

## Naval War College Review

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Volume 46  
Number 4 *Autumn*

Article 27

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1993

# Special Trust and Confidence: The Making of an Officer

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Cathy Downes

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### Recommended Citation

Rhys-Jones, Graham and Downes, Cathy (1993) "Special Trust and Confidence: The Making of an Officer," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 46 : No. 4 , Article 27.

Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol46/iss4/27>

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political changes in the Arab world. Taylor identifies Afghanistan as the ultimate Soviet disaster, one that best exemplifies for both powers the dangers of ignoring regional dynamics when pursuing a global approach to policy.

Arguably Taylor's most important and controversial contribution is his survey of the evolution of American policy through successive post-war administrations. He contends that most presidents desired an even-handed approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict, but that policy was generally pro-Israel to the point of undermining American interests. The powerful Israeli lobby, a predilection of policy advisors to be pro-Israel, and a closer American cultural affinity with Israel than with Arab peoples are given as reasons for this state of affairs. Taylor cites many examples to defend his assertions, to include a straightforward assessment of the USS *Liberty* affair, which will win him few friends in the American-Israel Public Affairs Committee.

Based on secondary sources, this book is more a survey than an in-depth analysis. It is logical, well documented, and straightforward, providing a quick read for both policy experts and the general reader. An excellent assessment that should be of interest to regional planners, the work is well worth the time to read. I would use the library, though. At nearly \$35.00 a copy, the book is simply overpriced.

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Downes, Cathy. *Special Trust and Confidence: The Making of an Officer*. London: Frank Cass, 1991. 268pp. \$37.50

This is a detailed and penetrating critique of the British institutions responsible for selecting officer candidates and preparing them for commissions in the Armed Forces.

Cathy Downes is a perceptive, and (in general) a sympathetic, observer of the British military scene, but her studies have left her openly critical of the directions taken by service education and training since World War II. At a time when the ambiguities of low-intensity operations and the complexities of modern technology are making ever greater demands on the intellectual capacities of the junior officer, Downes finds the Personal Directorates of the Ministry of Defense responding only to manpower shortages, competition in the recruiting market, development in the national education system, and of course, budgetary pressures. In short, she finds no coherent policy on the education and training of officers, only a series of *ad hoc* responses to the pressures of the moment.

In this climate, the Service academies have been reduced to a narrowly utilitarian role in which the cultivation of critical and analytical skills has been replaced by something akin to a "low-budget shopper's expedition." Downes views this process as aided and abetted by powerful sections of the British military establishment who believe that the best grounding for the junior

officer is to be had "at sea" or "in the regiment." The author believes that academic facilities have in some instances fought a losing battle against the tide of military philistinism, and in others, adopted a policy of passive conformity.

Those who have been close to the British recruiting and training machine will recognize that much of what Downes says has a ring of truth to it. However, it is perhaps unfortunate that the author has not carried her investigation far enough to examine how the young officer fares in his first active unit, or evaluated later career opportunities for educational and professional development. Many will argue that there has been little evidence on the streets of Belfast, in the waters of San Carlos, or in the deserts of Iraq, of the reemergence of those military stereotypes beloved of British Broadcasting caricature that would appear as the logical products of the system as the author sees it. This may be the best opportunity in nearly a century for a fundamental review of the education and training process. Unfortunately, the Treasury mandarins are going to demand more evidence than this before they ease up on the purse strings.

Because of its specialist nature, this study is unlikely to appeal to a wide audience in the United States. Personnel and training experts who might be tempted to read it will find few answers to their own problems. Those who do persevere, however, will gain a fascinating insight into British social, political, and educational mores. They

will marvel at the tribal rituals of regimental recruitment, at the positive epidemic of different training schemes, at the declining but still substantial role of the public (private) schools, and at Service hierarchies that remain at best ambivalent on the subject of university education. Most Americans will stand quietly before a bust of George Washington and murmur a prayer of thanksgiving.

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Rust, Eric C., trans. *The Odyssey of a U-Boat Commander: Recollections of Erich Topp*. New York: Praeger, 1992. 242pp. \$49.95

Erich Topp is not an ordinary author, nor, evidently, was he an ordinary U-boat skipper during World War II. Neither is his "odyssey" truly an odyssey in the ordinary understanding of the word. Anyone expecting to read the autobiography of a first-class U-boat commander credited with sinking some thirty-seven ships in seventeen war patrols, is going to be disappointed. If, on the other hand, readers have a desire to analyse the deep-seated feelings and self-evaluation of the German war effort, as seen by a thoughtful German who joined the Nazi Party and swore an oath of everlasting loyalty to Adolph Hitler because it was the thing to do, this book will meet their need, for they will come away with an understanding of what made Germany tick.