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A Time for Courage: The Royal Air Force in the European War, 1939-1945

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the message that "the Fuehrer wished it," overrode law, humanity, and restraint, and carried through the genocide. There did not need to be, and there was not, a simple written order. Hitler's wish was enough. This is true, but narrow concentration on whether Hitler explicitly gave an order for the extermination of the Jews fails to take into account what scholars like R. Hilberg have shown: that the extermination came at the end of a process. Anti-Semitism became industrialized murder through the bureaucratic machinery of the modern state. First Jews were identified, then concentrated, then removed, and then, finally, killed—systematically, by the apparatus of the state. It was this process, well advanced by the time of the invasion of Russia, that enabled people to accept the final Fuehrer order.

The most original article here is by Nolte. He argues we must see the Third Reich anew, always in a broad historical context and never just as an isolated phenomenon, but no longer so dependent on the old totalitarian model which has, for the 1980s, lost much of its factual authority and interpretative vigor. Nolte proposes another historical connection in terms of the history of what he calls the "annihilation strategy" in Western politics. He shows that the idea of the annihilation of whole groups, one way or the other, goes back to the days of the French Revolution and Napoleon, to the industrial revolution, and, most importantly, was carried on in the Sovietization of Russia which Hitler

watched so carefully. In those times annihilation applied to classes or political groups (aristocrats, counter-revolutionists, opposing armies, capitalists, kulaks, etc.). The Third Reich applied it to "radical" groups, and the result was genocide. And, Nolte somberly adds, we still see annihilation strategies practiced in our day. Thus, the Nazi regime may be investigated "historico-genetically" within this trend of world history.

But whatever our perspective, this book shows there is no need to change our enduring negative judgments, our final moral denouncement, of the Third Reich. Nolte concludes: ". . . from the history of the Third Reich there must result the fundamental insight that the absence of *annihilating* measures towards political, economic, social or biological groups is the great distinction of that society which, with all its weaknesses, we call the liberal one."

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Terraine, John. *A Time for Courage: The Royal Air Force in the European War, 1939-1945*. New York: Macmillan, 1985. 816pp. \$29.95

A unique one-volume history of RAF European Operations during World War II by one of Britain's leading military historians whose works have earned him the Chesney Gold Medal—the highest award of the Royal United Services Institute for Defense Studies.

While the central focus of the book is on the RAF during the war in

Europe, the book begins with the origins of the RAF toward the end of World War I, its struggle for survival against the disarmers, the other Services, and the budget cutters in Whitehall; and, its appearance at the beginning of World War II as a modern air force which, in the opinion of its author, was to hold “. . . for much of the time the place of honor on the right of the line, as the Black Prince and his men did at Crecy.” This volume is hard to put down despite its weight and length as Terraine assesses and analyzes the role of the RAF, its missions, organization, equipment, aircraft, its leaders and their personalities and its enemies. It is a critical analysis of the RAF’s leadership, policies, plans and organization for war, and its conduct of the war in relation to its prewar preparations and the harsh realities of battle. Meticulously researched, brilliantly written with lucid detail, the author discusses the period of preparation for war; the development of new systems, weapons and organizations; strategic, tactical and doctrinal development and change; the predominant role of the bomber and Bomber Command in RAF thinking; an analysis of the “knock-out blow” thesis; the strengths and weaknesses of its leaders; and how the test of battle showed so much was wanting.

The main themes examined in detail in *A Time of Courage* include the expansion of the RAF for war; the decisive victory of Fighter Command in the Battle of Britain, including a sharp rebuke of Leigh Mallory and a

strong criticism of his own countrymen for not recognizing even posthumously the great deed of Air Marshal Dowding, the leader of the Few, who saved England in the summer of 1940; the RAF’s role in the Battle of the Atlantic; the victories in the Desert and Mediterranean where the methods of Army cooperation and air support were forged and prepared the way for Overlord; and, the pyrrhic victory and glory of Bomber Command though the author admits to being displeased with the morality of the methods adopted by Bomber Command. But indicative of both the objectivity of the author and his willingness to draw conclusions, he points out that possibly the greater immorality was to lose the war to Nazi Germany.

This is must reading not just for students of airpower and World War II, but strategists, historians and even our present-day military reformers. This is military history the way it should be written.

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Hough, Richard. *The Great War at Sea, 1914-1918*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1983. 353pp. £14.50

Richard Hough has provided a highly readable and powerful appreciation of the global dimensions and revolutionary character of the Great War at sea, which proved in many respects the decisive strategic arena. Moreover, it was a conflict which, at least in prefatory competition,