

Official Programs Abroad



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AS long as rulers and governments have existed, they have recorded their memorable deeds, especially martial successes, in officially subsidized narratives. Among the earliest archaeological artifacts are clay tablets bearing cuneiform campaign histories of ancient Assyrian and Mesopotamian kings. Alexander the Great commissioned Eumenes of Cardia as chronicler of his military exploits. The historical record of human conflict relies heavily on officially sponsored, and therefore officially sanctioned, versions of events. The modern era extended the practice with the establishment of archives among the absolute monarchies of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe, for preserving records of diplomacy, dynastic ambition, and military planning and warfare. The formal organization of military records in specialized collections facilitated their use in compiling summaries of campaigns and battles. Official military history thereafter was nearly exclusively the province of active or retired military officers, who sought tactical principles for aspiring officers or precedents supporting existing doctrine or staff procedures. Such battle studies, although meticulously detailed, gave virtually no consideration to the wider economic and social implications of warfare. This limited form of analysis and the organization to support it were nowhere so developed as in the Historical Section of the Prussian Great General Staff; its work was widely emulated in the post-Napoleonic armies of Europe.

Even within their narrow focus, the official histories raised controversy. Some works frequently ran beyond a simple establishment of fact or doctrinal lessons and sought justification or exculpation for tactical errors or faulty defense policies. Many studies were so self-serving that they soured the reputation of official history and contributed to the lingering suspi-

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cion with which it is still regarded in scholarly circles. The official program of the Habsburg empire was known for its irregularities. Litigation and even duels resulted from allegations made in some Prussian official histories in the nineteenth century; and Sir Basil Liddell Hart, having worked on the British official history of World War I, maintained long afterwards that "'Official History' is a contradiction in terms—the word official tends to qualify, and often cancels out the word 'history'."¹

The sheer magnitude of the two world conflicts of the twentieth century made a heavy imprint upon official military historical programs abroad and led to developments which many of the leading programs share in some degree today. To deal with the massive record of both wars, some governments turned to civilian professionals for objective portrayals of the events, especially after World War II. The British and the Australian series fell under the jurisdiction of a general editor, an organizational innovation that also influenced the American official program after 1945. After 1918 the histories began to recognize that total war affects the whole of modern society. Official histories of World War II acknowledge further the burdens and accomplishments of the home front and explore the intricacies of the mobilization of societies and national economies for war. The number of volumes devoted to the home front in World War II has rivaled those devoted to combat, and far more serious consideration is given logistical and other technical support of combat forces, often in specialized subseries volumes.

New approaches in official historical projects were common after World War II. Among the major European powers and Japan, all except the French program were conceived as joint efforts of the armed forces. Although neither uniform nor everywhere permanent, this development contrasted with the American practice in which official history programs remained divided among the armed services, the Joint Chief of Staff, and the Department of Defense. Even a brief survey of some of the major official programs reveal distinctive characteristics.²

1. B. H. Liddell Hart, "Responsibility and Judgement in Historical Writing," *Military Affairs* 23, no. 1 (Spring 1959):35.

2. Unless otherwise noted, information on the national programs is drawn from Robin Higham, ed., *Official Histories: Essays and Bibliographies From Around the World* (Manhattan: Kans. State Univ. Library, 1970). It gives comprehensive studies of the national programs dealt with here.

Germany

The German effort, much changed since its re-establishment after the collapse of 1945, commands attention among European historical offices as the heir to a tradition envied and imitated among military staffs over a century ago. Though the tradition of official military historical writing was common among Prussian kings and army officers, it took a radical turn in 1807. With the reform movement that sought to redress the disastrous defeat at Jena the previous year, Generals Gerhard Johann Scharnhorst and August Neithardt Gneisenau employed extensive and self-critical historical analyses in adapting Napoleonic military and administrative genius to Prussian use.³ Scharnhorst's pupil, Captain Carl Wilhelm von Grolman, preserved this methodology when he established the War History Section of the Prussian General Staff in 1816. Renamed the Department of Military History in 1824, the section combined writing branches, the war archives, and the production staff of the *Militärwochenblatt* (Military Weekly), which published supplements containing the department's battle and campaign studies and biographic material illustrating the principles of leadership. One branch of the department under the elder von Moltke turned out a history of the Seven Years' War, also the justly famous Moltke military studies and a quarterly magazine devoted to military arts and sciences. Officers in the program submitted articles to a continuing series, "Studies in Military History," and some fifty monographic campaign analyses had appeared by the outbreak of World War I.

The historical function declined during World War I; and with the disappearance of the Great German General Staff as a condition of the peace settlement, official military historical work came under the newly instituted Reichsarchiv, a civil agency under the Ministry of Interior. The Reichsarchiv collected documents from all branches of the government, but military records were its main concern in the 1920s. Prussian Army records, surviving as a collection separate from German army records of World War I, remained in the Heeresarchiv (Army Archives), but they were almost totally destroyed in 1945.⁴

The head of the Reichsarchiv worked in conjunction with a Reichskommission of German scholars, among whom was Hans

3. Hajo Holborn, "Moltke and Schlieffen: The Prussian-German School," in *Makers of Modern Strategy*, ed. Edward M. Earle (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1943), p. 174.

4. Thomas E. Skidmore, "Survey of Unpublished Sources on the Central Government and Politics of the German Empire, 1871-1918," *American Historical Review* 65, no. 4 (July 1960):848.

Delbrück, whose critical approach to military history had already earned him a lasting reputation.⁵ The intervention of an academic group in the military archives caused no small tension, but with the Reichskommission's advice and direction, the displaced military historians began work on an extended series, *Der Weltkrieg, 1914-1918* (The World War, 1914-1918). In addition to traditional campaign and battle narratives, it included volumes covering German railroads during the war, cultural life under the stress of the conflict, and the economic aspects of the home front and military mobilization. This series was still in progress when the Nazi regime assumed power, and the last combat volume appeared only in 1956 under the auspices of the Federal Republic (West Germany), although it had been set in type in 1942.

In April 1935, military historical functions returned to a Military Historical Research Institute of the Army, the seventh section of the resurgent German General Staff. In 1940, the High Command of the German Armed Forces (OKW) established a section for Wehrmacht history under Col. (later Brig. Gen.) Walter Scherff. Though the written output of the section during the war was negligible, Scherff collected military records from all German field commands and from the archives of overrun countries, a hoard microfilmed by American and British archivists and historians after the collapse of Nazism. A separate though parallel effort in the German documentation of the war was the war diary of the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, kept by Helmuth Greiner from 1939 to 1943 and by historian Percy Schramm until the end of the war.⁶

Revived German military archival practice not only supplemented the work of the Historical Research Institute of the Army, but was also an indispensable adjunct to German staff planning. So strong was this tradition that one archivist, himself a product of German training, asserted after the stunning victories in 1940 that "the overwhelming success of the Germans was attributable to the fact that they had entered the war with a better filing system."⁷

5. See Chapter 4 on Delbrück, also Gordon A. Craig's "Delbrück: The Military Historian," in Earle's *Makers of Modern Strategy*, pp. 261-83.

6. Percy Schramm, ed., *Kriegstagebuch des Oberkommandos der Wehrmacht* (Frankfurt/Main: Bernard & Graefe Verlag für Wehrwissen, 1961) 4 (2d half):1772-74. See also Howard McGaw Smyth, *Secrets of the Fascist Era: How Uncle Sam Obtained Some of the Top-Level Documents of Mussolini's Period* (Carbondale: Southern Ill. Univ. Press, 1975), pp. 109 ff; and Helmuth Greiner, *Die oberste Wehrmachtführung 1939-1943* (Wiesbaden: Limes Verlag, 1951).

7. Ernst Posner, *Archives and the Public Interest* (Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1971), p. 87. Posner left Germany in 1939 and pursued a highly successful career in the United States.

Official historical work led a shadowy existence after the collapse of Nazi Germany until the establishment in 1957 of the *Militargeschichtliches Forschungsamt* (Military Historical Research Office), a joint staff element under the Bundeswehr [Federal Defense Force] General Inspekteur. The research office provides training material and runs informal programs in military history among troops and officers; it also manages the military records of the Bundesarchiv collection located at Koblenz.

The research office has undertaken research and publication in several areas, including a monographic series devoted to individual battles and a continuing series publishing older military records and documents of value. A reference work, *Handbook on German Military History from 1648 to 1939*, now over seven volumes, presents comprehensive bibliographies, while a more lengthy series, *Contributions to Military and War History*, has treated such topics as women in wartime, Army administration and promotion policy, a history of the development of the Luftwaffe, and an extensive analysis of the German General Staff from 1871 to 1945. Other projects seek to conclude work begun on German World War I air operations, and there has been some reworking of nineteenth-century histories of the Austro-Prussian War of 1866 and the Napoleonic campaigns. German official historiography has become far less nationalistic in tone since World War II while maintaining a commitment to the exposition of events in the conflicts involving Germany up to 1945. Recent reorganizations and revised policy have emphasized the histories of the development of the Bundeswehr as opposed to World War projects.

France

The present French official historical office claims a long heritage dating from an order of Cardinal Richelieu in 1637 to his secretary of war requiring the preservation of military state papers in a central archives. In one form or other, this document collection process has continued under military auspices since that time.

Official French production began after World War I with the series, *The French Army in the Great War*. Divided into eleven separate "books," each with a single title and each containing several subvolumes, the series dealt with operations in France and Belgium from 1914 to 1918. Primarily narrative, the works also include several volumes of maps depicting the areas

covered in the histories. One "book" deals with theaters of war other than the main front in Europe—Gallipoli, Salonika, and Africa. Three other multivolume works appeared in the period between the two world wars recounting the military history of French colonies, protectorates, and mandates (nine volumes), French military conquest of colonies (ten volumes), and the contribution of colonial soldiers and officers serving in the French armies (two volumes).

Reappearing in 1953 after the wholesale destruction of French records in World War II, the official military historical office serves the French Army as the *Service Historique de l'Armée de la Terre* (Historical Service of the Army) under the Ministry of the Army. Charged with providing historical materials for all French military training, the service also handles heraldic records, libraries on French Army posts, and archives of French military affairs since the sixteenth century. The respected journal produced by the service, *Revue Historique de l'Armée* (Army Historical Review), usually devotes each issue to a specific aspect of the army such as communications, armor development, chemical warfare, or command and leadership.

Historical production since World War II has not been as extensive in France as elsewhere. The major continuing work has been a series on higher headquarters commands, published as *Les Grandes Unites Françaises: Historique Succincts*. One separate volume concerns the history of the army between the world wars, and a number of works have been published privately with the support of the service. Within the service schools, historical study is emphasized as training for staff work. Students generally have the opportunity to apply historical lessons in field exercises lasting from two to four weeks.

Great Britain

Early official historical work in Britain was frequently overshadowed by private publications such as Sir John W. Fortescue's *History of the British Army* (fourteen volumes), appearing at the turn of the nineteenth century. Generally considered the first official publication, however, is the compilation of the Royal Engineers and the Royal Artillery on their operations in the Crimean War, commissioned by the Secretary of State for War in 1855.

No permanent historical section remained as a result of this effort, but in 1872 the Topographical and Statistical Departments of the War Office collaborated in the translation of the

official German volumes on the 1866 Austro-Prussian War. In the following year, the Intelligence Branch under the Topographical Department began functioning as a center for historical documentation and writing, and collected data on numerous colonial expeditions and campaigns.

The worldwide commitments of the British Army and the guiding influence of Sir Frederick Maurice in the last years of the nineteenth century and until World War I gave official British works a more cosmopolitan aspect than other national programs and produced considerably less imitation of the Germans than was the case in other countries. A three-volume history of the Russo-Japanese War made no analysis of tactics employed in the German-trained Japanese Army. Very little "doctrinal" history came from official British historians in this period.

By 1907, historical work was subordinated to the newly established Committee of Imperial Defense in a subcommittee for the control of official histories. Accompanying this change, the histories of World War I from 1920 to 1948 came to be connected with the name of one man, Brigadier Sir James E. Edmonds. They reflect Edmonds's dislike of politicians, and his mild treatment of battlefield blunders produced some conflict even among the official staff. The series, *History of the Great War*, amounted to five volumes on operations in western Europe and at Gallipoli and Salonika, supported by numerous maps and appendices of battle orders.

With the onset of World War II, the Committee of Imperial Defense became the War Cabinet Office; its secretariat managed the wartime historical staff, consisting after 1941 of an advisory committee of scholars from British universities. In 1946 the advisory committee decided upon a joint interservice history of the war and embarked as well on an extensive treatment of the civil aspects of the conflict. The entire production is divided into the United Kingdom Civil Series, with Sir William Keith Hancock as series editor, and the United Kingdom Military Series edited by Sir James Butler. A third, separate series deals with medicine in the war; it contains three subseries covering clinical services, combat medicine, and civilian services. The civil series devotes volumes to all aspects of civilian life and economy in wartime Britain, including food administration, social policy and services, industrial production and labor, weapons design, civil transportation, and overseas supply lines. The military series has volumes on grand strategy and conventional battle narratives on British ground, sea, and air

campaigns around the world. It also includes a subseries on military administration, occupation policy, and civil affairs in conquered territories.

For all of the breadth and the reliance on original records from the British cabinet, from wartime administrative agencies, from industries, and from the armed services, source citations in all series are very scant. But for the American reader, the British history of the Second World War is a fine history in a familiar language, and the volumes are masterpieces of literary style. A shorter eight-volume history appeared as an interim popular work before the production of the two main series started.

In the active service today, the sense of history and tradition again centers in the separate services; in the army the traditional pride in the individual regiment survives. Regimental and retired officers' associations preserve the memory of past events by publishing unit histories and encouraging the study of military history in general.

Until 1971 British officers had to pass examinations that included questions in military history for promotion to the rank of major. Although this practice has been dropped, a "war studies" paper and a study on some aspect of international affairs remain mandatory. Formal study of military history continues at the Royal College of Defense Studies and at the Joint Services Staff College, and some officers have attended regular university courses in history. The British government has endowed chairs or fellowships in military history at civilian schools to stimulate and support interest in military affairs.⁸

Commonwealth Countries

The larger countries of the British Commonwealth have pursued historical programs of their own. Canada's and Australia's came into their own in the decade after World War I, and relied greatly on the collection of documents in Britain and on coordination with the British writing program. Canadian work began both in Ottawa and London during the conflict, and gradually evolved into the Historical Section of the Canadian general staff by November 1918. Early histories followed the French models somewhat in that documentation and maps in each volume far outweighed narrative material. After World

8. Ad Hoc Committee, Department of the Army, "Report on the Army Need for the Study of Military History" (West Point, N.Y., 1971) 3:pp. N-6, N-8.

War II the program came under the inspired leadership of Col. C. P. Stacey who guided to completion a combined civil and joint military history of the war. Stacey's experience as a history professor in American and Canadian universities contributed much to the program.

The Australian contribution to official historical programs is noteworthy. At the end of World War I, Prof. C. E. W. Bean was the first to make a formal statement of the idea of having joint service histories prepared by civilian scholars working with military professionals. He devised an operating structure that put all of the historical effort under one general editor. This system has been followed with some variations by successful programs in Britain, Canada, Germany, and the United States to the present day.

Even as Professor Bean saw the volumes of World War I concluded in 1943, research for the series on World War II began under Mr. Gavin Long as general editor. Though a journalist by profession, Long preserved his predecessor's approach and organizational concepts. The work on World War II relied to some extent on the documentary collections of wartime allies, and for the Pacific War upon interrogations conducted in occupied Japan. Mr. Long also initiated a wide-ranging interview program in 1943 to record the actual experiences of individual Australians. The resulting series, with the overall title *Australia in the War of 1939-1945*, consists of five subseries, the first three being traditional accounts of combat action in all theaters where Australian forces were engaged; the fourth subseries covers industrial mobilization and the government's prosecution of the war. A medical subseries completes the Australian official record, twenty-two published volumes altogether.

New Zealand's program on World War II borrowed much from the Australian project, but the output shows the influence of Maj. Gen. Sir Howard Kippenberger, chief editor, and Mr. E. H. McCormick, New Zealand's chief war archivist. Nearly fifty volumes fall into four distinct categories: document collections, illustrated and documented popular histories for use in the school system, campaign and battle histories, and unit histories. The series has also covered the story of women in the war, the war economy, medical and dental services, and treatment of New Zealanders held as prisoners of war.⁹

9. Ronald Walker, "The New Zealand Second World War History Project," *Military Affairs* 32, no. 4 (Feb. 1969):173-81.

Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union

As with some other countries, official history in imperial Russia had forerunners in battle histories written by officers working independently of any staff or institution, although allowed access to official records. This practice continued after the establishment of a historical section in the Imperial Russian General Staff in 1836 and contributed to the controversial nature of Russian official and semiofficial histories of the Crimean War. A history of operations in the Turkish War of 1828-29 was the first officially written and published work in which the historical section cooperated.

After 1900 historical functions centered in the so-called Military Historical Commission of the General Staff, which undertook a multivolume series on the Russo-Turkish conflict of 1877-78, a project still underway when World War I erupted. A second major work was on the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5. Both of these efforts slowed during the war years, and ended altogether with the Bolshevik Revolution.

Soviet military history virtually ignored the Russian experience in World War I and concentrated on the events of the Russian Civil War of 1918 to 1920 and on operations during the Polish War of 1920. Active official historical work declined seriously by the mid-1930s, and in the Red Army came under Mikhail Frunze's early attempts to revolutionize military doctrine and historical events as well. During World War II and the twenty years thereafter, the functions of the Historical Administration of the Soviet Army General Staff extended far beyond what its name implied. During the war the section collected field reports on strategy, tactics, weapons, and unit organization. It had a strong influence on strategic planning and even on the equipment of troops; its directives became standard procedure, usually within three months after critiques and recommendations were issued.¹⁰

In the immediate postwar years, the administration's journal, *Voyennaya Mysl'* (Military Thought), restricted to military officers, showed some independence and professional outlook, but eventually it took the lead in establishing the approved and basic interpretations expected of all Soviet history. All credit for the strategic and much of the tactical direction of the war came to rest with Stalin. Even the disasters of the first two

10. Walter D. Jacobs, "Frunze Rides Again," *Military Review* 39, no. 3 (June 1959):16. U.S. War Department, *TM 30-430: Handbook on USSR Military Forces* (Washington, 1945), p. 1-19.

years of the war were uniformly transmuted into manifestations of a Stalinist mastery of defensive concepts. The same journal cautiously anticipated the revision of Stalin's role in the war two years after the dictator's death and a full year before Party Chairman Nikita Khrushchev debunked the Stalinist cult in a speech at the Twentieth Party Congress in February 1956.¹¹

After this "secret speech" Soviet histories spread credit for the victory among Communist party leaders, military commanders, and the great Soviet people. But otherwise they still followed the official Communist Party and Marxist-Leninist line and therefore remain suspect.¹² The most ambitious single work on the war to appear in the Soviet Union reflected the de-Stalinization movement. In 1957 a committee of over two hundred historians, many of them military men, began work on a six-volume *History of the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union*; the last volume was published in 1965. The history was written for popular consumption under the auspices of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism. Maj. Gen. E. A. Boltin, deputy director of the institute, furnished ideological and technical-military guidance for the research in articles published in *Voprosy Istorii* (Questions of History), the official journal for Soviet historians. The contributing historians used archives scattered throughout the Soviet Union and the Soviet client states of eastern Europe.

In 1966 the Supreme Soviet created an Institute of Military History directly subordinate to the Chief of the Soviet General Staff. Under a general officer who is a corresponding member of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, the institute has published a series of highly competent battle studies, including works on the conflict with Japan along the Manchurian border in 1939, about which relatively little was known in the west. Other volumes deal with campaigns in the Caucasus and southeastern Europe during World War II. A one-volume history of the war and a memorial edition on the ordeal of Leningrad were also produced in popular versions. The institute is now publishing a twelve-volume history of World War II. The institute also participated in the Thirteenth Congress of the International Congress of the Historical Sciences in Moscow in 1970 and in a similar conference at San Francisco in 1975 as a member organization of the International Commission on Military History.

11. Matthew P. Gallagher, *The Soviet History of World War II* (New York: Praeger, 1963), pp. 64-78.

12. Col. John E. Jessup, Jr., "Soviet Military History: Efforts and Results," *Military Review* 53, no. 6 (June 1973):22-23.

An apparently open-ended series of unit histories began appearing from a wide array of official publishing houses after 1962; they covered mainly the numbered armies and "fronts" of World War II. A companion series, started in 1968, examines the histories of local military districts in the Soviet Union before and during the war. Extensive publishers' lists of memoirs and accounts of single battles attest to the still-lively interest in World War II. A leading American bibliographer of Soviet military histories listed over 130 titles published in 1968-70. Beyond the public interest, Soviet military academies continue to emphasize military history in officer training. The average cadet at the Frunze Academy applies some twenty percent of his time to historical study and the preparation of papers in that field.¹³

Official historical programs in Soviet bloc states of eastern Europe parallel the Russian example to a large degree. Marxist-Leninist interpretations avowedly dominate the output, and the general staffs of the various countries or special organizations sponsored by the local Communist party have jurisdiction. Many of the military programs include research on national heroes and bygone wars, but the treatment of World War II follows the Soviet practice, with heavy political coloration and the necessary emphasis on the Red Army's role in the liberation of eastern Europe from Nazi oppression.

China

Exact data on historical activities in the Peoples' Liberation Army of the Peoples' Republic of China is very sketchy. Even though historical offices exist within the army and the Ministry of National Defense, various party organs have sponsored historical projects. The China Youth League solicited tens of thousands of personal memoirs from participants in Chinese revolutionary events from 1921 to 1950 and published over three hundred of them. Many of the vignettes describe small-scale military operations and individual acts of self-sacrifice performed in the name of the revolution. With contributions from Chairman Mao himself, and from other leaders such as one-time Premier Lin Piao and Army Commander Chu Teh, the collection

13. Michael Parrish, "A Selected List of Books From the Soviet Union on the Great Patriotic War Published during 1968-1970," American Committee on the History of the Second World War Newsletter, no. 5 (Sep. 1971), pp 10-12; Parrish, "Soviet Army and Military District Histories," *Ibid.*, no. 8 (Sep. 1972), pp. 3-8. DA Ad Hoc Committee Rpt., vol. 3, p. N-3.

is a leading example of the use of ideologically embellished history for mass indoctrination.¹⁴

Japan

Information on Japanese official historical activities within the armed services prior to World War II is limited, but some German record-keeping practices accompanied the importation of German military doctrine in the late nineteenth century. World War II caused widespread destruction of Japanese records, either by Allied bombing or by deliberate Japanese action after the surrender. Official military history has labored under this handicap ever since, although efforts continue to amass materials still scattered among the wartime enemies of Japan.

As commander of occupation forces, General Douglas MacArthur began the first official program in postwar Japan when he directed selected Japanese Army and Navy officers to write monographs on operations in China and Manchuria prior to 1941 and in the Pacific thereafter. The resulting series on the Pacific war, which the group concentrated on first, is highly uneven; some of the works barely outline events, and many of them were written only from memory. In 1951 the Far East Command established a Japanese research division to edit and rewrite some of the monographs and to analyze operations in Manchuria, as originally planned, again employing former Japanese officers. The Manchurian series is superior to the earlier efforts in organization, documentation, and quality.¹⁵

Since October 1955, the Japanese Self-Defense Force's Office for Research in Military History has produced joint histories of all of Japan's armed services. The office combines writing, editorial, and archival functions and has cooperated extensively with nongovernment researchers. Among the best products is the seven-volume *On the Road to War*, which recounts the political and military crises in the Far East prior to 1941. The *Asahi Shimbun* newspaper chain printed and distributed the series and now plans publication in English.

Published official volumes include studies of the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95, a lengthy survey of Japanese intervention in Siberia from 1919 to 1922, and narratives on operations in China in 1928 and during the Shanghai incident of 1932.

14. Robert Rinden and Roxane Witke, *The Red Flag Waves: A Guide to the Hung-ch'i p'iao-p'iao Collection*, Center for China Studies, China Research Monograph no. 3 (Berkeley: Univ. of Calif Press, 1968).

15. Department of the Army, OCMH, "Guide to the Japanese Monographs and Japanese Studies on Manchuria, 1945-1960" (n. d.). American involvement in this program ended in 1960.

The Japanese program has also traced some of the convoluted history of the infighting between the Chinese Communists and the Kuomintang (Nationalists) in China from 1926 to 1936. Work continues on the history of Japanese operations in the Pacific during World War II.

Aside from its own research and publication, the Office for Research supplies teachers and materials for staff schools. Both civilian and military instructors provide the three hours per week in military history required of students at the triservice Japanese Defense Academy. To encourage officers to continue the study of history throughout their careers, the official Japanese program also supports an informal military historical council, which publishes historical papers in a monthly journal. Membership is open to officers and university scholars interested in military history.¹⁶

Smaller Powers

South Korea's War History Compilation Committee published a documentary and statistical record of the Korean War in five volumes, ending its six-year existence in 1956. In 1966, it was revived to edit historical narratives on the Korean War produced by separate historical staffs of the Korean Army, Navy, and Air Force. Available in English as *History of the U.N. Forces in the Korean War (1972-)*, the series emphasizes the contributions of all the powers involved.

The Philippine armed forces headquarters has had a historical branch attached to its adjutant general's office since 1963, a successor to official writing programs that began in 1946. The branch devotes much attention to World War II events and leaders in the Philippines, but has also completed volumes on the postwar Huk insurgency, the Philippine revolution (1900), and the Korean War.

The Chinese government in Formosa maintains a history bureau of the Ministry of National Defense which has produced official compilations on Chinese wars with Japan in the 1890s and from 1937 to 1945, also the Chinese Civil War in the 1920s and late 1940s.

Indian official history after World War II followed the British format, relied heavily on British documentation, and employed British officers until full Indian independence in 1948. The official 24-volume *Indian Armed Forces in World War II* was completed in 1966.

The Israeli Defense Forces Historical Section, established in

16. DA, Ad Hoc Committee Rpt., vol. 3, pp. N-12—N-14.

1948 to document the Israeli war of independence, continues its accounts of more recent wars in the Middle East involving Israeli forces. The section's archival resources support both historical writing projects and constant efforts to revise or update military, naval, and air tactics and doctrine.



Each program represents in own peculiar amalgamation of scholarship, political ideology or the lack of it, and, inevitably, a government's willingness to expend resources on long-term research projects with somewhat intangible benefits. There is still some pursuit of "proven" lessons from the experiences of great military men. But as the leading scholar of the Canadian official program after World War II observed, officers should abjure the barren search for tactical devices that worked for Caesar, Napoleon, Suvorov, Patton, Manstein, or Zhukov, and concentrate on discovering those "qualities of heart and mind which go to the making of a great commander."¹⁷

The best of the recent programs, most notably the British, go beyond a mere summary of wartime documents with a cautious treatment of controversial issues. They make some effort "to inquire systematically into the relationships between military and political institutions, and to analyze the interaction of strategic policy and battle."¹⁸ Though still criticized at home and abroad, they permit serious insight into the nature of individuals, institutions, and doctrines in the stress of conflict, victory, and defeat.

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17. C.P. Stacey, *Introduction to the Study of Military History for Canadian Students* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1953), p. iv.

18. Peter Paret, "The History of War," *Daedalus* 100, no. 1 (Spring 1971):376.

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Military History and the Academic World



Ronald H. Spector

“AND this I write that young men may learn, if they should meet with such trials as we met with there, and have not opportunity to cut off their enemies; yet they may, with such pretty pranks, preserve themselves from danger. For policy is needful in wars as well as strength.” So wrote Lion Gardner in his 1638 *History of the Pequot Warres* (p. 32), perhaps the earliest military history written in America.

The writing of military history has thus a long tradition in the United States, and some of the most distinguished American historians, from William H. Prescott to Henry Adams to Samuel Eliot Morison, have turned their hand to it. Yet it has not been an academic tradition. If we accept Walter Millis's definition of a military historian as “a technically trained professional historian [who] . . . applies the interests and techniques of the general historian to the study of warfare” (*Military History*, p. 11), then it must be said that, until very recently, the academic historian of war hardly existed in the United States.

From the emergence of modern historical research in America, around the 1880s, until the end of the First World War, most of the serious writing on military history in the United States was the work of professional officers such as Alfred Thayer Mahan, author of the famous *Influence of Seapower Upon History* (1890), and Emory Upton, an Army officer who completed the manuscript of his pioneering *The Military Policy of the United States* in 1881 (published posthumously in 1904). In 1912 when the American Historical Association held a conference on military history in conjunction with its annual meeting, only two of the participants were professional historians.¹

1. *Annual Report of the American Historical Association 1912* (Washington: American Historical Association, 1914), 159-93.

Dr. Spector (Ph.D., Yale), of the Current History Branch, CMH, is working on a history of the early U.S. military involvement in Vietnam. He has also published two books, *Admiral of the New Empire: The Life and Career of George Dewey* and *Professors of War: The Naval War College and the Development of the Naval Profession*, as well as numerous articles on military and naval history.

Far from stimulating American interest in military affairs, the First World War led to a widespread reaction in the 1920s and 1930s against all things military. During this period historians whose specialties were in other areas nevertheless carried on a fair amount of research in military history. The *American Historical Review*, for example, carried fifteen articles or notes on military history between 1920 and 1930 and eighteen between 1930 and 1941, a respectable number in a journal in which so many fields are represented. About six percent of doctoral dissertations written in these two decades were also on military topics.

But few professional historians could or wished to concentrate primarily upon the history of war. Some of the most important work in the field was, in fact, done by persons without formal historical training, such as the journalist Walter Millis and the political scientist Harold Sprout. At the University of Chicago, scholars from a number of disciplines, including history, cooperated in a massive study of the causes of war begun in 1926 under the guidance of political scientist Quincy Wright. The Chicago project produced a large number of monographs, articles, and books culminating in Wright's own work, *A Study of War* (two volumes, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942). But though Wright's study contained much to interest the historian, it was in no sense history. Wright himself had little use for military history, which he believed to be "less historical than technical in purpose and usually designed to assist the practitioners of the art."² Like many academics of the 1920s and 1930s, Wright believed that war in general could be understood without detailed study of any particular war.

World War II and the onset of the cold war enormously increased scholarly interest in the study of war, but historians generally did not share in this revival of interest in matters military. After 1945 social scientists largely preempted the field of military studies, particularly recent national security policy. While study of civil-military relations, military administration, strategy, and arms control flourished in departments of political science and sociology, military history continued to languish. In 1954 after polling 815 schools, Dr. Richard C. Brown found 37 colleges and universities offering courses in military history (*Teaching of Military History* . . .).

During the last two decades, however, there has been an unmistakable growth of interest in military history among

2. Quincy Wright, *The Study of International Relations* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1955), p. 149.

American historians. This is most clearly reflected in the surprisingly large number of recent dissertations which deal wholly or in part with military subjects. Although there is no sure means of classifying or determining the exact contents of all of the hundreds of dissertations produced over the last twenty years, some ten percent probably fall within the general area of military history.

These dissertations are not confined to the study of operations but range over a wide area of subjects. Many explore new or neglected areas of scholarship or reexamine old topics from a new perspective. The new areas include the role of minorities in the U.S. armed forces, the Army and Reconstruction, the influence of war plans upon foreign policy, the armed forces and disarmament, the role of the military in developing countries, and the social ideas of professional military men. (See Millett and Cooling, *Doctoral Dissertations . . .*) The growth of interest in military history may be attributed in part to the impetus provided by the historical programs of the armed services after World War II. Distinguished academic historians like Kent Roberts Greenfield of Johns Hopkins University headed the Army's historical work, Samuel Eliot Morison of Harvard University produced the magisterial *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II*, and Wesley Frank Craven of New York University with James Lea Cate of the University of Chicago edited the seven-volume *Army Air Forces in World War II*. That none of these men had any connection with military history before World War II was symptomatic of the state of military history in the academic world in 1945. Two decades later, however, historians like Harry Coles, K. Jack Bauer, Martin Blumenson, Louis Morton, and I. B. Holley, who had begun their careers as Army and other official historians, were teaching and directing research in military history at a number of universities and colleges throughout the country.

At the same time ties between the Army and academic historians have grown closer, and visiting professorships in military history now exist at West Point, the Army War College, and the Command and General Staff College. Committees composed in part of distinguished academic historians advise the Army, Navy, and Air Force, and all of the services have established modest programs to support predoctoral research in military history. The prototype of these programs was the Center of Military History's Dissertation Year Fellowship Program established in 1970.

But increased interest in military history has not been

matched by a corresponding increase in the number of courses offered in the field. A 1962 study of 502 institutions of higher learning revealed that military history was offered less frequently than any other type of history course (Perkins and Snell, p. 76). The absolute number of course offerings, nevertheless, has almost certainly increased over the last decade. In 1969 Stetson Conn identified 110 colleges and universities listing courses in military history aside from those required for ROTC. (Brown's 1954 poll surveyed many more schools.) Of the twenty-five graduate schools rated as the leading institutions in the field of history in 1970, at least seven offered graduate courses or seminars in military history.³

Besides American and European military history, a number of history departments now offer such courses as "Comparative Military Establishments," "Technology and War," "Congress and American Military Policy," "War, Revolution, and Modernization," "The Military in American Life," and "War and Economic Change in the Twentieth Century." Courses concentrating on one of the two world wars are also increasingly popular. Military history still occupies a rather marginal and uncertain place in most colleges and universities, however. Many of the courses presently offered are a product of the personal interest and effort of the professor involved. If he leaves or retires, the military history course usually goes with him. Few history faculties feel a need to replace a lost position in military history as they would in, say, ancient history or diplomatic history. And most graduate advisers warn their students that military history is not a recognized specialty and offers extremely limited opportunities for teaching and publication.⁴

Only a handful of institutions accept military history as a major or minor field for the Ph.D. In some graduate schools the student who wishes to do his major research in the area of military history still faces an uphill struggle to convince his mentors of the feasibility or indeed the respectability of his project. That many are successful is attested to by the increasing number of solid dissertations in military history, many written at schools which offer no course work in the field.

The American attitude toward military history has always

3. Stetson Conn, "List of Universities and Colleges in the United States Offering Specialized Courses in Military History," Washington, CMH files. American Council on Education, *A Rating of Graduate Programs* (Washington, 1970).

4. Theodore Ropp, "Military History and the Social Sciences," *Military Affairs* 30 (Spring 1966):8. Louis Morton, "The Historian and the Study of War," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 48 (March 1952):608.

been ambiguous, and to this day the practitioners and critics of the art find themselves unable to agree on the proper approach to the subject. In the past many intellectuals feared that writing and teaching military history might contribute to the glorification of war and the spread of militarism. "In the process of militarizing minds," Alfred Vagts complains, "no small role has been played by the writers of military history" (*History of Militarism*, p. 23). Although this idea is seldom articulated, it is far from dead. As recently as 1957, Professor Arthur Ekirch ("Military History . . .," p. 54) warned the American Historical Association that "contemporary military history involves the danger that its very bulk . . . may result in our literature as well as our society becoming further militarized." The critical and independent scholarship of such writers as Marcus Cunliffe, Walter Millis, Peter Karsten, and Alfred Vagts and the reputation of the U.S. Army's official histories for honesty and candor have done much in recent years to allay these fears.

A second approach to military history might be termed, for want of a better description, the utilitarian approach. Like Lion Gardener, many American writers of military history have sought "lessons" useful to future generals and strategists or illustrating the underlying principles which they believe govern the conduct of war. Others have addressed themselves not only to soldiers but to the informed citizen as well. They believed that the study of military history would enable the civilian voter to understand the military problems and needs of his country. In 1912, Maj. J.W. McAndrew of the Army War College told the American Historical Association (*Annual Report*, p. 188) that "the education of our people in our military history will be the best guarantee of continued peace."

A growing number of younger scholars, however, have abandoned this utilitarian approach to military history and begun to examine it as simply an important branch of general history. "Most of us have abandoned the military's definition of military history as lessons of command and strategy," Professor Allan Millett observed. "Rather we study the conduct of America's wars and the development of its military institutions in the . . . milieu which shaped them. I would guess we hope such study will give us a fuller understanding of American history rather than make us strategists." ("American Military History . . .," p. 158.)

Like the utilitarian view, this approach to military history has a long ancestry. Sixty years before Millett, the distinguished journalist Oswald Garrison Villard criticized those

who "confine in their minds the study of military history to the technical purpose of preparing men to take the field," and called for the study of military history "as a purely historical study" (*AHA Annual Report . . . 1912*, p. 173). But the idea of military history as an autonomous academic specialty did not take root easily in the United States. Unlike Britain and France, the United States has no tradition of civilian scholarship in military history, and until recent years eminent European students of war such as Hans Delbrück in Germany and Charles Oman in Britain had no American counterparts. Since 1945, however, academics such as William R. Braisted, Arthur Marder, Peter Paret, Theodore Ropp, John Shy, and Russell Weigley have gone far toward making military history a significant part of American historical writing.

The emergence of a self-conscious group of academic military historians since World War II has also led to new approaches to the study of military history. Professor Peter Paret (1971) has called for an end to the old compartmentalizing of history as "social, intellectual, or military" and suggested instead that historians in all specialties combine their efforts to explore such areas as the economic aspects of war, the interaction of war with science and technology, and the history of ideas relating to war. (For a defense of traditional operational history, see Dennis Showalter, 1975.) John Shy recently (1971) explored some of the implications of psychological theory, particularly learning theory, for understanding the American military experience in a pathbreaking article, "The American Military Experience: History and Learning," while Alan D. Anderson has pointed to the usefulness of systems analysis in the study of operational history (1972). Military historians have begun to participate in such interdisciplinary undertakings as the Inter-University Seminar on Armed Forces and Society and the section on military studies of the International Studies Association. The American Historical Association has a "Section on Peace Research in History" in which military historians have been active collaborators.

The trend toward a more autonomous, more academically oriented and less "militarized" type of military history in the United States does not, of course, mean that the study of history has ceased to be of importance to the professional officer. On the contrary, it may be argued that the more scholarly and independent a work of history, the more useful it ultimately is to the student of war. One would have to go far to find a better discussion of the problems of command than Douglas S. Free-

man's Lee's *Lieutenants* or a more thoughtful discussion of commerce warfare than Henry Adams's famous chapter on privateers in his *History of the United States*. Yet neither of these men had any thought of writing specifically for a military audience.

Military history as an academic field has experienced an impressive degree of growth and development during the past two decades. Although it still has far to go to match the more established historical specialties, one might argue that it is at least moving in the right direction and has already contributed much to our understanding of American history.

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