

1989

Victory Denied

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Recommended Citation

Mahncke, Frank C. (1989) "Victory Denied," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 42 : No. 3 , Article 24.
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol42/iss3/24>

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II. The key events are adroitly summarized, and technical issues affecting battle outcomes as well as the strategy involved are addressed. Because the book is directed toward a British audience, it includes some aspects of the Pacific war that are not always emphasized in American histories.

Throughout the book there are brief profiles of key military leaders, including Yamamoto and Spruance. These vignettes are a definite asset to this work.

In sum, *The World Atlas of Warfare* is well written and interesting, and its index and bibliography are well-organized and useful. I expect that I will refer to this book a number of times in the future.

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Saward, Dudley. *Victory Denied*. New York: Franklin Watts, 1987. 376pp. \$18.95

In 1697, Father Francesco Lama described an aerial ship of war, but concluded that: "There is one small difficulty that cannot be solved; God will never allow man to construct such a machine since it would create many disturbances in the civil and political governments of mankind." So much for medieval prophecy in matters of technology and warfare.

By the end of the First World War, aerial ships of war capable of dropping bombs well behind the battle lines had been built and used,

albeit with little strategic consequence. These machines did, however, inspire great prophecies of future military victory, most notably by Giulio Douhet in Europe and Billy Mitchell in America. Of the world's air forces, the Royal Air Force was most influenced by these optimistic prophecies of easy victory through aerial supremacy and the bombing of the enemy's military, industrial and economic base.

Dudley Saward's book (first published in 1985 in the United Kingdom) is an account of the rise of the RAF's air power from 1920 to the defeat of Germany in 1945. While he has taken up an ambitious and important task—to relate the role of the RAF and "strategic" air power to the outcome of the war in Europe—the book is oddly flawed in that it contains no mention of the influence of either Douhet or Mitchell nor of the prewar roles of "Boom" Trenchard or "Bomber" Harris. Saward's book fails to make any connection between the earlier prophecies of victory through "strategic" air power and the realities of the European theater. "Strategic" air power did play an important role in the Second World War, but not quite as expected by its proponents before the war.

Nevertheless, Saward's book is an important contribution to the history of that form of air power. He was graduated from RAF Cranwell in 1934 and served in the RAF throughout the war, working on the development of electronic aids for precision night bombing. This perspective

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and his personal experience provide valuable insights for the historian of the period.

The first half of the book is a series of chapters which alternate between the early growth of the RAF and the rise of Hitler. This odd juxtaposition does not work well, for there is no new or relevant material in the chapters on Hitler. However, the material on the RAF is valuable, covering as it does the leadership of Trenchard, the establishment of Cranwell, the role of the RAF in the Middle East and the Northwest Frontier of India, and advances in aircraft design. Although Seward's biases are evident, his account of the struggle during the 1930s to build, train and equip an adequate number of squadrons of both offensive and defensive aircraft is a useful historical contribution.

Perhaps the best chapter in this section is Seward's commentary on the development of air defense in Britain during the late 1930s. He focuses on the great debates in the Air Defense Committee between Tizard and Lindemann. While C. P. Snow's work on this era is often considered definitive, Seward brings out more of the fundamental technical issues. He is particularly good at relating the new technical capabilities of the early radar systems to the tactics for air defense.

The second portion of the book covers the RAF bombing campaigns in Europe. Here Seward's perspective is valuable to the American reader who has been exposed primarily to the daylight bombing

campaign of the U.S. Army Air Forces. The British campaign was quite different. The RAF relied on night action rather than escort fighters for defense and on electronic rather than optical bomb aiming.

The author's coverage of the development of electronic methods for improving bombing accuracy profits from his personal knowledge. When the night bombing campaign began, the initial results were dismal because the bombers had to find their targets by dead reckoning and visual identification. In the weather-plagued nighttime skies of Europe, this method proved inadequate. In clear, nontechnical terms, Seward explains the development of the electronic navigation and radar bombing aids, including Gee, H2S, G-W and Oboe, and relates their significance to the bombing tactics. For the historian concerned with the impact of technology on tactics and strategy, this is valuable new material. Its significance has often been overlooked in previous works on the RAF bombing campaign.

Throughout that campaign, one of the key strategic issues was the selection and prioritization of targets. The doctrine of "strategic" air war called for the resources to be concentrated, in Harris' words, on "attacking the kernel of the problem at the center." This meant that the bombing should be concentrated on the enemy's internal war-making capability. If this were destroyed, then surely the enemy's war-fighting capability at the battle front would collapse.

As the Bomber Command's strength grew in 1942, high debates resulted concerning its best use. Harris argued passionately for focusing solely on the industrial kernel. In June 1942 he wrote to Churchill: "We are free, if we will, to employ our rapidly increasing air strength in the proper manner. In such a manner as would avail to knock Germany out of the war in a matter of months, if we decide on the right course." Churchill was cool to this grand promise: "I do not however think Air bombing is going to bring the war to an end by itself, and still less that anything that could be done with our existing resources could produce decisive results in the next twelve months."

Churchill's view prevailed, and Bomber Command's squadrons were used in a number of ways to support the many facets of the war against Germany. Seward does not criticize Churchill's decision directly but does seek to demonstrate that this was a mistake. He bases his case on postwar interviews with Albert Speer (the German minister of production), which indicate that the Allied bombing did impede German military production by 10 to 20 percent (at its peak) and did result in the reallocation of fighting forces from the front to homeland defense. The absolute impact of this on the pace and duration of the war remains unclear.

Seward's detailed account of the wartime debates over the use of Britain's heavy bombers contains a number of historically important

insights, especially his use of Harris' and Churchill's correspondence. However, his material from Speer and his vast statistics on tonnage of bombs dropped do not resolve the debate over the effective use of big bombers. Seward's book should be read for its source material on the rise and use of air power, but not for its implicit conclusion: that air power, if used as Harris wished, would have ended the war with less pain.

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Parker, Geoffrey. *The Military Revolution: Military Innovation and the Rise of the West, 1500-1800*. New York and Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1988. 234pp. \$27.95

Taking his cue from Michael Roberts' important 1955 lecture, "The Military Revolution 1560-1660," Professor Geoffrey Parker of the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, delivered these superb Lees Knowles lectures at Cambridge University's Trinity College in 1984. They are a model of synthesis, clarity, and comparative strategic history, and are drawn from primary and secondary sources in over a half-dozen languages to provide new and revealing information to English-language students of military history. What the author lacked in knowledge and sources, he elicited from scholars of many lands, all of whom he justly acknowledges.