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## American Secretaries of the Navy

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American nations to assert their independence from U.S. foreign policy. In addition, there has arisen a greater potential for conflict within and between Latin American nations. Finally, the military in certain Latin American nations, such as Brazil and Argentina, have developed great power pretensions of their own as has been reflected both in their foreign policies and politicomilitary theories. All of these phenomena have tended to decrease the functioning and effectiveness of the inter-American military system.

There was one important point, however, that the author did not address. While he devoted much attention to the ideas and policies of the military in military-ruled nations, he said nothing about military thought in democratic ones. Especially of interest would have been a discussion of the attitudes of the military in democratic nations toward military cooperation with the United States and toward the doctrine of national security and development that military regimes espouse.

On the whole, though, this book is an excellent piece of scholarship that sheds much light on a subject that is generally paid too little attention. In the United States, the study of ideology has focused almost exclusively on communist ideology. Child demonstrates that there are other groups as well whose ideology merits attention if the United States is to understand and deal with them effectively.

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Coletta, Paolo E., ed. *American Secretaries of the Navy*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1980. 2v., 1028pp.

An American Secretary of the Navy is the product of a complexity of factors.

He is appointed by and serves at the

pleasure of the President; he must be confirmed by the Senate; once in office he has to deal with the professional leaders of the service (whose aims may or may not agree with administration policy) and, until recently, with the Congress (which may or may not be in a mood to appropriate). He himself may or may not have clear ideas regarding the needs of the moment.

Over and above these abiding realities, the nature of both incumbent and office have been subject to evolutionary change. In the period before the Civil War the sources from which appointees were generally drawn shifted from the early merchants and shipowners to a predominance of party stalwarts (with an admixture of literary folk). Since the later 19th century, as command authority has diminished and problems of procurement have come to dominate, the appointment of businessmen, lawyers, and bankers (with an admixture of politicians and newspaper publishers) has been the rule. Viewing the office itself, the establishment of the Board of Navy Commissioners (1815), the bureau system (1842), the General Board (1900), the aide system (1909), and the office of the CNO (1915) gradually transformed the relations between the Secretary and his professional advisers. More recently, the coming of the Joint Chiefs, the unification of 1947, and the advent of McNamara have affected his position within the federal government.

To guide his 21 contributors to this biographical dictionary through these 2 centuries of continuity and change, the editor set the goal of an assessment of "the men and measures responsible for the administration of the Navy." That such an aim leads beyond the 60 secretaries who served between 1798 and 1972 is indicated by the first two essays on "The Revolutionary Navy" and "The Fleetless Nation." At the risk of some further violence to the title (but with some profit to the student of these

matters) it might usefully have been followed farther, to deal with important or controversial assistant secretaries (Gustavus Vasa Fox, Theodore Roosevelt) and with the most important of civilian administrators, Charles W. Goldsborough, whose service from 1798 to 1843 spanned the careers in office of 13 department heads.

Because, in their widely varying terms of service, some secretaries had wars to fight, some had crises to cope with or reforms to push through, and some found little or nothing to do, the sketches naturally vary greatly in length. Nathan Goff, whose term lasted 2 months, gets one page; David Henshaw, whose 7-month recess appointment was rejected by the Senate, gets three, as does Thomas Gilmer, whose 9 days in office were terminated by the explosion of the great gun on *Princeton*. At the other extreme come the wartime incumbents Josephus Daniels (56), Frank Knox (50), Gideon Welles (40), and John Davis Long (27). If these allocations seem generally judicious, some surprise may be occasioned by a scheme that gives Francis P. Matthews 44 pages and James Forrestal a mere 15. More generally, it may be said, the recent past seems to evoke a tendency to wordiness and irrelevance. The biographies in Volume II (since 1913) are twice as long as those in Volume I; the postunification secretaries, no longer of cabinet status, average 21 pages apiece while those important and interesting figures—Chandler, Whitney, Tracy, and Herbert—who presided over the naval revival of the 1880s and 1890s average out at a disappointing seven.

As well as in length, the essays vary widely in quality. Some hold the reader's interest; some badly need editing for style and syntax; some repeat or contradict others; in some the research seems superficial or out of date; some bibliographical notes are helpful and some are not. If there is a general

problem with this treatment of "men and measures" it is in the prevailing tone, which reflects the views of Mahan as interpreted by the Sprouts: a hankering, no matter what the state of the world or the needs of the nation, for concentrated forces maneuvering in squadrons. This somewhat old-fashioned attitude is reflected both in the recurrent themes that transcend individual essays and in the areas of administrative activity that are largely overlooked. Considerable attention is given to progress (or the lack of it) in naval architecture, and to the long-continuing efforts to establish ranks above that of captain, to organize a naval school, to provide for selection by merit, and to move toward some kind of a general staff. Contrariwise, little heed is paid such matters as the shifting patterns of peacetime deployment, the missions of the cruising squadrons, the protection of citizens abroad, the management of overseas logistics, or the development of naval communications.

In summary it may be said that as a readily available reference work *American Secretaries of the Navy* will have a certain usefulness if employed with caution with respect not only to what it contains but what it does not. Like most Naval Institute publications, these volumes are handsomely produced; they also contain an inordinate number of typographical errors.

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Collins, John M. *U.S.-Soviet Military Balance: Concepts and Capabilities 1960-1980*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1980. 645pp.

On 20 April 1963, then-Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara stated: "You cannot make decisions simply by asking yourself whether something might be nice to have. You have to make a judgment on how much is enough."