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## History and War

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Policy Commission recommended a 70-group Air Force in the fall of 1947 and the Brewster Board supported the same notion in Congress soon after, the President's tight grip on the budget was not to be shaken—far from it, as the Air Force was kept far below its goal until after the outbreak of the Korean War.

Wolk's story is striking in that the institutions established then are largely intact today. The leaders in the first years of a new service have an impact far out of proportion to the length of their tenures. In the end, the airmen were more successful in the internal structuring of the Air Force than they were in establishing the desired role within the Department of Defense and winning the kinds of powers they thought essential for its Secretary. Too, though they achieved their minimum goal of an independent air force, Forrestal and his followers were formidable adversaries and salvaged a good bit out of the fight. The Navy won the greater part of the contested turf between the two institutions, and the Department of Defense that emerged in 1947 resembled the Navy model, much more than that of Spaatz, Norstad and company. It was a great day for the airmen. But as Hap Arnold remarked to Spaatz, the flyers had done most of the compromising necessary to win it.

This effort by Herman Wolk goes a long way in correcting the common misconception that official history is always bad history. In the field of the study of military airpower at least, the official work is generally of a

much higher quality than that which is produced commercially. *Planning and Organizing* is well researched and written, and does a comprehensive and balanced job with its subject. It is definitive and shall not be superseded for a long time.

DR. DAVID R. METS  
Niceville, Florida

Ropp, Theodore. *History and War*. Augusta, Ga.: The Hamburg Press, 1984. 81pp.

*History and War*—published by admiring former students—is a kind of *festschrift* honoring Theodore Ropp on his retirement after 43 years of teaching at Duke University. Rather than write articles of their own, the “authors” have thought fit to print Ropp's hitherto unpublished, major idea—the further development of Quincy Wright's notion of the cyclical nature of social violence and his application of Thomas Kuhn's paradigm from his *Structure of Scientific Revolution*.

Naval historian Clark G. Reynolds' introduction is a tribute, a memoir, and an explanation of Ropp, who for long served as America's most prominent teaching military historian. A list of the many doctoral dissertations which he directed is included at the end of the book. Not surprisingly it contains the names of several who have become well-known military historians in their own right. Ropp is the *master teacher*, the giant of ideas who disseminates them in and well beyond the classroom. Indeed, the world has been his classroom—the freshmen he loves to awaken, the

graduate student he thrills at jarring to intellectual action, the alumni he enjoys refreshing, colleagues at whom he pokes fun, generals and admirals he baffles, and anyone who cares to listen—and learn.

In one sense, the book has been published prematurely. Its forceful removal from its literary womb can be excused in this case, as a useful method of circulating an idea which has had an elephantine gestation. Although begun in 1959, it still needs more to be done to expand it.

Ropp's central idea is that there is a pattern of change in military history which occurs roughly every 60 years. Within that span there are phases which last approximately 15 years. Successively, the movement within the larger cycle alters from crisis to adaptation, then to solution, and back again to instability. Then the cycle repeats again and again.

In one section, Ropp has made an elaborate table of dates to illustrate his concept. Numerology, he calls it. For the Naval War College, it is interesting to note that some of this work seems to stem from the study he was pursuing as Ernest J. King Professor of Maritime History at the college in 1962-63. Perhaps some of the War College students and staff from that time recall his preoccupation with the topic. Interestingly, eleven of them went on to reach flag rank and may well have adapted a bit of it to their own perception of their profession.

In his introduction, Reynolds points an accusing finger at the Navy, which was the only one of the

services that never sent an officer, on orders and in uniform, to study with Ropp at Duke. However, the Navy felt his influence in other ways, but no doubt, it was the poorer for not selecting a few to mix in Ropp's wide-ranging seminar at Durham. The interaction of that group, through Ropp's teaching, was undoubtedly the most effective and stimulating way in which he chose to make his contribution.

More than any other published piece, *History and War* expresses the method, style, and influence of Theodore Ropp on his students. For those who never had the opportunity and for those who seek some sense of his widespread impact on American-trained students of military history, *History and War* is worth examination. More importantly, it will be worth reflecting with Ropp on the unfinished work which he has set for himself. As he described it: "There may be enough here to make the chronological framework of a history of modern military strategy, beginning with its definition for military educational purposes, during the Enlightenment. Its alternating triumphs and disasters in practice are, I suspect, due to the lack of military experimentation during the longer periods of relative tranquility . . . . Any regular periodization may make it easier for students to remember the milieu of a particular mind-set, and its social political, and economic adaptability."

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