

the local states” in the region to give them a chance of survival. An American withdrawal would be “rather shameful,” Betts

says—but it could be no more disastrous than what continued temporizing may bring.

Lessons of the Purple Heart

“Half a Million Purple Hearts” by D. M. Giangreco and Kathryn Moore, in *American Heritage* (Dec. 2000–Jan. 2001), 90 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10011.

In 1999, as the American-led bombing campaign in Kosovo was being stepped up, news broke that the Pentagon had ordered 9,000 new Purple Hearts, the decorations awarded to troops wounded or killed in action. Some observers read that as an indication that the United States planned to send in ground forces. In fact, the run of Purple Hearts—the first large-scale production of the medal in more than half a century—told a very different story, write Giangreco and Moore, the authors of *Dear Harry. . . : Truman’s Mailroom, 1945–1953* (1999).

That order for new medals, they explain, cast light not on the war in Kosovo, but on the end of World War II: So many American casualties were averted by the dropping of the atom bomb on Japan that only now, three wars and many Cold War incidents later, was the United States running out of the stockpiled Purple Hearts.

In all, some 1,506,000 Purple Hearts were produced for use in World War II, say Giangreco and Moore, “with production reaching its peak as America geared up for the invasion of Japan.” The Navy ordered 25,000 Purple Hearts in October 1944, and then

50,000 more in the spring of 1945, and “borrowed” 60,000 more from the Army when it feared that delivery would be delayed.

“And then the war ended,” the authors write. “The most wonderful of all its surplus: 495,000 unused Purple Hearts.”

That’s not the only tale the medals tell. The evolving nature of modern warfare can be glimpsed through the debates over what constitutes a wound and who deserves the medal. When a powerful laser was directed briefly at a helicopter taking part in peacekeeping operations in Bosnia in 1998, the pilot and his crew chief were temporarily blinded, suffering “mild to moderate” burns—but neither was awarded the Purple Heart.

But undoubtedly the most significant tale involves the World War II surplus. Its sheer size, say the authors, undermines critics’ continuing attacks on President Harry Truman’s decision to drop the atom bomb on Hiroshima. Such critics contend that the U.S. military’s own secret estimates of the alternative, an assault on the Japanese home islands, predicted relatively light casualties for American forces. The unused Purple Hearts, say the authors, give the lie to that.

People Do Matter

“Let Us Now Praise Great Men” by Daniel L. Byman and Kenneth M. Pollack, in *International Security* (Spring 2001), Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard Univ., 79 John F. Kennedy St., Cambridge, Mass. 02138.

Political scientists striving for a theoretical explanation of international relations are inclined these days to pooh-pooh the significance of individual leaders. Of what importance could “Cleopatra’s nose” be in shaping history, they ask dismissively, compared with the anarchic system of nation-states, the weight of domestic politics, or the dynamics of institutions? It’s impersonal forces such

as those, they insist, that determine the course of international events.

How strange, then, that makers of foreign policy in the world’s capitals expend so much time and effort trying to fathom the goals, abilities, and idiosyncrasies of leaders such as George W. Bush, Vladimir Putin, and Jiang Zemin. Are the policymakers daft? No, argue Byman, research director of RAND’s Center for