

Naval War College Review

Volume 53
Number 3 *Summer*

Article 23

2000

American & British Aircraft Carrier Development, 19-19-1941

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Recommended Citation

Potter, Michael C. (2000) "American & British Aircraft Carrier Development, 19-19-1941," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 53 : No. 3 , Article 23.

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Anastasio Somoza or traveling by bus through Bolivia, Wilma was always interested in experiencing to the fullest the culture, language, historic sites, and people of each country. Her descriptions of the places she visited read like travelogues, with full historical background provided.

Wilma Miles was a Navy widow for thirty-four years, during which time she was instrumental in the publication of *A Different Kind of War*, the story of SACO, which she had researched and compiled with her husband after his retirement. She traveled, worked, attended SACO reunions, and deposited her personal papers and extensive photograph collection in the U.S. Naval War College archives.

This book is illustrated with Miles's trademark—the "What the Hell?" pennant—as well as signature whales and pencil sketches. Readers interested in the life of an independent, courageous, and intrepid Navy wife of the "old Navy" will find this personal story enjoyable.

EVELYN M. CHERPAK
Naval War College

Hone, Thomas C., Norman Friedman, and Mark D. Mandeles. *American & British Aircraft Carrier Development, 1919-1941*. Annapolis,

Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1999.
248pp. \$39.95

Working from the premise that a truly revolutionary military innovation is one that changes an armed service as an institution, *American & British Aircraft Carrier Development, 1919-1941* studies how two such institutions, the American and British navies, incorporated naval aviation, and also why airpower developed very differently in those fleets. It is a social analysis, not a design or tactical history. Although published more than six decades after the events, this book provides notable new insights and highlights. The authors, all naval experts, collaborated in finding whether the development of the aircraft carrier before World War II offers parallels for how military services might capitalize today on high-speed networks and miniature sensors.

The book is particularly interesting in its revelation that issues more fundamental than uncooperativeness on the part of the Royal Air Force (RAF) weakened tactical aviation in the Royal Navy. After the transfer in 1918 of most naval aviation personnel and all aircraft to the RAF, neither service's personnel saw sea-based aviation as a good career path. No internal organization turned innovative aviation tactics into correspondingly sound technical decisions about ships, aircraft, or air defense weapons. Anticipating frequent bombing attacks

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from land bases (and accustomed to operating in heavy northern seas, a factor not discussed in this book), the British stored all aircraft under short and usually armored flight decks. Holding flight decks empty resulted in slow flight-deck cycles that kept only a few aircraft actually aloft. Designed (though rarely procured) for catapult launch from dispersed cruisers and battleships, British naval strike aircraft sacrificed airborne performance for low take-off speed. These restrictions and the lack of institutional career incentives left the prewar Royal Navy with weak aircraft, small air wings, and few replacement personnel.

The authors observe that both organizations and individuals were influential within the U.S. Navy. Cooperation among the Naval War College, the Bureau of Aeronautics, and innovators in the fleet was the most important factor in the maturation of U.S. Navy carrier airpower. The 1920s Naval War College gaming models showed the potentially high payoff of a large airborne "pulse" attack to cripple enemy carriers and thus achieve decisive air superiority. Naval aviation proponents convinced Congress that the Hugh Trenchard—"Billy" Mitchell vision of an aviation corps was an error. Assigning long-range patrol to seaplanes, the U.S. Navy, through its Bureau of Aeronautics, also devised specialized carrier-based combat aircraft, including

high-powered fighters, to defeat land-based aircraft. U.S. naval aviation could capitalize on the wartime development of radar and long-range at-sea logistics to operate as a mobile, strategic attack force.

Under financial and treaty restrictions, neither of these prewar navies had enough aircraft carriers to develop massed-carrier doctrines, either offensive or defensive. Neither navy developed coordinated air and surface tactics. It is possible that the Royal Navy could not have afforded anything much better than what it actually had; the authors observe, however, touching on Japanese naval aviation, that heavy investment by itself was insufficient. Once reconstituted, the Fleet Air Arm after World War II developed angled decks and steam catapults. Those successes support the authors' contentions about the importance of functioning organizations and the development of evidence, since previously the Royal Navy had followed prominent individuals' initiatives on faith.

The authors conclude that new technology did not dictate a single or obvious path to success: top-down "vision" about military aviation failed. Learning by doing worked: "We believe that the capacity to learn operational and organizational lessons in the course of daily operations was and is a major means of reducing risk." Existence of a threat or rival against

which to measure performance was an important impetus; an “organization or process to connect the technical branches with their operational counterparts” was essential. It will be interesting to see how well these useful lessons are put into practice in today’s military.

MICHAEL C. POTTER
Captain, SC, U.S. Naval Reserve

Meilinger, Phillip S., ed. *The Paths of Heaven: The Evolution of Airpower Theory*. Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala.: School of Advanced Airpower Studies, 1997. 650pp. (no price given)

From dirigibles to stealth bombers, the theory and practice of airpower are distilled in this anthology’s fifteen thought-provoking essays by thirteen practitioners and students of military aviation. *The Paths of Heaven* traces the development of airpower doctrine and strategy from before World War I through DESERT STORM and beyond. Of necessity, many of the subjects are familiar to aviation history buffs, but the depth of scholarship evident in each essay will not only educate but entertain most readers.

The editor and author of three articles is Colonel Phillip Meilinger, Ph.D., a former C-130 pilot and previously the dean of the School

of Advanced Airpower Studies. His operational background and academic credentials are matched by those of several other contributors. As a result, the book reflects hands-on knowledge of airpower, in addition to historical and doctrinal perspectives.

The book’s organization is largely chronological. Meilinger looks at Giulio Douhet, Hugh Trenchard, and Alexander de Seversky, while Lieutenant Colonel Mark Clodfelter assesses William “Billy” Mitchell—thus the most influential airpower exponents and advocates are assembled in this one volume. Latter-day air strategists John Boyd and John Warden are addressed by Lieutenant Colonel David Fadok.

Beyond the key personalities of airpower doctrine, topical contributions include those of David Mets, with coverage of aviation influence in the U.S. Navy, and Lieutenant Colonel Peter Faber, in a review of the interwar Air Corps Tactical School. Contemporary European views are provided by James Corum. Cold War perspectives are examined by Karl Mueller (airpower and nuclear strategy); Dennis Drew (low-intensity conflict); Harold Winton (joint U.S. Army and Air Force operations following Vietnam); Colonel Buster McCrabb (Nato air doctrine); Lieutenant Colonel Edward Felker (Soviet aviation theory); Major Bruce DeBlois (airpower and space power); and I.