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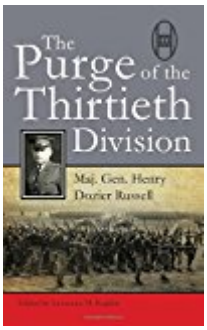
Henry Dozier Russell. *The Purge of the Thirtieth Division.* Edited by Lawrence M. Kaplan. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2014. 240 pp. $59.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-87021-066-2.



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Major General Henry Dozier Russell, a Georgia lawyer in civilian life, was a national guardsman who commanded the 30th Infantry Division from 1932 until his involuntary reassignment in May 1942. The 30th, composed of units drawn from North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Tennessee, was by no means the only National Guard division to experience such a change in leadership at the outset of America's entrance into the Second World War. In fact, sixteen of the eighteen National Guard divisions saw their commanding generals replaced by Regular Army officers prior to entering combat; a seventeenth experienced a similar change in leadership after entering combat. Only one of the eighteen National Guard divisions, the 37th, kept its original commander throughout the war.

Russell was unique amid this cohort of replaced guardsmen because he is the only one known to have written his memoirs, which he finished in 1947 under the provocative title *The Purge of the Thirtieth Division*. It was a searing harangue against George C. Marshall, the army chief of staff from 1939 to 1945, as well as other high-ranking officers under him. Not only did Russell believe he was unfairly removed from command, but he also accused Marshall of seeking to destroy the National Guard. After writing this explosive book, Russell personally paid for a print run of five hundred copies, then distributed them to fellow National Guard officers. According to military historian Lawrence M. Kaplan, the book was not "intended for or made available to the general public," and Russell resisted calls to republish the work beyond its initial print run (p. xv).

Yet Russell may have sensed that members of the general public would see his book. At one point, he wrote: "If any civilian who reads this story has difficulty believing that Regular Army officers of relatively high rank would be guilty of recommending the relief of officers whose jobs they want, I will not be surprised. Such procedure is obnoxious to honest civilians. It is obnoxious to me. In our professional Army, it is not so regarded" (p. 15). It is now possible for a wider audi-

ence to read Russell's memoirs. The Naval Institute Press republished the book in 2014; this recent edition, edited by Kaplan, features a foreword written by Michael D. Doubler, as well as a preface by Harry B. Burchstead Jr., a retired major general.

Russell sheds light on the troubled relationship between the regulars and the National Guard during the crucial years of 1941-42. According to him, he came under immense pressure from his superiors during this time to relieve several subordinate National Guard officers and replace them with officers from the Regular Army. He also claimed that the 30th Division was unjustly treated during the large-scale army maneuvers of 1941: referees aided the opposing forces, while observers unfairly singled out the performance of the 30th for criticism. When it became clear that Russell was not going to replace guardsmen with regulars on a large scale within his officer corps, he was ordered to appear before a reclassification board in 1942. As a result of this hearing, he lost command of the 30th Division but was retained in the army for additional duties, including serving as the legal officer on the board that examined the Pearl Harbor disaster. After the war, he was returned to divisional command, being placed at the head of the newly formed 48th Infantry Division, another National Guard unit.

Any analysis of Russell's book must mention the bitter tone of his writing. Some five years had passed between his reclassification hearing in 1942 and the completion of his memoirs in 1947, but neither the passage of time nor the triumph of Allied arms during World War II had done much to mollify his anger, which he indulged by heaping abuse upon those Regular Army officers he blamed most for his mistreatment. He accused Marshall and his right-hand man, Major General Leslie McNair, chief of staff of General Headquarters, of possessing "contempt for civilian soldiers" as well as "contempt for all things civilian" (p. 4). He charged them with seeking to destroy the National Guard in order to accomplish their "real objective," which was "universal military training and a larger professional army" (p. 5). He hoped they would instead be remembered as "the last of the little professionals who for so long fought the National Guard" (p. 167). In the appendix, Russell included a rambling letter addressed to Marshall (although it seems probable it was always intended as an addition to the book and never actually sent to Marshall). The "letter" concluded with this blistering broadside: "If you are running away from your fight on the Guard because it is now a more nearly equal fight, don't you think your present conduct is eloquent of a pale form of courage and a sorry exhibition of the ruthlessness about which you prattled so much during World War II?" (p. 192).

Russell had choice things to say about other officers as well. He and the 30th served under Lieutenant General Ben Lear, commander of the Second Army, during the Tennessee maneuvers in the spring of 1941; Russell thought the Canadian-born Lear a "glorified military policeman" and a "raving, ranting, shouting old man" (pp. 41, 61). Lieutenant General Walter Kreuger, the commander of the Third Army, was the officer who chaired Russell's reclassification hearing. Kreuger was born in Germany, a fact that Russell harped on frequently but never more bitingly than when he referred to "the rodent features of the old German" (p. 141). He lumped Lear and Kreuger together, grumbling: "It was my unfortunate lot to have my military career virtually brought to an end by the efforts of the German-born Kreuger and the Canadian-born Lear." While he did not question their loyalty to the United States, Russell believed that "their roots were on foreign soil, and their opportunities for orientation in American thinking were too limited to qualify them for the command of American soldiers." The conclusion he drew was that the army should "select native-born Americans for high command" (p. 132).

Russell also heavily criticized Major General Charles Thompson, the commander of I Corps who had suggested to Russell that it would be expedient to relieve officers under him who were not measuring up. In turn, Russell thought Thompson a "poor old stupid, senseless man" (p. 122). Russell thought Thompson performed poorly during the Carolina maneuvers of 1941, and wrote that to the extent that Thompson's "incompetent hide could be saved," it had been saved by "the almost superhuman efforts of a civilian division, the 30th" (p. 96). In one remarkable sentence, Russell managed to malign Thompson and three other high-ranking officers in one fell swoop: "These two men, Lear and Thompson, chosen by Marshall and McNair as executioners of the 30th Division, represented about the worst in a bad American Army" (p. 126).

Beyond criticizing certain officers in particular, Russell lambasted the Regular Army as a whole. With a few exceptions (such as John S. Wood and J. Lawton Collins), he thought professional soldiers were incompetent and too concerned about advancing their own careers. By contrast, national guardsmen were inevitably adept and public-spirited. It is ironic that Russell demonstrated prejudices no less pronounced than those he attributed to the regulars.

Aside from its vitriol, Russell's writing is also hyperbolic. He wrote of how the 30th was "fighting for its very existence" during the Carolina maneuvers, of its "impending destruction," and of its "rape" (pp. 79, 119, 156, 115). Lear and Thompson were the division's "executioners," while McNair "had the power of life and death" over the National Guard (pp. 126, 166). Although Russell had refused to "slaughter the National Guard officers" under his command, his replacement, William Simpson, "elected to destroy the division" by reorganizing it (pp. 74, 171). Yet, as Burchstead points out in the book's preface, in spite of Russell's talk of the destruction and slaughter of the 30th, the division performed very well during the fighting in Europe. In fact, Russell struck a solid blow against his own argument when he mentioned, approvingly, a postwar study by the War Department which concluded that the 30th had been the best division in the European theater.

As Kaplan demonstrates in the footnotes, Russell was occasionally mistaken in his account. He asserted that Horace O. Cushman was reduced in rank from a brigadier general to a lieutenant colonel after the North African invasion, when in fact Cushman merely reverted to the rank of colonel. He claimed that George Patton relieved Major General Terry de la Mesa Allen from command of the 1st Infantry Division because Allen had once been critical of a uniform Patton designed; but in reality, it was Omar Bradley who relieved Allen. Russell also made the dubious claim that Lieutenant General Lloyd Fredendall "was later destroyed by Marshall and McNair to cover up their great blunders in the North African campaign" (p. 86). Kaplan notes the lack of evidence to substantiate this claim and correctly attributes Fredendall's removal to Dwight Eisenhower.

Given the bitter and hyperbolic character of Russell's prose, as well as his occasional inaccuracies, it is tempting to dismiss his arguments. Indeed, in the book's preface, Burchstead—himself a retired National Guard general—concludes that "Russell the lawyer fails to make a ***prima facie*** case that Russell the 'civilian soldier' was unfairly removed from command. To the contrary, he demonstrates that he may have left his superiors no choice." Burchstead bases his analysis on Russell's stubborn determination to keep subordinate National Guard officers whom he had rated as "satisfactory," in spite of having been instructed "to obtain, not satisfactory officers, but the best officers available" (p. xiii).

Jim Dan Hill, writing a history of the National Guard in 1964, was not so quick to dismiss Russell's contention of unfairness. Hill had also been a general in the National Guard; he commanded the 32nd Infantry Division of the Wisconsin National

Guard from 1946 to 1956. (Presumably, in this capacity he had received one of Russell's original five hundred copies of ***The Purge of the Thirtieth Division***.) Hill was also an academic, having earned a PhD from the University of Minnesota in 1931, and served as the president of Wisconsin State College at Superior from 1931 to 1964. In ***The Minute Man in Peace and War***, Hill conceded that Russell had "damaged" his account by "writing hastily and while still in anger," acknowledged that Russell's book "lacks discrimination and restraint," and thought that Russell had erred in some of his "absentee criticisms." But he believed Russell a reliable witness of what he had actually seen and heard. "No one, however, who knows Russell will doubt his word as to facts and incidents that happened in his presence," Hill wrote. "Indeed, similar incidents elsewhere, some involving the same personalities, lend strong supporting credibility."[1]

Even though Burchstead dismisses Russell's claim to have been wrongly relieved of command, he still rightly concedes the importance of ***The Purge of the Thirtieth Division***, not just because it is the only known memoir from any of the National Guard division commanders of 1940-41 but also because it jarringly reveals the tension between the Regular Army and the National Guard at that critical period in the history of the US Army. Scholars focusing on America's mobilization for World War II (especially the Tennessee and Carolina maneuvers of 1941), on the history of the National Guard in general, or on the history of the 30th Division in particular must all consult this autobiography. So, too, should students of Marshall, McNair, Lear, or Kreuger. In spite of its bitter, aggrieved nature—indeed, in no small measure, ***because*** of it—this book is an important contribution to the historiography of the US Army at the outset of the Second World War.

Note

[1]. Jim Dan Hill, ***The Minute Man In Peace and War: A History of the National Guard*** (Harrisburg, PA: Stackpole Company, 1964), 414-415. For background on Hill, see "Jim Dan Hill, New Columnist for Times, Is Author, Educator and Decorated Vet of Two Wars," ***Gettysburg Times***, August 3, 1957, 1, 4; and biographical sketch of Hill, Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library, Texas Tech University, http://www.lib.utexas.edu/taro/ttusw/00103/tsw-00103.html (accessed July 4, 2016).

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