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"Cincinnatus." Self-Destruction and Decay of the United States Army during the Vietnam Era

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policy instruments should not become ends in themselves and that, in particular, policymakers should not specify targets for some definition of the money supply, and then use the instruments of monetary policy with the object of minimizing deviations of the money supply from these targets. These are not views that will endear him to the more dogmatic (or simplistic) monetarists.

His main message, however, is the integration of domestic and international economics in a way that makes clear that a nation's policymakers can only secure autonomy in monetary policy at the expense of sacrificing the benefits of the interdependence of nations—that is, the more efficient allocation of resources through trade and international capital movements. Attempts to insulate a national economy from the world economy, for example, by exchange-rate flexibility are likely, in the case of major economies, to have an influence on the world economy that will have inevitable feedback effects on the national economy. The case of collective action by national governments, and for the promotion of supranational institutions that can assist that collective action, is strengthened by this book. The world is too complex for major nations to be able to act profitably in isolation from their partners in economic policy, as in other matters relating to national security.

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"Cincinnatus." *Self-Destruction: The Disintegration and Decay of the United States Army during the Vietnam Era.* New York: Norton, 1981. 288pp.

At this issue goes to press (4 May), news accounts have identified "Cincinnatus" as Cecil B. Currey, a professor at the University of South Florida, who was commissioned as lieutenant in the Nebraska National Guard in 1965. He remains in the Army Reserve, attached to the Office of the Chief of Chaplains.

A pseudonymous author self-styled as "Cincinnatus" has written a book about the Army entitled *Self-Destruction*. The author's thesis is in the title. It is his or her view (the author claims to be a professional Army officer, about which more later) that the numerous problems afflicting the Army during and since the Vietnam era are of its own making, and that they persist to the present day.

There is not much new here. Most of the author's criticisms have long since been put forth with greater force, credibility and immediacy by others, most notably the Army's own general officers, as reported years ago in Douglas Kinnard's book *The War Managers*, which this author quotes extensively, and by others of the officer corps in such landmark works as the 1970 Army War College *Study on Military Professionalism*. Whatever original research underpins the present work seems to consist largely of some interviews the author says he has conducted with people, also anonymous, that he asserts know something about the matters under discussion. He does not identify his sources, nor give even a statistical profile of their qualifications or demographics, thus diminishing the force and credibility of whatever new material he may have been able to uncover. The result is a very slender volume (some 170 pages of text, fleshed out with a series of appendixes including such diverse and dubiously relevant material as the text of the Declaration of Independence of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, the dates on which major Army units arrived in Vietnam, and a two and a half page quotation from an unnamed lieutenant colonel) that adds little to the body of scholarship on the Army in Vietnam and since.

The text itself reads like a student research paper recycled (far too late to be pertinent) as a book. In seeking to make his own case the author grabs various published sources seemingly at random, certainly without any apparent discrimination, to establish one point or another. The government is criticized, for example, for having failed to heed the advice of a writer named Robert

Taber who published a book in 1965 asserting thar extermination of all insurgents and turning the territory that harbors them into a deserr is the only effective means of winning such a conflict. The Army is also criticized for having "generally ignored" ideas for alternative approaches to revolutionary warfare put forth by Geroge Patton in an Army War College student paper, an effort this author then goes on to call in the same sentence "a not very incisive analysis." There is a great deal more of the same kind of thing.

Equally uninspiring is the snide tone of much of the material. People become "captivated by" concepts, rather than adopting them rationally, as they work in "magnificent edifices." Security classifications are invariably "slapped" on documents, never objectively assigned to them. Senior officers are patronizingly characterized to no point: Lt. Gen. DeWitt Smith is, the author tells us, a "small-stature general," while Brig. Gen. James L. Collins, Jr. he gratuitously dubs "a pleasant man who walks with the aid of a cane."

In an unlucky bit of timing the author completed the manuscript in July 1979 although publication did not take place until early 1981. Such lengthy processes are not uncommon in the publishing business, although they can be radically compressed when commercial considerations dictate. In this case the delay is particularly unfortunate, for the author misses out entirely on the views and initiatives of the reformist administration that has been guiding the Army since Gen. Edward C. Meyer became Chief of Staff in June 1979. Thus a double misfortune: publication comes too late for the author to be given any credit for stimulating the present reform movement, while completion of the manuscript occurred too early for him to take it into account.

While it is too soon to reach conclusions about the likely long-term effect of the moves to increase unit cohesion, improve morale, and enhance training and readiness that General Meyer has put in train, it is even at this stage highly significant that rhe Army's top leader has gone on record as recognizing the problems and taking them as his own, attributed many of them to deficiencies in the professionalism of the officer corps, and charted a course for reform and rebuilding. Any analysis that appears some year and a half after this all began and that takes no note of it whatever is hopelessly dated to begin with.

What is needed now is some explication of the reasons behind the now widely recognized failures of professionalism within the Army, which became painfully obvious during the era of Vietnam but surely did not originate solely in that troubled decade, and some actionable proposals for reform. *Self-Destruction* provides no such insights or prescriptions. The few vague suggestions offered by this author are notable primarily for being patently inadequate to the resolution of problems of the nature and magnitude he has asserted now exist. The author does not even attempt to explain why such widespread degradation of professional behavior occurred, and without an understanding of the underlying causes of what he deplores there is little hope that effective remedies can be devised.

Any reviewer of this work is forced to make at least some mention of the author's decision to publish under a pseudonym. One's first reaction is that the author chose a particularly inappropriate pen name in signing himself "Cincinnatus," inasmuch as the original Cincinnatus, a Roman statesman and general, has come to be viewed as symbolic of the citizen soldier who takes up arms when his country is in danger and returns to his civil pursuits when the conflict is resolved—in other words, the antithesis of the professional soldier who serves in peace and war alike. Because this author claims to have spent

a lifetime moving through the ranks from private to "senior field-grade officer," it appears he has misunderstood the import of his chosen pseudonym.

Reading of the text, however, leaves one wondering whether the claimed military background of the author may not be overstated, even a hoax, for there are numerous blunders of terminology and the like that could lead experienced soldiers to question whether this author is really one of their company as claimed. The Army's Corps of Engineers, for example, is referred to as the "Corps of Engineering," while the Chaplain's Corps is called the "Chaplain Corps." The author reveals in a glossary entry that he does not understand the meaning of the term "cover," as used in the familiar phrase "cover and concealment," and he talks of camouflage suits of a "spotted-tiger" variety (a contradiction in terms to begin with). He advises his readers that a battalion S2 is responsible for advising "rhe commandant" on intelligence matters and, in a revelation that will surely come as a surprise to battalion executive officers everywhere, states that the battalion S3 "runs the battalion during the commander's absence." In a single sentence referring to the 173d Airborne [Brigade] the author first calls it a battalion, then cites one officer as irs deputy brigade commander, and finally speaks of another officer as the unit's "division commander." The Americal Division he gets nearly right as the "American Division."

Perhaps most puzzling of all, the author quotes approvingly an assertion that appeared in an earlier work to the effect that in 1960 it took an average of thirty-three years and two months for an officer to be promoted through the ranks from second lieutenant to full colonel. Because, with the exception of general officers and a very few other special cases, Army officers are required to retire upon completion of 30 years' service, the assertion appears ridiculous on the face of it; all those lieutenant colonels complering thirty years would retire, not be kept around for some 3 years and 2 months more to make colonel. The thought appears never to have crossed our author's mind.

None of this makes any particular substantive difference, but the cumulative effect is to cast doubt on the anonymous author's assertion of his credentials as an experienced professional officer. It is also not reassuring that, according to an account that appeared in *The New York Times*, the publisher claims never to have seen rhe author in person, but only to have "spoken to him many times," presumably by telephone.

Whatever its validity, *Self-Destruction* has been reviewed in a number of newspapers and general readership magazines, indicating that there is substantial interest in the topic of the Army as an institution and its present and prospective states of well-being. The field is still wide open for someone to provide an insightful and useful analysis that delves into the reasons for the many real problems, seeks to formulate some reforms that are genuinely responsive to these causal factors and feasible of implementation, and analyzes currenr Army initiatives in terms of their likely effect on the problem. The author of *Self-Destruction* credits himself with "a lively curiosity, mastery of certain research skills, twenty-two years of military service, many friends," and other attributes. On his own evidence he should have done a better job.

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Deane, Michael J. *Strategic Defense in Soviet Strategy*. Coral Gables, Fla.: AISI and Current Affairs Press, 1980. 119pp.

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