

2007

Realistic Visionary: A Portrait of George Washington

William M. Calhoun

Peter R. Henriques

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Recommended Citation

Calhoun, William M. and Henriques, Peter R. (2007) "Realistic Visionary: A Portrait of George Washington," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 60 : No. 2 , Article 22.

Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol60/iss2/22>

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its jailer, but it is still in jail.” Unfortunately, Butler fails to draw on the greatest strategic lesson for the Germans: on 4 July Admiral Reinhard Scheer, the “victor of the Skagaerrak,” informed Kaiser Wilhelm II that further fleet actions would be futile and that only “the defeat of British economic life, that is, by using the U-boats against British trade,” could swing the balance in the war.

Lamentably, Butler’s lack of familiarity with German documents and recent historiography mars an otherwise interesting book. Apart from misspelled German words and ships’ names, there are major howlers. Thus Ludendorff is raised to the nobility as “von,” Hugo von Pohl in 1914 is listed as the High Sea Fleet’s chief of staff rather than as Chief of the Admiralty Staff in Berlin, Karl Doenitz is cited as a World War I “destroyer captain,” and German diplomatic and naval files are situated at Koblenz rather than at Berlin and Freiburg, respectively. Further, while one can accuse the German naval command of timidity, it seems unjust to ascribe “cowardice” to them. Hyperbole abounds. Did Jutland really “dictate” that “Germany would lose the First World War”? Was it “the decisive moment of the First World War”? Did it “decide” the “very course of the war”? Was the German failure to intercept British cross-Channel troop transports in August 1914 the “lost opportunity” that “ultimately decided the course of the war”?

Finally, Butler’s claims that “three generations of histories” have failed to look at the “strategic aftermath” of the battle and that they have failed for ninety years to ask why the Germans never again faced the Grand Fleet in battle, or why they turned instead to unrestricted

submarine warfare, are not just inaccurate but make a mockery of that scholarship. Careful editorial work could have averted some of this. Regrettably, it did not.

HOLGER H. HERWIG
University of Calgary



Henriques, Peter R. *Realistic Visionary: A Portrait of George Washington*. Charlottesville: Univ. of Virginia Press, 2006. 256pp. \$26.95

The man who was “first in war, first in peace and first in the hearts of his countrymen” is also first as a subject in the contemporary revival of popular interest in the founding fathers. In this work Peter Henriques has provided a concise, balanced, and scholarly companion piece to the more comprehensive recent books concerning George Washington. Rather than a conventional biography, Peter Henriques, a professor emeritus of history at George Mason University and a distinguished scholar of the vast collection of Washington’s writings, has provided an analysis of ten of the arguably most important issues and relationships Washington dealt with during his life. Especially for those familiar with Washington’s basic biography, these thoughtful and fair-minded essays will inspire further reflection on the character and career of the indispensable man of the American founding.

Henriques’s erudition and balanced judgment may be at their most effective in his consideration of the private Washington, including an examination of his beliefs on slavery and religion, and a reflection on his final illness and death. Washington, who can be justifiably criticized as a slave owner, in

Henriques's view experienced a "tortuously gradual" evolution on slavery that mixed increasing moral consideration with ever-present economic assessments. Washington never publicly took a stance against slavery or called for its end, although his personal growth on the issue of slavery and race is impressive—in his will he ultimately freed his own. Henriques writes that Washington was a realist, a man who should be judged against the standards of his day, and notes that he made the unity of the new republic a higher priority than attacking slavery, an institution Washington came to write of as "the only unavoidable subject of regret."

Perhaps the most moving chapter in this well written book is the last, where Henriques addresses Washington's death. His detailed research reveals that Washington's last day of life was excruciatingly painful, that orthodox Christian beliefs had no apparent influence on his actions during his final hours, and that important aspects of his

character were highlighted by his behavior throughout this tormenting struggle. (Washington slowly suffocated to death over many hours, almost certainly from acute epiglottitis, a virulent bacterial infection of the throat.) As Washington wrote some four months before he died, "When the summons comes I shall endeavor to obey it with a good grace." He endured the attempted treatment from his doctors and an agonizing death with stoic courage, patience, and grace, completing his life with his honor intact.

Henriques's accessible book illuminates Washington's character through, in some measure, the lens of his honor and the importance to Washington throughout his life of preserving it. *Realistic Visionary* provides a trustworthy and insightful guide to a further understanding of Washington and confirms, in the words of his secretary, Tobias Lear, that "he died as he lived."

WILLIAM M. CALHOUN
Naval War College