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Women in the Military: The Unfinished Revolution

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hence thrust it into true world power. The origins and purpose of modern sea-land lanes of communication, and the significance of protecting navies, are established in these times—for Americans as well as Europeans.

Through these networks were established new global thalassocracies. Imperialism gave birth to the modern world, a new era in world history. It laid the foundation of a new global civilization based on Western technology. Today it is that *technology*, not the ideas of capitalism, Christianity, or liberalism, that is the legacy of the European conquests.

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Holm, Jeanne. *Women in the Military: The Unfinished Revolution*. Novato, Calif.: Presidio Press, 1982. 398 pp. \$16.95.

As the subtitle of this book makes clear, General Jeanne Holm has spent her thirty-three years in the Air Force fighting more than one battle. An unflagging champion of the rights of women in the military, General Holm traces the contributions of women to the Armed Services from the legendary "Molly Pitcher" to the present. *Women in the Military* examines the role of women in post-World War II strategy, the relationship between the All Volunteer Army (AVA) and women, the effect of the ERA on the military, and the role of the different branches of government in shaping military policy on this controversial subject. It sympathetically catalogs the prob-

lems faced by women, in particular: promotions, admission to the service academies, and family policy.

Although the book is informative on these and many other issues, I do not find Holm's argument compelling. This is largely because, having made up her mind about the justice of her cause, she avoids serious discussion of the complex questions involved. Let me give four examples. Although she acknowledges that the military is not a democratic institution, she seems not to have reflected upon the limits of the military to enshrine democratic values. She makes no distinction between the fight for women's rights in the civilian and military spheres; nor does she distinguish between the claims made on behalf of black male soldiers and women soldiers. Both seem to be legitimate *civil* rights issues for her. Thus she dismisses without comment her opponents' objections that the military is not the proper institution for carrying out controversial social policy.

Similarly, she attacks the "mind set" and "deep hang ups" of those who maintain that "war is a man's business" without considering whether this "cult of masculinity" might play a useful role in battle. It is true that much of military life has nothing to do with battle, but it seems equally true that the virtues necessary to victory in battle are not those we wish to encourage in our civilian lives. General Holm seems oblivious to this tension. She acknowledges only those instances where the presence of women does

seem to improve morale. She says nothing about the argument that in certain combat situations women might lower morale by imposing greater responsibilities on men or, even worse, boost the morale of the enemy by making him fight harder against women.

Although she concedes that there are problems with the AVA as well as the draft, she declines to discuss the political and moral issues of an all volunteer force which recruits from the most disadvantaged groups in society, leaving white middle class educated males to pursue their careers. Instead, she focuses on the opportunity the AVA provides to women, competing against male high school dropouts and mental incompetents. Because she sees no problems with such a force, she finds in back of the army's recent decision to limit women recruits a "hidden agenda" to bring back the male draft.

Finally, General Holm skirts the central question of women in combat. Throughout the book, she observes that the full integration of women in the military cannot take place until the combat issue is resolved. From her testimony on abolishing Section 6051 restricting women in combat, I take it she favors women in combat, but she refuses to discuss the issue. Perhaps this is because she does not wish to alienate those who would agree with her on the smaller issues. But she rightly points out that all these policy questions, e.g. promotion, retirement, admission to the service academies, turn on the question of combat. On the issue of the service academies, the

general is especially disingenuous. She points out that at West Point, the admission of women necessitated that only (sic) the physical training part of the curriculum be changed. Women carry lighter rifles, and are pitted only against women in pugil stick training. If we could sign a treaty with the Soviets insuring that American women fight only Soviet women, the general's expectations of fairness and equity would be realized.

General Holm's democratic principles seem to extend even to her writing, where she makes nouns do the work of verbs and draws on a formidable arsenal of slang expressions and cliches.

In the end, this is a disappointing book. *Women in the Military* deals with a serious subject, but not in a serious way.

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Bonds, Ray, ed. *The Vietnam War: The Illustrated History of the Conflict in Southeast Asia—Updated Edition*. New York: Crown Publications, 1983. 256pp. \$19.95

Crace, Max D. and McJunkin, James N. *Visions of Vietnam*. Novato, Calif.: Presidio Press, 1983. 248pp. \$25

Mason, Robert C. *Chickenhawk*. New York: Viking Press, 1983. 339pp. \$17.75

As the administration struggles with the vagaries of public opinion in making critical foreign policy decisions about Central America, the