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## A Telephone Switchboard Operator with the A.E.F. in France

©Thomas Sage Wyman

A rude cultural shock awaited the first contingent of Americans who landed in France after the United States entered World War I in April 1917. A simple telephone call by an American Colonel Wilson in Bordeaux to a Major Johnson in Tours would have to be relayed through French switchboard operators with the following result:

"Hello, this is Colonel Wilson, and I want to speak to Major Johnson in Tours."

*"Pardon, je ne comprends pas. Répétez, s' il vous plaît."*

"I said Major Johnson in Tours and hurry up."

*"Monsieur, quel est le nom, s' il vous plaît?"*

"Look dammit. Don't you understand? I want..."

The hard truth dawned quickly. In this foreign land, members of America's armed forces needed bilingual telephone operators simply to communicate with one another. The nation's effectiveness as a unified military force in France depended on finding Americans who spoke French and who could operate the telephone switchboards.

But even before switchboard operators could be recruited, the American Expeditionary Forces (A.E.F.) had to expand the seriously deficient French telephone and telegraph system. At home, Americans were relying increasingly on the telephone; the U.S. had 14 telephones per 100 persons, while the French had only 1.5 telephones per 100 people. Moreover, by the time the A.E.F. arrived, telephone and telegraph facilities in France were seriously overloaded by domestic requirements and by the Allied armies already in the country.

Thus, a priority task for the A.E.F. upon its arrival in France was for the U. S. Army Signal Corps to assess the situation and begin installing new pole lines and stringing wire. This was an immense project. By the end of the war the Signal Corps had installed 1,724 miles of new permanent pole lines and had strung throughout France over 22,000 miles of new wire on both existing French pole lines and newly installed American poles. In addition, the Signal Corps operated and maintained some 12,000 miles of wire leased to the Americans by the French and operated another 15,000 miles of wire that were maintained by the French. The installation of the new pole lines and the stringing of thousands of miles of new wire were immense undertakings. This feat was possible only because the Bell System quickly made available to the Signal Corps enough of its own experienced linemen to staff twelve battalions.

Once this work was well under way, it was essential to find experienced bilingual telephone switchboard operators to assure that the expanding system operated smoothly. Trained American military personnel were not available and bilingual French operators were deemed inadequate. So the A.E.F. commander, General John J. Pershing, requested that women operators from America who could speak French be recruited immediately to fill the military's "crying needs" instead of "trying to train men of the Signal Corps." Pershing later commented in his memoirs that considerable doubt prevailed among members of his staff as to the wisdom of operating the system with women, but, he observed, "it soon vanished as the increased efficiency of our telephone system became apparent. No civil telephone service that ever came under my observation excelled the perfection of ours after it was well established."

The Signal Corps was charged with finding the women, and it quickly turned to the American Tele-

phone and Telegraph Company in search of competent switchboard operators who spoke French. The first group of such operators were bilingual AT&T employees who needed no switchboard training. These women were immediately granted leave for service overseas with the Signal Corps for the duration, and they began landing in France in March 1918.

The American switchboard operators were well received in France. When one overworked A.E.F. officer lifted his telephone receiver to place a call and heard "Number please" in the old familiar way, he shouted "Thank God" with such fervor that everyone in the office laughed along with the American operator at the other end of the line.

After recruiting this first wave of trained switchboard operators, sometimes referred to as "hello girls," the Signal Corps sought to find additional women who spoke French and could be trained in switchboard operation. The Signal Corps made a nationwide sweep to recruit French teachers, American women of French descent who still spoke the language, and others who were proficient in the language, having traveled and lived in French-speaking countries. The women were offered the same privileges and allowances as were Army nurses.

My mother, Dorothy Sage (later Dorothy Sage Wyman), had spent years in France and Switzerland with her widowed mother before the war began in 1914. She had studied French at the University of Geneva and at the Sorbonne and had become sufficiently fluent that the French themselves often mistook her for a Parisian. The Signal Corps recruited her in early 1918, and her diary offers us a good record of her service with the A.E.F.

AT&T immediately began training Miss Sage and other recruits to operate the "cable and plug" switchboards of the era. As soon as they became proficient, they would board troop transports with A.E.F. forces bound for France. In total, 223 women were recruited for this service. They went abroad in six operating units over a period of some ten months.

Miss Sage was an early recruit. She completed her six-week indoctrination and switchboard training in Evanston, Illinois, on 11 April 1918. Because she was an only child, her mother accompanied her from their home in Illinois to New York to be with her while she and her unit awaited orders to board a troopship.

Upon their arrival in New York, the Evanston group met other recruits from Chicago and California. They were fitted for their uniforms, and their papers were processed in preparation for sailing. Miss Sage spent several days frantically shopping without really being sure what she would need overseas. After two weeks, orders arrived and she and her companions in their navy blue uniforms boarded the troopship USS *Baltic*. Observing the blackout on all information con-

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cerning troop movements, she simply did not meet her mother for dinner on 25 April. Although she knew how keenly her mother would regret her abrupt departure, Miss Sage could do little other than to arrange for flowers to be sent to her.

Two sobering events occurred even before the *Baltic* got under way. A ship just out of dry dock in an adjacent slip suddenly listed and sank with loss of life. Miss Sage's diary simply says, "Those Germans again." Then without warning or explanation one of the Signal Corps telephone operators in her unit was escorted from the ship by three officers. Miss Sage surmised that she was viewed as a potential security risk.

The *Baltic* sailed on 25 April as the women got settled in their first class staterooms. Miss Sage was billeted with a Miss Blanche Grand-Maitre from California and one other switchboard recruit. Of course, word quickly spread among the troops that there were women on board. Recognizing the potential problems in allowing the telephone operators to mingle freely with the troops, the Army confined the women to their quarters and allowed them no contact with the men. It didn't take long for the women to protest their inactivity and isolation. Miss Nellie F. Snow, who for seven years had been the chief telephone operator of the New England Telephone Company in Lowell, Massachusetts, and was now head of Miss Sage's unit, worked to have the restrictions eased. As a result of Miss Snow's efforts, the women were allowed to fraternize with a fortunate few officers, but only after they had been properly introduced and under the condition that the women remain in pairs.

Friendships formed during long conversations and promenades on deck. Some of these friendships warmed. Miss Sage had brought with her a copy of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, a favorite since childhood. To help pass the long hours at sea, she would occasionally read excerpts to Lt. Ross Moir, a Canadian returning to Europe after medical leave, whom she described as a nice young fellow. These readings must have been lively and animated as Miss Sage later became an accomplished play reader and actress. Lieutenant Moir was captivated by this American girl, and as they talked and walked the deck it appeared that the relationship might become serious. This was not to be, however, and the two went their separate ways after their brief time together crossing

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the Atlantic.

On 4 May as the *Baltic* neared the English coast, she was joined by nine destroyers. The women were now instructed to sleep with their clothes on. On 6 May German submarines were encountered, and the Navy escort vessels went into action. Miss Sage spoke of "the prickly sensation of danger." Depth charges were released. After several tense hours during which two submarines were reported sunk, the *Baltic* steamed on. For everyone aboard, this encounter lent new emphasis to the immediacy and dangers of the war.

The ship docked at Liverpool, England, on 7 May. The women were hustled aboard trains for London and proceeded by Channel steamer to Le Havre. From there it was on to Paris and then to Tours, where they received their assignments. Miss Sage and Miss Grand-Maitre asked to remain together, and both were assigned to Bordeaux.

By mid-May the two of them were settling into their work routines. The work at the magneto switchboard was demanding. Miss Sage wrote shortly after arriving, "The board was very busy and getting worse and worse." Several weeks later she commented, "Fearfully busy all day." At that point, eight women handled the telephone traffic for the entire switchboard facility at Bordeaux, a major port of entry for American troops and military equipment.

The telephone operators boarded together in *pensions* where they could also have their meals. Misses Sage and Grand-Maitre were always alert in seeking better accommodations and arranged several moves to improve the group's living situation. Order and decorum were assured by the presence of a senior switchboard supervisor who also acted as "house mother," making certain that the women did not fall into questionable company and got home at reasonable hours. A twenty-eight-year-old Northwestern University graduate who had traveled widely, Dorothy Sage was more mature and sophisticated than most of the young women recruited by the Signal Corps. As a conse-

*Signal Corps telephone switchboard operators at work in Bordeaux, France, with Nellie Snow at desk and Dorothy Sage standing (U.S. Army photo)*

quence, she often saw things from a different perspective than many of her younger associates. After getting settled in Bordeaux, she and Blanche Grand-Maitre took many long walks both for exercise and to familiarize themselves with the area.

A revealing excerpt from Miss Sage's diary on 4 June reads:

Well, having been here for several weeks I can really speak with knowledge of Bordeaux, our associates and our work. To begin with Bordeaux, Blanche and I explored it for several evenings and spare minutes we had off and decided it was one peach of a place to be. Its large streets and attractive shops and fine restaurants and many soldiers make it a mighty fine place to be. But half the joys are sham we found out on closer application. The streets are infected with *filles de joie*, all commodities in the shops are high priced, and there is a 10 per cent luxury tax on all nicer things. The restaurants are very expensive, and the officers are exclusive. *Voilà*.

To be sure we have Lt. Ainsworth of the Q.M. trotting around. Once in a while he asks Blanche or me to dinner, but it's a quiet affair.

Then we've met some corporals, privates and sailors. We had two sailors attach themselves to us one day in the park. Also from time to time we have a man or two sufficiently brave to come up and talk to us, but on the whole we seem a formidable duet and no one pays much attention to us.

As a whole we lead a quiet life except when Blanche gets into a fight with Miss Theriault, which is mostly always. Miss T. being young, uneducated, illiterate, egotistical and vain is, of course, obnoxious to deal with as every instinct revolts against the authority of a girl who has no more idea of discipline than she has. Really, if I can only stay decent to her and not let her know what I think of her it will be best all around, but it certainly is galling to have to obey every whim she may have. She loves to boss, and she thinks she's irresistible to men. Well, at least we have a lot of evidence against her if it ever comes to a showdown.

This early inability to meet officers soon disappeared, and before long Miss Sage and Miss Grand-Maitre were being sought out, wined and dined, and taken to movies, shows, and dances by a cadre of Army and Navy officers stationed nearby.

A Signal Corps officer, Captain Roach, learned that Miss Sage had secretarial skills and frequently requested her assistance in his office. This led to difficulties when her group was working the switchboard shorthanded or facing a heavy workload and he insisted that she assist him. As she wrote, "They're having a regular scrap about me." The captain, who became a major in August, wasn't an easy person to work for; as Miss Sage once observed, "He has a very high handed way about him." She often complained that he had little work for her to do while the switchboard was busy. Miss Sage actually preferred the telephone switchboard work, but the captain's demands that she act as his stenographer irrespective of other operational requirements suggests that he saw her as one who could enhance his prestige and status.

In August, Miss Sage began to supervise. Supervisors were paid seventy-two dollars per month, twelve dollars more than switchboard operators earned.
That same month Nellie Snow, the seasoned chief switchboard operator from New England Telephone, was posted to Bordeaux and brought with her ten more operators. She immediately assumed her administrative duties and soon resolved personnel problems which had plagued the group as a result of several months of weak leadership.

In late September Misses Sage and Grand-Maitre were granted a ten-day leave, or "permission." They took this opportunity to go to Vichy where they visited wounded soldiers recovering in the elegant hotels of the area which had been converted to hospitals. Seeing and talking with the men provided a grim reminder of the war itself. While in Vichy, the two also rented bicycles (or "wheels" in the vernacular of the day) to tour the area.

In mid-October Miss Sage was out for a week with a miserable case of the flu. It wasn't long before more of the women had caught the flu, forcing the remaining operators to work the switchboard shorthanded. In spite of the pressing need for operators, Major Roach continued to demand that Miss Sage work in his office. At one point, Miss Sage refused to take the major's dictation because of the critical shortage of switchboard operators. The major then stormed into the switchboard room and insisted that Miss Sage get off the floor as supervisor.

She vented her wrath in her diary. "The Major is a dirty skunk—as low down as anyone I ever saw." She had the full support of the switchboard group and quickly returned to supervising. However, Major Roach vindictively sabotaged her application for a promotion, which had previously been approved.

As the days lengthened into weeks and then months, the women worked the switchboard in shift after shift, seldom reflecting on their essential role. As a group, however, they effectively held the A.E.F. together and made it possible for it to operate as a cohesive force.

There were hints of peace in early November, and on the eleventh day at the eleventh hour it actually happened—an armistice went into effect. The celebrations in Bordeaux seemed to get off to a slow start, but they picked up over several days as the French gradually realized that the war was actually over.

With peace restored, the forces began to relax and reflect on the success of their efforts. It was Brig. Gen. Edgar Russel, the A.E.F.'s chief signal officer, who first applauded the contribution of the switchboard operators. On 12 November, the day after the armistice, he expressed his appreciation:

The bringing of women telephone operators to France for service with the American Expeditionary Forces had no precedent, and for this reason the experiment was watched with unusual interest. It pleases me a great deal to say that by your ability, efficiency, devotion to duty, and the irreproachable and business-like conduct of your affairs, personal and official, you have not only justified the action taken in assembling you, but have set a standard of excellence which could hardly be improved upon and which has been responsible, in no small measure, for the success of our system of local and long distance telephone communication.

Russel went on to emphasize that it would be some time before telephone traffic would begin to slack off and that the services of all operators would continue to be needed. Thus, switchboard work continued after the Armistice much as before; however, as more women arrived, it became less demanding and the hours of work became more flexible.

The social scene was always an important part of Miss Sage's daily journal entries. Dinners, dances, and outings were well documented. This led me, her son, to comment years later, after seeing the collected dinner invitations, dance programs, and theater stubs, "Gee, Mom, it sure looks like your time overseas was one long series of parties and social events." Well, that was a mistake. She stopped what she was doing, leveled on me, and gave me to understand in no uncertain terms that she and her companions had had to endure a lot of hard work, tension, and miserable living and working conditions.

The rather personal diary entry that my mother wrote while on leave in Vichy on 2 October 1918, some six weeks before the war ended, provides an insight into some of the social pressures the women faced. It was an exasperated Miss Sage who wrote these lines, reflecting a dour view for someone normally so positive and upbeat:

Men are surely queer things. I don't know whether the war has made them queer or just brought it out. They make dates and blithely break them. The Signal Corps apartment was open to us every night until we had a couple of other dates for a change, and then they all seemed to get peeved at us. Whitfield was even most cool to us, so we cut them out of our list. David Bruce is a perfect fool, and I won't even let Blanche discuss him with me. Several others including some we met at Vichy proved themselves short sports—no matter how much they whine about the dearth of American girls and how glad they are to talk to us. Let them go with their French *filles de joie* if that is the kind that appeals to them. I really wonder if there is a true, kind, honest, self-respecting man over here. At least he's never crossed our hems.

These doctors in Vichy are among the riff raff, and I shouldn't wonder if they gave up small Midwestern practices for the glory of a commission and the easy life of a French town. Towle said the medics were very jealous of the returned wounded who stole their girls away from them. A lot of sensual, self indulgent prigs. The nicest men in Vichy are wounded boys, and it's a crime the way they feed them. No sweets at all and as a dear Irish boy who had been gassed said, "That's the fellow who feeds me, and if I were his worst enemy he couldn't treat me meaner."

We visited many rooms and found cheeriness and optimism for the future in nearly everyone. Poor boys, they think we'll be home for Christmas—at the latest

*Dorothy Sage (left) and Blanche Grande-Maitre on leave in Vichy, September 1918 (Photo courtesy of Thomas Sage Wyman)*

July—but as that has been the claim every year since the war began I can't feel very encouraged. Now that Bulgaria has capitulated, we may hope a little for other developments.

Her diary entry written on 23 November, with the war over, reflects on what she had written earlier while in Vichy and goes on from there:

A month and a half later and my outlook on things has changed considerably. From being a depressed, discouraged second best I feel quite cocky and upper-handed again. I feel popular, which, if not true, is at least satisfying to one's own self. And the war is over and we are going home—when? Blanche and I are ill at the thought of going when we are all having such a good time, and the Navy bunch at Pauillac have been great to us. We've been out there constantly to dances. And popular! Why Blanche and I are acclaimed everywhere as the best dancers on the floor. I honestly feel men are crazy about dancing with me, and they don't hesitate to express themselves.

We've met a lot of Army men too, and they really do seem glad to talk to an American girl. What with phone calls, letters and luncheon dates I've been getting my *animus propre* back and feel able to hold my own again. Now what a blow to go and have to leave it all! Lois Gomez hints darkly that it will be "reasonably soon," but Capt. Matheny says the base is going to be one of the big ports and that the switchboards can't possibly be operated by men.

Brig. Gen. Robert Walsh, the commander of U.S. Army forces at Bordeaux, took time on December 13 to extend special thanks to the Bordeaux switchboard operators. He commented that he was familiar with many other telephone exchanges in France and that there was no comparison between the excellent work done by the young ladies at the Bordeaux exchange and the work done at other exchanges.

Miss Sage wrote glowingly of Christmas in Bordeaux. She visited the wounded at the hospital on the day before Christmas. The women shopped for gifts and toys and trimmed a tree in anticipation of a visit by refugee children who arrived Christmas Eve. After dinner the "dear youngsters" gathered around the tree and received presents. Miss Sage and Blanche Grand-Maitre attended midnight mass and arose early on Christmas day for a short shift at the switchboard before visiting the hospital with gifts for the wounded.

Christmas dinner was at one-thirty, and during the afternoon Major Roach arrived with books for the women. The A.E.F. staff had made a concerted effort to prepare a special booklet to present to all switchboard operators on Christmas. The booklet contained copies of, or excerpts from, fifty-eight letters of appreciation written by senior officers of all service branches. The A.E.F. commander, General Pershing, set the tone by quoting a commendation he had relayed to the secretary of war which read, "The officers and men and the young women of the Signal Corps have performed their duties with a large conception of the problem and with a devoted and patriotic spirit to which the perfection of our communications daily testifies."

Maj. Gen. Harry Rogers, the Army's quartermaster general, offered high tribute to the women

operators. "The American Expeditionary Forces will cherish among their brightest recollections the picture of this high type of patriotic young American womanhood who braved the dangers of the sea and faced the vicissitudes and discomforts of service on a distant foreign shore," he wrote.

The A.E.F.'s Assistant Chief of Staff for Supply, Brig. Gen. George Moseley, commended the operators, saying that they were "better disciplined than the Army itself, and they have nobly performed their duty as a part of the Advance Guard of the Women of America—the strongest force for good in the world today." Another officer commented, "It is a new grand step of the American woman in Europe. All are proud of these American business women as object lessons to stir up hope, confidence and cooperation among their French sisters." During the dark days of March 1918 when Paris faced possible evacuation, the staunchness of the women was reflected when they firmly announced, "We stay. We go with the last."

Many officers were struck with the cheerfulness of the operators in the face of a strenuous work load which taxed their endurance and patience. "Throughout these trials," observed the A.E.F.'s chief ordnance officer, "they kept devotedly to their task with a cheerfulness and spirit that furnished a worthy example and was of great assistance in our work."

In mid-January 1919 Misses Sage and Grand-Maitre accepted transfers to Neufchâteau, 150 miles east of Paris. They said their good-byes to Miss Snow and all of "the gang," gave up the comparative comfort of Bordeaux, and moved into field barracks. These were long, low, poorly heated, wooden structures with few windows. Miss Sage's first comments on arriving were, "Such hard cots. Quite like camping out." During the winter months everyone learned to get up, stoke the small stove, and dress in two minutes while snow sifted through the paper-covered windows.

With the war a fading memory, hardly an evening passed without there being at least one dance. Miss Sage wrote that the operators began to groan at the mention of a dance. "It was my unpleasant duty, as supervisor of the exchange, to discourage the boys who called up to engage the girls for a dance any night within the next three weeks. I was sorry for the boys. They were so anxious for a real dance with American girls, but the girls were getting fagged out, and our work was telephoning. Besides we had to stay home sometimes and get caught up on washing and mending."

When spring finally arrived after the harsh winter, it was a delight to walk in the countryside around Neufchâteau. Miss Sage saw the war's aftermath during visits to shattered Verdun, which had been occupied by the Germans, and to the trenches in the Argonne. These trips and the devastation they revealed left lasting impressions.

General Pershing arrived in Neufchâteau on 11 April to review the troops. The switchboard operators were given a "crash" course in military marching and saluting which elicited the wry comment from Miss Sage, "Can't even right face." The group marched to Aviation Field with the staff officers. During the review Pershing stopped to speak to the switchboard operators and to compliment them on their work.

Activity at Neufchâteau gradually declined, and on 24 May the women began training men to take over the telephone exchange. When the men took charge, Miss Sage described it simply as "Bedlam let loose." Gradually, the women were assigned to other locations, with Miss Sage and Miss Grand-Maitre going to Paris. It was then that they decided to take their accumulated leave and request passage back home.

The leave was spent in Paris sightseeing, and Miss Sage showed Miss Grand-Maitre some of her old haunts. There was also time for a quick trip south to Lourdes and to the coastal town of Biarritz before returning for the voyage home.

Miss Sage boarded the USS *Mongolia* on 25 June and, as she said, "We danced many of the miles back to America to the music of the ship's band." The *Mongolia* arrived in Boston on 6 July. Miss Sage stayed there two days before reporting to receive her back pay and transportation allowance. She then left by train to meet her mother in New York.

That was the end of her association with the Signal Corps. There was no formal discharge ceremony, nor was an honorable discharge certificate awarded, for the switchboard operators were considered to be civilian volunteers and not members of the military force. However, Miss Sage was given a testimonial certificate "for especially meritorious and excellent services in the American Expeditionary Forces." General Pershing summed up the Army's response to the women

*Dorothy Sage and her mother in 1919*
*(Photo courtesy of Thomas Sage Wyman)*

operators' service when he wrote in his memoirs, "The telephone girls in the A.E.F. took great pains and pride in their work and did it with satisfaction to all."

In 1979, sixty years after the war's conclusion, a vigorous campaign spearheaded by Mrs. Louise Le Breton Maxwell, who had been a senior switchboard operator in France, led the U.S. Defense Department to finally credit the A.E.F. women operators with having served on active military duty, making them eligible for veterans' benefits under a 1977 law. Honorable discharge certificates were issued, and each new veteran was belatedly awarded the World War I Victory Medal with Clasp for France and the World War I Victory Lapel Button (Bronze).

**Epilogue**

Dorothy Sage never returned to France. Her life took new directions. In 1925 she married Thomas Noel Wyman, whom she had known since childhood. They lived in a small, remote mining community in eastern Tennessee where he was the mine's manager and company vice president. When he died in 1936, she moved to Palo Alto, California with her two young sons and became an active volunteer in civic groups, an accomplished actress, and an avid golfer. She stayed in touch with Blanche Grand-Maitre who lived in Sacramento, California, and never married. Dorothy Sage was 89 when she received her honorable discharge certificate. I remember how she laughed at the fact that she was now a veteran and wondered about her G.I. Bill of Rights. She died in 1980 at the age of 90.

My mother's A.E.F. experience was a fascinating chapter in a remarkably fulfilling life and an unpretentiously pioneering venture in American women's contribution to the U.S. military.

*Thomas Sage Wyman served in the U.S. Navy in the Pacific in 1945–46. After obtaining degrees in geology and mining engineering at Stanford University, he worked for Standard Oil Company of California (now Chevron Corporation) for forty-two years as a petroleum engineer, a technical representative on overseas operations, and manager of government and public affairs for the company's international tanker operations.*

**13th Annual Siena College World War II Symposium**

Siena College in Loudonville, New York, will hold a multidisciplinary symposium on World War II on 4–5 June 1998. The foci for this conference are 1938 (The Beginnings) and 1948 (The Aftermath). Papers will be presented on fascism, nazism, Spain, Austria, Munich, women, Jews, displaced persons, war crimes trials, veterans affairs, literary and cinematic studies of the war, and economic reconversion.

Further information is available from Professor Thomas O. Kelly at Department of History, Siena College, 515 Loudon Road, Loudonville, New York 12211-1462, by telephone at 518-783-2595, or by e-mail at kelly@siena.edu.

## The Chief's Corner
## John W. (Jack) Mountcastle

Greetings from the Center of Military History. Hope this new year will be a good one for you and your organization. Like so many of us, I'm sure that you have been watching the strange extremes in the weather that we have experienced during the fall and winter here in Washington. Fortunately for us, El Nino has brought far more good weather than bad to the D.C. area, for which we are all grateful. We're all looking forward to an exciting 1998.

Let me give you a short SITREP on major developments at the Center. First, we are down to our authorized civilian personnel levels. Actually, we are understrength because we have a number of civilian vacancies. The downsizing that accompanied the regionalization of the Army's civilian personnel management system last year slowed the civilian personnel recruiting/placement process. We are doing all that we can to fill open positions as soon as we can.

COL Clyde Jonas has continued to manage our preparations for movement of the Center to Fort McNair next summer. I'm looking forward to this move with great anticipation. We will execute this relocation as we would an armor operation, with careful planning and violent execution!! Hope it all falls into place, because the GSA has already been by here with another federal agency that wants to move into our current office space on 14th Street!

During the past six months, the Army Audit Agency and the DA Historical Advisory Committee (DAHAC) have both pointed out my lack of a strategic plan and have urged me to correct that shortcoming. Not having what I'd call a "G3-Plans" staff, just "Operations" folks, we were hard pressed to address the future effectively. We asked for help in doing this. My boss, LTG John Dubia, and the Assistant SecArmy (M&RA) came to our aid. They provided a group of officers and NCOs to build on the hard work done by Dr. John Greenwood and our own strategic planning team over the past four months, developing a strategic vision for the history program needed to support the Army XXI and beyond. In this process, we are using the automated consensus/decision software ("groupware") that is available at the Defense Information Systems Agency. The uniformed planning staff will be here for only six months, but that will be enough time to translate concepts into plans. A number of our readers around the Army received a short questionnaire, asking for suggestions on ways to improve our Army-wide program. I am truly indebted to those of you who shared your ideas with us.

The Chief of Staff asked that we take the lead in developing suggestions for improving the process by which we instill a genuine sense of our shared Army heritage in new soldiers and junior officers. We chaired a small task force in August and September which looked at the whole process of "Building Great Soldiers." A number of the suggestions that came out of that effort were approved by GEN Reimer and are being implemented by TRADOC as part of the enhancement of Initial Entry Training throughout the Army. We are still very much involved in this project, having established a clearinghouse for successful approaches from throughout the Army. We are looking for ways in which all sorts of organizations sustain their soldiers' pride and devotion to the Army, the unit, the mission, their fellow soldiers and family members. I hope you'll send any thoughts you have on this critical part of the Army mission to us.

As I look back over what was a very challenging year for the Army History Program across the force, I sometimes wonder if we are passing the "so what" test. There are so many projects that seem to last forever, so many areas in which we must improve. I take heart, though, when I consider the contributions of the Center of Military History over the last year and recall the excellent training provided by our museums and the support provided to commanders by some of our best command historians. Army military history detachments from the National Guard and Army Reserve have been right there in the Bosnian dust, mud, and snow recording the history of Task Force EAGLE since the day it crossed the Sava in December 1995! The Army should be very proud of the superb history programs at West Point and many of the nation's undergraduate institutions,

the strength of TRADOC's Military History Education Program, and the extraordinary educational experience provided to students attending the Army War College, with its Military History Institute. I don't know where we would be without the guidance provided us by the Army Historical Advisory Committee. Their dedication, enthusiasm, and persuasiveness are largely responsible for the retention of the Center of Military History as an agency of the Army Headquarters. All together and in detail, we are meeting the mission and more.

It seems impossible, at times, that I have been privileged to serve as your Chief of Military History for over three years. It is nearly time now for me to pass the baton to another officer, one who will cherish the challenge as much as I have. But there are plenty of phase lines left to cross on the way toward that hand-off of responsibility. As my former commander, Fred Franks, always said, you've got to run all the way across the finish line. See you on the high ground!

## Historical Program News

The 1998 Conference of Army Historians will be held on 9–11 June at the Ramada Hotel in Bethesda, Maryland. The theme of the conference will be "The U.S. Army in the American Century, 1898–1998."

The Center of Military History has published *U.S. Army Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine, 1860–1941*, by Andrew J. Birtle. The book treats the impact on the U.S. Army of its guerrilla operations in the Civil War; its Western frontier duty; and its service in Cuba, the Philippines, Panama, Mexico, and Russia.

The Military History Office of the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command has published *The National Training Center Matures, 1985–1993*, by Anne W. Chapman. It is a sequel to her 1992 study on *The Origins and Development of the National Training Center, 1976–1984*.

The Office of History of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has published *Supporting the Troops: The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in the Persian Gulf War*, by Janet A. McDonnell, and *Designing the Bayous: The Control of Water in the Atchafalaya Basin, 1800–1995*, by Martin Reuss.

## Editor's Journal

This issue opens with an article about one of the first groups of women to serve with the U.S. Army, the American telephone switchboard operators employed by the A.E.F. in France. As the son of one of the operators, the author is able to provide a very personal account and share with the reader some of the rich commentary found in his mother's diary. Also featured in this issue are two stimulating articles from Europe—a research paper by an Austrian historian on American plans to sustain Vienna in the event of a Soviet blockade in the early Cold War years and a report by an American liaison officer at the French Army's Cavalry School on the school's April 1997 staff ride that revisited a French armored division's actions in World War II. The issue concludes with a half-dozen book reviews.

*Army History* appeared in only three issues in 1997 because the new editor was fully occupied at the end of that year in revising and preparing for publication a forthcoming book on the U.S. Army Europe and the Gulf War written by USAREUR historian Stephen Gehring. This project had been the editor's primary focus for nearly a year, and he now rejoices in its completion.

The Center of Military History is providing on the last page of this issue a second and final subscription renewal form, which those readers who neglected the form provided in the previous issue may use to indicate their desire to continue receiving *Army History*.

Charles Hendricks

# The Airlift That Never Was

## Allied Plans To Supply Vienna by Air, 1948–1950

**Erwin A. Schmidl**

*This article is a revised version of a paper that Dr. Schmidl delivered in Arlington, Virginia, at the 1996 Conference of Army Historians.*

Coming into Vienna these days, the traveler is greeted by huge billboards proclaiming that "Vienna is different!" ("*Wien ist anders*!"). In the context of recent Austrian history, this difference has often been stressed by Austrian historians, claiming Austria's postwar history to have been an "exception"—the much-cited *Sonderfall* from developments elsewhere. (1)

Indeed, Austria's fate after 1945 differed from Germany's. Although annexed by the Reich in 1938, and divided in 1945 just like Germany into four zones of occupation—a Soviet zone in the east; an American zone west of it; a French zone in the Tyrol and Vorarlberg; and a British one in the southern provinces of Styria and Carinthia—Austria was considered a "liberated" country and retained its unity. The government established by the Soviets in Vienna during the last days of the war was recognized by the rest of the country, as well as by the Western Allies, in the summer of 1945, and it was successful in establishing a democratic system. The capital city, Vienna, was divided into four allied sectors just like Berlin, but unlike Berlin the center of the city was under joint administration by the four powers. Generally, developments in Austria were less polarized than in Germany. The four powers continued their cooperation in Austria even when their unity disappeared elsewhere and the emerging Cold War led to major crises in Berlin, Greece, Korea, or Indochina. Against this background, Western planners had to prepare for two contingencies in Austria: a) the situation in the event of a third world war; and, on a smaller scale, b) any Communist attempt to take control in the eastern provinces and Vienna (which would eventually have led to a situation similar to the German one).

### War Plan BROILER and Operation PILGRIM DOG

It has to be stressed that despite all the "Third Man" atmosphere surrounding the late forties in Vienna (2), Western planners agreed that the likelihood of wholesale Soviet aggression into Western Europe, plunging the world into a new global war, was very remote. In that unlikely case, if the Soviets really attacked in force, the Americans realized that the Western Allies were much too weak to make a stand in Europe. Therefore, early U.S. war plans like PINCHER (1946–47), BROILER (1947–48), BUSHWACKER (1948), and HALFMOON (1948–49) envisaged the American forces retreating from continental Europe. From their air bases in Britain, possibly Spain, and North Africa—as well as in Asia and the Pacific—they would then conduct a strategic air campaign, using nuclear weapons (these were the days of nuclear monopoly), to force the Soviet Union to collapse. (3) The continental withdrawal would have included U.S. Forces in Austria. With the help of Austrian authorities and former officers, the Americans intended to evacuate in a "Dunkirk II–type" scenario as many war veterans and recruits as possible to Italy or North Africa to serve with the Western forces of liberation. (4) The American withdrawal policy changed only after the establishment of the Western (European) Union and NATO in 1948 and 1949, respectively, led to plans like OFFTACKLE (1949), which foresaw a defense of Western Europe along the Rhine-Alps-Piave line, and ultimately to NATO's adoption in December 1950 of its "forward defense" strategy.

However, while the initial postwar plans made sense from the American point of view, the idea of readily abandoning the European continent sounded less welcome to the European allies—and to France in particular. Instead, the French hoped to make a stand against a Soviet onslaught—and this would have included the defense of at least part of their occupation zone in western Austria. (5) This idea appealed to

American planners as well, because it would render more plausible the American commitment to Austria. French and American experts, therefore, in 1949 devised an alternative plan, Operation PILGRIM DOG, to defend Western positions in Austria and maintain a center of resistance, with Innsbruck as a logistics base. (6)

PILGRIM DOG also foresaw Austrian partisans and resistance fighters cooperating with allied forces to resist the Soviets and harass their southern flank in Germany and contributing to the defense of northern Italy. Its provisions included the prestocking of arms and equipment for Austrian forces. (7) Most likely it is in this context that we have to see the stockpiling of weapons for Austrian partisan groups which recently created such an interest in the press when the U.S. ambassador in Vienna informed the Austrian authorities in January 1996 of the existence of seventy-nine such arms caches. These were duly identified and excavated during the summer of 1996. (8)

**The Position of the Powers in Vienna**

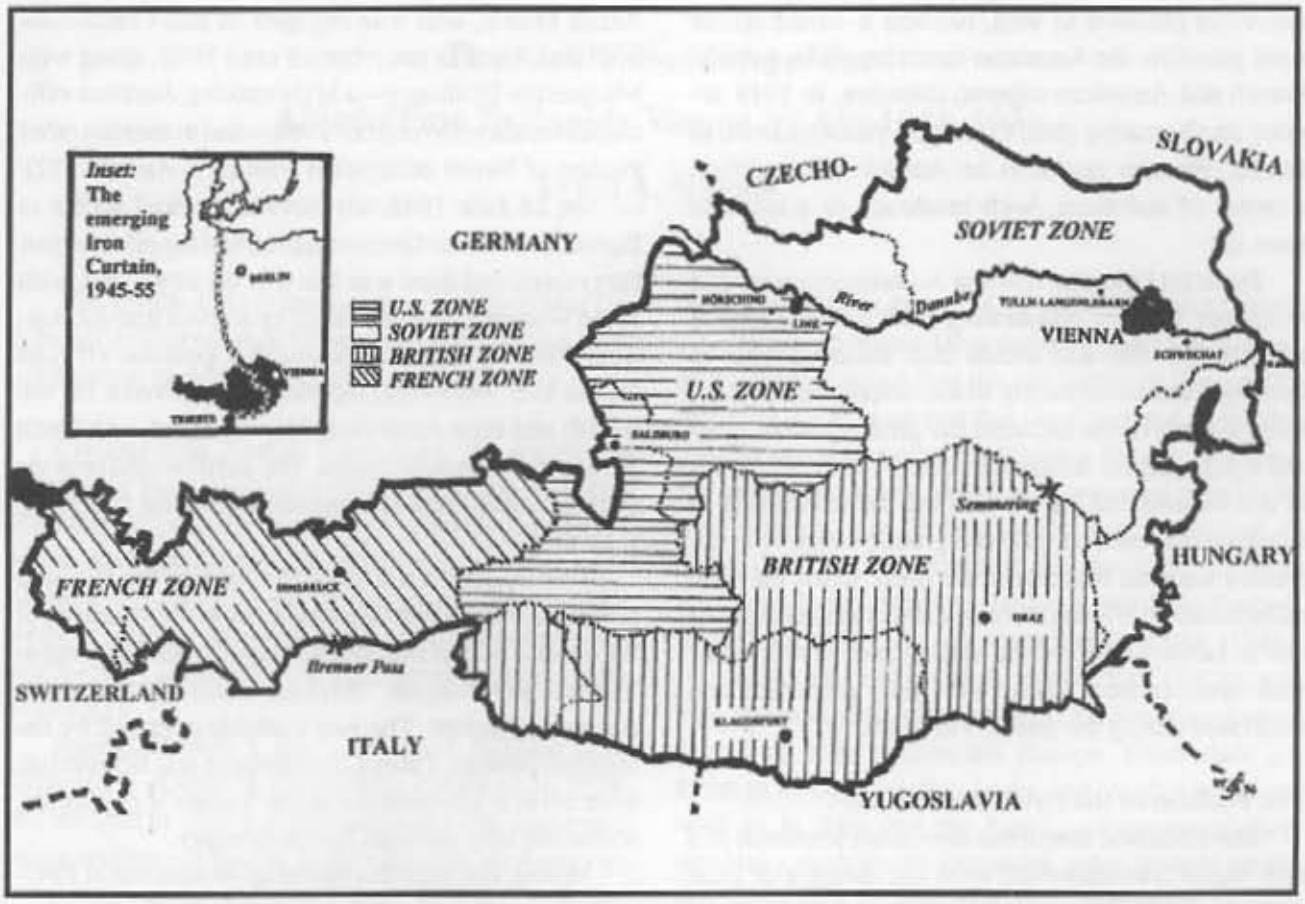
More realistic than these doomsday scenarios of a new world war, however, were the dangers of local action by the Soviets and their Austrian *collaborateurs*. Among Austrian historians, it is often debated whether the Communist-inspired strikes in Vienna in 1950 really were the first stage of a planned *coup* or not. (9) Possibly they were not, but in the late forties and early fifties democratic Austrians and their Western friends alike certainly dreaded such a development. (10)

These fears became acute in February 1948, when the Communists took over the Czechoslovak government. In April, in Germany as well as in Austria, Soviet authorities were less cooperative and tried to impose travel restrictions on the Western Allies. In the Soviet occupation zone in Austria, British and American vehicles and personnel were delayed on several occasions because of "incomplete passes." The Soviets also tried to effect tighter controls over Allied flights to Vienna, and they ordered the removal of the radio station near the American airfield at Tulln-Langenlebarn on the grounds that it was outside the airport and in Soviet territory (which was true). (11) Among further incidents was the attempted kidnapping of a woman by Soviet soldiers in the U.S. sector of Vienna. This was followed in June by the arrest of Austrian police officer Anton Marek, who was engaged in anti-Communist activities. He was not released until 1955, along with Margarethe Ottilinger—a high-ranking Austrian official abducted in November 1948—and numerous other victims of Soviet occupation politics in Austria. (12)

On 24 June 1948, the Soviets blocked access to Berlin. The former German capital had supplies for just thirty days, and there was fear that the city—and, with it, the Western powers—might be starved into submission. Within hours the famous airlift (Operation VITTLES for the U.S. Air Force, Operation PLAINFARE for the British and their Australian, New Zealand, and South African detachments) began. The airlift would provide over two million tons of supplies during the following year. (13)

This operation was possible because the Western powers had their own airports in the western sectors of Berlin. But what if the Soviets played a similar game in Vienna? Here—again "*Wien ist anders*!"—the situation was different. The two airfields operated by the Western powers, Tulln-Langenlebarn and Schwechat, were several kilometers outside Vienna's city limits, accessible only through Soviet territory.

Indeed, this problem had been recognized in 1945. In the discussions leading to the partition of occupation zones among the four Allies, the Western Allies had tried to have Vienna defined by its post-1938 boundaries. With the enlargement of Vienna under the Nazis ("Greater Vienna"), four airfields fell within the city's boundaries: Aspern, the main airport, as well as Seyring, Deutsch-Wagram, and Schwechat, three German fighter airfields built after 1938. Two airfields were farther away, Kottingbrunn-Bad Vöslau, near Baden to the south, and Tulln-Langenlebarn to the west. (14) The Soviets insisted, however, on the pre-1938 boundaries and prevailed on this point, even though one of the American negotiators, Lt. Col. F. S. Righeimer, already had warned in April 1945 that this meant that the airfields around Vienna "would all be contained in the Soviet Austrian zone." (15) Agreement on the zones of occupation was finally reached by the European Advisory Commission on 9 July 1945 and implemented when the Allied chiefs of staff met in Vienna on 24 and 25 July. The Western Allies were granted rights of passage to and from Vienna, with the Americans and French assigned the western route (Linz–St. Pölten–Vienna), and the British the southern route (Bruck–




*Austria, 1945-55: Zones of Allied Occupation*

Wiener Neustadt–Vienna). Also, air corridors were designated and formally adopted by the Allied Council in the air flight agreement of 28 June 1946. On several occasions the Soviets tried to interfere with the rights of combat or commercial aircraft to use these fields, claiming that they had agreed only to transport and communication flights. (16)

In order to be able to reach Vienna by air at least with small liaison planes—all this was before the widespread use of helicopters—the Western Allies built two small airstrips in the western sectors of Vienna: an American one on the Danube Channel, not far from the Karl Marx Hof, in the nineteenth district, and a British one in front of Schloss Schönbrunn, the former summer palace of the Habsburgs. But both of these airstrips were capable of handling only very small aircraft. (17) Even without breaching the existing agreements, it was estimated that the Soviets could easily close down both the road and rail links to the Western zones for quite some time, as well as the corridors to the Tulln and Schwechat airfields, claiming "technical difficulties" or "civil disturbances" as pretexts for denying passage to U.S. and other supplies. As an American study pointed out in the summer of 1948, in the case of a Soviet blockade "our forces would be trapped, unable to maintain themselves or to withdraw except by Soviet permission and on Soviet terms. . . . Our forces and their dependents would be at the mercy of the Soviet authorities and subject to whatever indignities Soviet policy might deem expedient." (18)

To their credit, the Americans were not content to wait until such an eventuality occurred. Early on they began upgrading the stockpiles for their garrison, and they started to explore the options for improving aerial accessibility. In early July 1948, shortly after the start of the Berlin blockade, American officers carried out their

first surveys. The results were not too encouraging: there was almost no possibility of establishing drop zones or glider landing zones in the densely built up areas of the city. Only if coal was to be airlifted into Vienna was dropping recommended to separate the air traffic patterns; otherwise, early stockpiling of supplies was clearly the best option. Operations by seaplanes, an important element of the Berlin airlift, were impossible in Vienna because the Danube River was completely controlled by the Soviets. The only realistic option was to build an airfield right in Vienna. (19)

**Where To Build a New Airfield: Dornbach or Kaiser-Ebersdorf?**

Although the first discussions might have included enlarging one of the two existing airstrips, either on the Danube Channel or near Schönbrunn, it soon became clear that this was impracticable. Even less feasible was the "option, " recalled by an anonymous "witness," to raze the Karl Marx Hof—a well-known, large community housing area—in order to make room for an airfield! (20) Soon two plans emerged out of the discussions. One was to build an emergency air strip in the American-occupied seventeenth district, utilizing an existing street for the runway, while the other called for the establishment of a larger airport in Kaiser-Ebersdorf, near the Central Cemetery.

The first option centered around a straight stretch of the Alszeile road in suburban Dornbach. Without too much work, it was hoped, this could be turned into a 3,600-foot runway with 500-foot overruns at each end. (21) It appears that the selection of this site predated the crisis of June 1948. According to the report on a Vienna visit by military and State Department officials in early July 1948, "the construction of an emergency airstrip within the U.S. Zone of Vienna . . . to serve the U.S. garrison by air" formed part of the detailed "Protective Security Plan" which had been developed earlier for major emergencies by Lt. Gen. Geoffrey Keyes, the commanding general of U.S. Forces in Austria. (22)

In any case, experts estimated that this airstrip could be made operational within a period of two to four weeks, using material and personnel available in Vienna. It would be capable of handling two-engine transport planes like the C–47 (Douglas DC–3 "Skytrain"/British "Dakota"). However, partly because of the hilly terrain, it could only be used under visual flight rules (VFR). In wintertime, it was estimated that weather conditions would forbid VFR flights at least 50 percent of the time. The capacity of this airstrip was estimated at 168 short tons daily, and it was thus inadequate for supplying more than the Western garrisons and officials, or for evacuating under emergency conditions the estimated 8,000 to 10,000 U.S. and Allied troops and civilians and key Austrian personnel. (23) Also, unloading and storage facilities were lacking.

Therefore, the airstrip in Dornbach would be of limited use for the Allies. American planners looking beyond the U.S. zone then found suitable terrain in the British sector, in the eleventh district near Kaiser-Ebersdorf. This was largely a flat farming area with few buildings, and it had already been used as an airfield early in the twentieth century. There it seemed possible to build a modern airfield with two 5,000-foot runways that could handle both the C–47 and the larger, four-engine C–54 (Douglas DC–4 "Skymaster") aircraft under instrumental as well as visual flight rules conditions. A construction period of ten weeks was anticipated for both runways. While this seems rather ambitious at first, we have to remember that during the Berlin airlift, Tegel airport in the French sector was finished within three months.

Assuming maximum air corridor traffic capacity and the availability of 110 C–54 planes, the planners estimated that up to 1,500 tons could be flown into Vienna daily. (24) One point was clear from the beginning, however: whatever the decision, the Allies would concentrate on one option only, either to build the small airstrip in Dornbach or the airfield in Kaiser-Ebersdorf. To build both appeared to be a waste of money and equipment. (25)

**Preparing for a Blockade**

After considering the advantages and disadvantages of the two options, the Allies decided to go ahead with preparations to build an airfield in Kaiser-Ebersdorf. The matter—by now raised to "top secret" classification by the director of plans and operations at the Pentagon—reached the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff for decision on 26 July 1948. (26)

Simultaneously, General Keyes asked the U.S.

European Command in Heidelberg to supply 1.9 million square feet of pierced aluminum landing plank for the construction of an emergency air strip in Vienna. It was necessary, Keyes argued, to bring building materials to Vienna before the beginning of a blockade in order to be able to start construction of the airfield immediately. However, to avoid undue speculation among the civilian population, the Americans refrained from obvious local preparations, such as stockpiling equipment at the Kaiser-Ebersdorf site.

An interesting point arose over the question of coordinating the Vienna measures with the Berlin airlift. The European Command considered a concurrent air supply of Vienna and Berlin not to be feasible. It believed that in the case of a blockade of both cities, "Vienna should depend on stockpiles established while land lines are still open." As a first measure, it was thus decided to establish an 84-day reserve supply of food and a six-month supply of coal in Vienna. (27) Military planners insisted that "airlift supply of Vienna cannot be undertaken concurrently with the air supply of Berlin with the resources presently available." However, they pointed out that in the case of a real emergency "our overall world capabilities," rather than the resources then available in Europe, would determine the feasibility of conducting both operations at the same time. And, as a discussion paper stated, "even though we may not agree with the wisdom of such a course of action, we could not justify our failure to prepare for this eventuality which would in effect sabotage such a decision should it be made . . . at the highest level." (28)

Following this line of argument, Army Chief of Staff General Omar Bradley approved as an initial step on 11 August 1948 the provision of 900,000 square feet of pierced steel landing mat (or pierced steel planking [PSP]) adequate for the construction of one 5,000-foot runway in the British sector. Bradley was reminded "that the shipment of pierced plank to Vienna would be evaluated by the Russians as another indication of the firmness of our determination to maintain our position in Berlin and Vienna." Despite its higher weight, steel planking was chosen because of the costs involved. Steel plank was about one-sixth as expensive as aluminum. (29)

All supply flights were to be handled from Hörsching airfield near Linz, in the American zone of occupation, a flying distance of a little more than 100 miles. In his message of 23 July General Keyes had been confident "that with proper operational and service personnel and equipment Hörsching could handle all necessary flights." (30) This might well have been so, but it should be pointed out that—unlike the case of Berlin—this meant that all flights were to be handled by a single airport on each side. In addition, it would have necessitated a major shift in Western supply routes to Austria, since after 1945 the major supply route for Austria was not from the northwest (Bremerhaven) but from the south (Trieste). These questions do not appear to have been further explored in the discussions at the time.

In late August, the establishment of an airfield in Vienna was questioned again. On 20–21 August a team of U.S. aviation experts surveyed the suggested site at Kaiser-Ebersdorf and promptly cast doubt on Keyes' optimistic plans. They warned that this area was "not suitable for C–54 type aircraft and that even with C–47 type aircraft the approaches and climb out are not considered safe." But Keyes was not to be stopped. Within a week he asked for 2.2 million square feet of pierced steel planking (300,000 more than originally requested) for his two-runway airfield. And in early September, he and Lt. Gen. Curtis LeMay of the U.S. Air Force finally reached agreement that the site was considered "satisfactory . . . for construction of an airfield in event of emergency," (31) and General Keyes was ordered to proceed with stockpiling 1.5 million square feet of PSP landing mats, (32) to be provided by the European Command. (33) The stockpiling was completed by 21 October, and by then the necessary signal equipment for blind flying operations was also on hand in Vienna. (34)

British documents from late 1948 show not only the exact site for the new airfield—the British code name was SWALLOW—but also provide additional information about the planned construction work. First priority would be given to the 5,000-foot runway ("Strip No.1") planned by the Americans. For efficiency, U.S. and British engineer resources would be pooled for its construction. Then, the British would build their own 3,000- or 3,500-foot runway ("Strip No.2") to the south of and parallel to the main one for the 50–60 daily C–47 flights estimated necessary to supply the British garrison and administration. These

flights would originate from an airport at Zeltweg in Styria and possibly also from another at Klagenfurt-Annabichl, both in the British zone of Austria. The lowest priority was given to a second American runway, 3,500 feet long, to be constructed without PSP landing mats for "lightly loaded planes" only. (35)

**Further Planning, 1949–50**

As we all know, the blockade of Vienna never happened. But American preparations for a possible Vienna crisis continued—as did, in fact, plans for a new Berlin airlift (VITTLES II). In 1949, and again in early 1950, American planners examined anew "the capabilities of the Soviets in Austria to effect a limited blockade of Vienna by pretext and other devious means short of force." The relevant American policy was approved in National Security Council document 63/1 on 17 February 1950. It emphasized exercising utmost care not to provoke any incident, while making "full and frequent use" of all existing rights. (36)

By now, however, more transport planes—the Fairchild C–82 and its successor C–119 "Packet"/ "Flying Boxcar," which were no larger than the C–54 but were easier to load and unload—were available, in addition to the trusty C–47 and C–54. Again, a major factor was whether a blockade of Vienna would be accompanied by another one in Berlin. "If Berlin and Vienna are blockaded simultaneously, Berlin would have first priority on C–54's and the aerial supply of Vienna would have to be conducted with C–82's and some C–119's." Sufficient quantities of the C–119 would not be available until the second half of 1951; only nineteen had been delivered by January 1950. (37) Unlike in 1948, when the Americans finally settled for a one-runway airfield, they now planned to fly in 900,000 additional square feet of pierced steel planking to allow for the construction of a second, parallel runway. The need to transport the additional landing planks to Vienna would reduce any other supplies to be flown in during the first weeks of the airlift, but it would enhance air transport capacity afterwards. (38)

In the wake of the Communist-inspired riots in October 1950, an American team again surveyed possible locations for an airstrip within the Western sectors of Vienna. This time the discussions centered on the construction of a permanent airstrip "to replace [the] present dangerous and unsatisfactory strip for our light planes" that could be used by C–47 type aircraft for limited operations including emergency supply and evacuation. (39) Of the five sites surveyed, Kaiser-Ebersdorf again was ranked first—partly because it was the only one which offered "the possibility for full expansion to meet airlift requirements" in the event of a blockade. (40)

Despite all these preparations, the feasibility of an airlift operation in Vienna, especially if simultaneous with a new Berlin airlift, remained in doubt. The Joint Strategic Survey Committee reported in January 1950 that a Soviet blockade of both Berlin and Vienna "would create a most serious situation perilously close to war." Under a complete blockade, the American position in Vienna would soon become "untenable," while even a limited blockade would be "extremely difficult" to overcome. The only option would be "the establishment of an airlift to Vienna as a stop-gap measure, if politically expedient." However, an airlift for Vienna would be "less dependable and far less effective than the Berlin airlift" and might lead to escalation. Therefore, early consultations with the NATO partners were urged. "Otherwise, some of these members might consider a United States attempt to supply Vienna by force as an act of aggression against the USSR." (41)

In addition, Air Force planners warned against overestimating the capabilities of an airlift. As Air Force Chief of Staff General Hoyt S. Vandenberg pointed out, a U.S. Air Force commitment simultaneously to attempt airlift operations for both Berlin and Vienna "would virtually cripple its combat capability in the event of an emergency." A commitment to overcome two blockades at once would limit the American potential "to launch a decisive atomic offensive," and leave a major portion of U.S. transport planes and crews vulnerable to the Soviets. In most Air Force papers, the chronic shortage of crews was raised as a crucial issue. (42) In fact, within one year many of the aircraft mentioned in these plans saw action in the Far East, hauling supplies and dropping paratroops during the Korean War or carrying weapons to the beleaguered French forces in Indochina.

**Operation SQUIRREL CAGE**

An important question in all these plans was: who

should be served by the airlift to Vienna? The first American plans concerned the supply (and evacuation) of the Western Allies' military and civilian personnel and dependents, and maybe also some top Austrian officials and politicians. Possibly in light of the successful Berlin airlift, the plans soon shifted to supplying the whole population of Vienna, including the Soviet sectors, by air.

It should be noted, however, that despite their involvement in the planning process the British found it hard to share the enthusiasm of their American allies. In September 1948, the second-ranking British officer in Austria, Maj. Gen. Sir John Winterton, informed his Foreign Office in a "top secret" communication, "I think you ought to know that the Americans have stockpiled in the Western Sectors of Vienna, 84 days of food for the whole of Vienna as a reserve in the event of Vienna being cut-off from the West. The Americans also contemplate the possibility of flying supplies into Vienna to feed the civil population. I think there are certain grave dangers in this action on the part of the Americans and in the line of thought which it discloses."

Because of the existence of a central Austrian government and the close economic and political ties between east and west, Winterton continued, "the situation here is in no way similar to that in Germany." The responsibility of supplying Vienna rests "fairly and squarely on the shoulders of the Austrian Government. . . . If the Russians hold up food supplies, the responsibility for starving the Austrians should be placed fairly and squarely on their shoulders." However, "if in these circumstances, the Americans started to supply Vienna, either from their stock-pile of food, or by air, nothing would please the Soviet [*sic*] better." The Soviet act of aggression involved in cutting off supplies would fade from public view, and the responsibility for feeding the Viennese would shift to the Western powers.

Winterton concluded, "I think we want to be quite clear on these issues however remote they might be. . . . We have made arrangements for the construction of a runway in the British Sector of Vienna on the assumption that access to Tulln and Schwechat would be stopped. . . . In order that we shall not be caught out, even temporarily, we have built up a 60 days reserve of food and fuel in Vienna for the British garrison and other British personnel in Vienna." In his reply, Michael F. Cullis of the Foreign Office supported Winterton's views: "We certainly do not want to take any action that would, as you say, blur the clear-cut implications of what the Russians were doing." (43)

According to the American estimates, to supply at "emergency level" the entire civilian population of Vienna (including the Soviet sector), or the three Western sectors alone, would require the following minimum daily requirements: (44)

| | All Vienna | 3 Western Sectors only |
|---|---|---|
| Food (1,550 calories daily per person) | 853 tons | 597 tons |
| Solid Fuel | 2,670 tons | 2,000 tons |
| Liquid Fuel | 292 tons | 223 tons |
| Civil Affairs | 319 tons | 319 tons |
| Miscellaneous (medicine, chemicals) | 96 tons | 96 tons |
| Total minimum requirement | 4,230 tons | 3,235 tons |
| Maximum deliverable | 3,600 tons | 3,600 tons |
| Daily deficit | 630 tons | |
| Daily overage | | 365 tons |

In any case, whatever the option chosen, it would have taken some three months to build the airfield in Kaiser-Ebersdorf. Thus, it was necessary to stockpile food and fuel for this period as well. With a daily minimum ration of 1,550 calories, existing stockpiles in the Western sectors were estimated to last for 84 days for the whole of Vienna, including the civilian population in the Soviet zone, or for 114 days if the blockade affected only the three Western sectors. These stores had initially been set aside under a 1948 plan developed by General Keyes to assemble in the Western zones of Austria and in Trieste sufficient stocks of emergency items to last for ninety days. The stocks had been "designed to minimize Soviet capabilities for exerting economic pressure on Austria." (45)

Preparing for a blockade of Vienna, the Civilian Supply Branch of the U.S. Forces in Austria reorganized in the summer of 1948. Supplies were stored in up to twenty-eight warehouses dispersed over the

Western sectors of the city. The value of the food stocks was estimated at over $17 million in 1948. (46) This project was known as Operation SQUIRREL CAGE and was classified as "top secret," as were the airlift preparations.

Depending on the commodity, stocks were generally rotated twice a year. Discussions arose in 1952 when it became obvious that items such as dried skimmed milk, which could be stored for up to five years, were less easy to rotate through the Austrian economy than were flour or rice. Housekeeping costs alone, including rents and salaries for the 131 local employees, were given as 6 million Schilling ($ 0.23 million) per year. The initial stocks were purchased by the Americans, with $12 million of their cost coming from the Army and $5.5 million from the European Cooperation Administration (ECA), i.e., the Marshall Plan, which Austria had signed on 2 July 1948. In 1949, the ECA portion of the stocks (comprising nearly 40 percent of the total) were charged to the Austrian allotment of U.S. Marshall Plan aid, thus becoming property of the Austrian government although remaining under U.S. custodianship. The Austrian government accepted the responsibility for the rotations in 1950. Andreas Korp, who had been minister of food in 1945 and was subsequently executive director of the *Konsum-Grosseinkaufsgesellschaft* (the food store chain controlled by the socialist Social Democratic Party) as well as a director of the Austrian National Bank, was appointed as coordinator for the program, which in 1952 was handled jointly by the Ministries of the Interior and Agriculture and the Marshall Plan office. On the American side, the operation, like all other "civil affairs," switched from the military administration to the civilian high commissioner's office in October 1950.

Following the end of the Korean War, the tensions between East and West eased and a Soviet blockade of Vienna became less and less likely. It was therefore decided to reduce the stocks to a 45-day level by January 1954, and to a 15-day supply by June 1954. (47) By early 1955, only 1,800 tons of canned horsemeat were left. These were finally sold as dog food—an ignominious end to a once grandiose plan to sustain Vienna in the face of Soviet aggression.

A blockade of Vienna never materialized. The plans for a relief airlift operation were finally relegated to the archives when Austria regained her independence in 1955. The firm response of the Western Allies in 1948–50 had discouraged any intentions the Soviets might have had for more aggressive action. In any case, in 1948 as well as in 1955, events in Austria must be seen in the context of developments elsewhere, especially in Germany.

*Part of the research for this paper was carried out in 1994 with the support of the U.S. Army Center of Military History. The author is grateful to John T. Greenwood, Judith Bellafaire, William Epley, and their colleagues for their support, as well as to the staff of the U.S. National Archives, the British Public Record Office, and the Austrian* Staatsarchiv *for their continuous help and assistance. For additional comments and suggestions I am particularly grateful to Günter Bischof of the University of New Orleans.*

## NOTES

1. For an overview of Austrian history in 1945–55, the reader is referred to Gerald Stourzh's stalwart *Geschichte des Staatsvertrages 1945–1955: Österreichs Weg zur Neutralität* (Graz, Austria: Verlag Styria, 1975, 3rd rev. ed., 1985), that will soon be published in a completely revised and updated fourth edition. The best overview of the occupation period is still Manfried Rauchensteiner, *Der Sonderfall: Die Besatzungszeit in Österreich 1945 bis 1955* (Graz, Austria: Verlag Styria, 1979). Additional material and new conclusions are presented in more recent works, such as Günter Bischof and Josef Leidenfrost, eds., *Die bevormundete Nation: Österreich und die Alliierten 1945–1949*, Innsbrucker Forschungen zur Zeitgeschichte 4 (Innsbruck: Haymon, 1988), pp. 371–405; Audrey Kurth Cronin, *Great Power Politics and the Struggle over Austria, 1945–1955*, Cornell Studies in Security Affairs (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1986); and Donald R. Whitnah & Edgar L. Erickson, *The American Occupation of Austria: Planning and Early Years*, Contributions in Military Studies 46 (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1985), as well as in the popular volumes by Hugo Portisch in his series *Österreich II* (Vienna: Kremayr & Scheriau, 1985–86). See also Günter Bischof, "The Making of a

Cold Warrior: Karl Gruber and Austrian Foreign Policy, 1945–1953," in *Austrian History Yearbook* 26 (1995): 99–127.

2. Hugh Appling, an American diplomat who was in Vienna in 1947–50, asserted that "*The Third Man* was not just a movie to us," while his colleague Robert B. Houston (in Vienna 1949–53) added that "Vienna was an exciting place to be in those days." See their interview transcripts, pp. 2 and 10, respectively, in the Oral History Collection, Association for Diplomatic Studies, Georgetown University Library. I am indebted to Charles Stuart Kennedy for allowing me to use this fascinating collection.

3. Steven T. Ross, *American War Plans, 1945–1950* (New York: Garland Books, 1988). For details about BROILER, see File 381.2–11/320, Box 104, Record Group (RG) 319, Records of the Army Staff, National Archives (NA); also Christian Greiner, "Die alliierten militärstrategischen Planungen zur Verteidigung Westeuropas 1947–1950," in *Anfänge westdeutscher Sicherheitspolitik 1945–1950*, Vol. 1 (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1982), pp. 119–323; and *Aspekte der deutschen Wiederbewaffnung bis 1955*, Militärgeschichte seit 1945, Vol. 1 (Boppard, Germany: Boldt, 1975), p. 168. Both latter titles were published by the German Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt (Military History Office).

4. Manfried Rauchensteiner, "Die Entmilitarisierung und Wiederbewaffnung in Österreich 1945 bis 1955," in *Entmilitarisierung und Aufrüstung in Mitteleuropa 1945–1956*, Vorträge zur Militärgeschichte 4 (Herford, Germany: Mittler, 1983), pp. 57–79.; Hugo Portisch, *Österreich II: Der lange Weg zur Freiheit* (Vienna: Kremayr & Scheriau, 1986), pp. 442–45. The Austrian manpower potential in the Western zones was estimated at 300,000, of whom roughly two-thirds had served in the war. In this context, I am indebted to Col. Hans Brandner (Ret.) for sharing his recollections.

5. Margit Sandner, *Die französisch-österreichischen Beziehungen während der Besatzungszeit von 1947 bis 1955*, Dissertationen der Universität Wien 162 (Vienna: VWGÖ, 1983), pp. 260–72; Portisch, *Österreich II: Der lange Weg*, pp. 372–74.

6. Operation Plan PILGRIM DOG, 30 Nov 49, in File OPD 381 Austria, 20 Apr 50, RG 341, Records of Headquarters US Air Force, NA. The name refers to a fourth in a series of PILGRIM plans—PILGRIM ABLE referred to the defense of the Italian Alps, PILGRIM BAKER foresaw a complete withdrawal from northern Italy by sea, and PILGRIM CHARLIE was the name for the Allied withdrawal through western Austria toward the Rhine as part of OFFTACKLE. See Günter Bischof, "Österreich—ein 'geheimer Verbündeter' des Westens?" in Michael Gehler and Rolf Steininger, eds., *Österreich und die europäische Integration, 1945–1993: Aspekte einer wechselvollen Entwicklung*, Arbeitskreis Europäische Integration: Historische Forschungen 1 (Vienna: Böhlau, 1993), pp. 425-50; also the report on the Austria visit of a joint military/State Department delegation in July 1948 in File 333 TS, Box 66, RG 319, NA, which mentions plans for withdrawing U.S. troops and noncombatants from Austria to Germany in the event of hostilities and the French "plan to make a stand in the Austrian Tyrol."

7. For a summary of planned subversive activities in general, see Beatrice Heuser, "Subversive Operationen im Dienste der 'Roll-Back'-Politik 1948–1953," in *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 37, no. 2 (Apr 89): 279–97.

8. *New York Times*, 30 Jan 96, p. A4. See also Conrad Seidl's articles in the Vienna *Standard*, 22 Jan 96; and Fritz Molden's article on the following day, claiming that not only had Austrian politicians known about these arms caches for a long time, but that they had indeed asked for arms against a possible Communist *putsch*. On Allied efforts to establish Austrian military forces, see Christian Stifter, *Die Wiederaufrüstung Österreichs: Die geheime Remilitarisierung der westlichen Besatzungszonen, 1945–1955*, Wiener Zeitgeschichte-Studien 1 (Innsbruck: Studien Verlag, 1997), especially pp. 129–34, recognizing, however, that Stifter's study has an anti-American slant and that the author failed to consult American archival sources.

9. Manfried Rauchensteiner and Oliver Rathkolb have argued that Soviet intentions may have been less aggressive than assumed by contemporary American—and Austrian—planners and politicians. See Rathkolb, "Von der Besatzung zur Neutralität: Österreich in den aussenpolitischen Strategien des Nationalen Sicherheitsrates unter Truman und Eisenhower," in Bischof and Leidenfrost, *Bevormundete Nation*, pp. 371–405. For a more realistic assessment, going beyond the local Austrian scene, see Günter Bischof, "Austria looks to the West: Kommunistische

Putschgefahr, geheime Wiederbewaffnung und Westorientierung am Anfang der Fünfziger Jahre," in Thomas Albrich et al., eds., *Österreich in den Fünfzigern*, Innsbrucker Forschungen zur Zeitgeschichte 11 (Innsbruck: Studien Verlag, 1995), pp. 183–209.

10. See, e.g., the summary of John Foster Dulles' talk with Austrian Minister of the Interior Oskar Helmer, 16 Oct 48, in File NN3-59-91-027, Austria, Oct 48, Box 1, Accession No. 71D325, RG 84, Records of the Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State, NA.

11. Incident reports, Case 137, File 092, Box 118, RG 319, NA; Study by the Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, JCS 2000/5, 29 Mar 50, in Air Force Plans 1942–54, File Austria 381 (Vienna), Box 712, RG 341, NA. See also Günter Bischof, "'Prag liegt westlich von Wien:' Internationale Krisen im Jahre 1948 und ihr Einfluss auf Österreich," in Bischof and Leidenfrost, *Bevormundete Nation*, pp. 315–46, who claimed that the tension in Vienna was worse during the "first" Berlin crisis of April than during the "second" crisis (i.e., the blockade) beginning in June.

12. See Portisch, *Österreich II: Der lange Weg*, pp. 358–60 and 501–05, and Stefan Karner, *Geheime Akten des KGB: "Margarita Ottilinger"* (Graz: Leykam, 1992).

13. On the Berlin airlift, see Robert Rodrigo, *Berlin Airlift* (London: Cassell, 1960); Avi Shlaim, *The United States and the Berlin Blockade, 1948–1949: A Study in Crisis Decision-Making* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983); Ann and John Tusa, *The Berlin Airlift* (New York: Atheneum, 1988). The exact data of the airlift operation vary according to the sources.

14. Erwin Pitsch, *Die Fliegerhorste des Bundesheeres in Krieg und Frieden*, Die Kasernen Österreichs 2 (Vienna: BMLV/HGM, 1982), pp. 88–91. For the territorial changes in Vienna, see Wolfgang Mayer, "Territoriale Veränderungen im Raume Wien 1938–1954," in: *Wien 1945: Beiträge zur Geschichte Wiens 1938–1955*, Wiener Geschichtsblätter 30 (Vienna, Sonderausgabe, 1975), pp. 122–30.

15. Whitnah and Erickson, *American Occupation*, pp. 118–29; AFAEP Notes: Zones of Occupation in Austria (JPS 583/11), 1 Apr 45, in File PD 320.2, Vienna 11-8-44, Sec. 2, Box 711, RG 341, NA. The British clearly recognized that under these circumstances any supply operation would be near to impossible. See the Allied Commission for Austria/Air Division's Operations Book and Appendices, Sep 44–Sep 47, AIR 24/1703, Public Record Office, London (PRO).

16. Study by the Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, JCS 2000/5, 29 Mar 50. For the use of Tulln-Langenlebarn airfield by Pan American Airways from 1946, see Case 61, P&O 686 (Section XII), Box 493, RG 319, NA.

17. Portisch, *Österreich II: Der lange Weg*, pp 266f, with photographs.

18. Case 54, File 686, Box 138, RG 319, NA.

19. Memo, Hq, U.S. Forces in Austria, for Director of Logistics Division, 12 Jul 48, in ibid.

20. Portisch, *Österreich II: Der lange Weg*, pp 341–46.

21. This site identification comes from the above-cited memorandum of 12 July, as well as later documents. However, in General Keyes' message of 23 July, also contained in Case 54, File 686, the site was quoted as being in the nineteenth district. Most likely this was a typing error, although witnesses in Portisch's series mentioned a possible site in the nineteenth district as well, and two locations there were among the sites surveyed in late 1950 for the construction of a permanent airstrip. (See note 40 below.)

22. File 333 TS, Box 66, RG 319, NA. Other measures included the arming of the Austrian police, and the protection of the Austrian government and its key officials.

23. Even under good weather conditions, it was estimated that it would take four days to evacuate U.S. and Allied personnel with minimum baggage from this field. U.S. personnel in Vienna at the time numbered 5,472 (3,400 military personnel, 1,641 dependents, 150 male and 213 female employees, and 68 other U.S. nationals). The number of other Allied and indigenous personnel to be evacuated was estimated at 3,000–4,500.

24. See Memo, Hq, U.S. Forces in Austria, for Director of Logistics Division, 12 Jul 48. For comparison, the maximum monthly tonnage flown into Berlin under much better conditions, with three major airfields on each end of the operation, was 250,000.

25. Ibid. and adjoining report by Col Peter P. Goerz, Chief, Engineer Section, U.S. Forces in Austria.

26. Under Secretary of the Army William H. Draper, Jr., to Gen Omar Bradley, in Case 54, File 686, Box 138; also Case 88 (95), File P&O 381 TS, Box 103, both in RG 319, NA.

27. Memo for record, 23 Jul; CS GPO to COMGENUSFA, 75294, Washington, D.C., 30 Jul 48; and Gen Keyes to CG, U.S. Forces in Europe, No. P 2176, 23 Jul 48, all in Case 54, File 686.

28. Lt Col Bailey, Statement, Appendix B: Discussion, to Keyes to CG, U.S. Forces in Europe, 23 Jul 48, ibid.

29. Lt Col Bailey's summary of 4 Aug 48, and memos for record, 13 and 20 Aug 48, in Case 54, File 686. The costs for 900,000 sq. ft. of pierced steel planking were given at $67,729.60 for transportation and $226,800 for acquisition. Apparently, the planks alone were obtained, without the steel clips to reinforce them once they were laid out. Although PSP can be used without the clips, for heavy operations—such as the one envisaged for Vienna—proper clips to keep the mats in place are useful.

30. Case 54, File 686.

31. Note for the files, Col R. W. Mayo (information from Lt Col Edwards), 8 Sep 48, in ibid.

32. It is unclear where this figure originated. Original estimates had been 900,000 sq. ft. for one and 1.9 million sq. ft. for two runways. Thus, the 1.5 million sq. ft. were just sufficient to build one-and-a-half runways—unless the 400,000 sq. ft. of extra planking was intended for taxiways etc., or included material for the smaller British runway further south. In any case, 1.5 million sq. ft. were delivered and stored.

33. See memos for record, Lt Col Edwards, 30 Aug, 16 Sep, and 7 Oct 48, in Case 54, File 686.

34. Note for the files, Col R. W. Mayo, 8 Sep 48.

35. Memo on "EX SWALLOW" by Col D. G. G. Macdonald, Dir, British Troops Austria/Military Div, 16 September 1948. Together with a map and other material on SWALLOW this memo is in Foreign Office file FO 1020/457, PRO.

36. When I conducted research for this paper in the National Archives in 1994–96, some documents in the files consulted were still unavailable for security reasons.

37. Memo, Col G. F. McGuire, Chief, USAF Operations Division, Directorate Plans and Operations, for Gen Anderson, 9 Feb 50; see also Study by the Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, JCS 2000/5, 29 Mar 50. Both are in File Austria 381 (Vienna), PO 381, Air Force Plans 1942–54, Box 712, RG 341, NA.

38. Memo, McGuire for Anderson, 9 Feb 50. In 1950 the planners also remembered to supply a total of 800,000 steel clips—which had apparently been forgotten in 1948. (See note 29.)

39. Rpt, CG, U.S. Forces in Austria, to Department of the Army, no. P 6009, Salzburg, 22 Dec 50, Box 3929, RG 59, General Records of the Department of State, NA. I am indebted to Günter Bischof for providing me with a copy of this document. Because pierced steel plank was not considered suitable for sustained operations, U.S. Air Force officers "strongly" recommended planning for asphalt strips from the beginning—an interesting point which apparently never arose in the earlier discussions.

40. Memo, Lt Col H. G. Woodbury, Office of the Engineer, U.S. Forces in Austria, for G–2, U.S. Forces in Austria, 15 Nov 50, in ibid. The sites surveyed included the one in Dornbach (Alszeile) already mentioned in the 1948 files, two other locations in the American sector (both in the hilly terrain of the nineteenth district), and the palace grounds of Schloss Schönbrunn next to the existing British landing strip. The last site was deemed "second best from the engineering viewpoint" but its use would mean that "an Austrian shrine would be desecrated" and involve displacing up to sixty families and the Vienna zoo.

41. Report, Joint Strategic Survey Committee to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, JCS 2000/3, 28 Jan 50, in File Austria 381 (Vienna).

42. Memo, Air Force Chief of Staff for the JCS, JCS 2000/2, 29 Sep 49; Memo, Col Donovan for Gen Vandenberg, for the JCS meeting on 28 Jan 50; and Memo for the Joint Chiefs on JCS 2000/2, Jan 50, all in File Austria 381 (Vienna). The quoted portion was subsequently toned down to state that both operations "would have a marked impact upon their [the participating services'] combat capability."

43. Maj Gen T. J. W. Winterton to James A. M. Marjoribanks, SEC 7603, Vienna, 28 Sep 48, and M. F. Cullis to Winterton, London, 11 Oct 48, in C 8174/G, FO 371/70473, PRO.

44. Memo, McGuire for Anderson, 9 Feb 50, and Study by the Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, JCS 2000/5, 29 Mar 50.

45. See Keyes' report P 1680, 29 Apr 48, in CCS 383–21, Section 16, File Austria 388.1, Box 12, RG 218, Records of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, NA, and Neutralization Plan, Feb 48, Decimal 381, Sec. VI–A, file 102, Box 105, RG 319, NA.

46. Rpt, C. E. Meyer to Foreign Operations Administration, Vienna, 19 Nov 53, in File 340.05, folder 1, Box 7, RG 59, NA. As the other documents in this file show, it was not clear whether the stocks belonged to the Army or the State Department—or whether it had been legal to set up Operation SQUIRREL CAGE in the first place!

47. All data in these paragraphs came from the file cited in the preceding note.

*Dr. Erwin A. Schmidl is a historian with the Institute of Military Studies in the Austrian Ministry of National Defense. He is the author of numerous books and articles on modern military and political history, including* Der "Anschluss" Österreichs, *3d rev. ed. (Bonn: Bernard & Graefe, 1994). He was a senior fellow at the U.S. Institute of Peace in Washington, D.C., in 1995–96.*

## Letters to the Editor

Editor:

I found the recent article in *Army History* by Douglas E. Nash, "*The Forgotten Soldier:* Unmasked," to be of interest, but I would especially like to comment on the reply by Edwin L. Kennedy, Jr. As a professional historian myself, I have noticed that in recent years something of a cottage industry in debunking Guy Sajer seems to have sprung up, an enterprise to which its adherents bring considerable energy in criticizing Sajer for errors in technical details, although they remain remarkably silent about the veracity of the larger issue of the combat soldier's existence. One might easily dismiss these errors as being of largely irrelevant and trivial detail, or as natural mistakes made by a man who was not yet out of his teens when the events he chronicled occurred, or as simple confusion occasioned by the myriad changes that the *Grossdeutschland* Division underwent in the last few years of the war.

What I find of interest, however, is the nature of Lt. Col. Kennedy's reply, and here I am thinking not so much of its flippant and dismissive tone, but of the substance of his continued criticism of Sajer and Nash. Kennedy appears to be arguing that although he now admits that Sajer is an actual person, and moreover one who indeed participated in the events he described, the numerous errors in his account render his not an autobiography but a *roman à clef*. This might well be true from the perspective of a military history of the traditional type, which sought to describe the elements of strategy, tactics, logistics, and military maneuver. As Sajer himself emphasized in a letter quoted by Lt. Col. Nash, historians have asked me "questions of chronology, situations, dates, and unimportant details. Historians . . . have harassed me for a long time. . . . All of this is unimportant. . . . I never had the intention to write a historical reference book; rather, I wrote about my innermost emotional experiences as they relate to the events that happened to me."

This, it seems to me, is the key to the controversy. Kennedy is criticizing Sajer, not necessarily for the work he wrote, but for the work he *didn't* write. This is what leaves such an odd impression about his reply; it is as if he were criticizing a chef for making errors in a recipe, when the chef is writing about the inner transformational experience of the process of cooking. Incidentally, this likely also accounts for why Sajer did not reply to Kennedy's inquiries, which he otherwise finds so suspicious. Moreover, Kennedy himself acknowledges that there are things that are correct in *The Forgotten Soldier*, especially those dealing with "the human dimension of war." Isn't that precisely what Sajer tried to convey? As Kennedy also admitted, Sajer's book expressed "powerful evocations of . . . [his] experiences in the cauldron of combat." Are reflective works about the inner experience of war—a book like Glenn Gray's *The Warriors* comes to mind—to be deemed valueless as history because they might contain errors of detail concerning military minutiae? Or should the magnificent writings of Primo Levi on the nature of the concentration experience be rendered invalid because of mistakes in details of how the camp

system was actually operated? What does Kennedy think about the value as historical artifacts of contemporary documents such as diaries or letters of soldiers, both of which provide insight into the human aspect of war but often contain factual errors concerning military details? No, Sajer certainly did not write an official history of *Grossdeutschland* Division, but then, he never claimed to have. What he attempted to do, on the other hand, was to write an account of the innermost emotional experiences of a combat soldier, and here even Kennedy, however grudgingly, acknowledges his accomplishment.

In the absence of a service record for Guy Sajer that substantiates his service in the *Grossdeutschland* Division, skeptics like Kennedy are not likely to be convinced. The words of Sajer himself and the testimony of other veterans as to the veracity of his observations do, however, strengthen the case that *The Forgotten Soldier* is genuine, and not fiction. The larger, and to me more intriguing, question is why some people find it is so vital to prove, on the basis of a few admittedly incorrect, if relatively minor, technical details that Sajer's work is fictional, even thought he got all the larger human aspects of the war correct?

Dr. Stephen G. Fritz
Professor of History
East Tennessee State University

Editor,

I write to call your attention to a factual error in my review of Robert Lee's book, *Fort Meade & the Black Hills*, which appeared in the Summer 1997 issue of *Army History*. I erroneously (and inexplicably) misidentified the commander of the Seventh Cavalry, Col. James Forsyth, as George Forsyth.

There are two reasons why I feel particularly embarrassed by this error. First of all, George Forsyth was the hero of a sharp fight with Southern Cheyenne warriors in 1868, while James Forsyth commanded the Seventh Cavalry during the Pine Ridge campaign of 1890–91. The slaughter at Wounded Knee Creek and the near-debacle at Drexel Mission a few days later both took place under the latter's command. George Forsyth deserves better than to be confused with him.

The second reason is more personal. Almost thirty years ago, as a graduate student at the University of Wyoming, I read Ralph Andrist's *Long Death*. Andrist's notes included a reference to a collection of James Forsyth's papers at the Denver Public Library. I drove the 130 miles to Denver only to find that Andrist had erred. The library actually had the papers of George Forsyth. I grumbled all the way back up U.S. Route 287 about the slovenly and unreliable work of some historians.

I have always maintained that the lucky ones among us live long enough to be embarrassed by our mistakes. This is not the first time that I have had the opportunity to be reminded of my longevity. Thank you for allowing me to set the record straight.

Frank N. Schubert
Joint History Office
Office of the Chairman, JCS

Editor,

Many thanks for a fine first issue under your guidance. The Seeger poems brought me back sixty years when I and many of my generation knew Seeger by heart.

The Sterling article was extremely informative. I am afraid that I am all too typical in knowing too little about the Army's contributions to geography and ethnography in our country.

Because I served from 1939 to 1945 in the Philippines, I am better aware of our Army's great accomplishments there in those fields, particularly during the first two or three decades of this century. The maps of central Luzon which we used were blueprints produced mostly between 1905 and 1915 by cavalry regiments. The *cordillera* of northern Luzon was penetrated and sketch mapped by our soldiers. Nearly all the early provincial governors in northern Luzon were American officers or NCOs and were held in very high regard by the headhunters.

Col. Thomas S. Jones
U.S. Army, Retired

# *"Raide Historique"*: A Staff Ride *à la française*

**John Moncure**

In recent memory the French Army has not conducted staff rides. In fact, it has had little if any formal military history curriculum. Small wonder. France's recent military history is littered with unpleasantness: Sedan 1870, the Dreyfus Affair, France 1940, Indochina, Algeria. . . . It is only fair to say that wedged in among these spectacular failures are numerous examples of strategic and tactical success and episodes of personal courage. But to many a French soldier, for whom pursuit of *la gloire* is the most noble objective, military history means the glorious cavalry charge at Reichshoffen or the fight to the death at Dien Bien Phu. The French soldier's goal is to resist blithely the historical reality that surrounds him.

As the success of the French Army in today's peacekeeping operations distances it from the past, this perspective may be changing. Forward-looking leaders at the French Cavalry School at Saumur have stepped outside the traditional confines to inaugurate a military history program. While serving as the U.S. liaison officer there in the fall of 1996 I was asked, because of my background as a military historian, to assist in creating a staff ride for the sixty-four lieutenants who comprised Saumur's Armor Basic Course students.

A number of people claimed authorship of the staff ride idea. The commander of the basic course claimed that he had long harbored the concept; the school's commanding general made the same claim; one commander of a sixteen-student basic course brigade told me the staff ride emerged as an excuse to conduct a long-distance motorcycle ride he had proposed the previous year. All are probably telling the truth. The staff ride idea was obviously ripe.

**Preparations**

Hoping to enhance the instruction in tactics the lieutenants at Saumur were then receiving, Lt. Col. Pierre Le Jolis de Villiers de Saintignon, the basic course commander, directed that the staff ride should analyze action at the tank platoon level. The principal organizer of the staff ride was the executive officer of the basic course, Maj. Bernard Laval. I served as his adviser. We determined that, in the interest of time and to conserve funds, we would need to select an action as close to Saumur as possible.

The World War II combat of the French 2d Armored Division, or 2e Division Blindée, commanded by Maj. Gen. Jacques Leclerc, filled the bill perfectly. This division, the first French armored unit to see action in France after the Normandy landings, was activated on 1 August 1944. It engaged in its first combat ten days later when it took part in a pincer movement that closed the southern half of the Falaise Gap. Major Laval identified an interesting series of actions conducted by the division north of Le Mans, which is about an hour-and-a-half drive from Saumur. Armed with this information, we visited the Service Historique de l'Armeé de Terre, the equivalent of our Center of Military History, at the Château de Vincennes outside Paris, where we found an abundance of material: regimental day books, intelligence reports, personnel and equipment status reports, casualty reports, and operations orders.

Since Leclerc's division had moved north in four parallel columns of task force size, we realized that we would need to refine the focus of our attention. I recommended that we choose the single axis with the greatest variety of activity. This would enable us to learn as many lessons as possible without requiring us to acquaint ourselves repeatedly with new actors. We selected the task force of Col. Pierre Minjonnet. I further suggested that each of the four basic-course brigades be assigned a particular action to study and then present its findings on the ground to the school's assembled lieutenants. Major Laval and I adapted the U.S. Army's battlefield operating systems, a set of functionally oriented tools for analyzing battlefield operations, to the French division's situation and proposed that these systems be used to analyze the action.

The tactical officers of the four brigades were initially resistant to the idea of a staff ride and critical of the amount of additional work the project would impose upon them. They also had no confidence that

the lieutenants could organize themselves. When directed to proceed, however, the brigade tacs mastered the details of the actions and formulated assignments appropriate to the abilities of their lieutenants. Their orders received, the lieutenants conducted a preliminary motorcycle reconnaissance of the battlefield about one month before the staff ride. This enabled them to determine the extent to which the terrain would support a presentation and showed them how much reconstruction would be necessary.

### A Play in Four Acts

The exercise began on the afternoon of 8 April 1997 with a movement to the barracks of the 2e Regiment d'Infanterie de Marine, or 2d Marine Infantry Regiment, northeast of Le Mans. There the lieutenants and cadre would spend the night. At dinner that evening, the course commander addressed the assembly. He thanked the rear detachment commander of the marine regiment, the bulk of which had deployed to Albania the day before, saying that it might seem surreal to be studying history while so much real-world action pressed upon us. Nonetheless, he assured us all that the practical study of history would prove advantageous for the lieutenants who might be faced tomorrow with decisions similar to those arising in the historical events we were studying today.

The following morning we gathered in the regimental theater for a general briefing from the first of the four brigades. The narrator introduced Col. Jean Baillou, a retired officer who had been a platoon leader in Colonel Minjonnet's task force. Colonel Baillou regaled us with stories of the events we were studying. He described a lieutenant who was killed in a lead tank, a French traitor who lied to him about the German dispositions, and a tank operating without its wing man. Following the eyewitness account, a series of lieutenants presented a quick biography of General Leclerc; described the formation, organization, and equipment of his 2d Armored Division; and traced its movement from North Africa through England to Normandy. The briefings were illustrated with actual film footage of the events and with viewgraphs.

While the narrators pointed out the various characteristics of Allied and Axis equipment in a detailed and insightful way, they used no rigorous analytical tool. The modified battlefield operating systems were ignored. No one discussed the combat training the division had received in England, although admittedly Major Laval and I had found little on that subject in the archives. The lieutenants concluded, with evident surprise, that combined arms operations were obviously not a novelty of the late twentieth century. The audience asked no questions, and no discussion followed. At the conclusion, Colonel de Villiers remarked, "We didn't have the luxury of training in combined arms tactics that you will." He emphasized the importance of speed, surprise, and rapid decision-making.

The first stop on the field trip was at the village of Mézières-sous-Ballon, some fifteen miles north-northeast of Le Mans, where on 10 August 1944 Task Force Minjonnet saw its first action. There, two French tank platoons rounded a corner on the road leading into the town and proceeded 200 meters into a German tank ambush. When we arrived the local population had already gathered in force around a Sherman tank—now a monument—marking the spot. Again, all of the lieutenants participated in describing the events, which they illustrated with actual examples of German equipment—a *Panzerfaust* and an MG–42 machine gun.

After the explanation of the wartime action, in which a platoon leader had been killed in the lead tank, the group moved to a terrain board with tiny tanks, trees, grass, roads, and houses. Using these, a narrator described each phase of the action. Lieutenants mounted on motorcycles then acted them out, following in the traces the narrator had just explained.

The class, followed closely by curious local residents and the press, then walked to a spot marked by another monument, where *Navarre*, another Sherman tank, had been destroyed. As a Panzer Mark IV of the type that actually hit *Navarre* was too heavy for the modern road, this action was illustrated by a Hetzer assault gun lying in ambush of a Sherman which roared toward it. Pyrotechnics simulated both the firing of the German gun and the explosions that slowed, and then killed, *Navarre*.

At each phase, the lieutenant narrator listed lessons learned: the platoon leader should not be in the lead tank, tanks should not maneuver unsupported, the Germans used camouflage well. . . . No discussion followed. In fact, as I learned later, the course leader had told the lieutenants not to ask questions so that they could keep to their timetable.

Navarre *dies again at Mézières*
*(Photo courtesy of John Moncure)*

The third act also took the form of a series of scenes, partly describing the action of the 2e Division Blindée and partly that of its neighbor, the U.S. 5th Armored Division. One of the scenes involved the excellent use of a half-track. A second included radio calls from both the U.S. and German sides, using recordings made by the current U.S. and German liaison officers dramatized by background music of Tchaikovsky. A third scene took place on the lawns of the château in Dangeul, a village four miles northwest of Mézières-sous-Ballon. Here the narrator described an attack by tanks from elements of the U.S. division against Panzer Mark IVs in defensive positions around the château. The lieutenants had prepared the ground with moving gunnery targets to represent the U.S. vehicles and popped smoke on them to demonstrate their destruction. Others representing the accompanying U.S. infantry fired blank ammunition, much to the delight of the civilian audience.

After the third scene a narrator began, "Now it is time for the inevitable teaching points," and he began to read us a list: the importance of air superiority, good intelligence, combined arms combat, good interallied communications, and the ability to deploy quickly from column to combat order (battle drill). He remarked on the short engagement ranges (200 meters) and listed three principles which translate easily in American terms as mobility, economy of force, and mass. No one asked questions. The scene in this small town resembled my mind's eye of the war: Shermans and half-tracks barreling down narrow streets lined with local citizens who gazed in awe at the iron monsters.

After the second visit to battle sites, the officers engaged in various social activities. Col. Patrick Olmer, director of the Armor Museum; Colonel de Villiers; Major Laval; Lt. Col. Roland Hoffmann, the German liaison officer; and I were invited for cocktails (*pot*) at the Château Dangeul. The château's owner showed me a sterling silver teapot that had been pierced by a bullet as his astonished mother watched on the day of the battle. Brig. Gen. Claude Pelletier, who commanded the Cavalry School, arrived that afternoon, and we attended a second *pot* at the town hall with all the

mayors and notables of the area. Along with a number of other officers, Colonel Hoffmann and I had been invited to board with local farmers. That evening we enjoyed a superb dinner made from the products of our host's farm, after which he took great pride in plying us with Calvados. Before we left the next morning, he insisted on taking us to a field which had served as a P–38 base during his youth. One could see in his eyes that he was reliving a defining moment of his life.

The final act of the staff ride took place on the morning of the third day. To begin, the lieutenants of the 4th Brigade showed an excellent PowerPoint (1) presentation in the town hall, including the mandatory recitation of lessons learned: the danger of fratricide, the importance of air-ground recognition panels, combined arms coordination, and the use of the civilian populace as a source of intelligence. Following the presentation the group visited various sites where actions were presented in much the same way as the day before. Half-tracks, tanks, and jeeps acted out a narrator's script as hundreds of civilians looked on. One interesting innovation was the use of smoke grenades to help spectators identify tanks moving in the vicinity of hedges and in folds of terrain. At the conclusion of the presentation, General Pelletier addressed the group, making three points to the lieutenants: that military history was important to the profession, that the particular study was well chosen for the lessons it revealed, and that they must not hesitate to mix with the French civilian population during maneuvers. I spoke with one of these civilians who, with a cracking voice, told me how he had been on the very spot on which we now stood fifty-four years earlier and had watched the action unfold. He found it most moving that the general had seen fit to mention the local citizenry in his remarks.

**The Festivities**

The presentation of the various scenarios having been completed, the lieutenants, the cadre, the general, mayors of nearby villages, and the assembled populace gathered at the local war memorial, the *monument aux morts*. Lieutenants were drawn up by brigade; cadre, veterans, and local officials each had their places. After

*Cavalry School lieutenants retrace the route of Task Force Minjonnet (Photo courtesy of John Moncure)*

the colors were presented to a fanfare played by a detachment of the Cavalry School's superb Drum and Bugle Corps, the general placed a wreath at the monument. Then one lieutenant read the name, rank, and unit of each soldier who died with Task Force Minjonnet on 10–11 August 1944. Another lieutenant echoed, *"Mort pour la France."* I could hear to my left rear the gravelly, emotion-filled voice of an old veteran repeat grimly, *"Mort pour la France."*

After the solemnity of the ceremony, the gaiety of the luncheon was welcome. Indeed, so it seemed, were all the townspeople. The Cavalry School had erected behind the town hall five huge, colorfully striped tents, each much larger than a GP-Medium, and had decorated the lawn with hobbyhorses on which military saddles were placed. Nearby, lances with colored swallow-tailed guidons were stacked in fours, and various other cavalry paraphernalia were strewn about. A litany of remarks followed. General Pelletier, Colonel de Villiers, and a retired general who had been a company commander under Colonel Minjonnet addressed the gathering. Afterwards lieutenants, dignitaries, and townspeople enjoyed a lavish five-course luncheon washed down with rivers of wine. The media followed throughout. During and immediately following the staff ride a number of articles appeared in regional newspapers. Overwhelmingly favorable, they contributed to the enthusiasm of the population for the undertaking. (2)

**Observations and Conclusions**

This first foray into military history for students at the French Cavalry School, created out of whole cloth, was a remarkable achievement. The exercise served a number of purposes. It launched the study of military history with a splash that should not only ensure its continuation but also encourage imitation at other French branch schools. It tied examples from military history to the tactical studies of the lieutenants at the Armor Basic Course. It stirred the enthusiasm of the local civilians and engendered popular support for future enterprises.

The documentary evidence available on the French units was exceptional. Efforts by the German liaison officer to locate relevant German Army records bore less fruit. The 9th Panzer Division, consisting mostly of Austrian soldiers, was the French armored division's primary opponent north of Le Mans, but none of its daybooks from after 1943 are extant. Contact with a lively veterans group in Vienna yielded very little. Thus, the analysis of the action was restricted to a one-sided point of view. I made few efforts to secure U.S. documents, as I had no idea the lieutenants would turn their attention that way. When I discovered the interest, I obtained from the Association of the 5th Armored Division several pertinent documents. This aspect of the staff ride can be greatly improved.

Although Exercise Minjonnet was an undisputed success, it was not without flaws. At a premium was fanfare; lessons learned were considered a drudgery. Admittedly, attention was given to both, but the exercise could have been done with more meat, less dessert, and at much reduced cost. Second, given the self-imposed limits of the study, the students lost an opportunity to examine the context of the tactical history: the debacle of 1940, the collaboration of Marshal Henri Pétain, the enormous friction between Free French Generals Charles de Gaulle and the more popular Henri Giraud, and the Allies' failure to close the noose around the Falaise pocket in time to capture the bulk of the German soldiers who could have been trapped there. While an understanding of these broader subjects is of minor interest to young lieutenants about to take command of their first platoons, it would be of great value for those who would eventually rise to hold positions of great responsibility. In the final analysis an army can undertake no serious study of military history without coming to grips with the least pleasant aspects of its past. More troubling still was the failure to apply an analytical tool such as the U.S. Army's Battlefield Operating Systems or the French Army's own principles of war which would have facilitated the drawing of valuable lessons. Without these, the students were undisciplined in their analysis.

Since the Minjonnet staff ride was a new experiment for the French, its planners were not bound by paradigm. They chose several interesting approaches and used innovative techniques that bear mention. Use of Allied officers increased the validity of and enriched the exercise. The testimony of eyewitnesses and participants made the history come alive for the lieutenants. (Comments from a German participant would have helped further, so the German liaison officer has been asked to identify one for the next staff ride.) Using

motorcycles for movement and quartering in army barracks and school gymnasiums kept the cost to a minimum, an important factor in the French Army's current budget crisis. Resorting to PowerPoint presentations, sand tables, and acted-out scenes, particularly where the terrain supported the study poorly, permitted a more thorough understanding of the action. Assigning each student brigade a slice of the action of Task Force Minjonnet to master, but having all four brigades of lieutenants attend all briefings, basically combined four staff rides into one. Using genuine, operational World War II equipment available through the Armor Museum of the French Cavalry School brought an extraordinary sense of realism to the action and drew the attention of the media and the local population. With a festival-outing atmosphere, the French command was able to create genuine enthusiasm among the lieutenants. If for no other reason, the lieutenants will carry the memory of their study of Task Force Minjonnet far longer than had it been a dry staff exercise.

**Sources for Additional Reading**

On General Leclerc and the Free French Army see Anthony Clayton, *Three Marshals of France: Leadership after Trauma* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's, 1992), or the more recent book in French by Adolphe Vezinet, *Le général Leclerc* (Paris: France-Empire, 1997). Two books by Martin Blumenson, *Breakout and Pursuit* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1961) and *The Battle of the Generals: The Untold Story of the Falaise Pocket* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1993), discuss the broader military context of the actions of the French 2d Armored Division north of Le Mans.

*I wish to thank my British colleague at the French Cavalry School, Lt. Col. Patrick Bangham, RTR, whose relentless quest for purity in the English language ferreted out a shocking number of my mistakes.*

**NOTES**

1. PowerPoint software had only recently been introduced at the Cavalry School. Use of it by the lieutenants showed a commendable willingness to step outside the comfort zone.
2. Articles with the following authors and translated titles appeared in *Maine Libre*: "Saumur Officers in the Footsteps of the 2d Armored Division," 10 Apr 97; Michel Bonte, "Testimony Truer Than Nature," 1-0 Apr 97; "In the Traces of the 2d AD," 11 Apr 97; Bonte, "The Liberation Began at Mézières," 11 Apr 97; and Loic Le Bourgne, "Tanks from Saumur at Louvigny," 11 Apr 97. Other articles included Le Bourgne's "The Combat of August 1944 Reconstituted in the Sarthe," *Courrier de l'Ouest*, 11 Apr 97, and "In the Wake of the 2d AD," *Ouest France*, 11 Apr 97.

*Lt. Col. John Moncure retired from the Army in November 1997 after his assignment as U.S. liaison officer to the French Cavalry School at Saumur. A 1972 graduate of the U.S. Military Academy, Moncure holds a doctorate in European history from Cornell University and is the author of* Forging the King's Sword: The Case of the Royal Prussian Cadet Corps, 1871–1918 *(P. Lang, 1993). His military career included duty with the 2d, 3d, and 11th Armored Cavalry Regiments and teaching assignments at West Point and Davidson College.*

## Making Better Use of the Army's History and Traditions

## Building Great Soldiers

**William W. Epley**

Last summer the Chief of Staff of the Army (CSA), General Dennis J. Reimer, asked the Center of Military History (CMH) to develop source materials and concepts that would make the best use of history to assist in *soldierizing* recruits. In short, the CSA wants the Army to make better use of its 223-year history and traditions to convince young Americans that being a soldier is truly special.

As a first step, CMH gathered information on current recruiting and Initial Entry Training (IET) practices from the Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), the Army's Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel (ODCSPER), and the U.S. Marine Corps. Specifically, we reviewed what the Army did during IET that made use of the Army's history and traditions and how much time trainers spent on these subjects. We also reviewed the heritage videotapes shown during IET. Finally, for comparison, we looked at how the marines trained their recruits. It was clear from this review that existing Army practices did not adequately capitalize on the Army's rich traditions and history. For example, in the current IET *Soldier's Handbook*, which is issued to every new recruit, only one page out of 429 was devoted to the Army's history and traditions. We also found that very little of the Army's rich heritage was imparted to new recruits during IET by their drill sergeants and training officers.

The Center then convened a series of meetings at CMH with representatives from TRADOC, ODCSPER, the secretary of the Army's Public Affairs Office, and the Army Research Institute. We reviewed the material gathered and discussed ways to improve the integration of history and traditions into basic training as well as methods of sustaining a sense of shared heritage once the soldier moved to his or her unit. As a result of these meetings, CMH developed several recommendations for a program that the Chief of Military History, Brig. Gen. John W. Mountcastle, has named "Building Great Soldiers." These were: (1) support the seven Army core values (duty, honor, loyalty, integrity, selfless service, courage, and respect) with specific examples from the Army's heritage; (2) socialize Delayed Entry Program soldiers; (3) encourage the use of local ceremonies and memorialization throughout the Total Army; (4) revise current Army heritage videos (dating from 1986) used in IET; and (5) have HQ, TRADOC, lead in this effort with the Army Staff and CMH assisting. Additionally, CMH thought that the CSA should sign a letter to the field to emphasize the use of the Army's history and traditions. General Mountcastle presented these recommendations to General Reimer in mid-September. The CSA approved the concept and signed the letter to the field.

HQ, TRADOC, responsible for all Army IET, now has the lead in this Army-wide effort, with CMH assisting it. TRADOC has taken steps to implement each of the CMH recommendations. TRADOC envisions major changes in IET and considers Army history, heritage, and values to be keystones in this process. To begin, IET is being extended one week, permitting the use of more ceremonies and an increase in training time for Army values, history, and traditions. Training centers will dedicate each of their training weeks to one of the seven Army values and will emphasize that value through the use of heritage examples throughout the week. They will also revise the old Army heritage videos. TRADOC, with assistance from CMH, is revising and updating a booklet entitled *American Military Heritage* for use in IET by trainers and for issue to new NCOs and officers. Additionally, TRADOC will revise the IET *Soldier's Handbook* and its *Cadre Guidebook* (for drill sergeants) to place more emphasis on values, history, and tradition.

In November, General Mountcastle, mindful of the need to sustain the sense of history and heritage beyond IET, sent a memorandum to all Army major commands reminding them of the CSA letter and requesting that they develop for use in their organizations the best local examples which reflect the seven Army values. He also requested that they send their historical examples to CMH so that we can maintain a data base to share with the Total Army. Many of the commands already have replied enthusiastically and promised to supply these examples in the coming months.

In summary, our proud traditions and history are extremely important as the Army transforms today's young civilian men and women into tough, confident, and competent soldiers. Those traditions must sustain a sense of *esprit* and pride throughout a soldier's service. The Center of Military History is proud to be a leading proponent of this effort.

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**Book Review**
**by Frank N. Schubert**

***Custer: The Controversial Life of George Armstrong Custer***
**by Jeffry D. Wert**
**Simon & Schuster, 1996, 462 pp., $27.50.**

***Nelson A. Miles and the Twilight of the Frontier Army***
**by Robert Wooster**
**University of Nebraska Press, c. 1993, 391 pp., paper, 1996, $18.00.**

George Custer and Nelson Miles seemed destined for greatness and immortality. They came to the Army from different backgrounds, Custer from the U.S. Military Academy as a regular cavalryman and Miles from civil life as a volunteer infantry officer, but both were scarcely twenty-two years old when the Civil War began. They served through the long conflict with distinction. Each became known for fighting hard, leading from the front, and fearing little. Custer and Miles rose rapidly to become general officers and division commanders, survived wounds, and earned the respect of the men they led. With ambition to match their ability, energy, and luck, they stood on the thresholds of brilliant careers and lasting fame.

Through the early days of Reconstruction and into the frontier Army that subdued the warrior hunters of the plains, Custer and Miles followed parallel tracks toward the success and renown that they both zealously sought and that appeared to be theirs for the taking. Small similarities continued to occur in their careers into the 1870s. Custer avoided service with the black 9th Cavalry, while Miles accepted command of the black 40th Infantry but left it as soon as he could. Both took along publicists for major 1874 expeditions, Custer in the Black Hills and Miles along the Red River.

In 1876 their professional achievements and legacies diverged. The great Sioux war of that year decided things for both of them. The Indians cut short Custer's career at the Battle of the Little Big Horn. According to Jeffry Wert, Custer bore the basic responsibility for the debacle, with his aggressive impulses reinforcing the disastrous consequences of his ignorance of the terrain and of enemy strength and dispositions. In death and defeat, Custer achieved immortality far beyond his accomplishments. Miles, who was a great admirer of Custer, survived unscathed and went on to cement his reputation as one of the Army's preeminent Indian fighters against the Sioux, Nez Percé, and Apache, before planning and carrying out the invasion of Puerto Rico during the war with Spain in 1898. In life and victory, Miles rose to the pinnacle of his profession as a lieutenant general and the last commanding general of the United States Army. After death, he slid into obscurity.

A quick look at the literature on the two careers confirms the dichotomy. Robert Wooster's biography of Miles has few predecessors, primarily Virginia Johnson's *The Unregimented General* (1962), Brian Pohanka's *Nelson A. Miles: A Documentary Biography of His Military Career, 1861–1903* (1985), and, on the war that did most to shape Miles's reputation as an outstanding frontier commander, Jerome Greene's *Yellowstone Command: Colonel Nelson A. Miles and the Great Sioux War, 1876–1877* (1991). Miles himself contributed two autobiographies, one before the Spanish-American War and a later version that covered his entire career.

The Custer literature, on the other hand, has been persistent, voluminous, and diverse. Custer's widow, Elizabeth Bacon Custer, promoted his reputation with almost maniacal energy. He was, she once wrote, her "bright particular star," and she made sure that his fiery point of light continued to shine long after his death. Strange allies also kept the star aglow, as modern proponents of the Indians, with a stake in asserting that the Sioux had defeated the Army's best, joined the bereaved Libby Custer in singing the praises of Custer and the 7th Cavalry. (1)

The fascination with Custer endures. Wert's biography is only the latest in the endless stream. The spring 1997 catalog of the University of Nebraska Press included a four-page "Custer Collection," with twenty-four titles, and the History Book Club in July of the same year featured a new collection of essays edited by Charles E. Rankin, called *Legacy: New Perspectives on the Battle of the Little Bighorn*, along with the Wert

volume. Memorialized in art, poetry, novels, movies (forty of them!), and reenactments, Custer remains the most dazzling of stars, while Miles stands well in the shadows. (2)

Wert and Wooster find the explanations for Custer's eternal fame and Miles's persistent obscurity in the respective personalities of their subjects. According to Wert, Custer emerged from the Civil War as the "last knight . . . a superb cavalry commander and a dashing unmistakable hero." (p. 230) Unreflective and exuberant, "he preferred not to measure life but to ride it like a spirited thoroughbred." (p. 318) That he died at the head of his regiment, in the prime of his zestful life, and left behind a dedicated publicist in his widow, only assured him the undying fame to which he aspired.

Miles shared Custer's passion for fame but never had Custer's charisma. He single-mindedly pursued advancement and recognition, alienating supporters and infuriating detractors, including the president of the United States, with his ambition and jealousy. As Wooster writes, "Miles was a certifiable hero in wars against three very different enemies, but one whose personality threatened to obscure his military successes." (p. 273) He outlived Custer by almost fifty years, but he never captured the national imagination. Custer not only captured it but kept it. He holds it still.

Both authors have published books on subjects related to their current volumes. Wert, a high school history teacher in Pennsylvania, has written three well-received books on the Civil War. Wooster, a professor at Corpus Christi State University in Texas, is also the author of *The Military and United States Indian Policy, 1865–1903* (Yale University Press, 1988). Their books on Custer and Miles belong on the shelves of students of America's military past. Thoroughly researched in collections of personal papers and primary military sources, they are well-written and insightful studies of two key figures in the nineteenth-century Army, one who became its central mythological figure and another who rose to the top as its commanding general at the turn of the century. Together they provide contrasting studies in the nature of success, fame, and glory.

**Notes**

1. See for example James Welch with Paul Stekler, *Killing Custer: The Battle of the Little Big Horn and the Fate of the Plains Indians* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1994), pp. 61, 127, and 170.
2. See especially Brian W. Dippie, *Custer's Last Stand: The Anatomy of an American Myth* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), regarding the many manifestations of Custer's enduring fame.

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**Book Review**
**by Charles R. Anderson**

***Guardians of Empire: The U.S. Army and the Pacific, 1902–1940***
**by Brian M. Linn**
**University of North Carolina Press, 1997, 343 pp., $39.95.**

This study of U.S. Army forces sent to secure and garrison Pacific possessions acquired in the late nineteenth century pursues five themes: Army strategic thought in the early twentieth century, the tactics of harbor and insular defense, the gap between policy and resources, the treatment of colonial populations, and attempts to create local military forces. Dominant among those themes is the lack of appropriated resources, the primary cause of the vulnerabilities revealed with stunning clarity in December 1941.

Historian Brian M. Linn of Texas A & M traces the decades-long and ultimately futile attempts of a succession of overseas Army commanders in Hawaii and the Philippines to convince their superiors in Washington just how dangerous were the defensive gaps left by short-sighted elected officials and the American public. But more was involved than the single dimension of civil-military dichotomy. Linn gives the two armed services a generous share of blame for contributing to the failure to set realistic military policy.

The two services held divergent visions of Pacific military policy: land-based, defensive, and tactical to the Army; sea-based, offensive, and strategic to the Navy. Complicating these perspectives and making

realistic joint action difficult if not impossible was the bizarre protocol governing interwar Army-Navy relations: far better to tolerate fuzzy mission statements than risk alienating the brother service with provocative questions about capabilities and intent. The result was a series of unresolved dilemmas that, when the showdown came against the most likely adversary, could only aid Japanese admirals and generals—Should Manila Bay or Subic Bay be the priority strongpoint in the Philippines? Should the Philippines or Hawaii be the keystone of the Pacific defense barrier?

Without the political support necessary to gain adequate funding, personnel, and equipment, Pacific Army commanders resigned themselves to the article of faith clung to in Washington: hold out until the Navy steams to the rescue. Behind the hopeful tones of official plans, most interwar Army officers conceded the indefensibility of the Philippines as well as the high probability that a determined enemy could not only attack but occupy Hawaii. The development of new technology—especially the B–17 bomber—seemed to offer a solution to planning dilemmas but actually complicated the issues. The new strategy suggested by the B–17—that Japan could be intimidated by basing a large force of the bombers in the Philippines—pushed the Army into a frenzy of pilot training and air base expansion that could not be completed until the spring of 1942, several months after Japanese oil reserves and diplomatic patience would run out.

Linn provides informative relief from summaries of strategic thinking and tactical planning with accounts of the interaction between soldiers and the civil populations among whom they served. While some Army policies faithfully reflected metropolitan American attitudes—continuous attempts to control alcoholism and punish homosexuality—soldier-civilian interaction in at least one area forced the Army to adopt policies that made local sense but deviated from Main Street norms. Rather than prohibit the hurried liaisons which so often translated into embarrassing rates of venereal disease among troops, the Army enlisted the aid of local authorities to provide disease-free companions as well as diversions which American parents and politicians could consider wholesome.

In a refreshing departure from those historians focused on race, class, and gender, Linn takes no gratuitous swipes at the military for being immoral or at soldiers for being racist. He reminds the reader that "those who castigate past generations for failing to share current social attitudes ignore both historical context and the changing web of relationships that escape simple categories." (p. 122) Similarly, he does not join the crowd that ascribes solely to racism the 1942 relocation of Japanese-Americans from the West Coast. Linn finds a more comprehensive explanation in the early twentieth-century concept of civilized warfare, according to which civilians had to be protected from the horrors of industrialized warfare even if it meant removing them from familiar surroundings and livelihoods. Many Army officers of the interwar period believed that the involvement of civilians in war, whether as willing participants or targets, contributed to a drift toward barbarism that Western civilization must resist. This benevolent view reinforced the national security explanation put forth at the time in justification of relocation.

Linn's study is deeply researched—51 pages of notes follow 254 pages of text and appendix—and rests not only on official documents but on interviews and correspondence with a number of interwar Pacific Army veterans as well as personal accounts and even fiction that came out of the experience. This reviewer finished *Guardians of Empire* hoping that Linn fills out the story of America's overseas armed forces in the early twentieth century by turning his attention to those deployed to the Caribbean and Panama Canal areas.

*Charles R. Anderson has been a historian at the Center of Military History since 1987. His publications include personal accounts of the Vietnam War and a number of campaign studies for the U.S. Army's commemoration of World War II.*

**Book Review**
**by Arnold G. Fisch, Jr.**

***From Triumph to Disaster: The Fatal Flaws of German Generalship from Moltke to Guderian***
**by Kenneth Macksey**
**Stackpole Books, 1996, 240 pp., $34. 50.**

Kenneth Macksey is a World War II veteran of the Royal Armoured Corps and a prolific military histo-

rian, with more than twenty titles to his credit. Not surprisingly, most focus on the World War II era, and many deal with tanks and armor tactics. Ultimately, despite a subtitle which suggests perhaps a broader scope, *From Triumph to Disaster* also concentrates on World War II German operations and generalship.

Macksey's stated theme is underscored frequently throughout the book. He argues that German military strategy—however brilliantly conceived—historically has been fatally flawed by a collective disdain for whoever might oppose the Germans. He finds this "inherited Teutonic arrogance and stupidity in dealing with eastern peoples" (p. 134) as early as the Teutonic Knights, becoming a part of German military doctrine under Helmuth K. B. von Moltke. Serious miscalculations—such as insufficient planning for conflicts lasting more than several weeks—logically followed, undoing the initiatives of individual capable generals. This reference to "arrogance" appears repeatedly in this book (pp. 51, 73, 78, 131, 134, 144, 222–23, 226) as the root cause for German military disasters. Unfortunately, this thought is hardly new, and the author's analysis seldom delves much deeper.

Of far greater interest and much greater value is Macksey's treatment of several topics beyond the general theme: the role of ULTRA, the consequences of the conflict within the *Luftwaffe* between the advocates of heavy bombers versus support for ground operations, the role of Albert Kesselring (whom the author regards highly) and of Erwin Rommel (whom the author does not), and the progressive emasculation of the General Staff (*OKW*). In addition, Macksey's observations about the relationship between *Blitzkrieg* tactics and modern maneuver warfare doctrine are particularly interesting.

There are the inevitable quibbles. The author leaves the impression that Otto von Bismarck encouraged the German quest for overseas colonies before World War I, whereas Bismarck felt that imperial colonies outside of Europe were an absurd distraction for the Germans. Macksey is too generous with honorific titles: "Dr." Albert Speer and Field Marshal Wilhelm "von" List. The reader would profit by looking beyond these minor distractions to Macksey's overall account of the German General Staff's declining fortunes.

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**Book Review**
**by Brooks Kleber**

***Work Commando 311/I: American Paratroopers Become Forced Laborers for the Nazis***
**by Claire E. Swedberg**
**Stackpole Books, 1995, 224 pp., $22.95**

This book sheds light on an element of World War II that has long been in shadow, if not complete darkness—the travails of United States Army enlisted prisoners of war in Germany. By way of background, the Germans separated officer and enlisted prisoners of war. Officers did not work, enlisted men did, and noncommissioned officers supervised. The small enlisted work groups labored on farms and repaired railroad tracks, among other activities. The Geneva Convention prohibited work in areas directly supporting the war effort.

Work Command 311/I, located in northeastern Germany, repaired and replaced railroad tracks. It consisted primarily of American paratroopers. It lived in a barn above a pigsty. Its members used trains to get to the repair sites and consequently on the trains and in the stations came into contact with German civilians.

We learn a great deal about these prisoners. Their combat experience, capture, living and working conditions, and relationship with German civilians all are covered in an intimate and sometimes gruesome manner. There is one abortive escape attempt. Near the end of the war, we see the German withdrawal as the Russians advanced.

The contact with German civilians was enlightening, particularly the case of two attractive young women who claimed their officer husbands had been gone since the beginning of the war. These women were able to get two of the prisoners on a weekly basis for work projects in exchange for good meals and tastefully described but explicit sexual encounters.

Having said all this, the book has serious problems. The author, a journalist who has reported for newspapers and television, obviously received detailed input from a number of former prisoners of war who in 1984 began holding small reunions. But little is said about this process other than a sentence in the dedication about "the honesty and unflagging generosity . . . the characters of this book provided." There is a series of photographs of participants both during the war and in the 1980s.

And that is where the problem lies. The text is extremely detailed and intimate. Was this the author's concept of how things were? The text is often naïve and in error, without a clear understanding of conditions. The haphazard splicing of the stories indicates a problem with the author and what must have been a total absence of an editor. For example, an early chapter spends an entire page introducing one of the few "straightleg" infantrymen in the unit. Five pages later, in the next chapter, this man is introduced again as if the previous background information did not exist.

There are many incidents that lead one to believe that the ex-prisoners are spoofing. The second sentence of the book describes the paratroopers' preparation for D-Day with "faces camouflaged under thick layers of chocolate . . . matching the blackness of the night." Later, in early July, after jumping into Normandy and returning to England, one of them exults in the fact "that recapturing France had been a great victory." Shortly before the invasion, several paratroopers spend a night in a London hotel with a bottle of gin and some girls "talking excitedly about the war and their future in it."

Shortly after D-Day a sober paratrooper stood watch over a group of his companions who had passed out from fatigue and the wine and spirits provided by the grateful French. An airborne colonel drove by, saw the "drunken soldiers' scattered limp bodies," and asked, "What are these men doing here?" "They're dead, sir," was the reply. "That's a damned shame," said the colonel as he moved on.

In Holland, men jumped from a stricken glider at heights exceeding 200 feet. I don't think glider personnel wore parachutes.

There are many other examples of ignorance and naiveté. Men looked for stripes to identify officers. Another was said to have jumped with the 82d and 101st Airborne Divisions. Men identified with one unit. In the introduction of five paratroopers, sometimes in a two-page chapter, all of them were to end up in Stalag XIIA at "Linburg," which was described differently in each chapter. The problem is that Stalag XIIA is in Limburg. I was there.

So my delight in receiving this book about American enlisted prisoners of war in Germany was diminished by my lack of confidence in the contributors, the author, and the nonexistent editor.

The book's jacket has a blurb from a former national commander of the American Ex-Prisoners of War: "A memorial to those who died during their imprisonment. . . . I highly recommend this book," he writes. I am afraid the prisoners who died, as well as those who survived, deserve much better than what evolved from this well-intentioned story.

*Dr. Brooks Kleber served with the 90th Infantry Division in France in World War II and was captured by the Germans on the Cotentin Peninsula. He was subsequently a historian with the Chemical Corps and coauthor of* The Chemical Warfare Service: Chemicals in Combat *(Center of Military History, 1966), chief historian of the Army Training and Doctrine Command, and assistant chief of military history at CMH.*

**Book Review**
**by James W. Dunn**

***Pacification: The American Struggle for Vietnam's Hearts and Minds***
**by Richard A. Hunt**
**Westview Press, 1995, 352 pp., $34.95**

Until Richard Hunt, a historian at the U.S. Army Center of Military History, wrote *Pacification*, there was a void in the literature of the Vietnam War. Hunt's objective was to provide a comprehensive study of the United States' support to the South Vietnamese government's pacification program—its effort to defeat the North Vietnamese–led Communist insurgency in the South. He succeeds admirably. Concentrating on the United States' role, Hunt reveals how difficult it was for American pacification enthusiasts to get civil-

ian U.S. government agencies to work together, to convince the U.S. Army to support pacification, and to get the South Vietnamese to implement pacification plans.

As Hunt notes, President Ngo Dinh Diem's pacification program was uncoordinated, with each agency working independently. American military advisers, meanwhile, did what they knew best and built the South Vietnamese Army into a force capable of waging a conventional, European-style war. The Kennedy administration believed in counterinsurgency, but the U.S. Army did not, and the American-sponsored strategic hamlet program lacked Vietnamese support. By 1965 pacification was a dead issue, and the Viet Cong had the momentum.

The arrival of American ground forces, Hunt observes, continued the decline of the pacification program as the U.S. Army concentrated on big-unit operations. Such operations provided some security, but American-style county fairs using civil operations teams, medical detachments, and engineer units were difficult to coordinate with the South Vietnamese government, and the results lasted only until the Americans left. U.S. civilian agencies continued to provide advice in an uncoordinated manner with the Agency for International Development handling the police, refugees, and the *Chieu Hoi* program; the Central Intelligence Agency working with the Revolutionary Development cadre; and the U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV), providing support to the regional forces. Hunt claims each agency felt its program was the solution to winning the war and jealously protected its turf.

At the Honolulu Conference in February 1966, President Johnson emphasized pacification, Hunt argues, not because he and his advisers believed in it but rather to keep the Vietnamese interested in the war. Robert Komer, as special assistant to the president for pacification with an office in the White House, pushed to get a coordinated effort from the Saigon embassy, but pacification continued to lag behind the big-unit war throughout 1966. Hunt sees the Office of Civilian Operations as only a step toward MACV control of pacification, Komer's goal from the beginning. As deputy for pacification to General William Westmoreland, Komer organized CORDS (Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support) in May 1967 and had what he wanted. In adding the Phoenix Program to CORDS, Komer felt a police technique, under CIA guidance, was the way to attack the hierarchy of the Viet Cong infrastructure. But his organizational efforts were hampered by a lack of qualified personnel. The Vietnam War severely taxed American civilian agencies, and the best and the brightest Army officers wanted to command in combat. However, as Hunt notes, Komer's greatest problem was the struggle to get the Vietnamese committed. Presidential elections in September 1967 consumed their interest, and it took the new Thieu administration time to settle in. Still, by the end of the year, Komer was in Washington to help Johnson convince his critics that the war was not a stalemate. However, as Hunt observes, Komer made clear in his year-end report that he was not satisfied with CORDS' accomplishments.

The Tet attack was a defeat for CORDS, as its critics wondered why all the pacified Vietnamese did not sound the alert. While, as Hunt points out, official Washington accepted the media gloom, Komer saw a window of opportunity in the Viet Cong exposure and their subsequent weakness. With the Accelerated Pacification Campaign he convinced a reluctant General Creighton Abrams to take the offensive and then used that effort to goad Thieu into increasing support for pacification programs. Hunt praises American troop support in the Central Highlands, where the commander of the 4th Infantry Division saw pacification as his main mission, but he criticizes the commander of the 9th Infantry Division in the Delta for being too interested in body counts. The success of the accelerated campaign convinced William Colby, Komer's successor, that the Vietnamese government could expand its influence into contested areas, and Hunt adds that Abrams saw support of pacification as a way to win the war.

The Nixon administration was interested in pacification, but not in the same manner as Colby, Abrams, or Thieu. The new administration saw pacification as the perfect vehicle for Vietnamization, the way to get the United States out of the war. With Abrams interested in winning, he supported Colby, while Thieu, not wanting to negotiate with the North, increased pacification efforts with village elections and a new land reform program. Thus, in Hunt's account, Washington and Saigon supported pacification, but for opposite

reasons.

Hunt views the Nixon administration's troop withdrawals as beneficial to the pacification effort as they made second-tour officers, unable to serve with the departing Army, available to CORDS. That was especially so with the Phoenix Program. While the Vietnamese saw what they called *Phung Hoang* as an American program, and critics, including Komer, bewailed its inefficiency and corruption, Hunt uses Viet Cong records to show that it hurt the Communist infrastructure at the village and hamlet level. By 1971 Colby was claiming success: the roads were open, village elections were being held, and the regional forces were growing. There were still doubters in Washington, but Hunt hints that North Vietnam felt that pacification was becoming too successful. Perhaps that was the reason for the 1972 Easter offensive.

In concluding, Hunt observes that the 1972 and 1975 offensives were unsupported by the Viet Cong infrastructure and wonders if that means CORDS worked and helped the South defeat the Communist insurgency. He says the practitioners, remembering how bad things were under Diem, saw success from 1969 to 1972 when the South gained control in the countryside from a weakened Viet Cong. Historians, he notes, looking at CORDS in isolation, see a failure to defeat the National Liberation Front. Hunt concedes that pacification alone could not have won the war, but argues that CORDS' deficiencies did not cause the loss of the war. Rather, the North overran the South in a conventional attack in 1975.

With this book, Richard Hunt has filled a void in the Vietnam War literature by providing a well-documented, scholarly history of the United States' effort to support the South Vietnamese pacification program. It was not his intention to argue the value of pacification versus big-unit operations. By leveling the playing field, he has made it possible for other historians to do so. Let's get on with it!

*A 1957 graduate of the U.S. Military Academy, Dr. James W. Dunn served two tours in Vietnam and participated in the pacification program there. He was chief of the Histories Division at the Center of Military History from 1978–84, before retiring from the Army as a colonel. Since 1985 he has been a historian with the Army Corps of Engineers.*

**Book Review**
**by John Sherwood**

***The Nightingale's Song***
**by Robert Timberg**
**Simon & Schuster, c. 1995, 544 pp., paper, 1996, $14.00**

As a reporter covering the Iran-Contra Affair for the *Baltimore Sun*, Robert Timberg became fascinated with the principal characters in the debacle—men who, like himself, had attended the U.S. Naval Academy and fought in Vietnam. He wrote *The Nightingale's Song* intent upon casting a more noble portrait of Oliver North, Robert McFarlane, and John Poindexter. The book, however, eventually mushroomed to include two men relatively removed from Iran-Contra—John McCain and James Webb. It also took on the far more lofty goal of exploring the "generational fault line" (p. 13) between those who fought a discredited war and those who avoided serving in it. In the end, what results is not so much a discussion of this chasm or even of Iran-Contra, but a portrait of a group of naval and marine officers whose experiences at Annapolis and in Vietnam would later influence their significant security policy roles during the Reagan administration.

*The Nightingale's Song* is composed of overlapping biographies of McCain, McFarlane, North, Poindexter, and Webb. In these narratives we learn titillating details about McCain's role in the horrific 1967 *Forrestal* fire, Webb's crusade against gender integration at Annapolis, and North's and McFarlane's attempted suicides. Timberg also gives his readers an insider's look at the Naval Academy of the 1950s and 60s—a rigorous world where one's basic rights were stripped away and given back one privilege at a time. Finally, he provides detailed discussions of the combat records of two of the Marine Corps' most famous Vietnam veterans: Oliver North and James Webb.

Ostensibly, the point of all of this background material is to explain the men behind Iran-Contra. For example, Timberg strives to mitigate the impact of North's Nuremberg defense by letting his readers know that this is what one can expect from someone indoctrinated at the Naval Academy to obey orders at almost any cost. Similarly, Timberg suggests that one

should not fault men like McFarlane and North, accustomed to the rigors of combat in Vietnam, for going the extra mile to keep a beleaguered Contra army supplied with beans, bullets, and Band-Aids.

Iran-Contra, however, represents a rather weak link to bind together all of the biographies in this book. After all, two of these men, McCain and Webb, had almost nothing to do with the controversy. Recognizing this methodological weakness, Timberg tries to compensate with several overarching themes.

One theme is the notion that an unbreachable fault line exists between those who went to Vietnam and those who did not. By examining closely the lives of his principal characters, Timberg strives to illuminate the various sore spots that have prevented veterans from reconciling with those who avoided military service during the Vietnam War. In this regard, the biography of James Webb works well. Not only did he experience brutal combat in Vietnam, but he also received constant criticism for his service there from students and faculty at the Georgetown Law Center after the war. Of all of the characters in the book, Webb's anguish over these two experiences is most palpable.

While Timberg successfully explains the outlook of the Vietnam veteran, he does not analyze the other side of the fault line. How different were his protagonists from their draft-dodging political adversaries? Most of Timberg's Naval Academy graduates came from comfortable upper-middle-class backgrounds, attended graduate school at elite universities, and spent the majority of their careers in the Washington area. Poindexter even managed to avoid the Vietnam War by taking a desk assignment in the Pentagon. The inclusion of several biographies of members of the Iran-Contra Committee might have revealed a less impenetrable divide than Timberg claims.

The other anchor that Timberg casts out in his attempt to create a degree of cohesiveness in his yarn is the nightingale's song. Renowned for its music during breeding season, the nightingale will sing only if it hears another nightingale. Under this metaphor, Reagan inspired each of these men to find their song by telling them that Vietnam was a noble cause and that they could now take pride in their military service. Reagan's song, so the argument goes, cured their Vietnam hangover and propelled them into national prominence in the political arena.

Clearly, Reagan administration appointments helped many of these characters rise to high levels in the Washington bureaucracy, but it is doubtful from the evidence presented that Reagan *personally inspired* these men to do anything. Webb's inspiration for accepting the job of secretary of the Navy came from his buddies who were killed in Vietnam. McCain got hooked on politics as a legislative affairs officer with the Navy. McFarlane's and Poindexter's zeal for their NSC jobs derived more from intellectual curiosity over foreign policy and a sense of duty than any great love for the Gipper. Only North could be labeled as crusader for Reagan, but his crusade was disingenuous. Personal glory motivated him more than any zeal for Reagan and his revolution; North would have accepted a White House post regardless of which administration occupied the mansion.

Overall, what it lacks as a five-part harmony, *The Nightingale's Song* makes up for in its brilliant solo performances. The Webb biography alone may be worth the price of the book. Timberg also should be commended for violating the cardinal rule of Annapolis, "never bilge a classmate." This author never hesitates to give a warts-and-all description of each of his characters, and, as a result, his personal knowledge of the Naval Academy and Vietnam illuminate rather than color his narrative.

*Dr. John Sherwood has been a historian in the Contemporary History Branch of the Naval Historical Center since 1997. He was a historian at the U.S. Army Center of Military History from 1995–97. He is the author of* Officers in Flight Suits: The Story of American Air Force Fighter Pilots in the Korean War *(New York University Press, 1996).*

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