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In My View

Peter M. Swartz
U.S. Navy (Ret.)

Wayne P. Hughes Jr.
U.S. Navy (Ret.)

Mike Bowman
U.S. Navy

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IN MY VIEW. . .

"The Navy's Search for a Strategy, 1945–1947"

Sir:

Robert Fisher has done us all a service in his Summer 1995 *Naval War College Review* article, as well as his Spring 1995 "Set and Drift" contribution, "The Ad Hoc Nature of Policy-Making: The *Missouri* Visit to Turkey." Fisher explores the U.S. Navy's search for a strategy in the two years following World War II—exactly half a century ago—in part because, as he notes, "in certain ways, the naval officers of that postwar era had to address an intellectual challenge clearly similar to that faced by those of today." Fisher is right. We need more study of earlier periods of international and naval transition.

Fisher, however, does not do justice to the alacrity and judgment of the U.S. naval officers of that period in meeting their challenge, using traditional U.S. naval concepts of forward presence and recent wartime experience in carrier striking fleet operations. Accordingly, Fisher does not understand some important aspects of the similarities between the officers of those years and the officers of the Navy of the 1990s.

Specifically, Fisher slights the speed and extent to which the Navy turned its face toward the problems of Europe, the Mediterranean, and the North Atlantic in late 1945 and early 1946. He also downplays the speed and extent to which the Navy's leadership in that period was able to apply traditional principles of U.S. naval thought and wartime lessons to the new world situation.

Fisher opens his article by stating, "In late 1945, the United States Navy confronted a postwar world wholly unlike the strategic situation for which it

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had, for decades, planned. . . . Suddenly there was no obvious threat, no maritime foe, around which U.S. naval thinking could crystallize—not at least in a form anything like what had long been familiar.” Later on, he asserts that “as relations with the Soviets deteriorated, United States foreign policy focused on the ‘Northern Tier’ states of Greece, Turkey and Iran; but the overwhelming preponderance of naval forces, as well as most of the tactical thinking and operational perspectives, and most leading admirals outside of Washington, were still in the Pacific.”

I would argue strongly that the actual U.S. Navy record was far better than that, thanks to a body of existing U.S. naval strategic thought that stressed (1) the importance of global forward naval presence in time of peace, and (2) the preparation of forward-deployable carrier striking fleets for the eventuality of war. This body of thought was based both on traditional U.S. Navy views of forward presence and the Navy’s most recent wartime fleet experience.

It is true that the U.S. Navy in 1945 rapidly drew down its force and base structure in Europe and the Mediterranean, at first to fuel the final campaigns of the Pacific War and then to begin the inevitable process of postwar demobilization. Nevertheless, at the same time the Navy also made other, more crucial decisions signifying the continued postwar importance of the European theater:

- Unlike after World War I, the U.S. Navy continued to maintain a major forward theater headquarters in London, with new *operational* responsibilities for Mediterranean and European waters, despite the end of the war in Europe and even after the war in the Pacific had ended.

- Just two days after the surrender of Japan, it replaced the World War II U.S. naval commander in Europe, former Chief of Naval Operations Harold Stark (a non-operational naval diplomat), with an admiral of similarly high seniority but with impeccable combat credentials—Admiral H. Kent Hewitt, veteran commander of the landings in North Africa, Sicily, Italy, and the south of France.

- The Navy continued to occupy, use, and advocate as vital the forward U.S. naval air base established during the war at Port Lyautey, Morocco—a permanent U.S. Navy postwar base on the Eastern side of the Atlantic, hard by the entrance to the Mediterranean.

- The Navy replaced the aged cruiser *Memphis* in the Mediterranean with the brand-new light cruiser *Providence* in November 1945.

Providence, incidentally, was not the only new warship in 1945 and 1946 to be deployed to the Atlantic and then later to the Mediterranean upon commissioning. The same was true of the large aircraft carriers—*Franklin D. Roosevelt* and *Midway*—and dozens of others. Twice as many warships commissioned in late 1945 and early 1946 went to the Atlantic than to the Pacific. And hundreds of Pacific Fleet ships began to transfer to the Atlantic as well, once Japan had

surrendered—ninety-nine in September, 120 in October, and eighty in November (“Command Narrative of the United States Atlantic Fleet, 1 September 1945 to 1 October 1946,” U.S. Naval Historical Center). The veteran carriers *Randolph* and *Wasp* and the battleship *Missouri* were on the East Coast of the United States as early as the end of October 1945. The U.S. Navy of late 1945 hardly neglected the Atlantic–European area, despite the demands of the just-ended Pacific War and despite the traditional predominance of its ally, the Royal Navy, in European waters.

Moreover, the U.S. Navy understood full well what its responsibilities should be in an unsettled early-postwar era with no clear enemy having emerged: *global forward presence*. Two months after arriving in London, Hewitt visited the capitals of recently liberated Scandinavia to impress upon its leaders the continued interest of the United States, backed up by its Navy, in their recovery from wartime devastation. A month later, he wrote to the CNO in Washington urging him to send *additional* U.S. naval forces to Europe, to provide a forward naval presence in northern European waters akin to that provided by the cruiser and two destroyers in the Mediterranean (and little different from the forward naval presence exerted in Europe up to 1940 by the U.S. Navy’s Squadron 40-T). In December 1945, in consultation with the U.S. ambassador to Greece, Hewitt expanded his area of operations beyond that of the World War II U.S. Navy in Europe by sending *Providence* for the first time to the eastern Mediterranean, to visit Athens, just as Soviet pressures on Greece, Turkey, and Iran were intensifying. (“Narrative of U.S. Forces, Europe, 1 September 1945 to 1 October 1946,” U.S. Naval Historical Center. For Squadron 40-T, see Willard C. Frank, Jr., “Multinational Naval Cooperation in the Spanish Civil War, 1936,” *Naval War College Review*, Spring 1994, p. 89ff; Edward E. Conrad (Capt., USN, Ret.), “An Ensign’s First Ship,” *Shipmate*, June 1993, pp. 20–2; and Adam Siegel, “The Tip of the Spear: The U.S. Navy and the Spanish Civil War,” Center for Naval Analyses, unpublished paper, 1992.)

In January 1946, as requested, the CNO ordered an additional cruiser and two more destroyers to Europe; they arrived in the United Kingdom in February. That same month, the discussions took place in Washington that would result in the April 1946 visit of *Missouri* to Istanbul and Athens cited by Fisher. By March 1946 communist pressures on Greece, Turkey, and Iran had intensified even more, but the U.S. Navy was ready to respond. (The force accompanying *Missouri* to the eastern Mediterranean included the upgraded forward U.S. Navy Mediterranean squadron and the new forward northern European squadron, already in-theater, so *Missouri* hardly arrived in the eastern Mediterranean alone.)

Missouri was also backed by the power of a forward-deployable carrier striking fleet for the Atlantic and Mediterranean—the reconstituted Eighth Fleet. The Eighth Fleet had been established under the Atlantic Fleet as early as December

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1945, only four months after the surrender of Japan. Vice Admiral Marc Mitscher—arguably the Navy's preeminent battle force commander—had been chosen to command it. In September, a few weeks after Japan surrendered, Mitscher had (as Fisher points out) advocated that the U.S. Navy keep the preponderance of its forces in the Pacific. Nevertheless, by December he was hard at work on the problems of projecting naval power across the Atlantic.

Mitscher's short-lived advocacy of a U.S. Navy Pacific "tilt" was rooted in his view that a medium-sized and benign force—the Royal Navy—would dominate in the eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean while no such force would be available in the western Atlantic or the Pacific (Theodore Taylor, *The Magnificent Mitscher*, 1954, pp. 315–6). This was a view widely shared at the end of the war by U.S. Navy—and Royal Navy—officers, and it was consonant with U.S. Navy thinking for much of the preceding three decades. (This did not, however, prevent Admiral Raymond Spruance at the Naval War College from studying operations against Britain as well as Russia in June 1946; the Naval War College of the period viewed the world's great powers as hypothetical game opponents, not actual political adversaries [Letter from Adm. Spruance to Fleet Adm. Nimitz, 19 June 1946, 00 files, U.S. Naval Historical Center].)

The British Empire had finished the war as the world's third superpower. How hollow that power was and how rapidly it would wane were apparent to few in late 1945. As Britain's economic and military decline grew more evident, however, the U.S. Navy was as quick to fill the vacuum as the rest of the U.S. government, especially in the Mediterranean. By the time President Truman signed the British Loan Act in July 1946, the U.S. Navy had already doubled its own permanent V-J Day force structure in Europe and was planning to increase it even more.

The other superpower, the Soviet Union, was hardly a nation with which most U.S. naval officers had ever felt very comfortable. Still, there had been a war on in 1944 and 1945, a war in which the United States was allied with the Soviets in Europe and was bringing them in as allies in the Pacific as well. Unlike a nation's political leadership (e.g., Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal), a navy at war focuses primarily on current operations, not future geostrategic planning. Consequently, up until V-J Day the chief concern of U.S. naval officers regarding Russia was how to work with it more closely in the Pacific, not how to oppose it more sharply in Europe. For six months in the spring and summer of 1945, the U.S. Navy was actually training Soviet combat crews—about 12,400 men—in the operation of 149 naval vessels planned for transfer to the Soviet Pacific Ocean Fleet (Richard A. Russell, "The Hula Operation," in Fern Chandonnet, ed., *Alaska at War*, 1995). Once, however, hostilities ceased against Japan, the U.S. Navy made changes in its thinking that appear breathtakingly swift in retrospect. Mitscher's September 1945 Pacific orientation was aimed at

possible confrontation there with Russia, believing as he did that the Royal Navy could handle things against Russia in Europe (Taylor).

Mitscher was made a four-star admiral and established the Eighth Fleet in Norfolk on 1 March 1946. To make this happen so quickly, he had brought with him his equally operationally adept former deputy from the Pacific, Captain Arleigh Burke. Mitscher conducted its first at-sea exercises off the East Coast and in the Caribbean in April and May, commanding from *Franklin D. Roosevelt*, with *Midway* also deployed. (There were no battleships except *Missouri*, recently returned from the Mediterranean: Mitscher despised battleships.) The president attended (Taylor). The exercise made all the papers, at home and abroad. Also, earlier, in March, another Atlantic Fleet exercise had been conducted in the Labrador Sea by a task force organized around *Midway*. This deployment had also been widely reported, as an Arctic cold-weather exercise. (See, for example, the *New York Times*, 17 March 1946, p. 3.)

Remember, this was 1946. The idea of major, fully ready main battle fleets permanently deployed far forward—like today's Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh Fleets—was just being born, in the minds of civilian and uniformed U.S. naval leaders. Fleets up to that time had normally demonstrated their power by holding highly publicized exercises in or near home waters. So the Eighth Fleet maneuvers, despite taking place in the Western Hemisphere, did send the desired signal, in the context of the times.

These evolutions were no cakewalks—the rapid demobilization had gutted the Navy's personnel readiness—but they did their training and diplomatic jobs sufficiently. And, being operational exercises, they were far more demanding for the carriers than a show-the-flag deployment to the Mediterranean with *Missouri* would have been. The leadership of the Navy had shown itself intellectually prepared for the new challenges of the postwar world, even if the political requirements of demobilization prevented the leaders from giving full play to their intellects.

Moreover, the Navy on 19 March had announced to a congressional committee that the active fleet was now split between 158 ships in the Pacific and 133 in the Atlantic (House Naval Affairs Committee Hearings, 79th Congress, 2nd Session, 2745). This was only seven months after the Japanese surrender, with the U.S. Navy still responsible in the Pacific for occupation duties in and around Japan, Korea, the Philippines, Indochina, and the Pacific islands, as well as China, where civil war was raging around the new U.S. Navy and Marine base at Tientsin.

Even the Navy's Marines—for so they were in 1945 and 1946—began to plan for operations in the Atlantic and Mediterranean. Despite their heavy engagement in north China, the Marines nevertheless formed a new special expeditionary brigade at Quantico, Virginia, as early as January 1946. That

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brigade was part of the May exercises in the Caribbean—the only major Marine training mission anywhere that year. And in the summer of 1946, the Second Marine Division moved from Japan to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina (Benis M. Frank and Henry I. Shaw, Jr., *Victory and Occupation*, Historical Branch, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1968, p. 468).

Thus the U.S. Navy was ready for the challenges of the Soviet-instigated crises of the spring and summer of 1946. Indeed, the twin strategic concepts of global, peacetime forward presence and surge of carrier striking fleets for wartime had made her more ready for those challenges than any other element of the government. U.S. Navy forces were on scene in sufficient numbers to help defuse the Trieste crisis of the summer of 1946. In June 1946, the Navy sent one its most experienced politico-military and strategic planning specialists, Bernhard Bieri, to take over the naval forces in the Mediterranean from Jules James. James had been a rear admiral; Bieri was a vice admiral (Bieri and James biographies, U.S. Naval Historical Center). In July, Admiral Hewitt sent six cruisers and destroyers on high-profile, forward naval presence operations in and around Scandinavia, the Low Countries, and the United Kingdom (“Narrative of U.S. Forces, Europe, 1 September 1945 to 1 October 1946,” U.S. Naval Historical Center).

Meanwhile, plans were being made in Washington to send *Franklin D. Roosevelt* on a Mediterranean cruise in the late summer and early fall. In August 1946, Mitscher, Burke, Vice Admiral Forrest Sherman, and Captain George Anderson—four of the best strategic and operational thinkers in the U.S. Navy—toured European capitals to learn first-hand what they were up against (Taylor; E. B. Potter, *Admiral Arleigh Burke*, 1990, pp. 278–89). By September, Mitscher was in command of the entire Atlantic Fleet, while the brilliant Admiral Richard Conolly (one of the “new breed” of young combat veterans cited by Fisher) had relieved Hewitt in Europe.

One deficiency was obvious, but it was being rapidly corrected. As Fisher points out, the attack aircraft available to the U.S. Navy for use in the Pacific against Japan could not project power far enough inland, especially against the Soviet Union. Consequently, in mid-1945 the Navy had asked industry to develop a long-range heavy bomber, and in June 1946 a contract was let to build the first aircraft, now redesigned to be nuclear-capable—the AJ Savage. (The Savage was flying in a squadron less than four years later. Deployed as intended to the European theater, it did not see action in Korea, where shorter-ranged attack aircraft proved sufficient [Vice Adm. John T. Hayward, “The Atomic Bomb Goes to Sea,” *The Hook*, Summer 1981; and Gordon Swanborough and Peter M. Bowers, *United States Navy Aircraft since 1911*, 1990, p. 417].)

Thus by the end of September 1946, just a little over a year after the surrender of Japan, *all the personal, conceptual, organizational, logistic, and operational building*

blocks had been put in place for Secretary Forrestal's policy statement confirming a continuing U.S. naval presence in the eastern Mediterranean, the event Fisher describes in closing his article. The Navy had been in the vanguard of U.S. policy toward Europe and the Soviet Union, due to the flexibility of strategic thought bred into a generation of U.S. naval officers through study and application of the principles of peacetime global forward naval presence and wartime forward carrier striking fleet operations.

This tale has parallels in the situation in which the U.S. naval officers of the 1990s find themselves. Faced with the challenges of the post-Cold War world, the Navy has put together a succession of concepts—"The Way Ahead," . . . "From the Sea," and "Forward . . . From the Sea." (See Edward A. Smith, Jr., "What ' . . . From the Sea ' Didn't Say," *Naval War College Review*, Winter 1995; and Bradd C. Hayes, "Keeping the Naval Service Relevant," U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*, October 1993.) These have been rooted not only in traditional naval thought (forward presence again) but also in the experience of preparing for prosecution of the Cold War Maritime Strategy and of executing the naval portions of Operation Desert Storm.

But there is a difference. In 1945–1946, the United States' "peer competitor," the Soviet Union, and the major theaters of contention—Europe, the Middle East, and East Asia—became apparent quite quickly. Today, the world's strategic realignment is taking place more slowly and with less clarity. Nevertheless, the Navy should continue to study its traditions, its principles, and its recent deployment and combat experience. As in 1945–1946, therein will lie much of the answer to the next set of intellectual challenges to be faced. While this approach will not provide specific solutions to the problems of tomorrow, it will certainly provide the firm foundation for seeking those solutions.

Peter M. Swartz
 Capt., U.S. Navy, Ret.
 Center for Naval Analyses
 Alexandria, Va.

"Doctrine on the Wrong Foot"

Sir:

It is well that the *Naval War College Review* has encouraged discourse on doctrine. When Major General Holley takes issue with doctrine's prescriptive nature (see Winter 1996, p. 117f.), he addresses the aspect about which the most debate has been registered. I do not say that doctrine must be prescriptive. I say two things. Doctrine has power to the extent that it is prescriptive. And doctrine is self-defining, hence the issuing authority must express itself so as to achieve

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the right balance between prescription and flexibility. Of course General Holley is quite correct to perceive that I think contemporary U.S. naval doctrine needs to be stiffened, especially at Echelon 3, governing fleet tactics in littoral warfare.

That one must prescribe (teach) or be hollow seems self-evident. Naval doctrine prescribes the principles of war as sound doctrine. Prescribing them means to choose from among them, because some are mutually in conflict. One emphasizes the applicable ones for the circumstances. How if one ignores some of them? If he does so with marked success he will be a hero. But personally I think the principles say too little, not too much, and so have little utility or power. They are too abstract, general, and timeless for me. Our teaching should be about the here and now.

The Air Force says that an air campaign will be conducted using the Air Tasking Order. It might not say the ATO will always be used to conduct one, but Air Force doctrine is prescriptive about the ATO and is much more pointed than guidance. That is good. The Army and Marine Corps sometimes complain that the ATO structure is too rigid and unresponsive to their needs. If the ATO was expressed as something the Air Force might or might not act on, then the Army and Marine Corps would have nothing to challenge, Air Force planning would drift on a sea of indecision, and there would be no unifying power to implement the doctrine of air supremacy.

My article, "The Power in Doctrine" (*Naval War College Review*, Summer 1995), was an attempt to express the need to write doctrine with the right amount of latitude for creative thought and action built in, but not too much. Several churches will say there is One God. If they go no further, ecumenicism can reign, but His majesty and power over the lives of the faithful are missing. As soon as we say God expressed Himself through Jesus, Mohammed, or Buddha, then Christians, Muslims, and Buddhists have concrete tenets to follow, but universal cohesiveness is lost. If we say instead that God expressed Himself through Jesus, Mohammed, *and* Buddha, we have a compromise that will serve mankind with the moral teaching they share in common. Each of the three statements, if it is doctrine, says what I may believe and how I may behave. What's more, it tells *you* what to expect about my behavior, and that's very valuable. In the choice we see the essence of doctrinal value. But if I tell you that religious teachings are mere guidance, which I will take or leave depending on whether it's in my own current interest, I have no anchor and you have no basis for understanding my behavior or relying on it. Therefore when Holley writes that if we fail to establish a common understanding we will be doing a great disservice to national defense, I wholeheartedly agree.

General Holley says that if Captain Hughes will back off from his call for mandatory doctrine while retaining most of the power he seeks by encouraging greater emphasis on uniform techniques and procedures, we may yet

achieve effective joint operations. I'll be glad to back off that far, for I don't want the services to be dogmatic. With that understanding, now let's get down to cases. I shall test the water by proposing that the Air Force take the first step by backing off on the doctrine of the ATO. Or does the Air Force think the ATO's unifying, centralized power is too strong to surrender to the whims of the other services?

Wayne P. Hughes, Jr.
Captain, U.S. Navy, Ret.
Naval Postgraduate School

Sir:

I have taken special note of the excellent article prepared by Captain Wayne Hughes, USN, Ret., which appeared in the Summer issue of the *Review*. Wayne is a charter member of the Naval Doctrine Command Academic Advisory Group and has worked with our staff over the past three years in reviewing draft doctrinal publications.

Centralized, multiservice naval doctrine is new to the Navy, even if doctrine itself is *not* new. Wayne obviously disagrees with the identification of multiservice naval doctrine with the operational level of warfare and wants to see more emphasis on tactical-level doctrine. Service-specific, tactical-level doctrine is important, but the initial emphasis of the Naval Doctrine Command has been the development of multiservice operational (not programmatic) doctrine at the operational level of combat. There is much to do here as the military services come to grips with jointness and the need for multinational operational-level doctrine as well.

Clearly Wayne has a point, that doctrine must do more than identify what we would like to do—that is policy. The distinction between policy and doctrine is that the latter governs behavior. Where I disagree with Wayne is over the issue of prescriptive doctrine. Our studies of history show us that navies have always fared better when the on-scene commander has the authority to deviate from doctrine. Doctrine represents the distillation of the best knowledge of what one ought to do, in a perfect world; but we must always retain the right of our commanders to deviate when it is in their best interests. I think that the naval services can come to grips with doctrine that is both guidance and flexible.

Our current efforts to develop doctrine are evolutionary in nature. We have spent the past three years relearning the theory of doctrine and gaining an understanding of how doctrine is approached by other services, our joint

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Doctrinal Issues

	Action or belief	Obligatory nature	Durability of doctrine
Tactical-level service doctrine	doctrine determines action	obligatory except in exceptional circumstances	valid until in need of change
Combined arms and lower-level joint doctrine	doctrine determines action	provisional and subject to interpretation	durable for limited time only
Operational-level doctrine for campaigns	naval: beliefs	mandatory	somewhat
	joint: action	mandatory	somewhat
Strategic-level doctrine	doctrine is only belief	not mandatory	doctrine aspires to be durable

commanders, and multinational partners. Our focus of effort is moving from the fundamental development of Naval Doctrine Publications, the restructuring of Naval Warfare Publications, and work with the naval educational establishment to more direct interaction with training commands and the fleet.

The Naval Doctrine Command is committed to the codification of operational-level doctrine in the fleet. The products of NDC will be more descriptive than prescriptive, or, said another way, authoritative vice directive in nature. Doctrine for the naval services should not become dogma. With the assistance of the Naval War College, we have uncovered a virtual trove of interwar, World War II-era, and postwar written Navy doctrine that demonstrates that the U.S. Navy once accepted and routinely used centralized written doctrine. The fact that we modified and improved upon our written doctrine during the war itself refutes the oft-told tale that it is only the German Army that has historically been able to perform this task. We too have a history of learning during combat and capturing those lessons in our doctrine.

Wayne raised some good issues in his article, and I encourage all naval officers to read it. I found his argument for four levels of doctrine most provocative. I would like to offer the graphic above as perhaps a way to state Wayne Hughes's major points in a concise format.

Using this matrix, we can clearly see that there is room for a great deal of interpretation as to whether doctrine should govern actions, the role that service and multiservice doctrine plays, and how durable are the different types of doctrine. From our perspective, however, we would take a slightly different view of some of these issues. The following graphic illustrates our own position at Naval Doctrine Command (changes are in italics).

Doctrinal Issues			
	Action or belief	Obligatory nature	Durability of doctrine
Tactical-level service doctrine	doctrine determines action	<i>guidance</i>	valid until in need of change
Combined arms and lower-level joint doctrine	doctrine determines action	provisional and subject to interpretation	durable for limited time only
Operational-level doctrine for campaigns	naval: beliefs	<i>guidance</i>	somewhat
	joint: action	<i>obligatory except in exceptional circumstances</i>	somewhat
Strategic-level doctrine	doctrine is only belief	not mandatory	doctrine aspires to be durable

I “roger” for all of Wayne’s specific recommendations to the Naval Doctrine Command, and I will personally review and consider each. Thanks for publishing his article, and I hope there will be more like it to follow.

Mike Bowman
Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy
Commander,
Naval Doctrine Command

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As the U.S. Postal Service requires of holders, like this journal, of Second-Class Postage privileges, we “scrub” our circulation (less commands listed in the Standard Navy and Coast Guard distribution lists) biennially, half of it each year. In 1996 it is the turn of organizational subscribers (i.e., as opposed to individual persons). Institutions, firms, libraries, etc., will soon be receiving a mailer addressed to their “Librarian or Periodicals Manager,” who should execute the pre-addressed tear-off postcard, attach postage, and return it to us. We must receive these cards by 30 September 1996: subscriptions of organizational (again, not SNDL or CGDL commands) that have not returned renewal cards by then will end with the Autumn 1996 issue.

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