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## Dropshot, The American Plan for World War III Against Russia in 1957

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10. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 197.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 180.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 181.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 181-182.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 183-184.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 183.
18. U.S. Congress, Committee on International Relations, *Authority to Order the Use of Nuclear Weapons* (Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1975), p. 1.
19. Kissinger, p. 182.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 182.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 190.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 183.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 194.
24. *Ibid.*, pp. 195-196.
25. Information on Soviet and American tactical delivery systems can be obtained from a variety of sources. The data on the "Frog" and "Scud" comes from R.T. Pretty, ed., *Jane's Weapons Systems*, 8th ed. (New York: Franklin Watts, 1977), pp. 410 and 50, respectively.
26. Matthew B. Ridgway, *Soldier* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1956), pp. 296-97.
27. Kissinger, p. 60 and p. 29.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 397.

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## BOOK REVIEWS

Cave Brown, Anthony. *Dropshot, The American Plan for World War III Against Russia in 1957*. New York: Dial Press, 1978. 330pp.

The promulgation of Executive Order 11652 in 1972 and the passage of the Freedom of Information Act in 1975 have resulted in the release of a great number of formerly classified documents to historians and political scientists. For the first time, the basic national security documents of the United States in the atomic age have become available to the public. During the past 2 years in particular, the strategic concepts and plans for war with the Soviet Union prepared between 1945 and 1951 have been opened for scrutiny at the Modern Military Records Branch of the National Archives.

It was inevitable that many writers would want to explore such a windfall. One such is Anthony Cave Brown, the author of the best seller, *Bodyguard of Lies*. A journalist, Cave Brown has a certain amount of experience in editing

secret documents, with *The Secret War Report of the O.S.S.* (New York: Berkley, 1976) and *The Secret History of the Atomic Bomb* (New York: Dial Press, 1977) to his credit. Both of these books were advertised and sold on their sensational aspects, however, rather than as contributions to history.

His most recent publication, *Dropshot, The American Plan for World War III Against Russia in 1957*, appears to be an outright exploitation of a newly declassified national security document, which, because of its subject matter and language, promises to have considerable public appeal. Cave Brown has reproduced a massive document nearly intact, and has written a 29-page prologue which purports to outline its historical context and which stresses the frightening prospect of the war which might have been.

There is no question that the contingency war plans prepared by the U.S. Military Establishment in the postwar years are sobering and even terrifying,

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documents. Despite the popular belief that the United States was in a position of unassailable strength because of its atomic arsenal in the late 1940s, military planners perceived the nation to be in a position of unparalleled vulnerability, unprepared to defend its interests abroad, or, over the long term, its own territory against Soviet attacks. This sense of vulnerability and the belief that desperate measures might be necessary to offset it is apparent in *Dropshot*.

*Dropshot*, or more accurately, JCS 1920/5, "Report . . . to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on Outline Plan for Use in the Event of War in 1957, (short title: *Dropshot*)" was a study completed by an ad hoc committee of the JCS in December 1949 to serve as background for preparation of a Joint Outline Long Range War Plan. It was itself not a JCS-approved war plan, contrary to Cave Brown's assertions, but was a requirements study that explained the long-term implications for war planning of the fiscal and defense policies that emerged between 1947 and 1949. In a sense, *Dropshot* might be considered the ultimate expression of that era's strategic thinking, as represented by documents now gradually coming to light as a result of the declassification process.

Unfortunately, Cave Brown knows little about strategic thinking and military planning in the postwar era. As a result, he misrepresents the role and significance of *Dropshot*. His facile introduction to the document is not only sprinkled with factual errors, but also presents an argument which is fundamentally flawed. Although he correctly identifies the sense of vulnerability which lay at the heart of military planning in the late 1940s, he fails to comprehend why or how that feeling emerged. He presents it rather as a relatively timeless phenomenon, and implies that it was much more permanent than it in fact turned out to be.

The sense that the United States could not carry out its military obligations, particularly the defense of Western Europe, despite its growing atomic arsenal, was consistently reaffirmed in the war plans prepared from 1946 to 1949. Although a variety of factors combined to create this sense of American inferiority, it was the budgetary ceilings which President Harry Truman imposed on military spending beginning in fiscal year 1949 that were the final blow. Military planners reluctantly concluded that most of Western Europe would be lost in event of Soviet attack and that the only hope of controlling possible Soviet aggression lay in rapid expansion of the then minimal American atomic capability.

*Dropshot*, completed nearly 2 years after strategic planners had reached this grim conclusion, contained no revelations in this regard. It instead attempted to explore what might occur if the current budget limitations were maintained until 1957. This was the first attempt to undertake such long-term forecasting and, as such, casts an interesting light on the thinking of U.S. strategists. *Dropshot's* conclusions, however, became irrelevant a few months after the study was prepared. In April 1950, NSC-68, "U.S. Objectives and Programs for National Security," the so-called blueprint for U.S. rearmament, was completed. Two months later the Korean war began. In the ensuing crisis, the budget ceiling was lifted and the military services entered a new era of strategic planning. *Dropshot* thus marked the end of a process of military planning, not the beginning of an era of atomic terror. As proof of this, the JCS removed *Dropshot* from planning consideration in February 1951.

Given these facts it is difficult to explain why Cave Brown chose *Dropshot* as a vehicle for presenting the unfolding of strategic planning of the

early atomic era. The initial JCS-approved emergency war plans such as *Halfmoon* and *Offtackle* would have clearly been more appropriate, as they show a growing sense of awareness concerning the Soviet conventional threat. Cave Brown's assertion that *Dropshot* was the main military planning production of the time is completely unsupported. It was never approved as a war plan, and there is no evidence, contrary to the editor's claim, in the JCS files or in President Truman's personal papers that he was ever advised of its existence.

But *Dropshot* had several characteristics which may have appealed to Cave Brown. The early emergency and mid-range war plans are buried deep within the geographical and central decimal files of the JCS and are relatively short. To reconstruct the context in which they were written would have taken a great deal of research time and competence in the strategic planning field. In contrast, *Dropshot*, an ad hoc special committee report, was book length—800 typescript pages—and was separated from these files in a "bulky package."

It should be noted that Cave Brown does include some interesting material in his introductory essay. His description of the Joint Intelligence Committee studies of the Soviet Union's capabilities to make war in 1948-1949, and of the Weapon Systems Evaluation Group's analysis of the effectiveness of possible strategic air operations against the Soviet Union in 1950 are particularly noteworthy. So too is his use of the conclusions of NSC 20/4 "U.S. Objectives with Respect to the U.S.S.R. to Counter Soviet Threats to U.S. Security," that he mistakenly identifies as NSC 40. Unfortunately, he is so eager to associate all these studies with *Dropshot*, perhaps to magnify its importance, that his descriptions of their development and use cannot be trusted. Compounding this problem is

his failure to cite sources for his many quotations in the introduction.

There are other ways in which Cave Brown twisted this document to suit his purposes. He takes the original introduction to *Dropshot* and hides it in the book's final appendix, after deleting certain key portions that would place *Dropshot* in its proper context. Also among the appendixes he introduces a 1957 unofficial British intelligence estimate without relating it to the 1949 official long-range estimates of the plan. Finally, he presents a fictional scenario for the opening of war in 1957 as the "editor's epilogue." This is clearly an attempt to strip *Dropshot* of its historical import and highlight its sensational aspects.

One hopes that responsible historians will be able to correct the errors which Cave Brown promulgates, and to disseminate a more accurate portrait of this period. Unfortunately, as eminent British historian Michael Howard commented on *Bodyguard of Lies*: "Perhaps the damage done by books such as this . . . can never be completely undone. Mud is easy to throw and some of it always sticks." Furthermore, this kind of abuse of historical documents is likely to become increasingly common. Papers with the intriguing stamp "Top Secret" are being declassified in growing numbers. Unknowing or unscrupulous editors will continue to use these public papers and in the process may peddle a great deal of misinformation to unwary readers.

In the case of *Dropshot*, there is a particular reason to regret that Cave Brown did not take the opportunity to raise serious questions to which his material is so well suited. The question of what effect spending limitations may have on military planning and strategic philosophy is important today. An understanding of how President Truman's laudable attempts to control military spending led to an

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unbalanced reliance on atomic weapons and a strategy of defense based on desperation would be helpful to us in thinking through present defense choices.

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Churba, Joseph. *The Politics of Defeat: America's Decline in the Middle East*. New York: Cyrco Press, 1977. 224pp.

No area of the world is as potentially explosive and dangerous to world peace as is the Middle East. American policy in this area during the past decades has not ranked among our finer achievements. Sound critical scholarship is necessary; viable alternative, imperative. Unfortunately, a high portion of that which professes to be scholarship is polemic; and that, which calls itself analysis is little more than tract. *The Politics of Defeat* is a classic example of this debasement.

On the surface, Joseph Churba has impressive credentials: Ph.D. in International Relations and Middle East Studies from Columbia University, graduate of the National War College, instructor at the Air University, Air Force Middle East intelligence analyst, and prolific author. But this book is not the work of a scholar or even an objective observer. It is a shallow, emotional polemic, a personal critique of American policy based upon spurious factual information and specious logic. Source material is limited, biased, and poorly employed. Throughout the book, personal opinion is professed as substantiated fact.

Churba is a committed Zionist. The book must be read with this in mind for it underlies and colors every word of his argument. He forthrightly states his purpose in the opening lines of the preface: "to demonstrate that the validity of Israel is crucial to the United States and

that the United States must therefore categorically commit itself to the defense and preservation of that nation."

Few would challenge the United States historic and moral commitment to Israel; or that this commitment is realistic and in the interest of the United States. But our commitment must be kept in perspective and in a constant process of assessment. Every Israeli national interest and aspiration is not consistent with American interest as Churba would have us believe. The United States has legitimate interests in the Arab world as well. The fact of oil cannot be dismissed as easily as Churba attempts. Difficult as the task is, American policy must be one of firm commitment to the integrity of Israel yet a middle ground between Arab and Israeli aspirations.

This Churba cannot accept. He discounts any advantages of closer U.S.-Arab relations. He dismisses the Arab world as pliant surrogates of the Soviet Union. In fact, the author cloaks his Zionism in a convenient anti-Communist framework. No question exists that Soviet penetration of the Middle East has been detrimental to genuine U.S. interests there. But Churba creates a picture of American policymakers' indifference to this Soviet activity, an acceptance of a policy of "inexorable defeatism." He exaggerates Soviet success and explains away apparent rebuffs as mere facade.

Churba dispenses with the Palestinians and "the Palestinian problem" in the same manner. He proclaims that really there are no such people as the Palestinians. They are nothing more than Hashemite Jordanians attempting to carve out another illegitimate Arab state in the area, an enclave which by definition would be a Soviet base for subversion, "a Cuba for the Middle East." Palestine, he declares, is merely part of "the grand Soviet design . . . being actively sketched at the present time."