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In My View

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and George Bunn

IN MY VIEW . . .



Jan Oliver

The Press, The Chiefs, and the War Colleges

Sir,

The May-June 1984 issue of the *Review* is of truly exceptional quality, made so in large part by the three honest and provocative articles on military-press relations and by Rear Admiral Swarztrauber's sifting out of conflicting views "On Reorganizing the Pentagon."

The value of the press analysis was considerably lessened, however, by Major Mitchell's choice of the Lefever study as his basis for analyzing television biases. The Lefever study cannot be separated from its author's own political involvements and espoused biases. That judgment might be just or unjust. It is simply a matter of effective Aristotelian debate.

Strange to say, Major Mitchell had ready at hand a more persuasive source, but he somehow managed to misread it. He states that "the net effect of television's coverage of the events of Tet was to exhort the American *public* [emphasis added] into its first real misgivings about the war and to initiate the movement of the *public* into active dissent," ascribing this view to Peter Braestrup's study (*Big Story*) of the 1968 Tet Offensive. That is not what Braestrup and his polling collaborator, Burns W. Roper, say! In short, what the Braestrup-Roper analysis says is that the public was ready to go out and win the war—possibly *because* they may have perceived the Tet Offensive to be a defeat—but shifted to opposition to the war only because the President, their Commander-in-Chief, did nothing, and then quit. Later in his article, Major Mitchell comes around to the Braestrup-Roper conclusion that the defeatist impact of the distorted press coverage was not on the public, but on the President and his advisers who were operating under the stupefying illusion that Walter Cronkite, et al, were in tune with the public. In fact, what we had were two groups not only isolated and insulated from the American public at large but to a considerable extent contemptuous of that public. These were, on the one hand, the majority of the academicians who had taken over the Government during the Kennedy Administration and whom President Johnson kept on to his ultimate sorrow, and a dominant group in the press who virtually worshipped the academics-become-bureaucrats. The blind were indeed leading the blind, and it was Johnson who was led into the pit.

It is ironic indeed that Major Mitchell would cite none other than David Halberstam as his source for the role of public spokesman Johnson may well have ascribed to Cronkite. From beginning to end of the American tragedy in Vietnam, Halberstam was the personification of the central flaw in American journalism's notion that a liberal arts degree from a respected university qualifies its possessor to report with discernment and accuracy everything from an Asian war to the election of a Pope. That delusion persists because that is the cheapest way to operate. It will change only when the public demands that people assigned to cover wars have at least the level of specialized expertise the public long ago demanded and got in the sports departments.

The same academic elite that Mr. Cronkite scared literally out of their wits at the time of Tet is, of course, the same civilian OSD bureaucracy lamented by Admiral Swarztrauber. Often, as is the case with many in the press, these people are the products of extended academic draft deferments. The psychological burden of knowing that other men were sent to Korea or Vietnam to die or be maimed in their stead is a factor that would have been hard to consider in Admiral Swarztrauber's analysis, but it is there, and it had a profound effect in the reaction of the Defense Department civilian leadership to the misreporting of Tet.

For this and all the other reasons Admiral Swarztrauber has stated, it is essential that the direct Presidential-military adviser relationship of World War II be reestablished, but I can't see how that will be accomplished or aided by restoring three squabbling service secretaries to the Cabinet.

The OSD bureaucracy did not displace military advice. It moved into a vacuum. The military will not be able to reassert a proper advisory role until it can convince the country that it is capable of coming up with alternative and recommended courses of action that are not dominated from first to last by service vested interests, separate or collective. The place to develop such strategic alternatives, it seems to me, is in a true National War College operating directly under supervision of the National Security Council. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff should be a member of the NSC, his vote balanced by the political and economic views of the civilian majority. Once a course of action is chosen the job of carrying out the military component should be given to the Chairman and the CinCs through the Joint Staff. That would make the Joint Staff solely an operating rather than a notoriously weak strategic planning agency and force the services to assign their very best talent.

I support wholeheartedly Admiral Swarztrauber's belief that the separate identities and voices of the land, sea and air services must be maintained. They cannot go on, however, with the preposterous assertion, institutionalized in so many separate "war colleges," that each service is capable of training senior officers for Joint and Combined operations. That is the role of the National War College and of the Joint staffs. Except for some consolidation of real estate, mainly in the Army, that does not imply any great change. Newport logically should continue to operate as the country's center for the study of maritime operations, the same for Maxwell Air Force Base as the center for air warfare, and with Fort Leavenworth as the logical center for the study of land warfare. All of these could be tied in with the electronic war gaming of Joint and Combined operations at the National War College.

Change is on its way, driven by the powerful economic and political forces set in

motion by the \$200 billion deficits. This time, hopefully, the military leadership of the country will be able to come up with something more attractive than the intransigence that brought on the MacNamara regime and disaster.

William V. Kennedy
Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania

A Management Error of the First Magnitude

Sir,

The authors of *The Trident Submarine in Bureaucratic Perspective* (Review, March-April 1984) appear to have missed a crucial point in Electric Boat's troubles with the Navy. P. Takis Veliotis's first act after becoming the yard's manager in 1977 was to fire some 3,500 employees, almost all of whom were so-called "overhead" people. Unfortunately, what he apparently succeeded in doing was to cripple the yard's quality assurance program by eliminating many of the "non-productive" personnel performing this function. Failure to protect the integrity of quality assurance was a management error of the first magnitude, a lesson learned most painfully by the Navy in the late 1960s but apparently ignored by Mr. Veliotis, who came from a surface ship job at the company's Quincy yard. Lapses in quality assurance usually come to light many months or years later, and this is obviously what happened to Electric Boat with regard to the poor welds, misidentified steel, etc.

According to recent newspaper reports, Mr. Veliotis is currently in Greece, a fugitive from a federal indictment for allegedly conspiring with a supplier of insulating material to divert over \$2 million in kickbacks from shipbuilding contracts under his management.

Commander John D. Alden, US Navy (Retired)
Pleasantville, NY

Primary Source Material?

Sir,

I am writing in reply to an article, "Central Mediterranean Sea Control and the North African Campaigns, 1940-1942," by Rowena Reed, that appears in your July/August 1984 issue. Your editorial statement purports that you publish articles on the "basis of their intellectual and literary merits." I assume as well, relatively to the interests of your readers. While I understand the attraction of Reed's topic, I am at a loss as to why you chose to publish this particular work.

The article is replete with factual errors. The British counterattack against the Italians at Sidi Barrani, Operation COMPASS, was launched in December 1940, not

October (pp. 84-85). Benghazi was captured in February 1941, not November 1940 (p. 85). On page 88 Reed states that Rommel fell back to El Agheila in December 1941 because of his "troublesome logistical situation." Rather, he had been forced to retreat by the British CRUSADER offensive of November 1941. Reed writes (p. 90) that on 21 May 1942 Hitler began to have doubts about the Malta invasion plan because of "the success of Rommel's advance." Yet Rommel's attack on the British Gazala position did not begin until 26/27 May.

Numerous factual errors could be overlooked if Reed's work was based on new, primary source material. But it is not. Reed cites only ten secondary works. Nevertheless, had she provided a synthesis of the relevant literature on the war in the Mediterranean, her work would have been worthwhile. But examine her footnotes and note the publication dates of the works cited: 1957, 1946, 1951, 1951, 1954, 1960, 1950, 1962, 1953, 1946. The most recent work cited was published in 1962. Most of the books were written before 1954, over thirty years ago. Has nothing been published on the Mediterranean theater since 1962? This is neither the time nor the place to go into the historiography of World War II, but might not the author have mentioned the breaking of the German Enigma codes—ULTRA? Reed cites neither F.H. Hinsley's history of British intelligence during the Second World War, nor the relevant chapter in Ronald Lewin's *Ultra Goes to War*. In fact, Reed never mentions ULTRA at all. When was this article written?

How could you have published an article full of errors, based solely on ten outdated secondary works, that ignores a quarter-century of research and writing, and that fails to mention ULTRA?

Michael A. Palmer
 Washington, DC

Reed rejoinder:

My article never claimed to be based on new documentary material; it is an overview of a very large and complex subject. Besides, published papers and official histories are not considered secondary sources. As for being old, historians do not determine the best sources by how recently they were published. In fact, accounts published closer to the event are usually more rather than less reliable. Mr. Palmer has a right to his opinion that the British CRUSADER operation caused Rommel to withdraw from El Agheila, but Rommel does not agree. He said it was because he was out of supplies. I did not mention ULTRA because it would have required too lengthy elaboration for a short article and did not seem to affect my main point about logistics and the North African war. In his zeal to explain why the article is worthless, Palmer seems to have overlooked its main contribution, which is to show that shipping across the Mediterranean from 1940 to 1942 had less effect on military control of North Africa than had been previously supposed.

Rowena Reed
 Associate Professor of History
 Dartmouth College

Naval Warfare Principle Research Grants

Sir,

The short discussion of the inside-back cover of the May-June '84 issue ("Naval War College—Naval Warfare History Research Grants") illustrates what I think to be a problem with present-day military-academic research effort. That problem is exemplified by the sentence beginning, "While the idea of principles was subsequently viewed as highly questionable"

I think it highly unlikely that there are no "immutable principles" of strategy and tactics. Within the subject of tactics, for example, we have the "principle of principle" illustrated by Frederick William Lanchester's famous "in-square law" of concentration in tactics. Although it was derived for very simple and idealized conditions, it is clearly a valid and rather general idea—an "immutable principle," if you will. Clearly, tactical concentration, in a rational world, is but a special case of the more general principle of tactical surprise. The latter, in turn, is subject to the logical principles of perception. Principles are everywhere, and are surely not absent from the strategy and tactics of naval warfare. I am fond of the statement attributed to a fellow engineer that "everything that can possibly happen in the real world is no more than a special case of a good, general theory."

The study of naval warfare history, while essential preparation, is no more than just that. Human progress is not made by students of history. It is made by those who, being familiar with the past, can nevertheless invent the future. To do that with success, in the long-term, would seem to require more reliance on principle than we have used in the past. If we are to use principle, we must discover it and understand it. Doing such things is often more difficult than studying and interpreting history, and is seemingly done by fewer people.

I think it is a pity that the grander goal of Stephen B. Luce and Alfred Thayer Mahan has been discarded. The much easier one of studying history, while clearly worthwhile, is too timid and slurs over the crux of military power and its place in the human scheme of things. It is too bad that there are no such things as "Naval War College—Naval Warfare Principle Research Grants."

Theodore C. Taylor
Pacific Palisades, California

Nuclear Weapons—Self Defense

Sir,

While stretching the definition of "law," George Bunn's recent article, "US Law of Nuclear Weapons," (July-August 1984) provides an excellent description of the various constraints on nuclear weapons.

However, I take exception to his assertion (p. 55) that "the UN Charter itself prohibits the *first use* of any armed force (including nuclear force) by a nation-state except as authorized by the UN" (emphasis mine).

I assume that Professor Bunn, as a respected international lawyer, *would agree* that the inherent right of self-defense, as enshrined in article 51 of the UN Charter, permits the use of proportional force in self-defense against a demonstration of hostile intent amounting to a threat of imminent attack. Article 0915, U.S. Navy Regulations 1973, and our peacetime rules of engagement, permit anticipatory self-defense ("Rules of Engagement," *NWC Review*, January-February 1983, p. 46, at 49-50).

No one can reasonably expect our warships to stand idly by in the face of a coordinated preemptive attack. Although all commanders recognize the tremendous responsibility associated with shooting first, none should be constrained from doing so when necessary by a mistaken belief that the first use of armed force in self-defense is unlawful. It is not.

J. Ashley Roach
Captain, JAGC, US Navy

Bunn rejoinder:

I agree with Captain Roach's comment concerning self-defense and Article 51 of the UN Charter. Article 51 preserves "the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense if an armed attack occurs" The language of my article which he quotes was meant to encompass this exception though it did not do so as explicitly as does his letter.

The problem has always been to determine when an *armed attack* is so *imminent* that "anticipatory" self-defense is justified. In the Gulf of Sidra incident, for example, hostile aircraft shot missiles at our planes. Though they missed, this was clearly an armed attack and justified shooting down the hostile aircraft in self-defense. (Contrast that with the Soviet destruction of Korean Airlines Flight 007 which was repressing, but not threatening an armed attack.) In the nuclear context, if our early warning systems revealed an approaching Soviet ICBM attack against the United States, international law would not stand in the way of a nuclear counterattack in self-defense.

George Bunn
Naval War College

