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## History, War and the Military Professional

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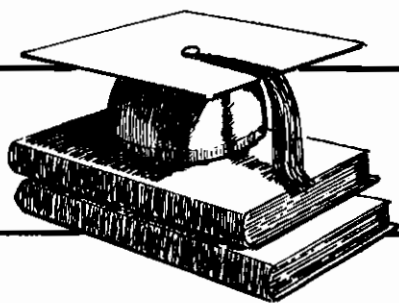
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## PROFESSIONAL READING

### REVIEW ARTICLE

### HISTORY, WAR AND THE MILITARY PROFESSIONAL

by

**David R. Mets\***

Henry Ford once remarked that "History is bunk!" That feeling is so widespread that the new professor soon learns he must include a defense of history's utility in his repertoire because his first task is to convince his students that the study of his subject is worthwhile. If teaching experience at West Point and the Air Force Academy can be taken as a guide, that task is not exceedingly difficult when it comes to the operational part of military history, for if the cadets do not see any other benefit in that dimension of the subject, at least it has more entertainment value than many other parts of the curriculum. Motivation is, however, a tougher problem when one gets to the other aspects of the work such as the political or economic sides of war. As both West Point and Colorado Springs are basically engineering institutions, it is probably justified to say that the tastes of the cadets are not too far removed from those of the military profession in general as it, too, is technologically oriented. When I was a midshipman at the Naval Academy, the popular name for history was "Bull." While one might argue that a part of the reason for that

jargon was merely that the formal title of the department was simply too cumbersome for day-to-day use, there is a good bit of evidence that the attitude implied by the word was indeed held by many midshipmen as well as a good many of their seniors.<sup>1</sup>

While there are doubtless still many among us who privately think of history and kindred subjects as "bunk" or "bull," many others would argue that the discipline has risen in status within the armed forces. It is now possible to major in the subject at both the Air Force and Naval Academies (though the vast majority of students graduate with technical degrees), and the Naval War College curriculum has a substantially greater historical content than heretofore.<sup>2</sup> For many decades, the study of military history was not considered a respectable activity for civilian scholars, but according to Allen Millett<sup>3</sup> and many others, the discipline has come into its own since World War II. Much good work has appeared since that time, and Millett is optimistic that the trend

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will continue. However, if the military part of the discipline of history is alive, well, and maturing, one could hardly say the same for one of its components, the history of airpower. The most that could be asserted there is that though airpower history is still in its infancy, it is showing some encouraging signs of progress.

Naval officers may well wonder about the wisdom of discussing the historiography of airpower in a professional naval journal. Mahan seemed to argue that there is a set of eternal principles of war that could be discovered and applied in future battles—that there was therefore a great and immediate utilitarian value of the study of naval and military history, but the frustrations of the world wars, Korea and Vietnam (among many other things) have led most scholars to deny that history repeats itself.<sup>4</sup> A more or less typical current view is that of Dr. James A. Huston who argued that the professional officers' objectives in the study of history should not be of such a utilitarian nature but rather should be: to broaden his experience base, to improve perspective and to gain inspiration.<sup>5</sup>

Unlike the social scientist or the researcher in the basic sciences, the naval officer cannot use controlled experiments to increase his experience base to the point where it can support reliable generalization about the future of warfare—war is too expensive and too complex for that. Consequently, as poor a substitute as is the reading of history, the professional is impelled to use it and try to discern its elements of change and continuity.

An argument could be made that, since the naval officer's personal experience has to do with war at sea, the reading of the history of war on land and in the air may be even more important to him than is the reading of naval history. Further, the power projection part of the Navy's force is largely airpower and the theory and doctrine

governing the use of SLBMs arises directly from the experience of the use of airpower in the strategic bombing role. Of course, the expansion of one's professional reading program beyond the limits of naval history and further back in time is quite liable to broaden perspectives and, perhaps, increase the confidence of the commander in times of crisis.

Dr. Huston's idea on the worth of history as a source of inspiration is usually thought of only in a positive sense and as having its greatest application at educational levels lower than that of the audience of this journal. Yet, inspiration can also have its negative aspects, and there are those who have asserted that one of Billy Mitchell's most important (if inadvertent) contributions was, from his viewpoint, the negative one of stimulating the U.S. Navy to make more rapid progress in naval aviation that might otherwise have been the case.<sup>6</sup> Finally, as both Dennis Showalter and Philip Crowl (not to mention Carl von Clausewitz and many others) have argued, the study of any of the variants of military history should inspire in the prospective commander a healthy skepticism as to the validity of both evidence and the most clever plans of the peacetime strategists.<sup>7</sup>

One of the signs of maturity in any field is the appearance of a general survey and that has not yet happened for the history of airpower. Robin Higham made a start towards such a work with his *Airpower: A Concise History* some years ago,<sup>8</sup> but it was not possible to make it sufficiently comprehensive to give the reader a general introduction to the study. Another of the signs of the maturity of a field is the appearance of scholarly bibliographies, and one of Higham's other works, *A Guide to the Sources of U.S. Military History*, is a competent symbol of the growth of the field in general.<sup>9</sup> Its chapter relating to airpower cannot, of

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course, be comprehensive enough to do the same for that particular part, but the Office of the Chief of Air Force History has produced some useful work in that realm.<sup>10</sup>

One of the signs of the immaturity of airpower history is that the material being published still has an exceedingly large content of romantic narratives designed to feed the popular appetite and biographical studies flawed by hero worship. Still, serious scholarship is appearing more and more often. The present article is devoted to the review of some of the latest writings on the history of airpower which demonstrate that, though it is still possible to find publishers for some rather shallow material, definitive studies are beginning to appear—and an encouraging portion of them are coming from official sources.

The historian "learns" at the outset of his career that official history tends strongly to be tainted by the imperatives of bureaucratic politics. Yet, there has long been (and continues to be) evidence in airpower history that proves that the generalization is *not* altogether accurate. The famous official work, *The U.S. Army Air Forces in World War II*, is a case in point.<sup>11</sup> Not only was it artfully done and based on competent scholarly research, but it was also honest enough to admit the disappointments of the establishment; such as recognizing that the B-29s had not bombed the Japanese into submission, for the submarines had already killed Nippon's industry through the interdiction of its supplies when the Superfortresses began their campaigns out of the Marianas. Of course, a skeptic might be moved to say that Craven and Cate (and their contributors) were the exceptions that prove the rule. They were not the ordinary bureaucrats whose future was identified with the establishment, but rather were true civilian scholars who were mobilized only for the duration. Two recent works suggest that even in peacetime

official history need not always be the "party line."

The first is *The U.S. Air Service in World War I* edited by Dr. Maurer Maurer for the Office of Air Force History.<sup>12</sup> The prize-winning *Air Service* is a collection of documents dating from the Great War and its immediate aftermath. Though the editorial comments are deliberately scarce, they are so well chosen that they give the work a coherence not often found in such collections. Maurer Maurer is one of the deans among the official historians at the Albert F. Simpson Historical Research Center at Maxwell Air Force Base and his long service there has clearly qualified him to turn out the definitive work in the field.

In the months immediately after the Armistice, Col. Edgar S. Gorrell of the Air Service was put to work collecting materials for the Chief's final report and for an official history of the combat activities of the U.S. Army's air arm. That constitutes the substance of Maurer Maurer's first volume, and it makes interesting reading indeed. Colonel Gorrell was an engineer of the first order who had graduated from West Point near the head of his class. He attacked his task with the same energy that had brought him to the fore in his previous roles. The result is that today's historians of the First World War are blessed with a set of documents that go far beyond what one would expect from that early day, especially in view of the shortness of the American participation in the war and the helter-skelter way in which we demobilized. This volume by itself establishes the fact that the body of ideas that has governed the later development of airpower was already well established by the time the United States entered the war in 1917. Though the reconnaissance and air superiority roles were clearly the most important in that war, all of the other missions that were later assigned to air

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forces were conceptualized first in Europe before 1918. It is also clear that by the end of the war airmen and soldiers on both sides were beginning to get a glimmer of the potential of airpower in the air-to-ground role, especially in pursuit of a defeated enemy.

Seldom is heard a discouraging word in the typical U.S. Air Force unit history of the Vietnam War, but things were different during the infancy of military airpower. Maurer Maurer has included a good many documents that show that the Air Service was faced with a logistical nightmare in France though some great deeds were accomplished. All of the aircraft used by the U.S. Army in France were of foreign design, and most of them were manufactured overseas. The only bright spot in that part of the Air Service's work is the record of the Liberty engine in all its variants which seems to have earned a fine reputation with our airmen and among our allies as well. Much of the literature on the First World War concentrates on the action at the front, but *Air Service* in its first volume (and subsequent ones) gives ample treatment to the training, supply, engineering and planning activities behind the line.

Planning is a theme of the collection of documents in the second volume of *Air Service*, and the main outlines of the political battle over the control and development of airpower in the twenties and thirties were already rather fully developed well before Germany surrendered. Pershing, probably followed by the bulk of the officers of the U.S. Army, readily saw the great value of the new instrument in war. But he envisioned it as an auxiliary to the "Queen of Battle," the infantry arm. Both Pershing and Mitchell insisted that air superiority was essential, but, though the United States did not become involved in any of the strategic bombing activities of the war, Mitchell nonetheless argued that airpower in the

future would have such an independent mission—and that it would likely be decisive. In *Air Service*, Mitchell's writings are accompanied by some of those of the other originators of our airpower doctrine: Gorrell, Bolling, Foulois, to name but a few.

Maurer Maurer's third volume constitutes a kind of case study by which the reader might judge the validity of the theories presented by the documents in the preceding book. It is wholly devoted to the Battle of St. Mihiel of September of 1918 and its nearly 800 pages are a comprehensive sampling of the orders and reports of the American air units participating in the fight. Mitchell was in command of what was the largest air battle of the First World War. Of course, definitive judgments cannot be made because (among other things) the Germans were nearing the end of the road, having exhausted themselves with their offensives of the spring and summer of 1918, and in any case there were obvious tactical advantages for them in permitting the reduction of the St. Mihiel salient. Still, sampling the mission reports of the lieutenants involved is sure to add to one's perspectives on the flavor of that particular war.

The final volume of *Air Service* is largely a collective end-of-tour report. Rather strenuous efforts were made to acquire material from all manner of combat and support officers before they were permitted to embark for home and a wide sampling is included. The book closes with a primitive version of World War II's Strategic Bombing Survey—which makes it quite clear that bomb aiming throughout was not a science—nor was it even an art, but rather only a matter of luck. There are some assertions for the morale effects of bombing, but practically no one claimed much in the way of physical results. Thus, Mitchell, his cohorts, and his intellectual descendants who fought for the strategic bombing idea and an independent air force in the two decades of peace that

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followed had precious little empirical evidence upon which to base their demands.

*The U.S. Air Service in World War I* is, then, the definitive work in the area. It is expertly edited by one of the recognized authorities on the subject. The layout and design of the book is enviable. The artwork itself is worth an afternoon of browsing. It contains countless photographs that have not appeared in print before. The maps are competent and the drawings are attractive and accurate. (One minor flaw is that the scheme for supplying captions for some of the drawings is unclear—some interesting illustrations remain unlabeled and seem to be in the same category as others that *are* explained.) Most important, *Air Service* supplies a comprehensive and balanced collection of primary source documents on the air war. While it is not light reading for the casual student, it is absolutely essential as a starting point for the scholar of the First World War.

A second official work of first-class historical quality is Sydney F. Wise's *The Official History of the Royal Canadian Air Force, vol. I, Canadian Airmen and the First World War*.<sup>13</sup> Contrary to what one might expect from the title, the work is not parochial. As the Canadian airmen were integrated into the Royal Naval Air Service and the Royal Flying Corps in France, and as the two services were united into the Royal Air Force early in 1918, the book gives a comprehensive picture of the air war from the allied, or at least the English, side of things. Further, because the British Navy's air arm was so heavily engaged in the land war and because the Canadians were in its ranks in some numbers, the naval part of the air war gets a good bit of attention.

Sydney Wise is superbly qualified to write *Canadian Airmen and the First World War*. He has all the academic prerequisites having been a professor at the Royal Military College of Canada,

Queens College, and Carleton University. Wise is also a past president of the Canadian Historical Association and was one of the authors (with Herman O. Werner and Richard A. Preston) of the highly regarded *Men in Arms*.<sup>14</sup> But, in addition to the academic qualifications, he also possesses technical experience uncommon among airpower historians for he himself was a pilot in the Royal Canadian Air Force during World War II.

*History of the RCAF* is organized on topical lines and the result is a well-balanced study of the aerial part of the British experience in fighting World War One—but, at the same time, the men from Canada who participated receive ample recognition—and they constituted nearly a quarter of the strength of many of the units of the Royal Flying Corps and the Royal Naval Air Service. Quite logically, the book begins with several chapters on preparation: planning, training, and the like.

Then, more than a hundred pages are devoted to the naval aspects of the air war—and these will be particularly interesting to the readers of the *Naval War College Review*. A start was made toward carrier aviation in the Royal Navy, seaplane reconnaissance and bombing operations were prominent, and large naval aviation units fought in support of the land war at the northern flank of the Western Front. Finally, though the aircraft of the day could hardly hope to hit a U-boat, Wise claims they were nonetheless a decisive factor in the antisubmarine war because of the inhibitions their presence imposed on the tactics of the German commanders. Here, as elsewhere in *History of the RCAF*, artwork of rare quality is included in support of the text. Fold-out maps are a splendid aid to understanding the photographs mined from the archives of the Canadian Government are indeed a treat. Among these are some illustrating the launching of

Sopwith Camels from lighters towed at high speeds by destroyers!

Another of Wise's principal topics is "Strategic Airpower." The ideas which emerge from this part of the work are similar to those inferred from *Air Service*. The airmen carried away great expectations about the future of strategic bombing, the soldiers thought that aviation was great as an auxiliary to ground forces, many held that the effects of bombing on the morale of soldiers and civilians alike were considerable, but the empirical evidence of the physical effects certainly seemed to support the claims of the soldiers. One of Wise's strengths is his ability to meld the larger story with episodes of the individual flyers in an effective way. This makes his book fairly exciting reading without disrupting the coherence of the general explanation of the role of airpower in the Great War.

Wise's fourth major topic has to do with the support of the land war. The ideas presented are similar to those one infers from Maurer Maurer's work: artillery spotting, reconnaissance, and air superiority missions were the most important ones and close air support, especially in pursuit of defeated forces, was beginning to come into its own. One minor flaw in the book is that technical change was coming so rapidly in World War One that the reader is hard pressed to keep up with it. To one accustomed to seeing the F-4 about our bases and decks for nearly twenty years, the parade of new aircraft types in World War One is difficult to comprehend without an appendix that would provide the drawings and performance data that would enable him to compare the types and better understand the meaning of change. Airmen came out of the the war with highly inflated expectations for the potential of strategic bombing and a somewhat inflated idea about the achievements of air superiority efforts. They did not much appreciate the decisiveness of the

reconnaissance and artillery spotting roles. In the following years, therefore, army cooperation missions received insufficient development and we had to relearn about their importance from the Germans in the first two years of World War II. Further, though the exaggerated claims of the "aces" were apparent enough in the histories, that inflationary tendency was not sufficiently recognized. Wise might have added that one of the "aces" who missed the point was Hermann Göring who in the battle of Britain insufficiently discounted the claims of his own pilots and therefore made some bad decisions on the pursuit of victory in 1940.

For the student of military aviation, then, *Canadian Airmen and the First World War* is a book that may be read with great profit. It tells a comprehensive story and tells it honestly. The prose is competent and the artwork complements it well. The documentation is beyond cavil. Though the author himself is a veteran of the establishment of which he writes, he rebuffs the powerful temptation to glorify it. That sturdy quality, found in an *official* history, stands in stark contrast to another new book published *commercially*: Edgar Puryear's *Stars in Flight: A Study in Air Force Character and Leadership*.<sup>15</sup>

*Stars in Flight* is a set of minibiographies of the World War II chief of the U.S. Army Air Forces, Gen. Henry Arnold, along with the first four chiefs of staff of the U.S. Air Force. The first defect of the work is its title, rather too melodramatic and inaccurate in the image it attempts to project. Without taking anything away from the admirable men described, it is nonetheless true that two of the five had absolutely *no* combat flying time in their logs and their great achievements really were in organization and planning rather than in action.

On the surface of things, Edgar Puryear seems well qualified to issue such a study on professionalism. He

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holds a Ph.D. in "Political Science and History" and is a lawyer as well. He was an officer in the Air Force, but he spent most of his active-duty time on the faculty of the USAF Academy, about a decade, before he resigned from the service to enter the law. He had already written a similar book which has received a good bit of attention: *Nineteen Stars: A Study in Military Character and Leadership* which covered the lives of Generals Marshall, MacArthur, Eisenhower and Patton.<sup>16</sup> Dr. Puryear is frequently a lecturer to student officers at the Air University, Maxwell Field, Alabama.

The title is not the only fault with the jacket of *Stars in Flight*. The book is about five of the most important fathers of the U.S. Air Force (of the cold war period, be it noted) and the artwork in its front contains the silhouette of only one aircraft: the Soviet M-4 Bison (counterpart of the B-52)! Of course that is no fault of the author as he probably did not even see it before it went to the market, but it is only the first of a multitude of editorial errors uncharacteristic of Presidio Press.

The principal defects of the work are the fundamental assumptions constituting the world view of the author and serious mistakes in methodology. Much of the early literature of the history of airpower was characterized by assumptions that invariably the leaders of the U.S. Army Air Corps were selfless patriots, the leaders of the Navy were selfish bureaucrats, and the political leaders of the United States were ignorant, reactionary, or perverse. Puryear accepts these assumptions. The result is a hero-worshipping piece that will not impress the general public, much less the junior leaders of the armed forces. Puryear's stated purpose is to inspire tomorrow's air leaders, but a book that downplays the "warts" cannot do that.

The second major fault in the work is its methodology. Let's start with the

small items and work up. The footnotes on materials in printed form are at the ends of the chapters; those citing material drawn from interviews (and Puryear leans heavily on oral documentation) are placed at the ends of the paragraphs to which they pertain. Much of the material that is uncontroversial and common knowledge is footnoted; some which is subject to serious question is not documented. Direct quotes, apparently from Gen. Thomas D. White's diary, to cite only one example, go without annotation (p. 185). Puryear leans heavily on the recollections of senior officers long after the events they are describing and seems never to question them. He purs forth uncritically the narratives from effectiveness reports and the citations from awards and decorations. Faults are noted, but they are dismissed as mere "boys-will-be-boys" mistakes that demonstrate the good nature of the subjects and that they were all regular fellows. He fails even to attempt to balance favorably biased evidence with similar materials from competing bureaucracies or competent secondary works. He documents some chapters heavily, but others hardly at all.

General Arnold's chapter has 77 footnotes, and General Spaatz' gets 68. General Twining's has seven, citing five sources (*Howitzer*, *Stars and Stripes*, *U.S. News & World Report*, *Saturday Evening Post* and *Look*). He accepts the descriptions of character contained in the West Point yearbook, *Howitzer*, apparently not realizing that very often they are conceived by classmates with hidden humor for the purpose of perpetually teasing their friends in the years after graduation. I have no doubt at all that Gen. Henry Arnold was a man of the highest character. However, Puryear attempts to prove that point by closing his case with a quote from an obituary written by one of Arnold's comrades in their West Point alumni magazine!



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*Stars in Flight* is open to question on the matter of balance. Carl Spaatz, the Air Force's first Chief of Staff and one of the great aviation pioneers, gets fairly full treatment from his cadet days through the end of the interwar period, with somewhat lighter treatment as a combat commander in World War II. His tour as chief of the U.S. Air Force receives no discussion at all! Yet, the first chief of any institution is certain to have a profound effect on its future for it is he who establishes the initial set of organizational processes that have an important effect on decisionmaking for many years. Many of the precedents set by George Washington still affect the way that we do things in America today.

The character attributes that become the generalizations Puryear draws from the biographical case studies are: "Duty," "Honor," "Service before Self," "Courage," and Decisiveness. Who can argue with the notion that these are useful characteristics for the one who would be a great military leader? In fact, they have the status of truisms that hardly need substantiation. A separate chapter is included at the end of the book on each one, and in his explanations, the author gives some treatments that are so general and so obvious that they can be of little use to the junior leader, and others that are just plain wrong. In his chapter on "Duty" for example, Puryear asserts that one should never tamper with the institution's assignment process, but rather the good soldier takes whatever comes along realizing that he will get his reward in the long run. In today's Air Force, at the very least, that is very bad advice and a virtual guarantee that the young officer will never get close enough to levers of power to do any permanent good for his country (not to mention himself). Assignments to responsible positions are almost always made on a "by-name-request" basis and are very often the result of personal relationship between the requestor and the

assignee. To stay out of the game is to commit one's self to a string of low-level positions with no responsibility—likely to be viewed by the powers as a lack of initiative, not a commitment to duty.

Puryear's own evidence contradicts his generalization. In the passages of Carl Spaatz who had been serving as the World War One commander of the largest American flying school in France, we find his citation for the Distinguished Service Cross quoted:<sup>17</sup>

Although he had received orders to go to the United States, he begged for and received permission to serve with the pursuit squadron at the front.

Then we find Puryear quoting Spaatz writing to Arnold:<sup>18</sup>

... I cannot agree . . . [that being selected to attend the Command and General Staff College is worthy of congratulation] I am going to Leavenworth not because I expect it will do me any good, but primarily because I am ordered there and secondarily to get away from here [Washington] . . .

And quoting Brig. Gen. Andrew Tychsen on Spaatz at Leavenworth:<sup>19</sup>

There was never a time that Tooley bothered himself with the study requirements handed out to all students. A number of times I witnessed Tooley taking out the sometimes bulky material from his slot and slide it all into the nearest waste basket.

That is hardly supporting evidence for the notion that the prospective great air leader must always take whatever assignment comes his way without murmur, salute smartly and turn to with determination and vigor!

*Stars in Flight*, then, really does not do justice to the men it describes. The evidence does not support all its generalizations, the generalizations are often truisms and do not cover the field (Puryear does not sufficiently address the factor that *all* of his subjects were

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graduates of West Point), nor does he seem to recognize Clausewitz' citation of the importance of chance and imponderables in war—*luck*, along with Duty, Honor & Country, helps, and the weight of the story is to change these five men from extraordinarily competent human beings into "Marble Men." Some years ago, Thomas L. Connelly did a history of the history of Robert E. Lee that demonstrated the damage that was done by elevating the Confederate hero from greatness to sainthood.<sup>20</sup> On the surface of things, there does not seem to be much harm in providing the junior officers of the service with heroic models by transforming the old greats from flesh and blood into marble. However, the effect can be deadly. Insofar as *Stars in Flight* is seen as the voice of the establishment, or of the older generation, the sanctification of yesterday's leaders can undermine the credibility of the leadership and widen the generation gap. The junior officers of today are no more naive than those of yesteryear and they know that marble men are seldom, if ever, found in the ranks of any generation. The outcome is added difficulty with the retention problem, or, at the very least, the erosion of the very professional values that Puryear wishes to raise above the motivations of the market place.

Another recent commercially published collective biography gives a first impression similar to that of *Stars in Flight* for its title, too, causes the reader to suspect that an act of sanctification is to follow. *A Few Great Captains*, however, is cut from different cloth.<sup>21</sup> Though it is founded upon some assumptions that are similar to those underlying *Stars in Flight*, it does permit some of the warts to show in its portraits and it does not claim complete omnipotence for airpower. It tells the story of the development of the U.S. Army Air Service and the U.S. Army Air Corps through the eyes of some of the principal air leaders (some of them the

same characters dealt with in *Stars in Flight*). It, too, assumes that the air officers in general were moved mainly by considerations of patriotism and that the motives of the leaders of the Army General Staff, the U.S. Navy, the executive arm of the U.S. Government, and the Congress were not as noble. *A Few Great Captains* takes the story up to the outbreak of World War II, and the second volume of Copp's work will examine the way in which the air force his captains built survived the rest of battle.

DeWitt S. Copp is admirably qualified for the work. He himself served as a World War II pilot in the air force that his subjects built. Since then he has worked as a journalist, a history teacher, and a screenwriter. That experience has given him an enviable writing style. Though it is quite obvious that the breadth and depth of the research underlying *A Few Great Captains* is far greater and better balanced than that of *Stars in Flight*, the documentation is slight—almost all of the few footnotes are explanatory in nature, and the reader is left wondering as to the sources of many things. That is a shame because it limits the usefulness of the book as a contribution to the growing scholarly literature on the history of airpower. That is especially true as the work is a comprehensive one, it seems sound enough, and it offers many new insights on the germination phase of American airpower. The book is sponsored by the Air Force Historical Foundation which also publishes *Aerospace Historian*, one of the few American periodicals devoted exclusively to the history of airpower.

The organizing theme of *A Few Great Captains* is that the entire interwar period can be seen as a struggle between the far-seeing airmen who understood that the principal role of the future air forces would be an independent mission against the sources of enemy strength and the traditional soldiers and sailors who felt that

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airpower was a useful adjunct to land and seapower but that there was not much potential in strategic bombing against industrial and morale targets in the enemy's heartland. Copp writes, it seems, from the perspective that the airmen were right and the Navy and ground part of the Army were wrong—but of course his conclusions on the point will come in the second volume. As we have seen in *Air Service* and *Canadian Airmen*, the data drawn from the First World War clearly supports the assertions of the interwar surface warriors, and the arguments of the "Great Captains" were based on faith in the future rather than on concrete evidence from the past.

The demand for the separate air service was somewhat subdued after the court martial and resignation of Billy Mitchell (1925), and those to whom he passed the torch expressed their dissent most prominently in the struggle for the development of a long-range heavy bomber and for a modicum of autonomy *within* the U.S. Army. They won both battles by rather narrow margins, and the contest is described by Copp in a detailed and competent way. In his eyes, perhaps the greatest of the great captains was Frank M. Andrews who was the first commander of the GHQ Air Force, the precursor of the independent air force that came into being after World War II. Copp does glorify Andrews (and many others) as fighters against ignorance and obstructionism, but he does not carry it to the kind of sanctification found in *Stars in Flight*. His treatment of Andrews is comprehensive, and a contribution to the growing literature. Andrews was an important figure in the development of U.S. air might and one whose role has not been sufficiently recognized because his death in an aircraft accident cut his career short at a time when the other great captains were about to go on to mount what probably will forever remain history's most massive strategic

bombing campaign—and to win the struggle for the independent air force. Naturally, the others have attracted greater attention from historians and biographers, and the book at hand fills an important gap.

It is too early to pass final judgment on *A Few Great Captains* for the main conclusions of the story will come in the next volume which will cover the battle testing of the ideas of Andrews and the others. It will be interesting to see how Copp will handle the evidence which *does* emerge from World War II. The whole point of the interwar struggle revolves around the notion that strategic bombing would be *the* decisive factor in future wars. Copp seems to agree with his captains' assertions that this would be so. Yet one of them, Henry Arnold, attempted to measure the effects of the great campaign on Germany and Japan when he created the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey.<sup>22</sup> The resulting conclusions go about as far as does any responsible scholarship when they hold that the bombing was *a* decisive factor, and no more than that. One escape from the dilemma Copp has created for himself might be the argument put forth by some of the great captains who did survive the War: strategic bombing never received a fair test. In Europe, they say, the mass required was not permitted to develop (early enough) because of the constant diversion of heavy bombers to the anti-submarine campaign, their deployment to North Africa, and their distraction in a tactical role supporting the land-sea battle at Normandy. In Asia, it has been further argued, the submarines had already destroyed Japanese industry through starving it for raw materials before enough mass could be brought to bear for a true strategic bombing assault. It is a perfect illustration of the difference between political and military science on the one hand, and the pure and applied sciences on the other. In physics, the difficulty would be

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overcome simply by running additional experiments until the flaws were eliminated and the sample were wide enough; in strategic bombing, one doesn't do such things with thousand-plane raids against other people's cities.

Because of the impossibility of running sufficient tests in political and military science, expert opinion must carry a greater weight than it does in other disciplines. One of the experts on the strategic bombing campaign is Walt Whitman Rostow and he has recently published a small book on one of its most significant controversies: General Eisenhower's decision to favor the arguments of the tactical airmen against those of the big bomber men. The former wanted to assign the strategic bomber force against the rail yards in France so as to isolate the landing area (Normandy in June 1944) and prevent the movement of German reserves against the beachheads during the critical early phases of the campaign. Gen. Carl Spaatz and the others associated with the strategic bombers asserted that the concentration on oil targets and on cutting rail lines and bridges would be more decisive aids to the struggle on the surface. Of course, the oil part of the argument was straight out of classical strategic bombing theory. Rostow's *Pre-Invasion Bombing Strategy* is a detailed examination of Eisenhower's choice and it seems to fit well with current decision theory.<sup>23</sup>

Though Rostow is now a professor at the University of Texas, as is well known, he is no ivory-tower intellectual. He has long had a prominent role in government and he is a primary source of sorts for the subject of the current book. He served as a member of a target planning group in wartime London and his unit favored the ideas of the strategic bomber proponents, but the book is a dispassionate one and not a polemic. The classical decision theory work, Graham T. Allison's *Essence of Decision*,<sup>24</sup> uses the attempt of Nikita

Khrushchev to emplace nuclear missiles in Cuba as a case study to illustrate his (Allison's) three models of the governmental problem-solving process. However, Eisenhower's decision before D-day would have served as a case study equally well—perhaps better because it was more compact and less complex than the Cuban case. Both the tactical and strategic men thought that the weight of logic was on their own sides, and that illustrates one of the difficulties of the "Rational Actor Model." No matter how much material is gathered and how hard the staffs work, the evidence will ever be ambiguous and some assumptions will be required. Thus, even if only "rational" procedures are permitted to intrude on the decision process, sincere men can nonetheless come up with opposed solutions. But further, the "Bureaucratic Politics Model" can be identified in the Normandy case for the personality of Air Marshal Tedder, arguing on the tactical side of the issue, was so powerful that Eisenhower seems to have had a special confidence in him. Further, a part of the argument of that side was that the organizational processes of the bombing forces were such that too much effort would be required for each rail (or bridge) cut and thus larger targets, such as rail yards, would have to be selected. As for the oil targets, the tactical men argued that the organizational processes of the German war machine were still resilient enough that the effects of the oil attack would not manifest themselves in time to help the landings. For all of that, though Eisenhower clearly opted for the rail yards, the processes of the organization were such that the decision was distorted in the implementation and in the end the oil targets and the bridges were also attacked—with good results. *Pre-Invasion Bombing Strategy* provides good reading for the military man, the historian, and the political scientist alike. Rostow's writing style is clear and

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economical and his arguments are persuasive.

The books at hand provide ample material to keep the officer-scholar busy all winter and spring. *Air Service* is useful to the professional military man mainly as a reference and it is a definitive one. The specialist in the history of airpower will want to become quite familiar with Maurer Maurer's fine work. *Canadian Airmen* is a model official history, and the readers of *Naval War College Review* will find it readable enough to serve as an introduction to the allied side of the air battle in World War One. *Stars in Flight* should detain neither the serious professional warrior nor the scholar. *A Few Great Captains* is better; it is highly readable and can serve the naval officer as a competent introduction to the development of Army airpower between the wars though it cannot be the ultimate in

scholarship on the subject because of the flaws in its documentation. Officers interested in air history or decision-making theory will find *Pre-Invasion Bombing Strategy* well worth the expenditure of reading time.

As we have seen, military history, especially in the United States, developed much later than the other fields of the history discipline. If for no other reason, this was inevitably so because the century of "free security" the Americans enjoyed after the War of 1812 guaranteed that the interest in things military would be rather limited. Simply stated, America's neighbors were just not *that* formidable. It was equally certain that the subfield of airpower history would mature at an even later date. *Stars in Flight* suggests that it is not yet out of its infancy; *Air Service* and *Canadian Airmen* prove that progress towards maturity is being made.

### NOTES

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