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Professional Reading

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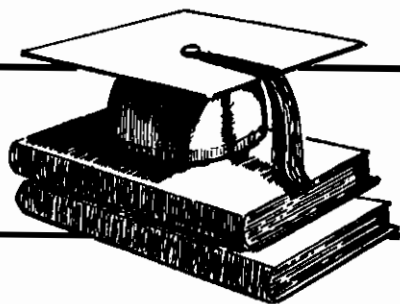
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PROFESSIONAL READING

Canan, James W. *The Superwarriors—the Fantastic World of Pentagon Superweapons*. New York: Weybright & Talley, 1975. 375pp.

This intriguing book presents both a reportorial overview of many Defense Department weapon systems and a brief but close look at problems existing in the research and development areas of the Defense Department and the military services. Unfortunately, Canan is not a technical man, and he has committed several obvious errors in his description of technical programs and in his interpretation of certain dates and facts. In one particular example, while he reports quite accurately that the Chief of the Electronics Systems is a rear admiral, at the same time he chooses to ignore that the only three-star admiral in the Systems Command is Vice Adm. Kent Lee of the Air Systems and that the Navy has not plotted to degrade the Electronics System!

An imaginative writer, Canan has completely covered some of the new approaches to the weapons of the future. It is obvious that in some cases he has been oversold not only as to when some of these weapons will become operational, but also as to their capabilities. While we all believe that high-energy lasers will indeed be a useful tool in the future, there is still doubt as to whether they will be a communication system or a "death ray" or have some other as yet unknown application.

For example, it is still not known if

they can generate neutrons and start a fusion device, which would make them a substitute for the present atomic weapons system. Canan tells the fascinating story of setting up the "eighth card" project at the Kirtland, New Mexico, Air Force Weapons Laboratory. He quotes frequently from *Air Force* magazine and the congressional testimony of Dr. Pete Waterman of the Navy.

The chapter "Tally Ho in the Pentagon" is a fine review of recent developments in the fighter story in the United States. He covers all of them: F-14, 15, 16, and 17. The book was written before the award of the ACF contract to General Dynamics for the F-16, which is probably the outstanding fighter of its time. Unfortunately, he does not give either former Deputy Secretary of Defense David Packard or then Secretary of the Air Force Robert Seamans the credit they deserve for a program that is without a doubt the single most outstanding example of the prototype approach to weapons procurement. Its success has been due largely to their efforts.

In discussing the in-house laboratories run by the Government and the I.R. and D. of industry, he refers to a problem we will hear more about in the future. It is the Navy's disproportionate number of support personnel and facilities in relation to its seagoing forces—particularly when the forces afloat have been reduced drastically in recent years. The time will surely come when this

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relationship will have to reverse itself and concentration will be on seagoing forces at the expense of the Shore Establishment.

Canan's account of the submarine-launched cruise missile and his contention that Captain Locke's approach was a defeat for Vice Admiral Rickover is not really in accordance with the facts. Rickover's stand was not that he wanted an excuse for a large new submarine, but, like all knowledgeable people in the business, he knew that the Los Angeles-class submarine armed only with torpedoes was woefully underarmed. Indeed, many people actually believe that the classic torpedo is obsolete! (Incidentally, Captain Locke is one of the best program managers in the Department.) Canan also fails to discuss the fact that the Air Force is now in the arena and wants to take over all of the cruise missile business.

When we realize that the Russians spend about \$3-1/2 billion dollars annually on air defense, it is in our interest to keep them in this business. The cruise missile system not only makes sense, but it is in line with the proposition that the United States must put its deterrent force to sea. The price of the B-1 has escalated to such an extent that we certainly will not have any great fleet of these aircraft, but the low flying, long-range cruise missile could, in its place, give any nation something to think about, if only from an air defense standpoint.

Canan repeats the old saw that all of the cruise missiles on the Russian submarines are tactical, not strategic. When one looks at the number of Echo Two class nuclear submarines built by the Russians with eight missiles apiece, it is quite clear they would be ideal to take out such places as Hawaii, and certainly they must be counted in the strategic role. Furthermore, while he lists the range of the Russian Shaddock missile as 250 miles, any aeronautical engineer knows it has the MIG 19 engine and has

an aerodynamic range of at least 1,700 miles. When one considers the obvious improvements in guidance, to regard this as only a tactical weapon would be a serious error.

His points that congressional committees have rolled over for Rickover as well as his statement that Rickover blocked the steel to Todd Shipyards so they could not go ahead with their venture in Galveston are not correct. High interest rates and the unavailability of money was the reason it did not go forward. Recent events in the tanker world make Todd Executive Officer Jack Gilbride's decision a wise one.

Canan has also followed the old story that advances in ASW will make it impossible to count on the Trident system or on the sea for our major deterrent weapons system. Yet he, with a straight face, states that the Russians could launch a successful nuclear attack on this submarine fleet and still maintain a strong strike capability against the United States proper. He says that "While an attack on submarines, if detected, can be viewed with a degree of ambiguity, an attack on the land based ICBM force constitutes an unequivocal act of war." He fails to state that if this is done against our missile sites, the entire radioactive fallout would cover all of our large population centers east of the Mississippi. The Russians are favored in that if we shoot at their sites the fallout goes into China, about which they could care less. This is still another argument to get out of the land-based ICBM business and go to sea with them. These facts argue for an air system with standoff missiles. There are many other instances where he reports situations that have had considerable play in the press such as Admiral Moorer's alleged spying on Henry Kissinger.

I am sure the professional military officers who read this book will easily recognize the obvious wrong conclusions and technical mistakes that will escape the laymen. Nevertheless, the

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reader who is simply seeking greater knowledge in this area and who has an objective mind will no doubt benefit by reading this book and will probably understand a bit better the process that is a never-ending one in the world of technology, politics, and the Defense Department.

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Dvornik, Francis. *Origins of Intelligence Services: The Ancient Near East, Persia, Greece, Rome, Byzantium, the Arab Muslim Empires, the Mongol Empire, China, Muscovy*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1974. 334pp.

This attractive volume by a multi-lingual, Czech-born scholar now based at the Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies had its origin in a post-World War II ambition of Maj. Gen. William J. Donovan, former director of the Office of Strategic Services. The general, we are told, "disclosed his intention of writing a history of the Intelligence Service [unspecified] in order to show its importance in safeguarding the nation." While Donovan's opus failed to materialize, the present title, dedicated to him, marks the fruition of at least a part of his original plan. As the only book-length work on its subject known to the present writer, the result should have been a landmark. In a way it is, but the net effect is also frustrating.

If either a military person or mere civilian buff hopes to find in these pages a pageant of neatly broken down activities of "secret services," he will be disappointed. What he will find is that the Assyrian postal system was developed over the centuries (by themselves and others) into news-gathering facilities and warning nets wherein the use of fire towers and pigeons was fundamental. Along the way he will learn that merchants, traitors, deserters,

returned prisoners of war, and diplomatic officials were regularly utilized by governments or ruling houses to learn something about each other. Scarcely electrifying.

Along the way, too, the author makes inordinate use of such phrases as "has the impression," "some indication that . . .," "it is thus natural to suppose," and similar generalizations which he fails to bring to the point of demonstration. There are too many pages of straight historical background history, a constant tendency to equate intelligence processing, as we understand it today, with mere fact collecting, and at least one confusion of "intentions" with capabilities (p. 50). The book's index is far from complete. In the bibliography to the Byzantine section, the author might well have included W.G. Sinnigen's "Two Branches of the Late Roman Secret Service," *American Journal of Philology*, July 1959, pp. 238-254.

But let us now turn to the volume's assets. It has 21 illustrations which, though only one pertains to intelligence work, are yet of interest. There are no less than 18 cleanly drawn maps. Each of the six major divisions of the text is followed by a lengthy bibliography; and while there is no annotation, textual citations are clear. Throughout the book there is a whole hatful of intriguing curiosa to savor, such as an early example of "Potemkin villages," Hannibal's use of "disinformation," and the origin of those stories about Sinbad the Sailor which ought to satisfy the most avid trivia fans. Dr. Dvornik—confronted with a gaping paucity of documents in the vast emptiness of ancient times—has striven mightily and he has come forth with a landmark of sorts. For that accomplishment, at least one of his readers is grateful.

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