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## Assault on Eternity: Richard E. Byrd and the Exploration of Antarctica, 1946-47

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vacuum in Asia, Africa, and Eastern Europe. Other chapters describe the tacit allocation of Soviet and American "Spheres of Interest," the development of strategies to rebuild the economies and governmental institutions of Europe, and the tactics of American leaders who consciously manipulated public opinion in order to marshal support for America's own "expansionist" actions in assuming the role of leader of the Western World.

The chief virtue of this book is that it successfully synthesizes, as the author intended, a voluminous body of research, including archival material as well as conflicting analyses by conventional and "revisionist" historians of the cold war. In his thoroughly documented book (the bibliography runs to 22 pages and is itself a highly useful reference guide). Paterson writes with clarity and lucidity about the rise of the new international system that has confronted members of the American military for the past 30 years.

The thesis of his study gives little comfort to either the radical left or right wing political hucksters. Instead, Paterson demonstrates that the policies pursued by American leaders in the cold war were motivated by both an altruistic concern to defend Western democracy and at the same time a desire to secure economic markets, natural resources, and strategic advantages for American business, government and other interests. Similarly, he concludes that Soviet behavior in the cold war was motivated by both ideological fervor and a legitimate rational concern for security growing out of traditional Russian fear of military invasion.

Though Paterson offers no prescriptions for the future, his final chapter warns that the history of the cold war period has demonstrated a steady erosion of the dominant position of both America and Russia in a rapidly changing world of nationalism, Communist polycentrism, and shifting eco-

nomics power. The implication of his study is clear: history does not remain static.

Karl Marx once wrote that history repeats itself: the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce. Like many of Marx's prophecies, this one has been proven false in our time. In an age of nuclear weaponry, a second cold war, unchecked by sophisticated policy, wise historical understanding, and disciplined restraint, could lead to a cold war whose momentum spins out of control. In such a situation the repetition of history would not be farcical. It would be catastrophically tragic for all mankind.

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Rose, Lisle A. *Assault on Eternity: Richard E. Byrd and the Exploration of Antarctica, 1946-47*. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1980. 292pp.

*Assault on Eternity* is the story of the U.S. Navy Antarctic Developments Project, more popularly known as *Operation Highjump*. This still is the largest expedition ever sent to Antarctica. *Highjump* was essentially a cold environment training exercise, but it had additional purposes—extending potential U.S. sovereignty over areas discovered by Americans, investigating the problems of establishing air and support bases in Antarctica's harsh climate, testing ships and equipment, and conducting limited scientific observations.

The author, the State Department Polar Affairs Officer, has written an excellent operational history of ship and aircraft operations in Antarctica in the post-World War II period. He discusses the concerns of ship's officers as they take their thin-skinned ships through the pack ice and the concerns of aircraft commanders and crews in long flights over unknown and dangerous territory. His report on the crash of the PBM "George-1" and the ordeal of the

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survivors is a classic survival story of man against nature.

The inclusion of Admiral Byrd's name in the subtitle and his continuous presence in the narrative is a disservice to the reader, however. Byrd's role in *Highjump* was not critical to the actual operation. Day-to-day responsibilities were vested in Rear Adm. Richard H. Cruzen and his Task Group commanders—Capts. George Dufek, Charles A. Bond, and Delbert S. Cornwall and Cdr. Clifford M. Campbell. Byrd was somewhat the senior citizen, concerned primarily with land-based flying late in the expedition. He was again flown over the South Pole, but even Rose admits that the flying program from Little America was a minor part of the entire operation and not really productive. Byrd, at this point in his career, was well-beyond his prime and might have grown old gracefully. Byrd is clearly Rose's hero and his treatment clouds the fine work done by Cruzen and others.

Additional problems of fact characterize this book. Rose says that Amundsen made his first trip to Antarctica in 1910-12 but Amundsen was first mate and a critical member of the *Belgica* expedition (1898). The American Lincoln Ellsworth did not establish a base in the "American Highland" in 1939; Ellsworth flew from his ship *Wyatt Earp* and the American Highland is in the interior of Antarctica, not along the coast. And the U.S. Antarctic Service Expedition of 1939-40 was not "quasi official"; it was a full-fledged government sponsored and conducted expedition.

These misunderstandings of polar history are minor, though, when compared with Rose's flawed view of Richard Byrd. Byrd was a complex person, as Rose points out, but he was not motivated by the grandeur of Antarctica. Byrd was motivated by a continuous need for fame and recognition as well as a strong need to continue

proving himself. Rose's treatment of Byrd's drinking is a sham. No pilot or navigator can perform to the best of his abilities if he has "a few drinks to calm his nerves" before a dangerous flight. Rose's analogy of a passenger on a commercial airliner makes the case for Byrd much worse.

*Assault on Eternity*, hindered by uneven chapters and poor integration of information at times, is nonetheless an important record of Antarctic operations by the U.S. Navy in 1946-47.

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Ryan, Paul B. *First Line of Defense: The U.S. Navy Since 1945*. Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, 1981, 224pp.

The typically glowing dust-jacket prose on this slim but meaty book states that "*First Line of Defense* analyzes the events and errors that, step-by-step, have threatened the status of the U.S. Navy as the world's undisputed maritime power." Most readers will detect in this opening statement at least three implicit assumptions that weaken the text's value as *analysis*. The second statement, "It is a history of . . . the political changes, the individuals, and the international events that contributed to American naval decline" is much better but the book is not really good *history* either, if one seeks balance. The acknowledgment pages thank 24 Navy admirals and a Marine general, plus assorted captains and colonels, for their oral and other contributions. The only civilians so cited, however, are those employed by the Navy at its various archival and educational centers or those who helped with manuscript preparation and review.

So much for what *First Line of Defense* claims to be. What it turns out to be is an absolutely first-rate account of the last 35 years from the institutional