

**FROM PAST TO FUTURE:
THE AUSTRALIAN EXPERIENCE OF LAND/AIR OPERATIONS**

**IN THE SHADOW OF THE DRAGON:
DOCTRINE AND THE US ARMY AFTER VIETNAM**

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In any modern army's hierarchy of professional concerns, military doctrine stands at a second or third order of importance. At the United States Army's staff college today, students are badgered into memorising a militarised version of the great chain of being, in which a nation's grand strategy is supposed to set the terms of reference for military strategy, which in turn dictates the character of its military doctrines.¹ Some actually believe this. Orthodoxy tells us further that these doctrines are meant to guide and often to prescribe the manner in which our armed forces will fight.² So defined, it is held that doctrine answers the straightforward and practical demands of soldiering, and makes it more than possible for a modern American soldier to pass through an entire career never asking more of doctrine than this.

But for both students and practitioners of war, doctrine can be made to answer more demands than this. An Army regulation dating from 1965 characterises doctrine as 'the best available thought that can be defended by reason'.³ The image is highly gratifying to contemplate, as are most things fantastic. As a practical matter, however, military doctrine possesses certain properties and behaves much like any other complex, evolving set of ideas. It does not evolve with quite the stately progress that would please theoreticians or romantics, who would impose upon doctrine a structure or meaning as if it were a self-contained body of thought, quarantined from the world in which it is meant to work. This would not be doctrine, but dogma.

Military doctrines, fighting doctrines, always have been expressions of their time and place, an artifact in the mental life of a fighting organisation. Any armed force operates in accordance with a conception of war that has been formed as a consequence of its history, the state of military knowledge available at the time, the material and technical assets at hand, the objectives to which the force expects to be committed, and, certainly not least, the calibre of those who must attempt to give it life in battle.

Although modern soldiers expect their doctrines to be explicit, professionally authoritative, and officially sanctioned, historically the doctrines under which soldiers fought were rarely so encompassing, prescriptive or explicit as they are today. Premodern doctrines are best regarded as loose collections of military folk ways, 'tricks of the trade', handed down by the vets to recruits on the march, in the saddle, or across the bivouac fires. For much the greater part of American military history, until this century, fighting doctrines were mostly implied. Soldiers depended for guidance upon what today we would call drill manuals if they were guided at all.

Retrospectively, one may deduce an army's implied doctrine from how it organises, disposes, trains and equips itself. Indeed, this sort of analysis is necessary—to take but one example—in order to understand how the United States Army operated against native frontier tribes in the far West after the Civil War, for there was no doctrine of any kind, and even the drill manuals then in existence were founded upon orthodox European forms of war. Expediency reigned supreme, and if lessons from field operations were passed along, they were conveyed in the most informal and irregular fashion. Modern soldiers, even forward-thinking soldiers at the time, would not have recognised this collection of fighting techniques as doctrine, implied or not.⁴ Not until after the First World War was the nature and purpose of fighting doctrine fixed in America as a genuine sub-class of military knowledge. It was during the next 50 years that doctrine in its present identity emerged. So from its beginnings, American military doctrine has described a rough and twisting path from military folk ways toward its contemporary forms. Even so, the most profound changes in the nature and functions of American military doctrine are of very recent vintage. The proximate cause of these changes was America's war in Vietnam.⁵

How an army recovers from a lost war, if indeed it does, is an abiding question in military history, and it is one of some importance to contemporary armies as well. Hard experience has shown that armies must strike a balance between past and future if they are to be prepared for their next war. That experience has also shown that armies, inherently conservative institutions that they are, commonly overvalue their past at the expense of progress. Ancestor worship did much to defeat the French when they fought the Prussians in 1870. The new-model Imperial Japanese Army of 1904-1905 achieved an unexpected harmony between tradition and modernity during its encounter with the Imperial Russian Army. As for the Russians in that war, the only discernible effect seems to have been to accentuate the rottenness. Scattered throughout history, we can see the wreckage of armies that learned nothing from their experiences, or learned badly, or learned too late.⁶

Of course, some armies do learn from their experiences and are defeated anyway. Here is where the German Army wins good reviews despite having lost every war since 1870. Perhaps Martin van Creveld had the Wehrmacht in mind when he wrote in *Fighting Power*: 'Though military excellence is inconceivable without victory, victory is by no means the sole criterion of military excellence. A small army may be overwhelmed by a larger one. Confronted with impossible political and economic odds, a qualitatively superior force may go down in defeat through no fault of its own'.⁷ But history has a different, brutal and unforgiving standard: the standard does not award points for stylish conduct, does not insist that an army learn all there is to learn, but only enough for victory. And even the most victorious armies must beware, for no sooner is a victory won than the problem renews and reshapes itself, as the French Army would discover in May 1940.⁸ Always, there is another war, another test, waiting somewhere in the history of the future, waiting to pass judgment on an army's readiness to fight.⁹

For the United States Army of the present day, that test revealed itself after years of waiting in the form of the Persian Gulf War. If the Gulf War was not quite the test that the Army expected to face, a climactic European defence against a Soviet offensive, still it would have to suffice. And suffice it certainly did for President George Bush, among others, who shortly after the war told an audience that victory offered the nation an opportunity to 'kick the Vietnam syndrome'.¹⁰ Of course, the allies had accomplished their mission handily, but the opportunity of which President Bush spoke was understood by many as the most important dividend of the Gulf War. Many Americans saw the United States' performance in the Gulf War as a deliverance from two decades of struggle against the bitter memories of defeat in Vietnam. In the month following the defeat of the Iraqi Army, public opinion polls gave President Bush the highest approval ratings ever received by a serving president, and the armed forces won the highest confidence rating any American institution had received since such polls were taken.¹¹

The history of the United States Army after Vietnam has yet to be written, but its traces have been drawn in a number of works, some of which are written in the breathless, now-it-can-be-told tones favored by journalists and other literary performers. This body of writing conveys something less than the balanced view that one hopes history will eventually produce.¹² In the heady aftermath of the war, American Army officers were not reluctant to pass judgment on what they had accomplished. Indeed, one could argue that for American Army officers of a certain age the redemptive quality of that war far outweighed their victory over the Army of Iraq. Inside the Army, any suggestion that the Army's performance was less than sterling was viewed as rank disloyalty, or at least unnecessarily troublesome. An elaborate, forthright after-action review of the war that was meant to provide the basis for future improvements was compiled but remains classified.¹³ Instead, the Army produced a quick history of the war whose chief attribute was a drumbeat of triumphalism.¹⁴

None of this is so surprising. What is more surprising, perhaps, is the idiom in which this chorus of self-satisfaction was expressed. Like their President and Commander-in-Chief, American soldiers routinely evoked the Vietnam War in invidious comparison with what they had accomplished in the Gulf. One senior officer observed, 'the genesis of the victory in the Gulf was Vietnam' and the commitment of those career officers in the generation after Vietnam who said, 'never again. I will never let that happen to my army again'.¹⁵ Set these

remarks against those of another officer, spoken nearly 25 years before, and one may appreciate the depth of feeling that underscores these attitudes. Said that earlier officer: 'I'll be damned if I permit the United States Army, its institutions, its doctrines, and its traditions to be destroyed just to win this lousy war'.¹⁶

The Army very nearly was destroyed. Since the end of the Vietnam War the most quarrelsome and emotional debate has animated appraisals of the war's origins, conduct and outcome.¹⁷ So it is all the more remarkable that there is unanimity on one count: that the United States Army was an institutional wreck by 1973, when the last of American ground forces were withdrawn from southeast Asia, and, further, that over the next two decades this army quite deliberately reformed itself into the fighting organisation that performed so well in the Persian Gulf.

Nor is that all. This consensus extends to the means by which this transformation is supposed to have been accomplished: these reforms were to be effected through the medium of doctrine itself. If the need for reform was virtually self-evident, it was also true that the usual means of reform were by 1973 largely absent. No civilian reformer in the tradition of a Haldane or Cardwell or Root appeared to rescue the Army from its malaise. The politico-military leadership had lost any moral or professional credibility it may have enjoyed. The war had not supplied this army with institutional heroes around whom the faithful could rally. Under the circumstances, neither vision nor visionary seemed possible.¹⁸

What were the circumstances? Strategic retrenchment was the order of the day. Under the terms of the new 'Nixon Doctrine', disengagement from southeast Asia was but a prelude to a general disengagement from all regional conflicts. This disengagement presumed that allies of the United States would provide more support in aid of their own defence. In general, the goal of the Nixon administration was to demilitarise foreign policy by replacing armed confrontation with diplomacy.¹⁹

For the Army, the new strategic posture of the United States meant a return to the old familiar grounds of what had been its principal interest since the Second World War: the defence of western Europe. During Vietnam, the Army's principal European formation, the Seventh Army, had eroded to little more than way stations, sources of men and equipment for deployment to southeast Asia.²⁰ The Vietnam War has been characterised in many ways, but an armoured war it most definitively was not. And, because the Army had always envisioned defending Europe with heavy armoured formations, those were the first to languish during the Vietnam years. The Army's reorientation on the European battlefield heralded, therefore, a happy return to the cradle of orthodoxy after years of exile in the wilds of insurgent warfare.²¹

This orthodoxy was composed of several beliefs that revealed a distinct institutional preference for a certain kind of warfare: defensive continental warfare dominated by the tank. This defensive conception was highly stylised, enshrined after many years of practice in what was effectively the bible for European war, the War Plan 4102. Strategically and operationally, this plan exercised a much greater influence upon pre-Vietnam European formations than doctrine ever did. Tactically, only one thing mattered: tank gunnery. 'Tank gunnery was king', a senior officer recalled from those days. 'If you could hit it, you could probably kill it.' After which, it was widely assumed, all other tactical problems were rendered mute. Thus, the war's end had simplified the Army's strategic and tactical life.

And, anyway, not much was expected from this army, not by its political masters, not, surely, by the American people. A 1973 public opinion survey of the respect enjoyed by American institutions ranked the military just above garbage men.²² America's withdrawal from southeast Asia in the spring of that year, when combined with the abolition of conscription and the advent of the 'all-Volunteer Army' may have contributed to the decline in its stature. Since 1969, the public had been treated to accounts of rising drug use among troops everywhere and certainly in Vietnam, and also to a development that presaged a dark future for this army: 'fragging', the killing of superiors by their own troops. Between 1969 and 1971, 800 fragging incidents were recorded. Forty-five officers and NCOs had been killed. Driven by the end of the draft to lower its recruiting standards, by the middle 1970s, half of the Army was composed of those who scored the lowest on aptitude exams. Forty percent of the Army's

soldiers had not graduated from high school. By 1974, the Army fell 11,000 recruits short of its enlistment target and had 20,000 fewer soldiers than it was authorised to have. Two years later, the statistics got worse.²³

The indiscipline first appeared in southeast Asia and was translated after the war to the European formations, manifesting itself in numerous racial incidents, drug and gang-related violence among soldiers. Some officers walked their night tours in the company areas with rounds chambered in their side-arms. Nor were the signs of institutional decline relegated to the enlisted ranks alone. A succession of five 'reductions in force' in the officer corps began even before the war had ended. These reductions were remarkably destructive of officer morale. One officer whose commission dated from 1966 recalled years later that half of his Officer's Basic Course, 163 men strong, had died in the Tet Offensive. Of those surviving, two-thirds had lost their commissions during the postwar purges. Speaking before a session of the Infantry Officer's Advanced Course at Fort Benning in early 1972, while he was still Chief of Staff of the Army, General Westmoreland told his audience that he intended to remove 'the scum from the officer corps'. According to one report, the general was booed from the stage. Evidently, General Westmoreland repeated his performance later that spring, at the Command and General Staff College, where the student body was so uproarious that a cadre of general officers was dispatched from the Pentagon to Fort Leavenworth to counsel the rowdies. One officer, remembering that time, told me, 'The senior officer corps was thoroughly discredited by the Vietnam War. The majors were in revolt. They didn't give a shit what the senior officers said.' Even five years later, bitter resentment was still casually and publicly voiced. As one officer said to me then, 'goddamn this army anyway. We ought to abolish it and start one of our own.'²⁴ The shadow of the Vietnam dragon was long, and it was very dark.

At the head of the men who had inherited this army was General Creighton Abrams, who was under no illusions about the quality of the force that he presided over. His immediate concern when he took office in 1972 was how best to translate the consequences of the Nixon Doctrine into realistic guidance for his army.²⁵ Abrams was facing a precipitate and, following American traditions, nearly inevitable reduction in the Army's authorised strength. From a strength of over a million and a half in 1968, Department of Defense programs were projecting strength authorisations for 1975 at about half of that.²⁶ In keeping with the new strategy, he was to prepare his army to fight not 'two and a half wars' but 'one and a half', meaning one major and one lesser conflict. But only four of the 13 active divisions were then rated as ready for combat. Out in the field, at least one junior officer doubted that the Army could contend with even a minor conflict. Speaking of his soldiers to a reporter from the *New York Times*, he said, 'You ought to see them, babied, pampered, dumb. Hell, they couldn't even lick the Cubans.'²⁷

The strength and structure of the Army were to be Abrams' overriding concerns during his tenure as Chief of Staff. But his brief would run only so far: he died of cancer before he had been in office two years. Nevertheless, Abrams was the spiritual godfather of the new army and the patron saint of a small cadre of loyal professional officers who were as committed as he was to reforming the Army. Neither Abrams nor any of his followers perceived at first that doctrine could or would be the means of that reform. Well into Abrams' tenure as Chief of Staff, he and his advisors were contemplating the fundamental roles and mission of the Army in the postwar world. The matter of doctrine played no part in these calculations.²⁸ Instead, Abrams determined, rather counter intuitively, to increase the number of active divisions even as the Army was being demobilised, from 13 to 16. Furthermore, he intended to ensure that all these divisions were ready for combat.²⁹

William E DePuy was an Abrams loyalist, and as Abrams' illness forced him out of effective control DePuy became, arguably, the most important general in the US Army. He certainly was, and remains, the most important figure in the modern history of Army doctrine.³⁰ For all his loyalty to Abrams' ideals and aims, DePuy was no sycophant. His character was complete unto itself. From 1969 to 1973 he worked an important influence over the complexities entailed in the demobilisation of the Vietnam army and the designing of the new All-Volunteer Army. During these four years, DePuy perfected a leadership style that had been in the making since his service began in the Second World War.

That war had been DePuy's formative professional experience, and it had not been a happy one. As a young officer in a poorly trained infantry division—the 90th—fighting from Normandy onward, DePuy had decided that few men did what had to be done without being told. Only a few in any given group functioned as they were supposed to function. DePuy thought that the only salvation for such a force lay with professionally competent, sensible and activist officers.³¹ He saw few among his peers or superiors who met his standard. The 90th had the reputation of being one of the very worst divisions the Army fielded during the war. During his time with the division, DePuy saw two of his division commanders, several of his regimental commanders, and a number of other officers relieved for incompetence or outright unfitness.³² DePuy vividly remembered one of his regimental commanders who never left his command bunker, preferring instead to color his tactical maps: green for forests, blue for rivers, black for towns. The regimental sergeant major's job was to keep the commander in crayons. By default, the junior officers ran the regiments, and sometimes with baleful effects. DePuy's memory recalls particularly one whole 'terrifying week of almost total failure'³³

None of DePuy's subsequent professional experience appears to have altered substantially his outlook; on the contrary, his later experience seems to have reinforced proclivities already well fixed. By contrast with the Second World War, DePuy's Vietnam service was mostly 'a distraction'.³⁴ He appears to have been disappointed that the war could not be made to yield to his best efforts. During his tenure as commander of the 1st Infantry Division, he became notorious for relieving commanders and staff officers in numbers not seen since the Second World War. He evidently believed that this was the sort of work a division commander ought to do. He certainly harbored no reservations about this performance later on.³⁵

When he became the assistant Vice Chief of Staff of the Army, DePuy's education would be further refined as he attempted to translate his values into a thoroughly bureaucratic environment. In the Pentagon, he learned the black arts of defence programming and systems management, the chief characteristic of which was its manner of organising economic data far more precisely than traditional methods. Impatient with the sluggishness of the various Pentagon staffs, and believing anyway that organisations of any sort were mainly good for managing routine and nothing else, DePuy did not hesitate to create *ad hoc* groups to do the necessary conceptual work his missions required. Once those had completed their work, and only then, DePuy handed the concept over to those who made the trains run on time. He would never surrender his control over the questions he addressed: by the time these got to the staff, indeed, he had already made the critical, strategic decisions. Anyone familiar with the US Army knows that this is not the normal approach. If responsible officials hand off a complex problem to their staffs, the quality of the product (the outcome always tending toward the safest, most nearly mediocre answer) is diminished, and happily for most, this approach diffuses one's direct responsibility as well. In this particular DePuy was different. He was not at all reluctant to assume responsibility, and he was happy to assume the responsibility of others too.³⁶

This tendency, when combined with the nature of his work at the Pentagon, finished out DePuy's professional formation. As the principal officer charged by Abrams to cut the Army in half, he could not afford to employ traditional methods of staff work, which emphasise single issues, which allow for 'ownership' of any given issue, and which normally are sequential and highly iterative, allowing for what is generously referred to as 'the consensus-building process'. DePuy was adept at circumventing these traditions. In this, he was aided by a new managerial philosophy that had pervaded all the military services since the advent of Robert McNamara's days as Secretary of Defense. This philosophy entailed viewing issues on an interdisciplinary, economic, and strictly functional basis. It had long been good enough for any professional officer to say that his position was founded upon his professional judgment. Because professional judgment was ultimately subjective rather than analytical, this approach no longer impressed in a headquarters run increasingly by the dictates of systems analysis.³⁷ And anyway, professional judgment had not won the most recent war; why should it be allowed to spoil the peace as well?

In the summer of 1973, DePuy won his fourth star and took charge of a new major Army command whose shape he had a hand in designing. The mission of the new Training and Doctrine Command, as its name suggested, was to oversee all the military schools and training installations in the United States.³⁸ DePuy was thus faced with several tasks at once: to organise an entirely new command, and to take charge of training and educating all troops and officers. He also wanted to rationalise 'combat developments'—the way in which new equipment was researched, developed, tested and produced—with the way in which equipment was integrated with the standing Army.³⁹

Notwithstanding the name of the new command, which gave some visibility to the matter of doctrine, the subject of doctrine was not high on DePuy's list of priorities in the summer of 1973. 'We started out ignoring it; it just was not an issue', he recalled years later.⁴⁰ All of which is only to say that DePuy regarded the matter of doctrine in much the same way as the rest of the Army: as of little real significance to the practical concerns of the Army. Management and training were uppermost in DePuy's mind that summer. As soon as DePuy assumed command, the training revolution in the Army would begin, but it would begin in the absence of doctrine. Instead, DePuy meant to elevate his own ideas about training to the level of a general principle. This, which could be translated roughly as performance-oriented training, he would apply to his own personal vision of what the military future had in store for the Army. 'We are not looking for World War III', he told an audience on the eve of his taking command at TRADOC. Instead, he foresaw a short, nasty, limited conflict, perhaps in the Middle East. In his eyes, future wars would be strictly 'come as you are'. There would be no time for the cumbersome mobilisation of the Second World War. Decision would be attained promptly, and very probably that decision would be won by small American forces, if it was to be won at all. To DePuy, this meant that any American unit had to be better by several orders of magnitude than any enemy it was likely to face. This assumption meant that American troops had to be trained to a much higher standard than was customary.⁴¹ In retrospect, it is easy enough to see the doctrinal implications in DePuy's plans for the Army, but these were not at all clear at the time, nor would they become so very soon. At the newly-formed TRADOC headquarters at Fort Monroe, Virginia, few epiphanies were available. Initiatives in training were already in the works: DePuy seemed to believe then that the Army could be reformed by means of training alone. Indeed, DePuy would never relinquish his insistence upon the primacy of training over all else. No matter how intensive his efforts were later on in the doctrinal arena, he admitted that his heart was with training. Indeed, his prejudice for training over doctrine or education was to become a source of criticism against him.

DePuy enjoyed another prejudice as well. Just as he saw performance-oriented training as the only sensible way to approach training, so too did he think of performance when considering weapons. Not the weapon itself, but its effect, and what is more, its effect against enemy weapons—these were more important considerations for DePuy. Such considerations corresponded nicely with what he had learned during his programming analysis days in the Pentagon. If training could act as a vital additive in combat, overcoming the weight of numbers, DePuy believed that superior weapons whose effects were properly orchestrated were even more important to the new equations of modern battle. Superior training and superior weapons meant superior tactics; superior tactics tilted battle in one's own favour. Wars made of tactics, the war on the ground of the battalion and company-grade officer—those composed the totality of war as DePuy then saw it.⁴²

For nearly a generation of soldiering, the US Army had not been very attentive to military developments abroad. In late 1973, the Army was in a theoretical limbo. Orthodox military practices had not won victory in Vietnam, yet no body of ideas had yet appeared to supplant or revise those practices. As if to confirm the bankruptcy of the Army's influence over its own fate, Congress had just cancelled two weapons development programs that the Army had sought—a new model helicopter and a modern main battle tank.⁴³ Despite a huge bureaucracy devoted to the development of new materiel, and despite a large training and education infrastructure, equipment and such doctrine as then existed occupied separate universes. Under the circumstances, the Army had difficulty making a case for modernising its force, to congressional committees or, indeed, to itself. The Army's recent past was unsatisfying to contemplate, its present unpromising, its future as yet indecipherable.

The eruption of yet another Arab-Israeli war in October 1973 was for the American army a providential event. In its general outline, the war corresponded to the military future that DePuy had foreseen only a few months before: it began and ended quickly. It was fiercely lethal. The opposing forces had no time to mobilise further than they had at the outset. The outcome depended importantly upon the quality of the training and the leadership of both armies. There was one critical and major difference, however: the forces did not achieve a decision on the battlefield itself. The fighting developed only to a point before diplomacy intervened. DePuy noticed this difference and incorporated it into his thinking about future war.⁴⁴

Soon after the conclusion of the October war, the Army undertook an intensive study of its operations and equipment. This study, directed by Chief of Staff Abrams and overseen by DePuy, was to work a profound influence upon the future shape of the Army. That the Army's official attention would be attracted by this war was by no means an inevitability. The 1967 Arab-Israeli War had been fought when the American army's attentions were fully occupied in southeast Asia, nor did that earlier war possess such compellingly modern characteristics as the latest war. Before the end of the year, a team led by a brigadier general from within the Training and Doctrine Command, Morris Brady, undertook a thorough operational investigation of the 1973 War. And although the Brady Group issued a final, and still classified, report in the summer of 1974, as early as January of that year DePuy knew enough of what had been learned to tell General Abrams and to react upon his knowledge.⁴⁵

What DePuy learned from the Brady report was that his own army was less well prepared to fight a modern war than even he believed. In three weeks of intense combat, the combined tank and artillery losses of both sides were greater than the total inventory of American equipment then present in Europe.⁴⁶ Armoured warfare had reached a state of complexity and lethality that had not been seen since the Second World War and that, in some respects, was unprecedented. Armoured forces engaged at ranges as much as 4000 metres. Employing Soviet-style combined arms tactics, Egyptian forces integrated infantry armed with precision-guided anti-tank missiles with their armoured formations. Precise, long-range, and well-coordinated fires from protected terrain features exacted a high price from Israeli armoured columns, travelling unaccompanied by infantry and attempting to fight with scant regard to terrain. Early Egyptian advances had been aided immeasurably, as well, by a new integrated air defence system composed of radar-guided anti-aircraft guns netted with a surface-to-air missile system further to the rear. Combined, these systems denied the Israeli Air Force the air superiority they had depended upon in the 1967 war by forming a protective bubble under which ground troops could advance. 'On the Suez front', DePuy told Abrams, 'the IAF [Israeli Air Force] was effective in CAS [Close Air Support] only when the Egyptians sallied out from under the SAM [surface to air missile] envelope'. Although the Israelis recovered from the initial shocks of the Egyptian surprise, DePuy doubted whether they 'could have sustained an offensive long enough to destroy the Arab forces as they were destroyed in the 1967 war'.⁴⁷ Notwithstanding the impressive performance of modern equipment on this new battlefield, DePuy believed that the war's implications for training were most important. Had these engagements been run on computer simulations, DePuy told Abrams, 'the Israelis would have lost every battle'. To DePuy, that meant that unquantifiable factors such as 'training and leadership weighed more heavily than weapons systems capabilities on the actual battlefield'.⁴⁸ But it did not mean weapons characteristics and effects were negligible; to DePuy these matters were inextricably associated with the need to train to a new and higher standard of combat performance.⁴⁹

Years later, DePuy remembered the October War as 'a marvellous excuse or springboard ... for reviewing and updating our own doctrine'.⁵⁰ The war also supplied the American army with a new professional reference point, uncontaminated by association with Vietnam. This reference point revealed modern war in its most sophisticated manifestation, and in such near-clinical conditions that its lessons were seemingly unambiguous. The war painted a picture of Soviet combined arms doctrine and how much the Soviets had modernised their equipment during the Vietnam years.⁵¹ All told, the October War had the effect of organising knowledge in the absence of operational theory. What had been until now a collection of undifferentiated suppositions and disparate intentions was given substance and an organised framework from which specific reforms could be undertaken. In the process, a new

professional metaphor had been created that the Army could employ to communicate both within and beyond itself. Drawing upon the lessons of the October War, DePuy mobilised his command and, in his words, 'embarked on a program to reorient and restructure the whole body of Army doctrine from top to bottom'.⁵²

Although TRADOC was still a new command in mid-1974, each of its many moving parts had been assigned their missions. Doctrine belonged to the various advanced schools, which were presided over by the chiefs of the branches. The Infantry School at Fort Benning owned doctrine for the infantry, the Armor School at Fort Knox attended likewise to its specialty, and so on. Only at the Command and General Staff College were the several specialised doctrines supposed to be amalgamated, for combined arms doctrine was thought to fall chiefly within the province of divisional operations. The staff college had the task of indoctrinating students in the art of arranging for dissimilar weapons and organisations to fight as one. The field manual that is meant to prescribe such doctrine is FM 100-5, Operations. 100-5 sits atop a hierarchy of subordinate manuals, each of which is required to take its cue from the conception of operations found in 100-5. Change 100-5 and one changes, ultimately, the way in which the Army fights. That, at any rate, is the theory, for this doctrinal system is always in motion; 100-5 and the other manuals are always in one stage of revision or another. Still, 100-5 rules the day in doctrine; in the event of a conflict, subordinate doctrine always yields. For these reasons, DePuy needed to focus his attention chiefly on 100-5 in order to conduct his campaign. If he could change this manual and arrange for the rest of the Army to agree, he would be well on the way to his objective.

DePuy conducted this campaign at several levels. His first task was to form a select cadre of loyalists who shared his views. These officers would bear the labor involved not only in the writing but the selling of the new ways to the Army. That was much the more difficult problem, for the Army was composed, then as now, of numerous constituencies and interests over which powerful brokers ruled. Chief among these was the US Seventh Army in Europe, then made of the Vth and VIIth Corps and assorted other units, comprising an important element of NATO defenses. Seventh Army's agreement to any new doctrine, or even its agreement to be guided by any doctrine at all, was critical to DePuy's success. Seventh Army's assigned area of operations in central West Germany was the cockpit in which DePuy's new doctrine was then most likely to come to life. If the Seventh Army could not be infused with DePuy's doctrine, it had no other available host. It would be ignored, and it would die. The new doctrine had to apply to NATO Europe, or nowhere.⁵³

DePuy began in the summer of 1974 by ignoring the organisational boundaries of his own command. From among his school commandants he chose Major General Donn A Starry of the Armor School as his principal confederate. Starry already had a distinguished record of service and was by then a practiced staff officer who had worked with DePuy in the Pentagon. He had been a commander under Creighton Abrams as a young officer, and he had led the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment during the American invasion of the Parrot's Beak in Cambodia during the Vietnam War. While at the Armor School, he would lead a team of writers in the production of an official history of armoured operations in southeast Asia. Like DePuy he thought little of bureaucratic niceties; even his earliest officer evaluation reports noted his impatience with administration. He shared, and perhaps even outdid, DePuy's enthusiasm for the potentialities of modern armoured operations that had been demonstrated in the 1973 War. For anyone who cared to read the signs, Starry was clearly DePuy's professional heir-apparent.

The implicit designation of Starry as the executive agent for the new doctrine of course reverberated through the corps of general officers under DePuy's command. Immediately, the other schools and their commandants were marginalised, and that included the Command and General Staff College and its commandant, Major General John Cushman. Cushman was widely regarded as a military intellectual, and he had an educational and professional background to support the claim. But he had also commanded battalions and brigades in combat, and just before coming to Leavenworth, he had commanded the 101st Airborne Division. He was a serious soldier with impressive credentials, his own kind of impatience with bureaucratic inertia, and an outlook toward ideas that was the polar opposite of Bill DePuy's. Cushman would be perhaps the most serious obstacle of all to DePuy's ambitions.

Brigadier General Paul Gorman was a third force in this equation. Starry was at Fort Knox, and Cushman was at Fort Leavenworth, but Gorman was at Fort Monroe with General DePuy. DePuy and Gorman had soldiered together in Vietnam and later in the Pentagon. Gorman too had a keen mind and professional sense and was absolutely devoted to the notion of reform. Gorman's forte was training, and it was under his hand that a new system of 'performance-oriented' training was quickly instituted, a scheme of training that answered all of DePuy's complaints about his own training in the Second World War. Gorman was the creator of the 'Army Training and Evaluation Program', a comprehensive task analysis of every critical task fighting organisations must perform in order to capitalise upon its combat power.⁵⁴ Gorman had performed well on a mission that was dearest to DePuy's heart, and his influence upon DePuy was considerable.

All of these ambitious, young general officers had of course been quite attentive to DePuy's interpretations of the 1973 War. All during the Spring of 1974, well before the publication of any formal reports, DePuy had been delivering an extensive briefing entitled, 'Implications of the Middle East War on us Army Tactics, Doctrine and Systems'. This briefing, whose primary source was General Brady's report, left no doubt where DePuy stood on the specific tactical and material challenges posed by the war. Already, the Army's training establishment was being bombarded with new 'training circulars', written under Gorman's guidance that incorporated DePuy's tactical outlook. These circulars were meant to convert NCO and officer instructors throughout TRADOC to the new ways of modern war.⁵⁵

If anything, Donn Starry had embraced DePuy's interpretation of the war even more enthusiastically than its author. In April, he had advised DePuy to begin proselytising the new way of war across the Army, opening a free-for-all discussion with field commanders high and low. DePuy understood what Starry was getting at: the convincing was going to be more difficult than the writing. The writing of the doctrine need never take place unless a modicum of consensus could be reached beforehand. But DePuy was not interested in the free interchange of ideas. He was interested in the success of his ideas. 'The only way you can judge what is good and what is bad, what works and what does not work, is to judge it in the light of whether it advances you toward your objective or not. If it does not, it is a waste of time. We are not in this business to be good guys', he had told an audience shortly before.⁵⁶ Instead of a dialogue, he told Starry and others, he wanted his campaign composed of three sequences: first, he wanted General Gorman's new training bulletins insinuated in all of TRADOC's institutions. Second, DePuy would visit the Army's field headquarters personally, to save the saveable and admonish the wicked. Then, and only then, would the 'dialogue' that Starry wanted be permitted.⁵⁷

What followed in 1974 and 1975 had been characterised as an extended debate, and indeed some did behave as though a debate were underway, but General DePuy intended no such thing. A genuine debate might have asked what was wrong with current doctrine, that it must suffer such a wholesale replacement. Nor did DePuy consider the possibility that some experience from Vietnam might still be applicable, such as the hard-won air-mobility tactics that were developed largely during active operations. DePuy was not interested in any history but his own history, and only those parts that he believed had taught him something. To have promoted the free and open exchange of ideas about doctrine would have been antithetical to him and at cross purposes with his intentions. Even as he managed to infuse the new doctrine with his own tactical preconceptions, he meant doctrine to serve the larger purpose of explaining the Army to itself, to rationalising the connections between the development of new weapons systems and how those systems would actually be used, and to fighting for a rejuvenated Army. But as for what was to go into this manual, under DePuy's hand, tactics became war itself.

In the summer of 1974, Starry's enthusiastic promotion of armoured warfare as the warfare of the future goaded Gorman into direct opposition. That July, Gorman wrote a cautionary memorandum to General DePuy, complaining of the promotion of 'doctrine by slogan' at Starry's Armor School, where training circulars were punctuated by 'nostrums', extolling the virtues of armoured warfare over all else. Gorman recommended that DePuy 'issue some strong guidance to the effect that Infantry and Armor will fight together'.⁵⁸ DePuy did not follow Gorman's advice. Starry's aggressiveness seemed to suit him just fine. Years later, DePuy remarked that it was imperative to get the infantry out of the '2 and 1/2 mile an hour mentality'.⁵⁹

Not long after Gorman's denunciation of the Armor School, DePuy wrote to his school commandants. Along with his letter he sent an essay on modern tactics, a 'draft concept plan', he called it. In fact, the essay was a refined version of the briefing on the implications of the Middle East war he had been giving for several months. Virtually all of DePuy's most fervently-held tactical ideas were to be found in this essay: the inherent superiority of the defense in modern war; the prospect of being outnumbered and outgunned; the new parity in opposing weapons; the superiority of the tank on the modern battlefield; and his conviction that if mass and technological superiority could no longer be assumed, the American army's only remaining advantage must be found in the quality of its leadership and its training—an advantage that he clearly felt was lacking at the moment.

DePuy did not intend to publish this essay. Instead, he said, it should be like the pot of soup at a French peasant's house, forever cooking over the fireplace: everyone contributes from time to time, and everyone partakes, but the soup keeps getting better. 'I view the attached paper somewhat in the same way', he wrote. The 'pot of soup letter' has often been cited as evidence of General DePuy's admirable liberality of mind, one anxious to traffic in ideas. But one should remember that this was William E DePuy's house, his fireplace, and his pot of soup. He meant to allow only certain ingredients in the pot. The 'pot of soup' was a fine metaphor after all: DePuy wanted elaboration and improvement, certainly, but not revision. And, importantly, he wanted everyone to have a helping.⁶⁰

To that end, DePuy planned a grand convocation for the fall of 1974. All the school commandants were to meet with troop commanders from Forces Command units in the US, as well as assorted commanders from Europe and Korea for the ostensible purpose of reviewing tactics in light of lessons learned from the 1973 War. The meeting was held at Fort Knox and was called the 'Octoberfest'. The meeting was in fact a carefully rehearsed extravaganza, complete with live-fire demonstrations, all designed to advance the cause of the new doctrine even before it had been written. Also, the widespread infusion of DePuy doctrine by means of Gorman's training circulars would not have been lost upon those who attended. Whether those from the operating forces liked it or not, the NCOs and junior officers joining the field commands in the near future would have been thoroughly indoctrinated already. In the end, through exhaustion or indifference, most seemed to wilt in the face of the TRADOC onslaught. General Walter Kerwin, who commanded Forces Command, admonished the audience on the last day of the meeting to try out the new ideas. This was good enough for DePuy. Now, all he had to do was see that the doctrine was written.⁶¹

The success of 'Octoberfest' signaled the beginning of an intensive round of meetings between DePuy and his lieutenants. Starry was ever-present; so were Cushman and Gorman, as were the other school commandants. DePuy allowed his subordinates just two months to prepare outlines for FM 100-5 and the most important subsidiary manuals. He left no doubt as to who would be held responsible: 'if necessary', he told them, 'you must write them yourselves'.⁶² No one had cause to doubt that DePuy himself would be intimately involved in the process from beginning to end.

DePuy's personal interest, and his insistence upon personal involvement from the general officers under his command, gave birth to a new stage in the history of doctrine in the US Army. Since the beginning of the century, doctrine had been produced at the Army's various schools by committees of harried military instructors. That early doctrine had borne the imprimatur of the Army General Staff, but it was otherwise faceless. No attention had ever been paid to linking doctrine with either the training establishment or weapons development, with the result that a commander in the field could take or leave current doctrine with near impunity. Since the institution invested so little in its creation, why indeed should anyone have taken this doctrine as in any way authoritative in either an institutional or professional sense? But in 1974 and afterward, William E DePuy became so intimately associated with the new doctrine that it would inevitably bear his name. Nor was it any secret that a function formerly served by nameless committees was now being attended to by a cadre of general officers. Doctrine had become generals' business, and most certainly the business of a very select group of generals in particular.

Notwithstanding the dominant role played by Starry and the Armor school in doctrinal developments so far, responsibility for the manual that was so important to DePuy's ambitions still resided with General Cushman at the staff college. When DePuy and his court gathered once more, at Camp AP Hill in December, 1974, Cushman's assignment was to deliver an outline draft of FM 100-5. Cushman once defined doctrine as 'a search for the truth'. None of his other remarks was so telling of his differences with DePuy's philosophy. DePuy believed he had already found the truth, and indeed, he had committed that truth to paper several times already. Cushman began his draft with a quotation from General George C Marshall's classic work, *Infantry in Battle*, written in 1934: 'Tactics is a thinking man's art. It has certain principles which may be learned but it has no traffic with rules'. Such an outlook was anathema to William DePuy. To him, rules were acceptable so long as the rules were right, and he believed fervently that his rules were right. DePuy then gathered his generals about him and produced an outline of the manual he wanted. When the group met again in April of the following year, DePuy assigned a general officer to oversee the writing of each chapter of the new manual. For several days, these subcommittees wrote drafts and briefed the others on their work. Then DePuy told Gorman to take all the draft chapters back to TRADOC headquarters at Fort Monroe. Though present, General Gorman did not participate in the writing, nor would he. He and his staff college had been relieved of the responsibility for the new 'capstone' manual of the Army.⁶³

It was clear enough to DePuy that Cushman's range of vision was insufficient to concoct the sort of doctrine that would serve the Army's purposes, which at the time went far beyond the traditional uses to which doctrine had been put. DePuy thought Cushman's 'scholastic' outlook, along with his lofty and formalistic prose, failed to convey 'the sense of urgency' necessary to retrain, reorient and refocus an Army.⁶⁴ But perhaps more important, DePuy had other constituencies to deal with that were beyond Cushman's reach, and one constituency in particular was every bit as critical as consensus within the US Army itself. That constituency was made up of the Europeans, and mainly the West German Army.

Since West Germany's rearmament in the 1950s, the Headquarters, United States Army Europe, had been the US Army's authoritative voice. Short of national-level contacts, this headquarters, also the home of the Seventh Army, had been the principal link between the new West German Army and its American military allies. Shortly after DePuy took command at TRADOC, the Chief of Staff, General Abrams, directed DePuy to establish close relations with the German High Command. Abrams had given DePuy a golden opportunity to advance his cause by opening an avenue in which Seventh Army's institutional power over European operations could be circumvented. In effect, DePuy would become the Army's executive agent in a new scheme of army-to-army relationships with the Germans. He moved quickly to institutionalise these relationships by organising annual staff talks between the Germans and TRADOC officials and taking control of a system of liaison officers assigned to the German Army. As a formality, American staff officers from the European command were included, but as the staff talks evolved, it was clear that TRADOC was supplanting the European command as the voice of the US Army.

DePuy found much in common with the Germans, and much to admire as well. His admiration had begun when he was on the receiving end of German tactics in the Second World War, and the new German Army's reorganisation of its *Panzergrenadier*, or mechanised infantry, units had impressed him as just the sort of innovation he was attempting to infuse in the American army. Germany's geopolitical situation similarly worked to the advantage of DePuy's ambitions. The Federal Republic of Germany saw its chief military task as a defensive one, and any hint of a cross-border offensive was politically and militarily beyond the pale. For their army, that meant a flexible tactical scheme as close to the inter-German border as could be managed. DePuy believed that here was a context in which his new tactics could, and indeed must, be made to work. In this, there was nothing unrealistic about DePuy's outlook. Referring later to the set of tactical ideas that came to be known as 'the active defense', DePuy observed that 'at best, it is a formula for a stalemate or for deterrence'. On the inter-German border, and with the correlation of forces opposing one another at the time, victory simply meant not losing.⁶⁵

DePuy played his German card expertly. At every opportunity he evoked his association with the Germans, emphasising their agreement with the general principles contained in the various drafts of the new manual that TRADOC's staff was now producing.⁶⁶ His admiration for the German style of mechanised infantry operations was given as an example of the way American armour and infantry ought to fight in the future. USAREUR might well take exception to General DePuy's programs, but they could hardly disagree with the Germans too. One of the most important constituencies in the Army had been outflanked. Within two years of its establishment as a new command, TRADOC was a power to be reckoned with in the US Army.

Almost from the beginning of DePuy's campaign to rewrite doctrine, General Starry had voiced concerns about resistance to change within the Army.⁶⁷ The Infantry School had been dissatisfied with Starry's bid for proponentcy over mechanised infantry doctrine.⁶⁸ Time and again, DePuy had supported Starry, but he had been careful to include the infantry community in the AP Hill conferences. Forces Command, whose forces then comprised the bulk of infantry and airborne units in the Army, expressed displeasure because the new doctrine blithely ignored developments in heliborne warfare that had been perfected in Vietnam.⁶⁹ USAREUR objected that little attention had been paid to combat in urban areas, and especially to the nuclear dimensions of modern war. Likewise, chemical warfare found little space in the early drafts of 100-5. DePuy's approach to these objections was accommodating. Drafts of the doctrine were distributed throughout 1975 to all the objecting parties, along with an invitation that they contribute chapters to the new manual that addressed their concerns. More conferences were held to smooth out objections. None of these objections challenge DePuy's fundamental tactical philosophies. So long as these remained intact, he had no objection to others joining the party. Almost insensibly, the Army's hierarchy was becoming attuned to the new importance of doctrine. By these means, as the field manual grew, the various constituencies were mollified. 1975 was the most political of years for General DePuy.

In February, 1976, DePuy wrote a triumphant report on his progress for General Fred C Weyand, who had succeeded General Abrams as Chief of Staff of the Army. Abrams' tacit support of DePuy's work had been one of his most important advantages. The Chief of Staff's death in late 1974, did not mean, however, that without a patron DePuy's program would be abandoned. It did mean that a power vacuum had been created, and DePuy filled it more than any other general officer. Of all the corps of general officers, only DePuy seemed to have a vision, along with the energy and resources to pursue it. The new Chief of Staff was more nearly DePuy's contemporary than superior, and what is more, according to DePuy, 'he just wasn't intensely interested in the kinds of things we are talking about as I was and as Abe was and as Gorman was and Starry was and so on. He just wasn't'.⁷⁰ What DePuy left unsaid was that the 'kind of things' he and his associates were dealing with were critical to the future of the Army at large, its place in the defence establishment, and its institutional and operational future—matters that were inherently the concerns of any Chief of Staff. General Weyand's disinterest left the field open to DePuy, and only three months earlier he had convened the hard core of his followers once more at Camp AP Hill to write the final draft of 100-5. DePuy, Starry and Gorman personally rewrote the manual, dividing chapters between them. Cushman attended, but only as an observer. No other general officers were present. Less than a month later, DePuy briefed all his fellow four star generals at an Army-level commanders' conference and sent them all home with a copy of the draft, asking for comments. This was merely a formality. There was no chance anyone would offer substantive revisions. Barring last-minute, serious revisions from the Germans, whom he had also given a draft, DePuy expected to publish the manual he now had in hand.⁷¹ A month later, the centrepiece of the new doctrine had also been named: the 'Active Defense'.⁷²

DePuy reported all this to General Weyand. He recounted the origins and evolution of thinking that went into the manual, as well as the political process by which he had accomplished it all. He cited the concurrence of Israeli, German, and US Air Force authorities, and he admitted the differences remaining between them and his manual. 'We are very close on almost all points', he wrote. Nor did he attempt to obscure the eruption of differences within his own army. No doubt General Weyand knew about these already. DePuy recounted how Forces Command had successfully included air mobility tactics in the manual as an example of how

he had taken pains to integrate the best available thought into the process. For all its triumphal tone, DePuy's report ended on a philosophical note. He wrote, 'It will be several more years before 51% of the commanders in the Army ... operate instinctively in accordance with the principle of FM 100-5. At that time, it will be genuine doctrine.'⁷³ Speaking before the officers in his headquarters a few days later, he was rather less reserved: 'The impact [of FM 100-5] ... will be a thousand fold. It will be more significant than anyone imagines. [It] will be the Army way and it will show up for decades.'⁷⁴

DePuy was to be disappointed in these expectations. He intended the manual to be tactically authoritative and comprehensive in its treatment of modern warfare. It was neither. As if to emphasise the tentative nature of the new doctrine, DePuy had directed it be published in a loose-leaf binder. but given the aggressive, take-no-prisoners manner in which DePuy and his associates imposed their ideas upon the rest of the Army, the appearance of the manual could hardly be taken sincerely. But, had DePuy and TRADOC failed to convince the rest of the Army that it must alter its thinking about the future of war, the new FM 100-5 would have been killed with indifference. Whatever else one might say about the Active Defense, it was certainly not ignored. FM 100-5 was officially published on 1 July 1976. Before the month was out, the debate had begun, and in a most unexpected quarter. William Lind, a legislative aide for Senator Robert Taft, Jr, had received an early draft of the manual, as well as a briefing in which General DePuy himself had participated. Lind was less than convinced on several points and wrote an essay, detailing his doubts. *Military Review*, the house organ of the Command and General Staff College, at first offered to publish the piece. General DePuy was informed and three days later the offer was withdrawn. DePuy explained later that 'it would not serve any useful purpose to have the article published ... in advance of the FM's distribution to the Army in the field'. This episode was reported in the October issue of *Armed Forces Journal International*, which led off with an editorial entitled, 'Doctrine Developed in a Vacuum?' 'There are suggestions', the editorial read, 'that the manual is not an Army manual; that TRADOC put it together, got a lower-level DA [Department of the Army] staff chop, then presented the Chief of Staff with a fait accompli'. This was followed by a book review of the field manual, an unprecedented event in itself, as well as a scathing account of the Lind affair. That account reported that 'DePuy hit the ceiling when he heard of this unexpected criticism, and that he ordered the Army to take no notice of the article whatsoever'. Since then, Lind had been distributing copies of his paper far and wide throughout the Defense establishment.⁷⁵

Lind's objections to the Active Defense provided the basis for most of the substantive criticism that would follow from other quarters. Lind asked whether 'winning the first battle' meant that there would be no second battle; he attacked the doctrine as placing too great faith on the effect of weapon systems, and interpreting those effects always to the advantage of the defender. More pointedly, he thought the new doctrine merely offered nostrums to an army so weak that it could only rely upon slogans to encourage a 'can-do' attitude among the doomed. Lind laced his article with historical allusions and examples, marshalled to support his objections, all of which no doubt struck DePuy as completely worthless. Indeed, the TRADOC reply to Lind's criticisms did not even attempt to contest his historical analyses. Not only had doctrine become generals' business, it had become civilians' business as well, and Lind was certainly not the last civilian analyst who would be heard from.⁷⁶

Lind's article, which was eventually published in *Military Review* the following year, effectively signaled the beginning of an unprecedented doctrinal debate involving not only civilian defence experts, some of them self-appointed, but also Army officers. During the next four years, nearly 80 essays were published in *Military Review* alone, most of them focusing upon one perceived deficiency or another in the new manual. If DePuy's own standard for doctrine—that it was how 51% of the Army fought—then the new field manual was in trouble from the beginning. And it never recovered.

Critics who followed Lind had several objections in common. The new manual was perceived as being entirely too defensive in its orientation. DePuy would have replied, and did, that he was only being realistic, and that, in any case, there was a chapter on the offence in the manual. But critics argued that even the offence pictured in the manual was tilted toward the

defence. Alexander Haig, then Supreme Allied Commander Europe, was concerned that the manual was too narrowly focused upon European defense and did not contemplate the possibility that Americans might have to fight elsewhere in an entirely different style. During the bruising encounters between General Cushman and General DePuy during the meetings at Camp AP Hill, Cushman had taken the line that doctrine should not be rigidly prescriptive. But Cushman could not successfully contest DePuy's insistence that doctrine should be precisely that. People had to be told what to do. This approach worked well enough in venues where DePuy was in control, but once the manual was published, he was no longer able to suppress criticism.

Donn Starry had left the Armor Center at Fort Knox in 1976, having been promoted to lieutenant general and been given command of V Corps in Germany. This new perspective impressed some reservations about the doctrine upon Starry. He eventually came to believe that the doctrine did not sufficiently address theatre-level problems, and he learned a great deal more about the Soviet threat than had found its way into the manual. Starry would remain with V Corps for only a year before he was promoted to his fourth star. General DePuy retired, and handed TRADOC over to Starry. Starry commanded TRADOC for four years. By the time he left, the command was well on the way to producing yet another edition of FM 100-5, an edition that was very different from the one he had helped to write at Camp AP Hill.⁷⁷

Even today, Starry questions whether the 1982 edition of FM 100-5 repudiated General DePuy's 1976 manual. He argues that it was necessary for the Army to pass through the pain and the controversy that DePuy's manual lighted in order to reach a more balanced doctrine that the Army could accept. Those who participated in the creation of the 'AirLand Battle', which is the shorthand term by which Starry's doctrine became known, would argue that their doctrine constituted the real revolution, the real progress in doctrine', as William Lind would put it.

But by the time Starry's AirLand Battle doctrine was published, the doctrinal revolution was over. That revolution consisted not of the substance of the doctrine, but of the unprecedented functions doctrine had been made to serve and the way in which it had been given life. At a time when there were no incentives but many excuses to do otherwise, DePuy managed to harness doctrine in the service of reform. Never had doctrine been put to such a purpose. No one else wearing an Army uniform had the resources and the energy to make this ambition a reality. The reserves of energy and professional discipline he committed to this task were likewise unprecedented. His intellectual resources were a keen memory of his early service and an analytical mind, neither of which compelled him to the deeper reflections of a more contemplative man. He was a man of action, not of ideas, which were to him things to be consumed or applied if they accorded with his preconceptions. His analytical bent drove his view of tactics as chiefly the sum of weapons systems in action; he was not unmindful of the human dimensions of warfare, as his critics claimed; he merely thought they were subordinate to firepower and capable of producing limited effect on their own. Perhaps this is why, though he knew the political dimensions of steering the new doctrine through the byzantine collection of interest groups that make up the Army, he did not foresee how these interests might criticise his doctrine once it was finished. For good and ill, DePuy's name was more intimately associated with a military doctrine than any other American soldier had been in over a hundred years.

He shared his enthusiasm and his temporary power of certitude with only a few others, young and aggressive general officers who were happy to subordinate themselves to the large cause of reform. There were, after all, no other reformers competing with DePuy: they all belonged to him. When by these means, doctrine became generals' business for the first time in American military history, the course of doctrine assumed an unprecedented meaning for the institution. It provided a mechanism by which the institution could organise its thinking about future war. Even as DePuy's field manual was being criticised, its critics seemed not to realise that it was DePuy who had created the venue in which they were now thinking.

The doctrinal revolution began as General DePuy's personal creation, and it remained personal while he was in command. His style depended always upon a few loyalists, detached as it were on intellectual service to him. But, DePuy also commanded a large and complex military bureaucracy that gradually grew to attend to doctrinal issues grand and small. While he was at TRADOC, doctrinal issues were the province of a small, talented and energetic band of officers who operated under the patronage of a man who had become the most powerful general in the United States Army. By the time General Starry took command of TRADOC, an elaborate undergrowth of bureaucracy had been created. Significantly, proponentry for the next edition of FM 100-5 was returned to the staff college at Fort Leavenworth. By then, the real doctrinal revolution was over, but by then, the US Army had become a doctrinally-oriented army.

Several months ago, I listened as General Donn Starry addressed a gathering of military historians at Gettysburg. Few of those in the audience understood who he was, and still fewer understood the significance of the movement in which he had been such an important participant. He spoke of General DePuy, now dead, and of the dark days after Vietnam when the Army was convinced it could not win. He outlined how the American Army had discovered the uses of doctrine, and how those uses had helped to make the Army of today. And he recounted how, as he watched with the rest of us the war in the Persian Gulf unfold, he thought to himself, 'it all worked'.⁷⁸ I think it did.

Endnotes

The views expressed herein are solely those of the author and do not constitute the official position of the Government of the United States, the Department of Defense, or the Department of the Army. I am especially indebted to Dr Richard M Swain (Colonel, US Army, retired) for his considerable assistance in the preparation of this paper.

1. I employ the term 'doctrine' here to encompass both higher conceptions of war and operational philosophy as well as what the present-day US Army refers to as 'tactics, techniques and procedures'. Some of the latter can be quite prescriptive. For the purposes of this paper, my focus is upon the higher conceptions of war and operations as they are addressed in what the Army calls its 'capstone manual': Field Manual 100-5, Operations, especially in its post-Vietnam editions. Since the mid-1970s especially, the Army has taken great pains to ensure that derivative manuals—for instance, those addressing Infantry or Armour operations—are written in strict consonance with the outlook of FM 100-5.

2. See Field Manual 100-5, Operations, Washington, DC, 1992, pp iv-vi, and 1- 1,1-2. which describe its doctrine as both definitive' and 'adaptable'.

3. US Army Regulation 320-5, Dictionary of Army Terms, Washington, DC, April, 1965, p 146.

4. Two especially fruitful examinations of 'doctrine' in this period may be found in Robert M Utley, *Frontier Regulars: The United States Army and the Indian, 1866-1891*, Bloomington, IN, 1977, esp pp 44-58; and Perry Jamieson, *Crossing the Deadly Ground: US Army Tactics, 1865-1899*, Tuscaloosa, AL, 1994.

5. These observations are more fully developed in the author's 'American Military Doctrine', *The Oxford Companion to American Military History*, forthcoming.

6. A worthwhile set of essays on this subject may be found in Lieutenant Colonel Charles R Shrader, ed, 'The Impact of Unsuccessful Military Campaigns on Military Institutions, 1860-1980', *Proceedings of the 1982 International Military History Symposium*, Washington, DC, 1984. Especially pertinent to this essay is Colonel Harry Summer's, 'The United States Army's Institutional Response to Vietnam', pp 296-308.

7. Martin Van Creveld, *Fighting Power*, Westport, CT, 1982, p 3.

8. See Robert A Doughty, *Seeds of Disaster: The Development of French Army Doctrine, 1919-1939*, Hamden, CT, 1985.

9. See Alvin Coox's superb account of how the Imperial Japanese Army learned, or failed to learn from, its defeat, a generation after the Russo- Japanese War, at Nomonhon in 1939. Alvin Coox, *Nomonhon: Japan against Russia, 1939*, Stanford, CA, 1985.

10. President George Bush, 'Remarks at a Meeting of Veterans Service Organizations, March 4, 1991', reprinted in *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents*, vol 27, nos 1-14 (Washington, DC, 1991), 248.

11. See 'Bush Approval at 89 Percent, Highest in Polling History', and 'Victory's Aftermath: American Confidence Soars' in *The Gallup Poll Monthly*, no 306 (March, 1991), 2, and 18-19.

12. The winning entry in the race to publish after the war was Bob Woodward's *The Commanders*, New York, 1991. This was followed in quick turn by James Blackwell, *Thunder in the Desert: The Strategy*

and *Tactics of the Persian Gulf War*, New York, 1991, and, by the editors of *US News and World Report*, *Triumph without Victory: The Unreported History of the Persian Gulf War*, New York, 1992. See also the later entries, by James Kitfield, *Prodigal Soldier: How the Generation of Officers Born of Vietnam Revolutionized the American Style of War*, New York, 1995, and James F Dunnigan and Raymond M Macedonia, *Getting it Right: American Military Reforms after Vietnam to the Gulf War and Beyond*, New York, 1995. To date, the best works on the Gulf War that take serious notice of interwar reforms are Colonel Richard M Swain, *Lucky War: Third Army in Desert Storm*, Fort Leavenworth, KS 1994, and Rick Atkinson, *Crusade: The Untold Story of the Persian Gulf War*, Boston, 1993. This theme is employed as the leitmotiv in Alvin and Heidi Toffler's *War and Anti-War: Survival at the Dawn of the 21st Century*, Boston, 1993.

13. (Major General Thomas H Tait, study director), *Operation Desert Storm: Lessons Learned*, 6 vols, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 1991.

14. Brigadier General Robert H Scales, Jr, et al, *Certain Victory*, Washington, DC, 1993. The first chapter is devoted to the history of the Army between the War in Vietnam and the onset of the Gulf War. The remainder of this book is offered as proof of the thesis, set forth in the first chapter, that the Gulf War was the validating event for virtually all the Army's interwar efforts to rebuild itself.

15. Quoted in Al Santoli, *Leading the Way: How Vietnam Veterans Rebuilt the US Military; An Oral History*, New York, 1993, p 422.

16. Quoted in Guenter Lewy, *America in Vietnam*, New York, 1978, p 138.

17. Judging from the sulfurous reactions to former Secretary of Defence Robert S McNamara's recent memoir, *In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam*, that quarrelsomeness has by no means abated; notwithstanding President Bush's hopes, America's war with the memory of Vietnam continues. See, for one example among many, Townsend Hoopes, 'Robert McNamara's "Mea Culpa"', *Washington Post* (27 April 1995), p A20.

18. In 1970 and 1971, the US Army War College conducted two 'studies on military professionalism' in the officer corps that drew a very dark picture of an 'ambitious, transitory' officer corps obsessed with personal advancement at the expense of all other factors. See a discussion of these two reports in Richard A Gabriel and Paul L Savage, *Crisis in Command: Mismanagement in the Army*, New York, 1978, pp 84-96. These two authors argue, further, that these studies show external factors such as popular disapproval had little influence upon the creation of this picture. Instead, they argue, it derived solely from the poverty-stricken ethics that had been inculcated in the corps by the Army itself.

19. See Henry Kissinger's discussion of the new policy in his *The Years of Upheaval*, Boston, 1982, pp 132-35. And for a contemporaneous discussion of the implications of the Nixon Doctrine, see William B Kinter and Richard B Foster, eds, *National Strategy in a Decade of Change*, Lexington, MA, 1973, pp xvii-xx. See also Norman A Graebner, 'American Foreign Policy after Vietnam', *Parameters: The journal of the US Army War College* 15, no 3 (Autumn, 1985): 46-57.

20. A former Vice Chief of Staff of the Army, General Bruce Palmer, Jr, later wrote: 'The proud, well-trained, and combat-ready Seventh Army in Germany was in effect, over time, destroyed as a fighting force.' See his *The 25 Year War - America's Role in Vietnam*, Lexington, KY, 1984, p 94.

21. See Andrew Krepinevich's discussion of this period in his *The Army and Vietnam*, Baltimore, 1986, pp 269-73.

22. This Harris Poll finding is cited in Scales, *Certain Victory*, p 7. It is worth remembering, however, that 1973 was also the year of the Watergate scandal, an affair that did not add to the lustre of government and that contributed to a considerable loss of public confidence in all major American institutions.

23. These figures are recapitulated from various public sources in Scales, *Certain Victory*, pp 6-7, 15-16.

24. *Ibid*, p 8. Author's notes of a conversation with LTCOL Keith Skyles, dated 2 May 1989. Author's notes of a conversation with Colonel Richard M Swain, dated 19 April 1989. I have spoken with several officers who were either present or had knowledge of Central Westmoreland's speech at Fort Benning, as well as several who were members of the staff college class of 1972. Any history of the Army after the Vietnam War that does not address the social and cultural stresses experienced by those who stayed on will be incomplete in my view. See also Lieutenant Colonel John H Moellering, 'Future Civil-Military Relations: The Army Turns Inward?', *Military Review* 53, no 7 (July, 1973): 68-83, which contains the results of a student opinion poll conducted in the Spring of 1972.

25. One general officer, well after the fact, thought that the Nixon Doctrine provided such insufficient strategic guidance that the Army was forced to deduce its proper course of action unilaterally. See General Donn A Starry, 'A Tactical Evolution—FM 100-5', *Military Review* 58, no 8 (August, 1978): 3.

26. See Captain Richard J Hyde, 'A New Force Structure', *Military Review* 70, no 11 (November, 1990): 12.

27. Quoted in Scales, *Certain Victory*, p 7.

28. In the Spring of 1973 General Abrams formed a small ad hoc study group, named after its chief, Colonel Edward F Astarita, to 'determine if there was a legitimate role for conventional strategy and for the Army in the post- Vietnam world'. The group produced a secret three-hour briefing that was given throughout the Department of Defense and other executive agencies. The Astarita group was disbanded in the Spring of 1974. In 1981, one of the members of the original group, Colonel Harry Summers, prepared a written, unclassified version of the group's findings. That paper was published as 'An Occasional Paper from the Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania: The Astarita Report; A Military Strategy for the Multipolar World', typescript dated 30 April

1981. No mention was made of the role of doctrine in this paper. See also General (retired) William E DePuy, 'Presentation to the TRADOC Commanders' Vision '91 Conference, 5 October 1988', in Colonel Richard M Swain, comp, *The Selected Papers of General William E DePuy*, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 1994, p 431 (hereinafter cited as Swain, *Selected Papers*). 29. Lewis Sorley, *Thunderbolt; General Creighton Abrams and the Army of his Times*, New York, 1992, pp 360-67.

30. I am happy to share this view with Dr Richard M Swain (Colonel, US Army, retired), in his introduction to his compilation, *Selected Papers* p vii.

31. DePuy's views are reminiscent of those of the post-Civil War doctrine-writer and reformer, Major General Emory Upton, whose *Military Policy of the United States* evokes the same reservations about the qualities of mass armies as DePuy does.

32. This experience, it must be said, was not unique to the 90th Infantry Division. Quite a few of the draftee divisions were even less well officered and consequently less effective. See Robert R Palmer, Bell I Wiley and William R Keast, *The Procurement and Training of Ground Combat Troops*, Washington, 1948, pp 466-69.

33. Romie Brownlee and William J Mullen III, *Changing an Army: An Oral History of General William E DePuy, USA, retired*, Carlisle Barracks, PA, nd, 1979?, pp 7-16, 35, 45.

34. The characterisation is Major Paul Herbert's, in his 'Deciding What Has to be Done: General William E DePuy and the 1976 Edition of FM 100-5', *Leavenworth Papers*, no 16 (Fort Leavenworth, KS, 1988), pp 21-23.

35. *Ibid*, pp 125, 131, 140, 152-53.

36. *Ibid*, pp 171-75. 37. *Ibid*.

38. TRADOC was one of the new major Army Commands established in 1973— the other being Forces Command, or FORSCOM—as a consequence of the reorganisation of the old Continental Army Command, or CONARC. CONARC had evolved from the Army Ground Forces command of the Second World War and had become an unwieldy military conglomerate. The new FORSCOM commanded all the troop units in the Continental United States.

39. See DePuy's discussion of the problems inherent in the new command in Brownlee and Mullen, *Changing an Army*, pp 177-79.

40. Swain, *Selected Papers*, p 431.

41. 'Briefing by LTG DePuy, 7 June 1973, Fort Polk, Louisiana', in *ibid*, pp 59-66. The training revolution in the Army largely parallels, and in some cases, as above, actually precedes doctrinal reform. The principal author of training reforms during this period was Brigadier General Paul Gorman. For an elucidation of Gorman's ideas, see his *The Secret of Future Victory*, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 1994, pp III-I to III-42. For DePuy's views on Gorman's ideas, see also Brownlee and Mullen, *Changing an Army*, p 183, and *passim*. See also Herbert, *Deciding What Has to be Done*, pp 25-29.

42. DePuy's views on war *qua* tactics suffuse his interview with Brownlee and Mullen, *Changing an Army*.

43. See Herbert, *Deciding What Has to be Done*, pp 27-28. See also a draft of DePuy's memorandum for the Chief of Staff of the Army, dated 8 January 1975, in Swain, *Selected Papers*, p 143.

44. See a transcript of DePuy's handwritten notes, entitled 'Modern Battle Tactics', dated 17 August 1974, in Swain, *Selected Papers*, pp 137-38.

45. See Paul Herbert's discussion of the Brady Study and its findings in Herbert, *Deciding What Has to Be Done*, pp 29-36.

46. *Ibid*, p 30.

47. See DePuy's 14 January 1974 letter to General Abrams in Swain, *Selected*, pp 69-74.

48. *Ibid*.

49. See Brownlee and Mullens, *Changing an Army*, pp 190-91.

50. *Ibid*.

51. Swain, *Selected Papers*, p 72. American investigators had been surprised, for instance, to see Soviet-model Egyptian tanks, equipped for nuclear and chemical warfare. This finding alone would pose substantial complications when DePuy attempted to fit his new doctrine into the framework of NATO defence.

52. DePuy is quoted in Herbert, *Deciding What has to be Done*, p 36.

53. I can find only one instance in which DePuy acknowledged, even obliquely, this obstacle to the acceptance of his doctrine. In a letter to General Alexander Haig, then Supreme Allied Commander Europe, he vigorously defended the new doctrine in a kind of shorthand: 'It is not a European defense plan'. Both officers understood that the European defence plan had for years served as a kind of *de facto* doctrine in the absence of authoritative doctrinal guidance. General William E DePuy to General Alexander Haig, 13 October 1976; copy of letter in author's possession provided by Dr Richard Swain.

54. See Herbert's discussion of the ARTEP, and Gorman's role in its creation, in *Deciding What Has to Be Done*, pp 38-39. See also DePuy's recollection of Gorman's accomplishments in the field of training, as well as a statement of his own affinity with Gorman's training philosophy, in Brownlee and Mullen, *Changing an Army*, pp 182-87, and 202.

55. Herbert, *Deciding What has to be Done*, p 47. A typescript of DePuy's briefing, 'Implications of the Middle East War on US Army Tactics, Doctrine and Systems', nd [Spring, 1974], may be found in Swain, *Selected Papers*, pp 75- 111.

56. General William E DePuy, Keynote Address, TRADOC Leadership Conference, 22 May 1974, Fort Benning, GA, in Swain, *Selected Papers*, p 120.
57. Herbert, *Deciding What Has to be Done*, pp 44-45.
58. Gorman to DePuy, Memorandum, 3 July 1974, parts of which may be seen in *ibid*.
59. DePuy is quoted in *ibid*, p 41. The '2 and 1/2 mile an hour mentality' was evidently a phrase routinely used at Fort Knox to describe the Infantry School's less than adventurous approach to the problems of modern war. Colonel Edwin Scribner, 'Doctrine Development by TRADOC, May, 1973- December, 1979', typescript in author's possession, p 6.
60. General William E DePuy to Major General David Ott, *et al*, 23 July 1974, with Inclosure, 'TRADOC Draft Concept Paper: Combat Operations', in Swain, *Selected Papers*, pp 121, 122-35.
61. An account of 'Octoberfest' can be found in Herbert, *Deciding What has to be Done*, pp 47-49, and John L Romjue, *From Active Defense to AirLand Battle: The Development of Army Doctrine, 1973-1982*, Fort Monroe, VA, June, 1984, pp 4-5.
62. *Ibid*.
63. *Ibid*, pp 56-59. I have been told by one of the general officers who participated in this affair that Cushman's role constituted 'one of the most egregious acts of disloyalty I have ever witnessed in a general officer'. This general seemed to believe that Cushman intentionally attempted to scuttle DePuy's efforts to write his own version of 100-5, though he would not elaborate.
64. DePuy's assessment is recorded in *ibid*, p 116, n 13.
65. Brownlee and Mullen, *Changing an Army*, p 192. See also Herbert's detailed discussion of FRG defence questions and their effect upon American doctrine in *Deciding What has to be Done*, pp 61-67.
66. See, for example, DePuy's letters to General Fred Weyand, Chief of Staff of the Army, 29 April 1975, and again, on 18 February 1976, in Swain, *Selected Papers*, pp 161-62, and 181, respectively.
67. Starry's concerns are quoted in Herbert, *Deciding What has to be Done*, pp 42-43, and 45.
68. Major General Thomas Tarpley, commandant of the Infantry School, opposed Starry's bid for dominance on the grounds that his school would have 'proponency for nothing'. *Ibid*.
69. *Ibid*, pp 89-92. Romjue, *From Active Defense to AirLand Battle*, pp 4-5.
70. DePuy is quoted in Herbert, *Deciding What has to be Done*, p 119, n l.
71. *Ibid*, pp 92-93.
72. An account of the naming of the new doctrine is given in Scribner, 'Doctrine Development by TRADOC', p 8.
73. DePuy to General Fred C Weyand, 18 February 1976, in Swain, *Selected Papers*, pp 179-83.
74. Herbert, *Deciding What Has to be Done*, p 93.
75. See William Lind, 'Some Doctrinal Questions for the United States Army', *Military Review* 57, no 3 (March, 1977): 54-65. Whether civilian critics were ever taken very seriously by the Army is highly doubtful. Lind soon found an appointment on the staff of future presidential candidate, Senator Gary Hart, and from that post became a mainstay of an informal Washington group that called itself the 'Military Reform Caucus'. By virtue of their positions in government, certain members of the caucus were recognised for their political influence, but there is much reason to doubt that successive field manuals were ever directly influenced by the substance at their opinions. See the reminiscences of one of General Starry's principal staff officers during the revision of FM 100-5, 'Oral Interview with BC Donald R Morelli by John L Romjue', typescript, 12 January 1983, pp 16-19, copy in the author's possession.
76. F Clifton Berry, 'Doctrine Developed in a Vacuum?', F Clifton Berry, 'Book Review: FM 100-5, "Operations"', John Patrick, 'Banned at Fort Monroe, Or the Article the Army Doesn't Want You to Read', and 'TRADOC's Reply', all in *Armed Forces Journal International* 4 (October, 1976): 23-26, and 27-28, respectively. This issue also contained a defence by Philip A Karber, 'Dynamic Doctrine for Dynamic Defense', *ibid*, 28-29. Although he contested William Lind's critique on several grounds, Karber also wrote that 'over the last decade we have let the Soviets outthink us. Every year their Ministry of Defense publishes an average of 50 books and over 500 journal articles dealing specifically with ground force doctrinal issues.'
77. See Romjue, *From the Active Defence to the AirLand Battle*, pp 23-76, for the official history of this period.
78. General Donn A Starry (USA, retired), 'Remarks at the Annual Meeting of the Society for Military History, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, 13 May 1995', p 2; copy in the author's possession. See also General Donn A Starry, 'A Tactical Evolution—FM 100-5', *Military Review* 58, no 8 (August, 1978): 2-11.