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## The Sleeping Giant: American Armed Forces between the Wars

James W. Hammond Jr.

J. E. Kaufmann

H. W. Kaufmann

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ships kept sailing, and none was delayed by lack of crew.

Bunker examines in detail each theater. He recounts incredible feats of endurance during winter in the North Atlantic. He describes the Murmansk convoys and other efforts, often bordering on the suicidal, to supply the Soviets. One convoy, PQ 17, attracted attention because of an erroneous report that German battleships were preparing to break out into the Atlantic. Escort ships abandoned the convoy to challenge them. The merchant ships were reasonably well armed, and their naval and merchant gun crews gave a good account of themselves in what proved to be a highly uneven contest against bombing, strafing, and U-boat attacks. Of the original thirty-three ships that left Iceland, however, only ten got through. In addition to the loss of ships and crew, a hundred thousand tons of vitally needed war material was sent to the bottom of the sea.

Bunker's description of Japanese submarine attacks in the South Pacific and the Indian Ocean, where ships generally sailed unescorted, is particularly disturbing. The Germans were usually content to sink ships, and on occasion they offered help to the men in lifeboats. However, the Japanese seemed determined to leave no survivors. The author provides details of instances where surfaced Japanese submarines deliberately attempted to ram lifeboats and sprayed the occupants with machine-gun fire.

Throughout the war those who survived the destruction of their ship generally returned to the sea as soon as they were able. By the end of the war, thousands of Allied merchant ships were

delivering material that made victory possible. Fleet Admiral Chester Nimitz praised their contribution, writing, "Our requirements were numbered in the millions of barrels of fuel to be transported thousands of miles to the scene of fleet operations. Our success in keeping the fleet properly fueled was dependent upon the delivery by these commercial ships. Not once did they fail."

In the nuclear age it is improbable that another war approaching the duration and scope of World War II will ever occur, but we still have to be prepared to support American forces overseas under hostile conditions. The need for crews like those described in Bunker's book, willing to venture into troubled waters, is bound to arise someday in the future.

ANDREW E. GIBSON  
Short Hills, New Jersey

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Kaufmann, J.E., and H.W. Kaufmann. *The Sleeping Giant: American Armed Forces between the Wars*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1996. 216pp. \$55

The authors, a husband-and-wife team who in addition to teaching at the university level have combined to write on the early phases of World War II, make two significant points about the importance of the years 1919-1939 to the victory eventually achieved in 1945. Their first is that this important era has been neglected as an entity in the military literature. Although offhandedly referred to in biographies of World War II leaders or buried in opening

chapters of histories of that war, the historical infrastructure that produced the war machine which won in 1945 has received no adequate historical treatment. This book is an effort to remedy that deficiency. The second point flows from the first. The years after winning "the war to end all wars" were ones of fiscal irresponsibility toward the nation's armed forces. Neglect and drastic cuts in appropriations marked America's attitude toward its military. The "peace dividend" attitude at the end of the Cold War has prompted a similar indifference. The authors urge Americans to remember the past and ponder the implications of relegating the military to second-class status.

In 196 well written pages of text with twenty pages of charts illustrating ships, aircraft, and armored vehicles plus dispositions of major air, land, and naval units during the period, the authors present a comprehensive overview of the U.S. armed forces during the 1920s and 1930s. *The Sleeping Giant* has one of the best compendiums of Fleet Problems I-XXI (1923-1940) this reviewer has ever read. The struggle to provide a viable army within the imposed framework of a merely defensive force is recounted. The fixation that tanks were offensive weapons caused the Army to coin the euphemism "combat car." Also, the problems of army aviation with dissension between the two schools of air theory are described. The heavy-bomber disciples of Italy's Giulio Douhet and Britain's Hugh Trenchard, championed by "Billy" Mitchell and his followers, are shown pitted against the ground advocates, who saw air as a

supporting arm for infantry and armor—a debate that continues today.

One of the more interesting facets of the story is the parade of junior and middle-grade officers whose names were to be notable during World War II. They are mentioned in the context not of their later achievements but of their significant contributions to the development of "the Sleeping Giant." A litany of names of those who laid the foundation for the coming conflict includes Arnold, Brereton, Mark Clark, Collins, Doolittle, Eaker, Eisenhower, Halsey, Hart, Kimmel, King, Krueger, Leahy, LeMay, McNair, Marshall, Nimitz, Palmer, Patton, Spaatz, and Towers. They did not rise to high command by accident; they paid their dues along the way during the austerity of the interwar years.

This volume, however, is not all perfection. The authors reveal their lack of personal military background with several gaffes in military terminology that military professionals will easily find; one is calling ship's detachments the "Fleet Marine Force." Such occasional lapses do not detract from the worth of the book, however. It stands on its own as the initial entry into this heretofore neglected period of American military history. Let us hope that it is merely the forerunner of further in-depth attention to the time between the world wars. Any military professional who considers himself a serious student of World War II without comprehensive understanding of what happened in the decades preceding it is merely "coming in during the middle of the

movie." He can help fix that deficiency by reading *The Sleeping Giant*.

JAMES W. HAMMOND, JR.  
Colonel, U.S. Marine Corps, Retired  
Reno, Nevada

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Coletta, Paolo E. *Allied and American Naval Operations in the European Theater, World War I*. Studies in American History, vol. 7. Lewiston, N.Y.: The Edward Mellen Press, 1996. 588pp. \$129.95

Paul G. Halpern's splendid *A Naval History of World War I* appeared in 1994, providing an up-to-date general survey based on thorough primary research, and it soon became an essential tool for all students of the era. Paolo Coletta's *Allied and American Naval Operations in the European Theater, World War I*, regrettably, is no match for its precursor. In fact, the reader ultimately is left to wonder what induced Dr. Coletta to write the book, where his editor and proofreader were during its production, and why the publisher issued a work in this state and at such an inflated price.

Coletta's study shows little sign of being the fruit of thorough scholarly research. Although there is an impressive, if disorganized, bibliography, it includes only a smattering of documents, all American, and even these are rarely cited. He relies far more on official histories (whose reliability and coverage is highly variable), memoirs, and secondary sources.

Coletta starts by presenting a confused and inaccurate description of the Anglo-German naval race in the pre-war years. Thereafter, his coverage is

geographic, providing separate chronological descriptions of naval events in the Atlantic, Mediterranean, Adriatic, and Baltic theaters from the outbreak of war to the Armistice. This approach makes it more difficult for both the reader and the author to comprehend the interplay between events in different theaters, and it leaves the impression that each operational area was essentially isolated. Furthermore, the narrative suffers from factual confusion and error, and it displays a glaring omission—operations in the Black Sea are completely ignored.

Coletta misses two great opportunities in this book. He provides greater coverage of Adriatic operations than do most general surveys, but it is marred by his excessive reliance on the Italian official naval history, which is among the most chauvinistic and bombastic of all national studies of World War I, and by his apparent ignorance of recent interesting work on the Austrian navy. Even more regrettable is the missed opportunity to offer an overall perspective of the first half of the Great War from a neutral American stance rather than perpetuating the European nationalistic biases that still flavor much of this war's historiography.

The final content problem of this study is in its errors of historicity. Much of the analysis is colored by late-twentieth-century perspectives, an approach that profoundly misunderstands the naval paradigm of the era. The most glaring example of this is Coletta's criticism of contemporary thinking on submarine warfare. It is true that unrestricted warfare on merchant shipping was ill handled by both the British and