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Trench Warfare--The Live and Let Live System

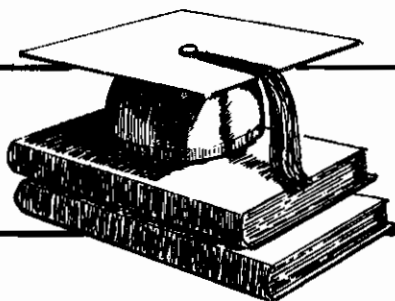
Michael B. Edwards

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PROFESSIONAL READING

BOOK REVIEWS

Ashworth, Tony. *Trench Warfare—The Live and Let Live System*. New York: Holmes & Meier, 1980. 266pp.

What we know of an age or historical event is fashioned for us by the historians. In time a kind of consensus is found, derived from which facts are highlighted, where the emphasis is placed, and how the analysis is drawn and the conclusions reached. Such is certainly the case with WW I. We all know the story of that incredible "war to end all wars" when the great powers of Europe, after 20 years of duplicitous diplomacy and a stubborn refusal to recognize the changing world around them, literally stumbled into 5 years of carnage and unprecedented horror in 300 miles of parallel trenches stretching from Switzerland to the English Channel. Famous too are the heroes of the French on the Marne and at Verdun, and of the British date with destiny in the marshes of Flanders.

But for Professor Ashworth it is quite another story. His interest and hence his emphasis lies less in the usual story of the more famous heroes, battles and generals, and more with the fate of the common soldier. What was his lot? How did he endure the disaster and the horror of the trenches? Is the story in fact one of unending artillery and mortar bombardment, of gas warfare and pitched hand-to-hand combat in "no man's land," and finally one of frontal assault "over the top" into a solid wall of machinegun bullets? Nor

so, according to Ashworth, or at least not to the degree we may think. Instead, what he calls the "Live and Let Live System" prevailed throughout the war. Thus, facing each other across as little as 100 yards of no man's land the enemies could choose either to harass, bombard, snipe and attack each other, or they could choose to practice a kind of laissez-faire truce.

Professor Ashworth maintains that both sides chose these undeclared but fully recognized truces, that they were a kind of sympathetic understanding between soldiers for their mutual protection and safety, and that they were prevalent throughout the war. Citing hundreds of examples and quoting numerous sources from both sides, he builds a solid case for his interpretation of this little-known side of the Great War. This tendency for the war continuously to "deteriorate into peace" created a problem for the generals. Thus commanding officers on both sides were forced to deal with lethargy in the trenches and the problem of motivating men to fight. For the French the Live and Let Live System became a problem of major proportion near the war's end when large portions of their army simply refused to fight. The British answer to the tendency was a tactic called the Raid, which was a small-scale attack across no man's land by small units designed to demoralize the enemy and "enhance the [British] fighting spirit." Ashworth maintains, however,

that the raids not only jeopardized the Live and Let Live System, because they necessarily invited counterattack by the enemy, but that they were even more detrimental to morale and the fighting spirit as no man could withstand constant harassment in the trenches for long.

Ashworth's study is unique, and interesting because it focuses on such a little-known side of the history of WW I. In part it reminded this reviewer of personal experiences with the River Patrol Force in the Republic of Vietnam in the late 1960s when we had our rivers and the Vietcong had theirs. To choose to enter "their" rivers was to invite retaliation. Whether we did or did not was remarkably like the Live and Let Live System.

MICHAEL B. EDWARDS
Commander, U.S. Navy

Bryant, Ralph C. *Money and Monetary Policy in Interdependent Nations*. Washington: Brookings Institution, 1980. 606pp.

Economic instability is not the least of the threats facing the Western World, and the last 10 years have been marked by particularly baffling problems posed by rising prices and fluctuating exchange rates. In such a situation the importance of economists, with their claims to be able to diagnose, and prescribe for, the ills of economies, has naturally increased. Yet much economic theory, for all its sophistication, is inappropriate for a world of increasingly interdependent economies, for economists have traditionally divided their discipline into its domestic and international aspects, all too often with inadequate regard for the interactions between these aspects.

The disadvantages of habits of thought that keep domestic and international economics apart become apparent as soon as one attempts to define the quantity of money in any one country, for to what nation's money supply would one allocate, say, a West

German firm's call deposit, denominated in U.S. dollars, in a London bank, when the firm's business is trade with Argentina? Conventions can be developed to deal with such cases but, as Bryant points out, national governments do not, as a matter of fact, all employ the same concepts or statistical practices. Moreover, the most appropriate concept of money supply may vary according to whether one wishes to stress the causal effect of various forms of financial assets on the economy, or the monetary authorities' power to control something called "the money supply."

Bryant has set himself an integrationalist role in presenting a common-sense analytical framework within which policymakers may work out options. He eschews unnecessary theoretical controversies among economists, and refuses to place himself either in the Keynesian or monetarist camp. He admits that academics in the social sciences have tended to isolate themselves from policymakers and laymen as a result of increasing use of "technical languages" (less politely called jargon), and he has attempted to write for both policymaking and academic communities. Nonetheless, while his prose is unusually lucid for an economist he cannot avoid extensive use of mathematics, and one can only say that a nation all of whose policymakers (as opposed to specialists in its central bank) could follow his arguments would be indeed fortunate.

The policymaker who comes to Bryant seeking some simple monetary rule-of-thumb will (rightly) be disappointed. Nevertheless the book does suggest some basic guidelines to which those responsible for national monetary policy would do well to pay heed. He stresses that monetary policy should not be conducted in isolation but should be integrated with fiscal and other policies (this seems to argue against the independence of central banks). He urges that