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A Hollow Threat: Strategic Air Power and Containment before Korea

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and operations), "The Civilians" (portraits of the Vietnamese), and "The Grunts" (the combat soldiers). There are brief captions associated with each photo and drawing, and the book is well-layed out and sharply printed, although the left page is always blank, evidently for dramatic effect.

Unfortunately, *Visions of Vietnam* fails to capture the essence of the war. The photos are unremarkable and not especially dramatic and the artwork, while serviceable, is not memorable. Perhaps the nightly coverage of the war spoiled us for books such as *Visions*, giving readers a sense that the war was more dramatic than the pictures and art in this volume would indicate. The volume contains all the clichés of the war (men on tanks, prostitutes and pimps in Saigon, patrols through the jungle, destitute peasants) but does little to go beyond the surface that is already too familiar from newspapers and television broadcasts. One is left, sadly, with the feeling that it has all been said before.

The final recent book on the war is the memoir of a year's combat tour in country by a helicopter pilot, Robert Mason. The book is an intensely personal look at combat that is realistically and dramatically written. It describes the helo air war in Vietnam in the same biting prose that James Webb and Phil Caputo used in telling the story of the ground soldiers in *Fields of Fire* and *A Rumor of War* respectively. As a combat memoir, *Chickenhawk* is fairly good, accurate, and occasionally powerful writing.

By far the most haunting portion of

the book, however, deals with the author's return to the United States and his life from 1966 to the present. In a few short pages of epilogue, Mason manages to capture the horror of post-Vietnam trauma that afflicted some veterans. For a man who had survived the dangerous air war over the jungles in Vietnam, it seems sadly ironic that alcohol, drugs, and severe stress disorders were ultimately crippling. Robert Mason is today appealing a conviction for drug-related charges, and claims "No one is more shocked than I." These are the final words in a sadly troubled memoir written by a man who could have done better. One is left with a sense that having survived the war in Vietnam, Mason had little left over to deal with the demands of life after combat. While Mason's experiences are not typical of the vast majority of Vietnam veterans, they are sadly indicative of the problems many suffered. At least America seems gradually to be coming to terms with the war in Vietnam. Robert Mason, it would seem, has yet to come home.

JAMES STAVRIDIS
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Borowski, Harry R. *A Hollow Threat: Strategic Air Power and Containment before Korea*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1982. 242pp. \$27.50

Long before World War II ended, it was apparent to US leaders that our ally, the Soviet Union, would be the biggest threat to the postwar world. While the West demobilized its military forces, the Soviets did no such thing. The pressing question then, was

how to deter any potential Soviet plans for expansion on European territory.

Many believed that the only viable deterrent available after 1945 was the atomic bomb. The delivery vehicle to be employed was the large strategic bombers of the Army Air Forces, which recently emerged from the successes of Germany and Japan. Lieut. Colonel Harry Borowski states that while historians generally have credited America's strategic air arm with singlehandedly holding the Soviets at bay during the late 1940s, they were mistaken because at the time that air arm was incapable of carrying nuclear weapons to Soviet soil.

The wartime chief of the Army Air Forces (AAF), General H.H. Arnold, believed the three postwar priorities of his service were autonomy, continued research and development, and a strong air arm capable of strategic bombing. AAF leaders felt that the demonstrated ability to carry out the strategic bombing mission was essential in order to achieve autonomy. Impinging on these priorities were demobilization and President Truman's comparatively small postwar defense budgets that placed severe constraints on continued R&D efforts.

Nonetheless, the separate air force was established in 1947, with strategic bombing vested solely in the Strategic Air Command. Unfortunately, creation of the command did not insure that capability. Under General George Kenney's leadership, SAC struggled during its first two years of operation. Grave personnel and tech-

nical problems, as well as uncertain national policies on the use of atomic weapons, compounded the difficulties in producing a viable atomic capability.

The author holds that it was the US airlift, not US atomic power, that prevented the Berlin blockade from spreading into further Soviet action. Despite repeated intelligence estimates of the Soviet intentions to initiate another war, it was only with the naming of SAC's second commander, General Curtis LeMay, that the Air Force began to develop a true atomic capability. But even that failed to defer the North Korean invasion of South Korea in 1950.

Making excellent use of National archives and Strategic Air Command historical documents as well as oral history material covering the period, Lieut. Colonel Borowski provides an interesting look at the development of US atomic development between 1945 and 1950. Yet, though he establishes his case for the "hollow threat," he leaves with an unanswered question: what actually deterred the Soviets from taking more aggressive action during those years?

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Ferencz, Benjamin B. *Enforcing International Law: A Way to World Peace. A Documentary History and Analysis.* Dobbs Ferry, N.Y.: Oceana, 1983. 2 vols. 891 pp. \$90 the set.

In 1975 Benjamin Ferencz brought forth *Defining International Aggression: The Search for World Peace, A Documentary History and Analysis* (Oceana, 2