

Naval War College Review

Volume 21
Number 3 *March*

Article 14

1968

The Broken Wing

J. D. Stevens
U.S. Air Force

David A. Divine

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review>

Recommended Citation

Stevens, J. D. and Divine, David A. (1968) "The Broken Wing," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 21 : No. 3 , Article 14.
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol21/iss3/14>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Naval War College Review by an authorized editor of U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. For more information, please contact repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu.

Davis, Vincent. *The Admirals Lobby*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1967. 329 p.

Admirals — past, present, and future — will not find in this book a named group of Admirals constituting a “lobby,” notwithstanding the catchy title. This is a scholarly study of the “politics of the policymaking process out of which military policy emerges” by a behavioral scientist who has major misgivings about relying so extensively on personal sources and the improvisations which characterized his research. He, therefore, regards the work under review as “only an early report.”

In part I the author leads the reader through an exhaustive historical review of the Navy and its problems prior to 1941, including centralization versus decentralization, the impact of the airplane, and the implementation of Mahan's theories. U.S. foreign policy, particularly during the period between the Spanish-American War to Pearl Harbor, is examined in some depth — related to naval affairs, of course. The author cites and agrees with Ambassador George Kennan that American policy was “seriously defective.”

The heart of this study will be found in parts II and III where the author examines what he labels the “political” activities of naval officers and draws at least tentative conclusions. It appears that these political activities are simply the lobbying in which the Navy has engaged in the Executive and Legislative Branches, and its public relations efforts outside the Government, to achieve its goal of a Navy “second to none.” In spite of naming well-known naval and civilian figures, e.g., Admiral Burke and Secretary McNamara, and using somewhat startling subheadings such as “Overt” and “Covert Approaches” (Office of Legislative Affairs and Op-

23), the author reveals little that has not been known generally in Government circles and by the informed public. He does provide a welcome analysis of these political activities, backed by impressive documentation — in spite of his own misgivings. The final section summarizes the author's findings in some five pages. In brief, the inference is that naval officers do not like to lobby (engage in “political” activities) except under pressure of any threat to the Navy and its ability to contribute to the security of the United States.

THE HON. T. S. ESTES
State Department Adviser

Divine, A. David. *The Broken Wing*. London: Hutchinson, 1966. 400 p.

The Broken Wing is an unduly severe criticism of Britain's defense establishment, which, Mr. Divine asserts, has served the country's defense needs poorly in the 20th century. The Admiralty and the War Office are both dealt their fair share of invectives, but it is the Air Ministry, Royal Air Force, and Ministry of Aviation (and their progenitors) which receive the brunt of the attack. The individuals involved in the many incidents examined are also singled out, and concise and illuminating evaluations of their roles in the development of British military and naval airpower are provided. Few are complimentary. Most harshly treated is Lord Trenchard, widely revered as the Father of the Royal Air Force. He is portrayed as a self-centered, self-seeking opportunist whose convictions and decisions were often, if not always, subordinated to personal career enlargement and empire building. Just as severe is the charge that Lord Trenchard instilled in the RAF a false philosophy and doctrine (that of Douhet and Mitchell) and deceived the public as to the capabilities and potential of airpower. That false philosophy, which permeates

the RAF to this very day, is primarily responsible for a long succession of bad decisions and failures from World War I onward, according to the author. Only the aircrews, who established an "imperishable record of courage and self-sacrifice," consistently fare well in the book.

In the course of his sweeping accusations, Mr. Divine traces the development of military aviation in Britain from its beginning to the present, which would he from beginning to end if he had his way. He finds little justification, past or present, for an independent Air Force and develops that theme with such enthusiasm that he arrives at the conclusion that there is little need for aircraft: "The manned aircraft is today — despite recent elaborations — a primitive and outmoded equipment for exercising these functions [of air warfare]." In his zealotry to discredit the manned bomber he commits the particularly serious error of misrepresenting the effects of the bombing of Germany during World War II. The data that he presents are correct insofar as he reveals them; but only by restricting his presentation to gross and incomplete statistics, thereby omitting many vital and relevant facts, can he possibly draw the dangerous conclusion that the bombings had little or no effect on German arms production. A slightly more thorough study would have revealed to Mr. Divine that the bombings were, in fact, disastrously destructive and resulted in the near-total collapse of the whole German economy. Elaboration is not possible here, but interested readers are referred to the very authoritative 315-volume *United States Strategic Bombing Survey*, (the Summary volume is quite thorough) or the 4-volume *The Strategic Air Offensive against Germany: 1939-1945* by Sir Charles K. Webster and Noble Frankland.

Whether Mr. Divine's omissions and erroneous conclusion on the effects of the bombing of Germany were intentional or inadvertent is beside the point. Regrettably, the naiveté of his shallow assessment casts suspicion on the credibility of other interpretations and conclusions in the book, especially those which are at variance with commonly accepted and documented interpretations.

Just as Mr. Divine's criticisms are considered unduly severe, so too, perhaps, is this review, for on the whole the author has given us a well-written, thought-provoking (albeit unbalanced and biased) analysis of the development and employment of military aviation in Britain. It merits the serious attention of all students of military and naval affairs. His criticisms of the airplane and tabulations of its limitations are valid, though exaggerated in effect and time. Nearly one-third of the book is devoted to an informative, comparative analysis of the development of guided missiles and rockets in Germany, Britain, the U.S.S.R., and the United States before and during World War II, and in the latter three countries since the War. Finally, woven throughout the book is a penetrating, illustrated commentary on the consequences of interservice rivalry, roles and missions, squabbles, and shortsighted, biased plans and decisions. It would seem there are lessons still to be learned in these areas, and *The Broken Wing* is an excellent, interesting primer.

J. D. STEVENS

Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Air Force

Florentin, Eddy. *The Battle of the Falaise Gap*. New York: Hawthorn Books, 1967. 362 p.

Originally published in 1964 under the title *Stalingrad en Normandie*, this book tells the story of the battle of