General

Proud Legions
John Antal
Presidio Press
978-0-89141-667-8
(March 25, 1999)

Excluding our current disagreement with Iraq, this is entirely possible—war with North Korea. Antal, now serving in the Pentagon, was formerly a battalion commander in Korea, the site of this excellent, exciting and frightening novel of modern warfare.

There has never been an end to the Korean War, no signing of a treaty, no declared peace. Tensions between North and South Korea are still high and periodically North Koreans attempt to infiltrate the South by submarine or through the Demilitarized Zone. The United States, in support of South Korea, keeps active troops—infantry, Air Force and, especially, tanks—along the south side of the DMZ. In this novel, a military coup in North Korea brings into play a brilliant and aggressive blitz attack into South Korea. Its goal: to occupy Seoul and renegotiate peace with the South and the United States. Its tactical problem: in order to be successful the initial attack must thoroughly debilitate U.S. and South Korean Forces.

Told through the eyes of dozens of soldiers from new tank recruits to the upper echelon of the U.S. and North Korean military, the novel ricochets between characters as the North Korean strike catches the allies off guard, destroying U.S. air support and jamming satellite communications. Remaining is a lone U.S. tank battalion led by Lieutenant Colonel Michael Rodriguez. Their mission is to head straight up toward the advancing North Koreans and buy time—any way they can—for the rest of the forces to get organized.

This is a relentless story, frightening in its realism, fascinating in its technical detail and thought provoking. If it has any weakness it's that characterization plays second fiddle to the machinery of war. On the other hand, anyone familiar with the military novels of Tom Clancy will recognize that Antal has a deep understanding of how things can go wrong in military campaigns, how good, well-trained people can die doing their job right. In the world of tank command, there is a saying: "If you run out of fuel, become a pillbox. If you run out of ammo, become a bunker. If you run out of time, become a hero." In many ways, this is a novel of

heroes.

Readers of Tom Clancy , W.E.B. Griffin and other military novelists will love this novel. For the rest who are interested in a relentless novel of geopolitics, high- tech warfare and suspense, this is an excellent choice.

Mark Terry