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The Development of a Modern Navy: French Naval Policy 1871-1904

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minor flaws, however, it is an exceptional research tool for students of naval history and ship modelers, and it should be considered the first reference tool to be consulted for any aspect of the history of battleships and battle cruisers.

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Ropp, Theodore. *The Development of a Modern Navy: French Naval Policy 1871-1904*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1987. 439pp. \$28.95

With this book the Naval Institute continues its practice of publishing outstanding work in the field of maritime history for the benefit of scholars and warriors alike. Both will find ample reward here. Professor Ropp completed this work as his dissertation in 1937 and it became a standard reference in unpublished form at the Harvard library; so thorough is this study that none other has been attempted, and no published work on this period has followed. To fill this publication gap, Stephen S. Roberts has transformed the dissertation into a book for general readers, with outstanding clarity and utility, enhanced by remarkable photographs.

This is a fascinating story of bewildering rates of change in technology, and the awkward efforts of proud institutions to master the new weapons and platforms provided. Parallels with modern periods abound, and veterans of E-ring battles will smile in rueful empathy

with their French counterparts who fought conventional wisdom with new approaches.

The panoply of weaponry is fascinating in itself, as steam supplanted sail, steel supplanted iron and wood, and rifled quick-firing breechloaders took the place of gigantic muzzle-loading smoothbores (one class of which required 90 men to serve and fired only 3-5 rounds per hour). Simultaneously, mines and torpedoes progressed from the crude barrels of the American Civil War to the first modern weapons of this type.

All this took place on a tactical seascape in which Horatio Nelson would have been comfortable in 1870, when the melee and individual action were deemed to be the most desirable doctrine, and the ram was preferred by many tacticians over naval artillery. In the span of one generation, the conceptual basis of the large Jutland fleet engagement was in place, with scouting by cruisers, screening by destroyers, ranging ladders and torpedo attacks. All this required extraordinary intellectual effort, and modern maritime strategists will find the story of the *Jeune Ecole* of particular interest. This was an intellectual movement within the French officer corps which literally changed the basic maritime strategy of their nation by advocating commerce warfare (against their primary perceived antagonist, Britain). In response, Britain established the "two for one" rule of naval construction, which was the genesis of the naval arms race of the 1890s and 1900s.

Ropp's balanced presentation of the French picture is enhanced greatly by a continual comparative analysis of development and adaptation in the neighboring navies of Italy, Britain, and Russia. As technology was mastered, first one and then another moved into a temporary perceived "lead" which rendered other ships and weapons obsolete. Progress was halting and jerky in all the navies, with little conception of where technology was leading ships and the organizations that built and operated them. Frequently, the traditional approach triumphed simply because it was familiar to the decisionmaker.

Throughout the narrative, the tragic flow of the Third Republic is exposed time and again. Politics for the sake of politics; charges, counter-charges and acrid *ad hominem* dispute poisoned the domestic political atmosphere and spilled over into the professional navy via the civilian secretariat. In reaction, the navy turned inward, became separated from the public, and lost the understanding and support of the general population which was (and is) the *sine qua non* of modernization and maintenance of a naval force structure.

It is this aspect of the tale which is most unsettling to a thoughtful reader, as it is a reaction most of us have felt when confronted with antagonism from political and academic critics of our best work. Ropp concludes with this paragraph, which provides a philosophical summation:

Perhaps the greatest weakness of the French Navy in 1904 was the continued

lack of understanding between its leaders on the one hand and the public and its representatives in Parliament on the other. The navy's failure to resolve the traditional problem of its relations with public opinion was a major cause of the survival of its antiquated administration, of the public apathy that permitted the ruinous regime of Pelletan (a civilian secretary), and of the continued failure of the public and military men to see the importance of sea power in a continental war. In a democratic society like France, it is as impossible for the public to escape its responsibility toward the navy as it is for the navy to exclude it by reconstituting the old closed corporation of experts of aristocratic days. While the French experience proved the public's incompetence in technical matters such as ship design and naval tactics, it also proved that the abstention of the public, which owes far more to the navy than mere financial support, will show up eventually in flaws in the Navy's industrial and general strategic system, even if the navy is run by some of the ablest experts in the world.

This book deserves careful thought by each of us.

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Captain, U.S. Navy

Allen, Thomas B. *War Games: The Secret World of the Creators, Players, and Policy Makers Rehearsing World War III Today*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1987. 402pp. \$19.95

Thomas B. Allen explores the scope and uses of war gaming in the study and making of U.S. defense strategy and policy. Political and military simulations, analyses, and games have become important tools for the defense community, and Mr. Allen's attitude about them is well summed up in his own words. "From