

# Military History in the Army School System



Brooks E. Kleber, Col. Roy K. Flint,  
and Charles S. Hall

**I**N his letter to the Chief of Staff in 1970 that led to the establishment of the Department of the Army Ad Hoc Committee on the Army Need for the Study of Military History, Brig. Gen. Hal C. Pattison, then Chief of Military History, contended that in the 1950s the Army's higher schools had turned away from the teaching of military history, traditionally an integral part of officer education. The net result, he thought, had been that officers in the 1960s paid the price of "neglect of the lessons of the past."<sup>1</sup> General Westmoreland's mandate to the committee consequently placed heavy emphasis on the question of the place of military history in Army school curricula, and some of the most significant conclusions and recommendations of the committee concerned this subject.

The committee found General Pattison's contentions right, that while interest in military history on civilian campuses had increased over the preceding twenty years, the Army had "shown less interest in teaching the subject in service schools than it did before World War II." Its first general recommendation called for the U.S. Continental Army Command to introduce a "progressive coordinated history program into the Army educational system." (ANSMH Cmte Rpt, 1:51, 56.)

When the committee met in 1971, responsibility for most of the Army's service schools, the Command and General Staff College, and the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) and associated programs resided with the Continental Army Command; in the 1973 reorganization of Army commands they were transferred to

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1. Ltr. Brig. Gen. Pattison to Gen. William C. Westmoreland, CSUSA, 30 Jul 70, copy in CMH files. On the committee report (ANSMH Cmte Rpt) and its part in the genesis of this Guide, see above, Foreword.

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Dr. Kleber (Ph.D., Pennsylvania), Chief Historian of the Army's Training and Doctrine Command, is coauthor of *The Chemical Warfare Service: Chemicals in Combat* (U.S. Army in World War II). Colonel Flint (Ph.D., Duke) is Professor of History at the U.S. Military Academy. Dr. Hall (Ph.D., Columbia) is on the faculty of the Army War College. His publications include *Benjamin Tallmadge: Revolutionary Soldier and American Businessman*.

the newly created U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command. The United States Military Academy and the Army War College operated at the time and continued to operate in 1977 under the direct control of Headquarters, Department of the Army. The teaching of military history in all these educational settings came under the ad hoc committee's examination, and only in case of the Military Academy did the committee make no recommendations for changes and improvements in the teaching and use of military history. The following account sets forth the status of military history instruction in 1977 at all of these levels, with some emphasis on the committee's recommendations and how they were carried out. To some extent, of course, the whole system is, and perhaps always will be, in a state of flux.

### *United States Military Academy*

The purpose of the Military Academy is to educate and train professional officers for the Regular Army, and military history has always held an important place in the curriculum. In order to meet the requirements of the Army for officers capable of assuming the diverse responsibilities inherent in a modern defense establishment and who also possess detailed knowledge in various areas, the academy seeks to strike a balance between breadth and specialization in its academic program. The cadet is required to take several courses in each major discipline but is allowed to choose an area of concentration in either basic sciences, applied sciences and engineering, national security and public affairs, or the humanities. While an area of concentration is not the equivalent of a college major, it can, when taken in conjunction with the broader offerings, provide a sound basis for future study at the graduate level. At West Point, history is offered within both the national security and public affairs and the humanities areas of concentration.

Each cadet, regardless of his area of concentration, must study either modern European, world, or American history during his sophomore year and take a course entitled "History of the Military Art" during his junior or senior year. The latter course indicates the Military Academy's professional as well as academic responsibilities; among the traditional university functions of education, scholarship, and service, the last is somewhat more strongly emphasized than at other academic institutions.

The academy has taught the history of the art of war in one form or another for well over a hundred years. The two-semester

course, "History of the Military Art," as it is presently constituted began to take shape in the mid-1960s. While preserving the traditional focus on the evolution of the military art, this course now presents more of the political and societal context in which wars have been waged; i.e., the causes and consequences of wars now receive more emphasis. The cadet examines the conduct of wars as well as the peacetime activities of military institutions in light of the milieu in which they existed.

This complex material is presented in terms of evolutionary themes, referred to as threads of continuity. They include strategy; tactics; logistics; generalship; military theory and doctrine; military professionalism; technology; and political, social, and economic factors influencing the nature of war. The evolution of these factors, the relationships among them, and the reasons they have changed form the structure of the course.

A thematic approach provides several significant benefits. By studying military history over a broad time span, the student can isolate and analyze the critical reasons for changes at different junctures in history. Ideally, such a process sharpens the cadet's judgment so that he will better understand contemporary military developments; it also builds the foundation for a broader and deeper understanding of war that will help the graduate make sound decisions and give useful advice as he moves through positions of increasing responsibility in the Army.

"History of the Military Art" is divided into subcourses covering various periods: ancient and early modern warfare through the eighteenth century, the Napoleonic wars, the American Civil War, World War I, World War II in Europe and the Pacific, together with several military conflicts since World War II. Although the course offers a selective survey of the history of the military art, the cadet studies two operations, Napoleon's Jena campaign and the battle of Vicksburg, in considerable depth to give him a more realistic understanding of the events that transpired and to develop his ability to conduct a detailed historical analysis.

In addition to this required two-semester course, the Department of History also offers a number of military history electives, generally taken during the junior and senior years. These include two popular courses, "The History of Revolutionary Warfare" and "War in the Twentieth Century," which are offered each semester, as well as broader, nonoperational electives such as "War and Its Philosophers," "The Development

of Air Power," "The Development of Sea Power," and "The American Military Experience," presented less frequently. Since the institution of a visiting professorship in military history in 1972, each holder of the chair has offered a one-semester course in his area of principal specialization or interest.

Perhaps the major difference between teaching military history at the Military Academy and other academic institutions is the low student-to-instructor ratio. Each instructor teaches approximately sixty-four students in four separate sessions of sixteen students each, a ratio which gives him the opportunity to conduct the class more as a colloquium than as a lecture. This allows the student to participate in give-and-take discussion with the instructor and to probe him for answers to questions; it also enables the instructor to know his students individually. Classroom discussions are enlivened by a variety of visual instructional aids and are supplemented by occasional lectures, films, television programs, and demonstrations of weapons and equipment by the curators of the West Point Museum.

Assigning active-duty officers as instructors has a number of advantages, particularly in teaching military history, but it also results in an annual turnover of one-third of the officers within the department. Because of the personal method of teaching in a small classroom, continuous attrition makes the selection of instructors a vital and time consuming task which shapes the character of the entire department.

The department head's criteria for selecting military history instructors include a strong desire to teach cadets, excellent performance in duty assignments, and potential for academic achievement and growth. In addition it is desirable for military history instructors to have attended the Command and General Staff College before reporting for duty; to date about ninety percent of the officer instructors have done so. Those selected as instructors attend graduate school, usually for two years, to study under noted historians with an interest in military history and to earn an M.A. degree. Some continue their work toward a doctorate and complete the requirements while at West Point. New instructors in military history also receive several weeks of instruction during the summer preceding their first year, including a tour of selected American battlefields. Thereafter the instructor's continuing education is a product of his own initiative and the needs of the department. In addition to educated cadets, the system of teaching history at the Military Academy produces middle-grade officers with a greatly increased understanding of war and peace.

Military history increases the cadet's understanding of how, through the whole sweep of history, man has used war to achieve his goals; helps him perceive the relationships between strategy and policy, between tactics and technology, and between the military profession and society at large; and, finally, helps him appreciate his place in the profession of arms as a newly commissioned officer. By causing him to reflect upon how military commanders and statesmen of the past handled their problems, the Military Academy can alert the cadet to the demands that will be placed upon him as he matures to higher commands and responsibilities.

### *Reserve Officer Training Program*

The Reserve Officer Training Program was established by the National Defense Act of 1916, and from the beginning military history instruction was an integral part of the program. Privately printed manuals supported all ROTC instruction for many years, and they provided some coverage of military history. The manual for 1922, for example, contained 106 pages of military history concentrated primarily on military policy rather than campaigns. By 1932, however, the historical accounts had shifted to military operations exclusively.

The ROTC program was suspended during World War II and underwent extensive study and changes in the immediate postwar period. A major revision in the curriculum took place in 1951. The new 480-hour curriculum contained thirty hours of instruction in American military history which emphasized the principles of war and stressed the history of the Army and of leadership to add meaning to the detailed factual information presented. In 1956 the Office, Chief of Military History, first developed a text for the course (see Chapter 11).

Further revisions of ROTC curricula took place periodically during the 1950s and 1960s. Most of these changes resulted from pressures in the academic community to substitute academic courses for military subjects and to eliminate instruction which was not up to college level, such as training on crew-served weapons. In 1965 an Army advisory panel on the ROTC reviewed several proposals and recommended a new curriculum which included sixty classroom hours of world military history in the freshman year and ninety hours on national security and the concept of force in the sophomore year. The Department of the Army approved this as a developmental program, and in 1968 eleven schools adopted the new curriculum, which was known as Option C. Almost immediately work began on another

revision, a flexible one that allowed more academic substitution. Half of the 360 hours then required would be professional military courses taught by military instructors. The other half would consist of academic subjects which could be taught by the academic faculty. Although American and world military history were two subjects which could be taught by the academic faculty, about fifteen or twenty hours of American military history were included in the first year course, "Fundamentals of Leadership and Management." The Department of the Army approved this curriculum as another option in 1969.

When the ad hoc committee met in 1971, colleges and universities could choose from five ROTC programs. Three included 30 hours of American military history; one (Option C) contained 60 hours of world military history; and one, the curriculum approved in 1969, had 15 to 20 hours of military history augmented by those history subjects (enrichment courses) taught by the academic faculty.

Most of the committee recommendations with regard to the ROTC curricula were general. The one precise recommendation, that the required hours of military history in the 1969 curriculum be raised to thirty, was not approved by the Department of the Army—doubtless because of a desire to maintain the flexibility so necessary for a changing educational philosophy and for the accommodation of a wide spectrum of institutions with ROTC programs. These were, after all, the reasons for having a choice of curricula in the first place. In any case, in school year 1975/76 the large majority of ROTC students did receive the thirty-hour block of American military history. For this course the Office, Chief of Military History, provided its revised and much improved text in 1969, with an updated version in 1973 to provide more current coverage of the Vietnam War (see Chapter 11).

The ad hoc committee recognized a basic prerequisite for an adequate ROTC program in military history, competent instructors, and it recommended the assignment of at least one officer with a graduate degree in history to each ROTC unit. As this recommendation came at a time when many military subjects were being phased out of the ROTC program, it coincided with increased demands from colleges for ROTC instructors with advanced degrees in several fields. The Army decided to rely on a broader program, an advanced degree program for all ROTC instructors, to improve academic qualifications of teachers of military science and tactics and so rejected the committee's specific recommendation. In the advanced degree program,

instructors with a master's degree were to have a three-year stabilized ROTC tour; those not having that degree were to be permitted up to two years of study at a civilian institution to work toward it, followed by a two-year stabilized tour of instructor duty.

In terms of upgrading the academic qualifications of ROTC instructors generally, the program was highly successful. The proportion of professors and assistant professors of military science with advanced degrees increased from only 8 percent in academic year 1968/69 to 64 percent in 1974/75. As of February 1976 the figure was 66 percent. While no distinction was made as to the disciplines in which these degrees were earned, history undoubtedly received its share.

Meanwhile, a major study of the officer corps started in 1974 had significant impact upon the ROTC program. Under the Officer Personnel Management System (OPMS), the assignment of officers to ROTC duty no longer would be by grade and branch with graduate degree in unspecified disciplines. Rather, officers would be assigned by grade and OPMS specialty, with graduate degree requirements corresponding to that specialty. Although precise requirements had not been determined in 1976, there was no reason to assume that ROTC requirements for officers with advanced degrees would decline significantly.

As approved, committee recommendations called for participation of the civilian faculty in teaching ROTC cadets military history, either in the core curriculum or in enrichment courses. Some colleges and universities offered military history courses within their own history departments which served as appropriate substitutes for the ROTC requirement. Team teaching continued to be an effective device which combined the talents of military and academic instructors in the presentation of military history. Guest lecturers added variety and depth.

A six-week military history workshop, conducted since 1968 at the United States Military Academy, has also improved the qualifications of some ROTC military history instructors. This program includes seminar discussions, guest lecturers, library research, and the preparation of monographs. In 1972, the Department of the Army asked the Continental Army Command to restudy the workshop requirement, particularly in view of the expected impact of the advanced degree program, but its value was solidly reaffirmed. These workshops have served as excellent training vehicles for selected professors and assistant professors of military science to prepare adequately for their role as military history instructors.

## *Branch Service Schools*

Although branch service schools date from 1824, when the Artillery School of Practice was established at Fort Monroe, the present system took shape after the reorganization of the Army in 1920. During the period between the two world wars, service schools stressed a broad education and included the formal study of military history in the basic and advanced officer courses. For example, in the early 1920s the Infantry School's basic course contained 66 hours of critical study of selected campaigns, and its advanced course had 91 hours of formal military history. Some schools studied military history in relation to the particular arm or branch. The Artillery School advanced course after World War I contained 25 hours of "lectures on selected campaigns with particular reference to Field Artillery." World War II forced the abandonment of such "educational" subjects as the schools stressed the accelerated training of large numbers of officers.

Post-World War II attempts by some branch schools to reinstitute military history in their curricula were thwarted primarily by more pressing teaching requirements. In 1954, a survey of fourteen branch schools revealed that only the Chemical Officer Advanced Course provided formal instruction in military history. By the early 1970s some basic courses did include one-hour periods on the history of the particular branch. Although branch advanced courses benefited from extensive use of historical examples integrated into regular instruction, there was little or no history in the core curricula, and, at the time the ad hoc committee met, only a few schools offered military history electives.

For the basic courses, the committee recommended a two-hour block of instruction on the importance and value of the study of military history and two hours on the history of the particular branch. Two military history electives should be offered in the advanced courses, one operationally oriented and the other emphasizing civil-military relationships. Realizing the futility of offering military history courses without qualified people to teach them, the committee recommended that a minimum of two spaces be validated for officers possessing master's degrees in history for each school conducting an advanced course.

The Department of the Army concurred in the recommended basic course requirements but eliminated any reference to minimum hours. It agreed that two military history electives, "of diverse sophistication," should be included in each advanced

course curriculum. And it also agreed that "one or two spaces" in each branch school should be validated as graduate degree positions in history; incumbents would teach history and advise fellow faculty members on matters of military history.

In addition the committee recommended that the Continental Army Command (CONARC) develop some instruction for officer candidate school students who had not been exposed to military history as college undergraduates. This instruction, which should approximate the ROTC American military history course, should be given no later than the branch basic courses. This recommendation was never approved; neither the relatively short length nor the performance-oriented training characteristic of both OCS and the basic courses were conducive to teaching military history.

By school year 1974/75, CONARC and the Training and Doctrine Command had carried out the other recommendations. CONARC directed the Command and General Staff College to prepare instructional packets consisting of scope, outline, and bibliography for the two military history electives which were to be included in the advanced course curricula. One course was called Topical Military History, the other Advanced American Military History. While some schools used this material, others developed their own military history electives, an approach facilitated by the assignment of qualified instructors to the branch service schools. Even so, there was no precise uniformity in offerings. The Armor School, for example, offered but one military history course during school year 1974/75, as part of the core curriculum. The Field Artillery School offered five military history electives in its advanced course ranging from an evaluation of warfare through the ages to the role of the military in the modern world. The Air Defense School offered two military history electives, one a review of American military history, the other a reading seminar which examined generalship and technology in warfare. The Infantry School offered a well-received world military history elective, taught by an officer instructor who was a Ph.D. candidate in history at Duke University.

By 1975, however, a change in the length of branch school advanced courses was affecting the elective program. The Training and Doctrine Command determined that advanced courses would be reduced from thirty-six to twenty-six weeks. This change, which took place in the school year 1975/76, forced out all elective courses. A survey of branch schools in 1976 indicated that only one intended to retain military history as part

of the core curriculum. Other schools planned to integrate military history into the instruction, although that subject would not constitute a teaching objective. The removal of formal military history presentations from advanced course curricula naturally eliminated the need for officer instructors with advanced degrees in history.

The whole matter of reducing the length of advanced courses became interwoven with the formulation of the Officer Personnel Management System which was taking place at the same time. One of the ramifications of the system was a review of the advanced degree program and a decision to limit civilian schooling requirements to skills and areas dictated by officer specialties.

### *The Command and General Staff College*

In 1966, the Department of the Army's Haines Board, convened to review the Army's school system, described the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth as "the keystone of the Army educational system in the tactical application of combined arms and services." From its inception in 1881 as the School of Application for Infantry and Cavalry, this institution presented instruction in military history. Refinements in the curriculum resulted from the influence of Capt. Arthur Wagner immediately before the Spanish-American War and the stimulus of Elihu Root's sponsorship and Maj. John Morrison's instruction after that war. If the period preceding World War I can be characterized as the time of intellectual ferment in the teaching of military history at Fort Leavenworth, the 1920s can best be described as one of pragmatic, utilitarian endeavor. During World War I, Leavenworth graduates had served in high command and staff positions and had organized training schools based on the Leavenworth model. Confident of the soundness of the Leavenworth method as modified by their wartime experience, they returned to reestablish the Army school system. The National Defense Act of 1920 provided for the progressive military training of officers from West Point and the Reserve Officers Training Program through the branch service schools and the Line and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth to the Army War College.

The prevailing post-World War I educational philosophy was best expressed by a colonel in a 1921 issue of the *Infantry Journal*. To be an active and intelligent participant in the era that

had just begun, an officer "must know, not only the military condition of the United States, but he must know its history, its political, industrial, and financial conditions, and the hopes and aspirations of its people."<sup>2</sup> This kind of thinking ensured the place of history within the curricula of the Army service school system during the interwar years.

In 1923 the institution at Fort Leavenworth was renamed the Command and General Staff School, and the curriculum that had evolved by that time was to remain substantially the same until World War II. A course in psychology and leadership, emphasizing American characteristics, included general historical studies and studies that dealt more specifically with such American military leaders as Grant, Lee, Sheridan, and Sherman. A course in logic was later combined with one in military history, while courses in military geography, strategy, and legal principles drew heavily upon the study of military history. The school's annual report for 1921 indicated the rationale for such measures:

Purely theoretical studies . . . even though they consist largely of the discussion of concrete situations, are not considered sufficient to adjust the officer's mind to actual conditions. In time of peace, Military History must be relied on for information as to the actual conditions of war. As a consequence . . . the course in Military History and Strategy is scheduled to proceed hand in hand with the course in Tactical and Strategic Studies, Corps and Army, for the purpose of illustrating the actual workings of the principles discussed in the latter course.<sup>3</sup>

Despite good intentions for broadening the scope of military history, courses stressed for the most part military operations in the field. Although course hours and content fluctuated during the years up to World War II, the objective of military history remained that stated in the 1921 annual report. In the last year before World War II disrupted the school's operations, 53 of 1,073 total classroom hours were devoted to military history.

The first special World War II streamlined course, which began in December 1940, contained 318 hours of instruction and 243 hours of applicatory exercises. Both formal instruction in military history and the use of historical illustrations were discarded entirely. Operational lessons learned were to be the only vestige of military history. The post-World War II Leavenworth curriculum was an extension of the wartime model. Formal instruction in military history did not reappear

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2. Henry A. Smith, "General Staff College Course," *Infantry Journal* 18 (Jan. 1921):51.

3. General Staff School, *Annual Report 1920-1921* [Fort Leavenworth, Kans., June 30, 1921], p. 23.

until 1952, when historical examples were introduced into the core curriculum as a means of illustrating the principles of war. By 1957 the curriculum included 21 hours of historical examples and one hour on the history of Fort Leavenworth. In addition, each student spent about 55 hours on a leadership paper involving rudimentary historical research and some 16 to 32 hours of historical illustrations were written into lesson plans.

By 1960 the upward trend was reversed and formal instruction in military history was reduced to a three-hour course, the purpose of which was the encouragement of self-study. These three hours were eliminated in 1965 in favor of a more comprehensive elective military history course. The use of historical examples to reinforce general instruction continued, and ten hours of leadership case studies were introduced. In 1967, as result of a Haines board recommendation, the college expanded its program of electives, including those in military history.

When the ad hoc committee met in 1971, the core curriculum of the Command and General Staff College contained no formal instruction in military history, although case studies and historical examples continued to be used. The college itself offered three military history electives—"Military History," "Topical Military History," and "Development of Combat Divisions—Free World and Communist Powers." Ten history or history-related electives from the University of Kansas, Kansas State University, and the University of Missouri at Kansas City were also available. The lack of qualified instructors at the Command and General Staff College was a problem in the military history elective offerings in 1971. None of the eleven instructors who taught two of the military history courses had graduate degrees in history, although two had masters in other disciplines—English and mechanical engineering. A similar situation existed in the third military history elective.

Ad hoc committee recommendations approved by the Department of the Army included the following: improving the quality of current military history electives within the college as faculty expertise improved; introducing electives in the critical analysis of actual tactical operations and in strategic studies; validating at least three spaces as graduate degree positions in history; and encouraging nearby colleges to offer more military history electives. The Department of the Army deferred action on a recommendation for restudying the feasibility of a visiting professor in military history.

The large majority of these approved recommendations were

carried out. The catalog of resident courses for the academic year 1977/78 listed ten military history electives taught by the faculty, while five more history courses were presented by professors from the University of Kansas. The college faculty also taught 29 hours in the common curriculum, including an 18-hour block on the U.S. Army in the twentieth century. Equally important, historians were introducing a theater operations exercise and a two-major-corps tactical exercise. Three of the five officers teaching military history had masters in history, one had his Ph.D. in history, and one had met all doctoral requirements but the defense of his dissertation. The military staff was supplemented by two civilians with doctorates in history and by a visiting professor in the John F. Morrison Chair of Military History established in 1974.

### *The Army War College*

Military history has traditionally formed an important part of the instruction for students at the Army War College. Studies of campaigns and leadership to derive lessons from the past can be found in the curriculum of the Army's senior educational institution from its inception at Washington, D.C., in 1901. This type of study, emphasizing military operations in the field, reached its zenith in the years between World War I and World War II, when much time, both in and out of the classroom, was devoted to analyses of earlier campaigns and battles and foreign military institutions. Students toured Civil War battlefields in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia, and distinguished military historians such as Douglas Southall Freeman lectured frequently at the college.

Unlike the Command and General Staff College, the War College closed its doors during World War II. When it reopened after the war it was at a new location, first at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, and after 1951 at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania—and with a new curriculum reflecting new concepts of professional education for senior officers. The emphasis had shifted from field operations to the realm of national military planning and policy and management problems. The approach was interdisciplinary, and the tools of study more frequently political science, international relations, economics, and psychology than military history per se. The formal teaching of military history that had characterized the interwar period disappeared from the curriculum, though the use of military history for illustrative examples as part of the interdisciplinary approach did not.

In the various curriculum changes since the early fifties, the study of military history has increased both in terms of formal instruction and as part of the interdisciplinary approach. The ad hoc committee report in 1971 concluded that coverage within the core curriculum was adequate. The committee proposed a threefold definition of military history that furnished a framework for War College curriculum planners and professors. The committee's definition included (1) operations (tactics, strategy, and leadership, to mention the most important aspects); (2) administration and technology, such as the functional and professional activities of armed forces, doctrines, organization, manpower, training, and weapons and their development; and finally (3) the military establishment and society, dealing with the national and international aspects of national strategy in war and peace, the elements of national power, and the role of the armed services strategies in achieving national objectives. Since the War College seeks primarily to educate rather than train, the educational aspects of military history have been emphasized.

For the past several years the curriculum at the Army War College has had two major elements: a Common Overview to provide the core of professional knowledge essential to each graduate, and an Individual Concentration (elective) phase to allow each student to meet individual professional needs. The Common Overview exposes the student to the historical backgrounds of the United States and the leading nations of the world to aid him in assessing the domestic and international issues that affect U.S. national security. The approach during these core courses is interdisciplinary, and history in general and military history in particular is woven into the fabric of instruction.

A much more intensive and extensive use of military history can be found in the Evolution of Military Strategy course of the Common Overview. Here the three elements of the definition of military history come into play: operational, administrative and technical, and the military and society. All students are exposed to the development of military strategy/military history with special emphasis on the "great captains" and military strategic thinkers here and abroad. Thus, a definite military historical framework for all War College students is part of the required course.

The Individual Concentration phase gives the student an opportunity to explore military history in greater depth. In this as in the Common Overview, the War College has received

excellent cooperation from the U.S. Army Military History Institute (MHI—see Chapter 12). Since 1971 the institute's staff and since 1973 visiting professors at the institute have offered elective courses. Each visiting professor has conducted a seminar in military history as an elective for War College students in addition to other services, such as advising students and guiding study projects.

Elective courses provide a range of choices in the general field of history as well as specifically in military history. Among the specific military history courses a student might choose are: Contrasts in Command, Changing Nature of Modern Warfare, and Strategic Issues of World War II. General courses with historical content include: Arms control: An Element of National Security; Nuclear Strategy: Policy and Planning; Politico-Military Dimensions of National Policy; Contemporary Issues in U.S. Foreign Policy; and War and International Law: The Kaiser to Kissinger. Area courses also have historical content, for instance, Africa: Problems and Promises; China as a World Power; Middle East Political Dynamics; and Soviet Power and Policy.

Besides formal curricular offerings, War College students have other opportunities to study military history. The commandant conducts wide-ranging small group discussions with all members of each class, and distinguished active or retired members of the armed services who visit the college can draw on professional experience stretching back in some cases to before World War II. One of the highlights of the academic year is the Gettysburg Battlefield tour which is open to students, their families, and guests. A presentation on the strategy, tactics, and events leading up to the day of battle precedes the tour. During the academic year the Military History Institute sponsors a series of evening meetings, "Perspectives in Military History," in which some of the leading military historians here and abroad discuss their current research. The institute also provides publications and exhibits.

Perhaps the most interesting and rewarding experience is the Oral History Program sponsored by the MHI. An average of about twenty students per year debrief senior retired Army generals and other distinguished military and civilian leaders and analyze earlier debriefings. These interview sessions make the student keenly aware of the significance and importance of military history in the education of the professional officer.

In summary, the current War College curriculum represents an interdisciplinary approach to fulfilling the college mission. A

strong undercurrent of military history flows through the Common Overview courses and especially the Evolution of Military Strategy course. Almost half of the Individual Concentration courses have a direct relation to history and to military history in particular. Other educational and professional opportunities also exist outside the seminar room at the War College for the student to pursue an interest in military history.

## The Use of Military History in Staff Work



Walter G. Hermes

**O**N the eve of the Civil War the Secretary of War received two communications. One—a treatise on camels and their use in warfare—was sparked by Jefferson Davis's interest in the possibility of importing camels and employing them in the American southwest in the place of horses and mules. The second came from a junior Engineer officer who pointed out that the system of coastal defenses along the Atlantic seaboard would be largely ineffective against a maritime power. In the process, he gave a short account of amphibious landings undertaken since 1400 A.D. to demonstrate how the state of the art had changed and how vulnerable the United States was to invasion from the sea. The treatise on camels argued that the old ship of the desert still merited a place in warfare, while the engineer emphasized the impact of modern technology, such as the introduction of new steam vessels and more deadly weapons, upon military planning.

Whether the issue concerns the retention of the old or the adoption of the new, the telling points are frequently drawn from military history. For generations staff officers have marshaled facts and figures to support the pros and cons of a case. Patently, the officer who is poorly grounded in military history will often operate at a disadvantage in the staff arena.

It is thus unfortunate that as a rule the young officer entering his first assignment on a staff will have little time to devote to the study of military history. In most cases, he will soon become an action officer responsible for a specific area and will be immersed in current operations. Working against deadlines, he will be under constant pressure to prepare the never-ending stream of reports and memoranda that are the lifeblood of staff work. In the hectic schedule of a working staff, military history will usually play a subsidiary role.

Yet that role is important. Many of the papers that staff

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Dr. Hermes (Ph.D., Georgetown), Chief, Staff Support Branch, CMH, wrote *Truce Tent and Fighting Front* (U.S. Army in the Korean War series).

officers prepare become the bases for decision—some of major consequence. The proper use of historical materials and resources in the preparation of these papers is essential in arriving at acceptable solutions to many problems. How then can the staff officer take full advantage of his training and resources to ensure that his staff submissions are historically sound and can be supported with confidence?

The exposure to military history that young officers receive during the academic years may vary from almost none to a great deal. The fortunate ones will have a general background of knowledge in the field, although it may be of only limited assistance in attacking a specific problem. Similarly, the experience acquired in research projects during the school years should give many officers at least a basic skill in finding materials and in digesting, assembling, and presenting information in a logical fashion. Some officers have also had the benefit of postgraduate work to sharpen those skills.

How these skills can be applied to each problem will vary according to the time available. For the most part, the staff officer will be dealing with a brand of history that, in this era of convenience packaging, has received the rather appropriate title of instant history. In staff operations the deadline is the controlling factor and the amount of research that can be done in support of a project is usually quite limited. Frequently the staff officer will not have adequate time to do a thorough job in investigating the background of a problem.

If the deadline is extremely tight—a day or less—the officer will have to depend upon what is immediately on hand or easy to obtain. He must know the sources he can tap quickly. Upon his assignment to a staff section, he should become thoroughly familiar with the office records and should set up and maintain a complete and well-organized file on the subjects he is responsible for. Since very few problems are wholly new, background material will be available in previous studies, reports, and other documents. Frequently the major task will be simply to update this material by screening current records or by getting information from other staff sections. In the search for such material the command staff historian or the Center of Military History can often be of service. The command staff historian, who may work alone or with a small staff, is charged with performing historical functions for his command or agency. Either he or the center may have done some work on the subject and may be able to provide spot information, statistics, or other data from reference files. For the immediate demand project,

however, there is little time for basic research, and the result is instant history at its worst.

The quality of the response should rise in proportion to the time allowed by the target date, but the depth of the research will depend a great deal on the complexity of the subject and the location of the records. In other words, a week may permit an officer to become familiar with the desertion problems that existed during World War II but would scarcely allow him to do more than begin his research on the handling of deserters in all American wars. It also follows that if all the required records are located in one place, the staff officer will be able to cover much more than he could if they were scattered among half a dozen sites.

A quick survey of the dimensions of the problem will help determine whether the staff officer should attempt to do the job himself or seek outside help. In most cases, consultation with the command staff historian or, if the officer is located in the Washington area, with the Center of Military History is highly advisable. Historians can provide information on what has already been done on the topic—in 1965, for example, a center study on the call-up of reserve forces during the Berlin crisis of 1961 proved to be of great help to the staff in planning for the use of reserves during the war in Vietnam. Historians may also suggest books, articles, theses, and studies that can be helpful reference sources. Frequently they may be able to furnish names and addresses of persons and organizations that can give additional information and assistance. The historical office usually can save the busy staff officer valuable time that otherwise might be spent in searching dead ends by guiding him promptly to the most rewarding sources. By cutting down waste motion the staff officer can do a more thorough job, and that thoroughness will be reflected in his final submission.

On occasion the staff officer will be assigned, either individually or as a member of a study group, to prepare a long-range study on a major topic such as Army promotion policies, the overhauling of a logistical support system, or Army planning for the mobilization of reserve forces. Depending on the urgency of the situation, the time allotted for studies of this importance will, as a rule, vary from three months to a year.

For a comprehensive study the first task is generally the development of an outline. In almost every outline the first section will be devoted to the background of the topic. To know where you are going, it is necessary to know where you have been. If the study is on promotion policies, the officer will have to

become familiar with the policies of the past before he can discuss those of the present or recommend those of the future. The scope of the study will determine whether he need only study the policies of the past decade or must trace developments from the Revolutionary War to the present. Similarly, a consideration of the use of foreign ports in wartime may be limited to the experience in Vietnam or may span the period from World War I on. Whether the period covers a few years or centuries, the background portion of the study is essentially historical in nature and should be approached as a historical research project.

It is rare to discover that someone else has already done the bulk of the research and writing in response to an earlier requirement. More frequently, the bits and pieces that form the background mosaic are scattered in a dozen places and considerable digging may be necessary. Should the staff officer decide that he has both the time and ability to do the historical work himself, he would still be wise to consult the command staff historian or the center of Military History. There is no point in duplicating the work of others, especially if they have done the job well. In any event, the guidance and suggestions of the historian can help smooth and shorten the path of the do-it-yourself officer.

If the study topic is broad and complex or if the study clearly cannot be completed on time without assistance, the staff historian or Center of Military History may be called upon to prepare part or all of the background material. Preliminary consultation with the historical office is always advisable before a formal directive is drawn up. Since each historical unit has certain fixed requirements and capabilities, the priority of a new request must be established and the availability of qualified persons to do the task must be determined. A small historical office, for example, will not have the flexibility of the Center of Military History and may not be able to assume an additional load, no matter how willing it may be to help. In some cases, requests for historical assistance may have to go through command channels and be approved by the staff agency that supervises the historical office. An informal discussion with the historian in advance will reveal whether his office can handle the job and meet the deadline. It will also assure that the request is sent through the proper channels and that the directive to be issued is concise and acceptable to the historical office.

The preparation of the directive is important and should be done with care. The staff officer must assume that he will get

what he asks for. If the request for a historical background section or chapter is vaguely worded and does not state the requirement clearly, the end product will probably mirror the indecision. The directive should set forth the purpose of the study, the topics to be covered, and the scope and time focus of the historical background so that the historian's research will put the subject into the proper perspective. The background chapter should not be cluttered with material that is not germane to the study. If the subject should be the mobilization of the National Guard in times of crisis, for instance, there may be no need to cover in any detail the call-up of other reserve forces or the expansion of active Army units during these periods. The directive, in essence, should be a blueprint for the historian to construct a sound, unbiased, and relevant base for the study.

If the agency or command to which he is assigned prepares an annual historical summary of its activities, the staff officer may also become directly involved in writing military history. Although the administrative details of assembling and packaging the annual summaries are usually performed by civilian action officers, many of the submissions concerning directorate, division, and branch operations are prepared by staff officers as an additional duty. To do the job effectively, they must become thoroughly familiar with the background of missions, accomplishments, and problems so that they can present an objective, well-organized, accurate account of the major activities of the past year. In the process they should acquire a good overview of their own operations as well as valuable experience in researching, writing, and organizing historical materials.

Thus far only the more usual circumstances under which the staff officer would come into contact with military history have been considered. A development of recent years may become more commonplace and important. It is instant history also, but with a different twist. In 1962 during the Berlin crisis, the Chief of Staff wanted a record of the events, since the call-up of two National Guard divisions and a number of other reserve units had resulted in a number of problems for the Army. The Office of the Chief of Military History sent a four-man team to the Pentagon to collect the necessary data from action officers scattered throughout the Army staff. The team worked from current files and filled gaps in the records by interviewing military and civilian staff members who held important positions. Shortly after the reserve forces were released from active service in mid-1962, the team finished a detailed study that covered the background of the call-up, the problems

encountered in mobilizing and demobilizing the reserves and in expanding the active Army, and an analysis of the lessons learned during the operation.

Later that year OCMH sent a historian to the Pentagon to monitor the Oxford crisis, which developed when a black student attempted to enroll in the University of Mississippi. Working side by side with the action officers, he was on hand as the drama took place and was able to obtain copies of most of the important documents and telephone conversations as they were generated. With this valuable source material he was able to write a monograph on the incident within a few months after it ended. Similar uses of historians occurred during later crises, with the historians collecting and writing the story almost as it happened.

The advantages of preparing instant history of this kind are obvious. The historian can be on the scene while the records are relatively intact. He can screen the source documents and organize a historical file that should eventually contain the core material for his study. By being close to the action officers while history is in the making, the historian can absorb a sense of the drama of the situation and a feeling for the atmosphere. He can also talk to many of the participants while everything is still fresh in their minds, before the fog of time begins to obscure the sequence of events and leads them to magnify their own roles.

For the staff officer this type of instant history can be extremely useful. Almost immediately he will have a handy reference tool available to answer questions, to prepare reports, and to tap for planning and experience data. But the attractions of instant history should not blind either the historian or the staff officer to its inherent weaknesses. Of necessity it will be limited in scope and will reflect mainly the information to which the recorder is privy. Many pertinent records will not be available until well after the events are concluded, especially those dealing with the high-level story and those held by other agencies. Perhaps the most glaring limitation of all is the lack of perspective. Writing so close to the action, the historian can hardly avoid some distortion. And, like the quick demand project that the staff officer is called upon to prepare, instant history is bound to reflect the haste with which it has been turned out.

Despite these disadvantages, instant history's plus factors appear to outweigh the minus. The collection and preservation of the records alone would be enough to commend it. Besides, in many cases the instant history may be the only reliable account available for some years. It serves as a useful reference tool until

the passage of time and the accessibility of other records permit a more accurate and balanced account to be written.

In summary, the staff officer will come into contact with military history on numerous occasions during his tour but will probably not have much time to study it. He will have to rely mainly upon whatever general knowledge of the subject he acquired during his school years plus what he has picked up on his own in the interim. Ideally he should be familiar with the standard books and reference works in the field and with the historical publications of the Center of Military History before he is assigned to staff duty; time for extensive reading may be sharply limited during the tour, especially under crisis conditions. Then the officer will have to know how to exploit quickly the resources at his disposal. The deadline will be the prime factor in every action, and the officer must know where to go for assistance, both short- and long-range, and be keenly aware of the time restrictions that govern his response. He will usually have to make compromises between the desirable and the practicable to satisfy the requirement of the moment.

To help ease the pressure and increase the reliability of his staff submissions, the officer may turn to the historical office for guidance and assistance. The professional military historian may not always have all the answers, but he does know the best places to look for them. When time permits, the historian may also be requested to prepare historical background material for staff studies and reports, especially those of major importance. During crises the staff officer may encounter the historian on the job when they work side by side covering the emergency. With luck the officer will have a draft account of the events on hand shortly after they come to an end.

All in all, the staff officer will be exposed to military history frequently during his tour, and often, consciously or subconsciously, will be applying his knowledge to the solution of his daily problems. For those who plan to reach the top, military history can be a valuable aid.