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# A History of Strategic Bombing: From the first hot-air balloons to Hiroshima and Naiasaki

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concluded with the isolation and bombardment of Japan by the Navy and the Air Force? Mrs. Hayes does not state whether the Joint Chiefs ever considered the evidence from intercepts and other intelligence that the Japanese were desperately searching for a way to end the war in the summer of 1945. She does report that the JCS materials contain nothing to indicate that the Joint Chiefs as a body discussed the possible influence of the atomic bomb on Japan's will to resist. Perhaps the intercept intelligence and the bomb were too highly classified for mention in the JCS minutes. Or was there some parochial interest that removed intelligence and the bomb from the Joint Chiefs' cognizance?

Mrs. Hayes' volume is enhanced by Dean Allard's fine bibliographical essay and by 166 single-spaced pages of notes. Had the Naval Institute furnished maps to replace the originals that were judged inappropriate that would have helped the readers immensely. It would also have been helpful had Mrs. Hayes provided a brief appendix describing the distinctive roles of such bodies as the Joint Staff Planners, the Joint Staff, the Joint Strategic Survey Committee, the Joint United States Strategic Committee, the Joint War Plans Committee, and others.

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Kennett Lee. *A History of Strategic Bombing; From the first hot-air balloons to Hiroshima and Nagasaki*. New York: Scribner, 1982. 221pp. \$15.95

Within the limits which the author set for himself, this is the finest survey of so-called "strategic" bombing that has been written to date. Such an enthusiastic estimate is based upon the author's distribution of the chronological content. Most books which claim to be "histories" of this subject are in truth no more than rehashes of World War II; fortunately, this book goes far beyond that. Less than half of the text which is more than enough, is devoted to the threadbare events of World War II, whereas the remainder deals with the pre-1939 world, and more than half of this

concerns itself with the *twenty years* between the two world wars.

Strategic bombing is one of the most formidable myths of the 20th century. A myth may be true fractionally true, or utter nonsense; its importance is that a majority of mankind, or an influential minority, believes it to be true and in one way or another it moves people to action. The great gestation of the myth of strategic bombing occurred during the interwar years, and most especially in the 1930s. No historian has given this era much attention because the research requires thousands of hours of grubby work among a discouraging number of diverse sources. This is not the kind of labor which anxious journalists and publish-or-perish academic historians are inclined to undertake. Justifiably

then this little book's great strength is in these pre-1939 years.

The attention given to pre-1914 imaginings and expectations is very good, as are the crude executions of the proposition during 1914-1918. But by far the best and most instructive part of the book is in the 66 pages devoted to the interwar years. It was in this period that "the bomber will always get through" mentality was developed, and it took shape as a "magic weapon" which practically paralyzed rational political action by the end of the 1930s. The bombing campaigns of World War II cannot be understood, nor their results adequately assessed, unless they are measured against the exaggerated expectations spawned during these 20 years.

If the book has a shortcoming it is that its text ends in 1945, whereas, the myths of strategic bombing continued to be cultivated and acted upon thereafter. There are 36 years between the Wrights' flights at Kitty Hawk and 1939, years in which the expectations of bombing came in one-ton packages. Since 1945 we have witnessed 38 years slip by—the hardware has changed dramatically, the results now are packaged in megatons, but the exaggerated expectations remain much the same. However, if there is a "lesson" to be drawn from any history of strategic bombing, it is to be found in those interwar years of which this book gives our first good glimpse.

RICHARD K. SMITH  
Washington, DC

Morrison, Wilbur H. *Fortress without a Roof: The Allied Bombing of the Third Reich*. New York: St Martin's Press, 1982. 322pp. \$16.95

Copp, DeWitt S. *Forged in Fire: Strategy and Decisions in the Air War over Europe, 1940-45*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1982. 531pp. \$19.95

Mr. Morrison's *Fortress without a Roof* is the best single-volume treatment of the RAF and USAAF bombing campaigns over Europe that has appeared since Alfred Price's *Battle over the Reich* (1973). While it is true that his emphasis is on the American side, he is far more successful than most writers in tracing the interrelationships with the RAF's Bomber Command, in particular the differences in doctrine, equipment, and targeting philosophies so often slighted in accounts centering on the US 8th, 12th, and 15th air forces.

Professional historians will be less pleased than laymen, however, citing an inadequate bibliography, the absence of footnotes, rather a bit too much jumping about in time between and among paragraphs, and what is often derisively referred to as an anecdotal style. And, regrettably but inevitably, the less expert such critics re on the Combined Bomber Offensive, the more likely they shall be to register such complaints! But for anyone looking for a readable and reasonably thorough account squeezed into 300 moderately sized pages, and one that does not avoid controversy, Morrison's volume is a good place to start.