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### The Air War 1939-1945

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however, and while other analysts might not agree with all of them, they do not detract from the overall value of the book.

Of special interest is the author's excellent treatment of Nikita Khrushchev's consolidation of power after the death of Stalin, Khrushchev's successful bid to forestall an intricate Kremlin plot to overthrow him in 1957, and, finally, his eventual demise as a result of still another episode of Kremlin intrigue. Naturally Brezhnev's role in all of these events is the focus here, and Murphy clearly shatters the view widely held in the West that Brezhnev was not regarded as a serious contender for Kremlin leadership. Then, of course, the relentless manner in which he marshaled his own political forces until all semblance of collective leadership gave way to the eventual emergence of still another *vozhhd* or supreme, incontestable and infallible leader, is a veritable case study in the dynamics of Soviet politics.

Appearing at a time when Brezhnev's advanced age and poor health are catching up with him, Murphy's book sheds much needed light on the impending succession struggle certain to beset the Kremlin in the not too distant future. In fact, the struggle has in all probability already begun.

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Overy, R.J. *The Air War 1939-1945*.  
London: Europa Publications Ltd.,  
1980. 263pp.

This is an outstanding book on a subject in which past controversy has often generated more heat than light. Dr. Overy's study of the relationship between air and sea warfare, and air and land warfare, leads him to conclude that, prior to the dropping of the A-bomb in August 1945, airpower was a necessary, but not sufficient, means to victory, and that air forces were complementary to

navies and armies, rather than autonomous of them. He offers an analysis not only of the strategic but also of the economic, scientific and technical aspects of the air war. Navy men may feel that more might have been said about the naval side, but they will find much to interest them. The conclusion that strategic bombing alone, using high explosives, was insufficient to secure victory is itself significant from the point of view of assessing the role of navies. The most effective target for strategic bombing was the enemy's economy, but here airpower was being used in combination with naval blockade.

As for naval use of airpower, the author, a Briton, points out that whereas the Royal Navy maintained even in 1939 that aircraft from carriers could only slow down large ships leaving them to be sunk by other ships rather than aircraft, the use of aircraft carriers to attack the enemy fleet had been fully accepted by the U.S. Navy. This victory for the advocates of airpower was timely, in view of Japanese enthusiasm for aircraft carriers and the nature of the Pacific War in 1941-45. No less fortunate for the Allies was the *Luftwaffe's* failure to give adequate support to the *Kriegsmarine* in the Battle of the Atlantic. Admiral Raeder pointed out that aircraft were needed not only to attack shipping but also to guide submarines to vulnerable targets, but, despite initial success by Focke-Wulf *Kondor* long-range aircraft, Goering refused to divert more aircraft to the war at sea, largely because he did not wish to relinquish operational control over *Luftwaffe* units.

Certainly, from mid-June 1941 the *Luftwaffe* was busy elsewhere with what for Germany was the major effort of the war—the invasion of Russia. Although Overy's main focus is on the Anglo-Saxon countries—inevitably perhaps in view of the availability of sources—he has some interesting things to say about

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the Russian contribution to the air war. Russia, like Germany, concentrated on the use of aircraft in close support of its army, but this did not mean that air warfare on the eastern front was only of local importance. Of the world's aircraft economies in 1939, Russia's was the largest in terms of current production, with massive plant expansion taking place in Siberia in time, as it proved, for the German invasion. By concentrating upon quantity production of a few types, at some sacrifice of quality, the Russians were able to enjoy an overwhelming numerical superiority over the *Luftwaffe* by 1943. It was the hope of hitting long-distance targets in Russia, rather than in Western Europe, that revived interest in Germany in strategic bombing; but the technical shortcomings of the chosen instrument—the Heinkel He 177—undermined every attempt to fulfill this ambition. Even before 1943 Russian resistance had forced the *Luftwaffe* to concentrate on tactical air warfare in the east, giving the Western allies a long breathing-space in which to build up and deploy large air forces without interference, and from this Overy concludes that the Western Powers benefited more from the Russians' efforts than vice versa.

The Western Powers' strategic air offensive against Germany is also put in perspective by comparison of the effects of bombing with other reasons for Germany's failure to keep pace with Allied aircraft production. Overy, who is no stranger to the history of German aircraft production, points out that poor production planning at three major firms—Messerschmitt, Junkers and Heinkel—resulted in a greater loss of output than the loss caused by bombing down to the end of 1944. The strength of the book is, in fact, Overy's masterly discussion of the economic problems of sustaining air forces in war and of hitting the right balance between quantity production of current models and diversion of resources to research

and technical innovation. Overy's comparison of the various aircraft economies shows up facism in a poor light, in that Germany made less efficient use of her human and technical resources than the United States, Britain or Russia. One word of caution here, though: Overy has used official, confidential records for Germany, but only official, published histories for the Allied powers, and it may be that as a result he has a clearer idea of the shortcomings of the Germans than of the others. Even so, the production figures of the various powers show clearly enough Germany's (and Italy's and Japan's) failure to keep pace in 1941-43, and a great increase in German (and Japanese) production came too late in the war to alter the result. The country with the worst interservice disputes was Japan, where rival research programs resulted in the navy and army producing separate radar aids to the identification of friendly aircraft and thus being unable to distinguish each other's aircraft from those of the enemy!

Truly this is a book that deserves attention from all those who wish to study, and learn from, the history of warfare.

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Paskins, Barrie, and Dockrill, Michael.  
*The Ethics of War*. Minneapolis:  
University of Minnesota Press, 1979.  
332pp.

Best, Geoffrey. *Humanity in Warfare*.  
New York: Columbia University  
Press, 1980. 400pp.

The two books offer alternative academic theories regarding man's conduct in warfare. Paskins and Dockrill have produced "an experiment in practical philosophy by a philosopher and historian," while Geoffrey Best, also a historian, has written a history of the law of war.