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# The Good Years: MacArthur and Sutherland

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World War II was indeed an era of giants in our history. Unfortunately, few of that splendid generation of warriors remain. We regret their passing, but can take some consolation that recent histories and biographies, such as these, refresh our memories of the soldiers, sailors, and airmen whose successes both sustained us during the war's darkest hours and brought us victory in this century's greatest conflict.

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Rogers, Paul P. *The Good Years: MacArthur and Sutherland*. New York: Praeger, 1990. 181pp. \$49.95

General of the Army Douglas MacArthur is the only American senior commander of World War II who has been increasingly subjected to severe criticism by historians. Eight books in the 1980s condemned his leadership in 1941-1945, while his high-ranking colleagues largely escaped the wrath of critical scholars. However, three of his wartime staff officers have written in support of him. Paul P. Rogers, who was the main stenographer for both MacArthur and his chief of staff, Lieutenant General Richard K. Sutherland, has written an insightful account of the relationship between the two men from September 1941 to January 1943.

*The Good Years* covers the period from the frantic preparations of MacArthur's Philippine command for the imminent Japanese invasion to the bloody, disappointingly prolonged Papuan campaign. Says Rogers, "Sutherland's career followed the path of Greek tragedy. An initial elevation with MacArthur reached an apogee of pride with a fracturing of personal relations and a final disintegration of his potential." Ironically, during the

dark period of Bataan, Corregidor, and Buna the two generals enjoyed their best personal and professional ties.

Rogers, a retired professor of economics and insurance at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, arrived in Manila in the early fall of 1941 as a twenty-one-year-old private and was assigned as stenographer to Sutherland and MacArthur. He was promoted to master sergeant in March 1942 and was the only enlisted man who left Corregidor with the MacArthur entourage that went to Australia to form the nucleus of the general headquarters of the new Southwest Pacific theater. In early 1945 Rogers was promoted to warrant officer. By then he had earned the favor and trust of not only MacArthur and Sutherland but also a number of other generals at GHQ, and he had long functioned as the office manager and principal steward of MacArthur's and Sutherland's files.

One of the most useful portions of his book is the appendix. It is a careful description of the so-called MacArthur Files. These comprise the high-level documents in the MacArthur and Sutherland papers located in the MacArthur Memorial and the National Archives that relate to MacArthur's

three wartime commands: U.S. Army Forces, Far East, 1941-1945; Southwest Pacific Area, 1942-1945; and U.S. Army Forces, Pacific, 1945. When it comes to these key records, Rogers knows whereof he speaks: his initials are on many of the documents as the one who took the dictation and typed the originals.

A significant contribution is Rogers's account of the \$640,000 arrangement in early 1941 between MacArthur and President Manuel Quezon of the Philippine Commonwealth whereby MacArthur received a "bonus" of \$500,000 and three of his main lieutenants, including Sutherland, were given the remainder. Although he never mentions historian Carol M. Petillo's findings about the \$640,000 episode (in her article in the *Pacific Historical Review*, 1979, or her book *Douglas MacArthur: The Philippine Years*, 1980), Rogers presents his evidence and argument apparently as a defensive rejoinder to her writings about the deal. The extant documentation, however, simply does not permit a definitive conclusion as to what motivated Quezon to pay these officers such enormous sums.

Rogers's style is sometimes eloquent, though occasionally he lapses into writing habits astonishingly similar to those of MacArthur himself, such as sudden doses of purple prose and references to himself in the third person. But most readers will

conclude that he tells his unique story with verve and vividness.

If the book has a major fault, it is the author's tendency to stray from his superb perspective on the MacArthur-Sutherland relationship in order to describe operations about which he had no first-hand experience, such as the Malay Barrier and the Buna battles. This also applies to the author's analyses of MacArthur's relations with Admirals Thomas C. Hart, Chester W. Nimitz, and Ernest J. King; his knowledge here is limited, and he consistently defends MacArthur's positions regarding naval matters. These tangents are detrimental to the value of his contribution.

The merits of this unusual work, nevertheless, far outweigh its limitations, and it is an interesting read whether one likes or despises MacArthur. The GHQ office chief for MacArthur and Sutherland possesses the riches only an insider can offer; these are bountiful enough without endeavoring to provide a general account of the war in the Southwest Pacific as well.

In December 1990, Praeger published Rogers's sequel, entitled *The Bitter Years: MacArthur and Sutherland*. It follows them through the Southwest Pacific operations to the end of the war, and includes the unfortunate rift that developed between them in the autumn of 1944.

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