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Logistics and the Failure of the British Army in America 1775-1783

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of American military history will want to read Reginald C. Stuart's discourse on three of the volumes found in the Macmillan *War of the United States* series. After reading Stuart's perceptive review of the three books, it is apparent why the Macmillan series has become required reading for the professional soldier. The remaining articles also are very good.

While the essays are excellent, like so many compendia this one exposes the reader to the risk of learning a little about everything and not much about anything. The subject matter found in the compositions ranges from the Renaissance to the era of total war, and as the editors are quick to point out, " . . . it is intended that future issues will be equally wide-ranging." Be aware that the articles collected for this book are for the specialists in the field and are not designed for the general reading public, to wit "The Fighting Potential of Sixteenth Century Venetian Galleys," "Arrears of Pay and Ideology in the Army Revolt of 1647," and "The Danger of Bombardment from the Air and the Making of British Air Disarmament Policy 1932-4."

The academicians will find this book invaluable. The war colleges and professional service schools will want a copy on their library shelves, but the professional soldier does not have to run out and buy his personal edition (at $19.00 the price is too high). The first issue is a solid, historically sound piece of work. I await with high expectations the new volumes to come in the series.

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Bowler, R. Arthur. *Logistics and the Failure of the British Army in America 1775-1783.* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975. 255pp.

In his Introduction, Professor Bowler states that a principal purpose of his book is "to point out where logistical and administrative problems in America affected the course of the war." He has achieved his stated objective and has done so in a thorough manner that deserves the attention of those on both sides of the Atlantic who are interested in the conduct of the American War for Independence. There has long been a need for this book, for although the perennial shortages that afflicted the small American army are well known, the complicated question of supply as it affected British planning and operations has not before been fully examined.

During the Seven Years' War and from its end in 1763 until the outbreak of hostilities at Lexington-Concord on 19 April 1775, the British Army in America had been able to purchase locally practically all essential foodstuffs, as well as grain and forage. Some salt provisions were shipped by the Treasury in chartered victualling ships, and other assorted items (principally those required by the Artillery and Engineers) were provided by the Board of Ordnance.

One first finds mention of the problem of insuring adequate stocks of food for the British Army in a letter Lt. Gen. Thomas Gage, commanding His Majesty's Army in the 13 colonies, wrote the Treasury from the beleaguered town of Boston on 10 May 1775, just 3 weeks after the near debacle of 19 April, " . . . all the ports from whence our supplies usually came have refused suffering any provisions or necessaries whatsoever to be shipped for the King's use . . . and all avenues for procuring provisions in this country are shut up." This letter was the first intimation Whitehall had that the army would have to be fed from the home islands. And, as Professor Bowler makes clear, no single organization charged with providing continuous effective support to the army existed. Nor, given the state of the bureaucracy at the

time, could a centrally directed organization have been created.

Professor Bowler has correctly defined the major factors that affected the British attempt to suppress the American rebellion. One of these was the mistaken estimate that the colonies could not unite and would bow to a show of force. Even after Bunker Hill, Whitehall was optimistic that isolated and sporadic resistance could be crushed in a year. Nor did anyone in Lord North's administration have a clear conception how critically American geography, the almost nonexistent road net, the difficult terrain, and the Atlantic weather—all factors beyond control—would affect timely supply.

In the days of sail, the Atlantic was an always menacing and frequently a hostile ocean. When one considers that under the best conditions a crossing from east to west, say from Cork (the Irish port that was the major supply depot) to New York required 7 or 8 weeks, and sometimes 12 to 14, or the voyage from Cork to Quebec, which from May to November (the only months of the year the St. Lawrence was passable), normally required 10 or more, and makes due allowance for loading at Cork, for turnaround at destination, and for the voyage home, the critical element of time consumed becomes apparent.

One might construct a typical scenario commencing with the assembly of victualling ships at Cork to take on barrels of salted beef and pork, cheese, butter, flour, dried peas, hard biscuit, vinegar, onions, salt, and beer. When consignments were fully ready for shipment (i.e., had passed inspection and were suitably packaged for a lengthy and possibly tempestuous voyage—which they rarely were) and were loaded expeditiously (which would have been unusual), and the convoying frigates were ready to sail at the appointed time (which they might be if a third of their impressed seamen had not jumped ship), and the wind was fair (which it was not, more than half the time), the convoy would get laboriously under way. If there were 36 victuallers, each of from 200 to 400 tons burdern—as there were in one such convoy—it was practically certain that 4 or 5 would be blown away or dismasted during the first storm. During the passage, a further half-dozen slow sailers would be separated and another half-dozen might be lost to weather in mid-Atlantic. When the convoy arrived off the coast of America, 2 or 3 strays would probably be cut out and taken by Yankee privateers. When 20 of the 36 starters arrived in New York, perhaps 12 weeks after departure from Cork, they would have to swing around their cables awaiting their turns for unloading. Frequently they swung for weeks, because docking and warehousing facilities were totally inadequate. And, after supplies were finally unloaded, the packages and barrels usually sat on the docks for days and even weeks exposed to the weather and to pilferage (apparently as common on the New York docks then as it is today). The inspectors often found the butter rancid, the biscuit weevily, the cheeses jumping with maggots, the peas alive with worms, and the flour soaked during the crossing and unfit for use.

Horses, too, had to eat, and practically every quart of grain they consumed had to be brought from England. Foraging for hay, an exhausting and dangerous business, occupied much energy and produced many Redcoat casualties. But the horses had, at least to be kept alive, for without them the army, with its artillery and cumbersome train, could not move any distance from the Atlantic and the great rivers. An important aspect of Washington's strategy was to immobilize the British Army by denial of forage.

Lack of horses, wagons, grain, and forage were critical factors in

Burgoyne's campaign in 1777. Burgoyne, at the end of a 4,000-mile supply line, was never able to build up even 30 days' rations. Nearly every senior serving officer, Burgoyne, Howe, Carleton, and Glinton, has been blamed for Burgoyne's failure. Lord George Germaine deserves a good share of the blame, and he has received it. There was certainly enough to go 'round. But the key to the whole situation was supply. With a well-ordered flow of supplies, Burgoyne would never have had to linger at Skenesborough for weeks or have had to send the expedition to Bennington and could probably have been in Albany by mid-August 1777. This would have changed the whole face of the war. There would have been no Saratoga and probably no French alliance. Of Burgoyne's invasion from Canada, Professor Bowler correctly writes: "No campaign of the war better illustrated the logistical problems of operations in America or the consequences of failure to understand them."

The supply picture was further complicated by the proclivity of the British and the Hessians to plunder indiscriminately and to destroy what they could not carry away. Their wanton behavior alienated many Americans who might otherwise have helped them to overcome the difficulties of getting food, grain, and forage from the countryside.

And there was the question of peculation. Many senior officers, civil servants, and commissaries made fortunes during the American Revolution and returned to England to purchase estates and live happily ever after. Graft was so common that it seems to have been tacitly condoned. (Generals Gage, Howe, Clinton, Cornwallis, and Carleton are free of this taint.)

Unfortunately, the British learned very little from the American experience. As far as I know, no attempt was ever made to assess it in comprehensive terms as Professor Bowler has done. His is an enlightening book, and I recommend it to all officers, not only to logisticians.

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Buck, James H., ed. *The Modern Japanese Military System.* Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, Inc., 1975. 253pp.

Despite numerous articles on Japan's postwar armed forces, the number of serious books on the subject, in Japanese and in English, remains small. The unpopularity of anything military in Japan after 1945 was nurtured by the largely U.S.-controlled Occupation. Starting in 1947, this outlook began to change. In 1950 General MacArthur wrote to Prime Minister Yoshida about the creation of a "National Police Reserve" of 75,000 men, which was an undisguised army (still today called the "Ground Self-Defense Force"). This preexisting unpopularity was thus joined by suspicion resulting from the creation of Japan's postwar armed forces having been ordered from outside its own national government, ironically enough by the same Occupation Government which earlier had virtually directed that Japan adopt a MacArthur-written Constitution. The ninth article of that famed "peace" Constitution forbade the nation to ever possess ground, sea, or air forces.

Both the Self-Defense Forces and the Constitution have survived, and the controversy has not altogether faded away. In 1973 a Japanese District Court ruled that these forces were unconstitutional and the final decision by Japan's Supreme Court remains years away. Much Japanese literature on the nation's armed forces, to the astonishment of outsiders unfamiliar with the political history of postwar Japan, has dealt with the simple question of the legitimacy of national defense. In addition to being uninteresting, much of this literature