing the growing pains of the Chinese Air Force (only created in November 1949); the maneuvers at the top levels (the haggling between the Chinese and Russians); as well as the issues at the tactical level (such as limited pilot training). The author presents a balanced and even-handed account, not only between the military and diplomatic dimensions, but also between the actions of the Communist and U.S. airmen. He concludes that the impact of U.S. air superiority on the communists was substantial and that the fighter battle was not a one-sided American triumph as described by western authors. Zhang is more successful in arguing his first conclusion than the second.

Zhang's efforts to elevate the record of the communist airmen falls short. The problem centers on the matter of claimed victories and acknowledged losses posted by the combatants. The author's difficulties are a partial result of making limited use of USAF archives and instead relying on some questionable secondary sources and communist documents. (Can we put the same faith in communist documents as in U.S. documents? By inference, Zhang does just that.) It is certainly possible that the communists may have

lost 550 MiGs in air-to-air combat as they assert (is it naïve to assume the combatants knew and accurately reported their losses?), versus the over 800 claimed by U.S. airmen. However, communist victory claims of over 1,600 U.N. aircraft destroyed, far exceeds the 150 aircraft that U.S. sources reported were lost in air-to-air combat. Clearly this gigantic discrepancy is much more than the normal overclaiming typical of aerial combat. Thus the claims issue is a controversial point, and because Zhang refers to it so often and as it supports one of his major conclusions, it requires more detailed attention. Regardless of the exact numbers, there can be little question that the U.S. airmen had air superiority (the author calls it “overwhelming air superiority,” p. 203). This was significant for, as Zhang concludes, U.N. airmen prevented the communists from using their aircraft to support their troops and inflicted heavy damage on both communist personnel and material (p. 209).

Red Wings Over the Yalu is an excellent and important book. In addition to its groundbreaking character, it is well written and illustrated. Anyone wanting a fresh, well-researched, and balanced view of this subject will welcome this study. We can only hope that Zhang will continue his work and others will be encouraged to follow his impressive lead.

Kenneth P. Werrell

Christiansburg, Virginia

The Role of Amphibious Warfare in British Defence Policy, 1945–1956.

By Ian Speller. London and New York: Palgrave, 2001. ISBN 0-333-80097-4. Tables. Appendixes. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Pp. xi, 250. £50.00.

Amphibious operations have long played an important role in British military history. Indeed, they remain one of the Royal Navy’s “core capabilities” and the largest addition to the surface fleet in the last decade was the new amphibious assault carrier, HMS *Ocean*. While much of the history of these operations is well documented, the period immediately following the Second World War has been largely ignored. In this revision of his doctoral dissertation, Ian Speller has begun to fill that important void.

The primary goal of this well-written monograph is to discuss the reasons why the British lacked any substantial amphibious forces through the immediate postwar decade and how this situation placed significant limits on the options available when faced with various crises throughout the period. Speller begins with a brief account of British amphibious warfare through World War II and the strategic theory behind it. His account is both interesting and vital to an understanding of the postwar situation. Unlike the United States Marine Corps, the British had no single service responsible for amphibious operations. Instead, they had the interservice Combined Operations Headquarters, later Amphibious Warfare Headquarters (COHQ/AWHQ). The author rightly, and repeatedly, argues that this situation was seriously flawed in that “being the general responsibility of all, amphibious