

BOOK REVIEWS / BOEKBESPREKINGS

The Nature of War, by John Keegan and Joseph Darracott (Jonathan-James Books, 1981. 276pp. R32,00)

Ever since the advent of recorded history man has engaged in warfare — so much so that it sometimes seems that prevailing conditions of mankind, were merely interrupted from time to time by brief episodes of peace. This book records this phenomenon cyclically — from peace to outbreak, through campaigns, battles, sieges, invasions, retreats, surrenders, aftermath and return to peace.

The Nature of War analyses the course of war at every point of time: recruitment of armies, the role of the heroes and leaders up to the treatment of prisoners and wounded. Even terrorist warfare in comparison with conventional (traditional?) warfare finds a place:

'The empire-building was, to its victims a straightforward act of conquest, was a point of view with which few European politicians and soldiers had sympathized during the great age of expansion. All the more galling was it therefore when, in what has come to be called the age of decolonization, subject peoples all over the globe began to adopt the methods of revolution, as well as the weapons of modern technology, to wage wars of national liberation against their European overlords. None was begun with a formal declaration or carried on in a style which permitted its familiar pattern of mobilization, concentration and deployment to take its customary effect.'

Keegan describes the evolution of heroism and military leadership by means of historical examples. Inter alia he states:

'Heroism, whether masculine or feminine, is alternately, however of limited usefulness on the battlefield, and even its most powerful verbal celebration of limited effect. For in the midst of fear, which is the fighting man's psychological element it is example which counts.'

Medical aid, the establishment of the Red Cross, War Memorials, War Graves, treatment of prisoners, the Geneva Convention and the concept of non-combatant status, linked to the

300 000 Germans and 500 000 Japanese killed by allied bombs, are covered in Chapter VII under the heading *Armageddon*.

In the final Chapter of this book Keegan states that the most dangerous of all moments in warfare is that of surrender, when a combatant literally gives himself in the hands of the enemy. He concludes with the wellknown Nuremberg War Trials of 1946.

Through generations artists as well as historians have recorded the dramatic process of war and peace. Joseph Darracott has brought together a selection of nearly 250 illustrations — half of these reproduced in colour — in which war artists and others have captured the splendour and pathos of war from ancient times up to the present. Together with Keegan's text they make an eloquent and powerful statement about the very experience of war and its pivotal place in history.

The Nature of War is a collaboration of two of the world's experts on their subject. John Keegan graduated from Balliol College, Oxford. From 1958 to 1960 he was a political analyst for the United State's Embassy in London, and since 1960 has been Senior Lecturer in War Studies at the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst. Joseph Darracott was born in 1934 in Aldershot. He served in the Navy, read history at Lincoln College, Oxford and studied art history at the Institut d'Art et Archéologie in Paris. He was appointed Keeper of the Department of Art at the Imperial War Museum, London in 1969.

The Nature of War, created and produced by Jonathan-James Books, is obtainable from the Southern African Branch of the Oxford University Press.

Brig W. Otto

Numbers, Predictions and War by Col T. N. Dupuy, US Army Ret. Macdonald and Jones; London (1979)

Die subtitel van hierdie boek: 'Using history to evaluate combat forces and predict the outcome of battles', is 'n goeie beskrywing van die