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USAFA Harmon Memorial Lecture #17 "The American Revolution Today" John W. Shy, 1974

"The American Revolution Today," as a title, must sound vaguely familiar. Surely we have read or heard this one before, somewhere, in the Sunday magazine section or on television. If the title seems banal, that was the intention, because it seemed more appropriate here not to strive for profundity or esoteric reinterpretation of the American Revolution as an armed struggle, but to deal directly with certain aspects of the Revolutionary War so obvious and so elementary that they are easily overlooked. The first, perhaps most important, aspect has to do with the relationship between a war fought two hundred years ago and now.

"Relevance" was never a strong word. Vague, and a little soft at the center, it simply could not carry the load placed upon it during the 1960s when a silent, accepting generation gave way to one that was vocal and full of doubt. And now the word is exhausted. Sophisticated people visibly react, wincing or smirking, when others use the word, as if the speaker were wearing an odd piece of clothing gone out of style. We (at least we in history departments, who have suffered during the last decade a hemorrhage of students to more obviously relevant disciplines like psychology and sociology) relish signs of a counterattack that will administer the coup de grace to "relevance, as in a sign tacked on a history office door: "The surest way not to find relevance," it said, "is to go looking for it." With a sigh of relief teachers of history watch enrollment figures bottom out, then begin to climb again, and they go back to teaching history, not trying to explain why history is worth studying.

And yet, that weak word, muttered and shouted by a generation of students already moving toward middle age, a generation that may never have thought carefully about what it was demanding when it demanded "relevance," makes a vital point. There ought to be a better, stronger, clearer word, but there isn't, so "relevance" has had to do what it could to make that vital point. The point is: historians inhabit two worlds, the world of the present, and the world of the past.1 And it is not just any "past" world but some particular location in time and space which each historian probably knows as well or better than he knows the world of the present. Most historians read the documents of the past more systematically and carefully than they read today's newspaper. They reconstruct the physical environment of the past with painstaking care, while usually taking their own almost for granted, often hardly noticing their immediate surroundings. The vital point, so feebly made by the cry for "relevance," is that these past and present worlds not only *ought* to connect, but they absolutely *do* connect, whether we like it, or are aware of it, or not. There is simply no escaping the subjective quality of historical study; "history" is memory, and the human mind is the inevitable filter through which every gritty historical fact either does, or does not, pass. We may smile wisely at those who still demand relevance; but then we go back to work, our present world subtly dictating the past time and place we choose for intensive study, dictating our priorities for research, dictating our preliminary hypotheses and our angle of attack, dictating when we can meet to talk about history, who our audience will be, and even suggesting what that audience would like to hear.

Consider, briefly, how the historical "present" has effected study and understanding of the Revolutionary past. Historians who lived through the great Civil War focused on the Constitution, that miraculous and delicate achievement which had bound together disparate, scattered groups of people; for these historians of the nineteenth century, the Revolution was primarily the story of the long road to the Philadelphia Convention of 1787, and the question lurking in the backs of their minds was how the

Constitution could contain the forces of disruption which threatened the Republic in the 1860s and 1870s. For a later generation of historians, those who lived and worked through an era of great reform and great depression, of Woodrow Wilson and the two Roosevelts, the concerns were different. In both the causes and the consequences of the Revolution, they looked for the effects of class conflict and economic interest, and of course they found them. For a still later generation, profoundly affected by the Second World War and working under the influence of the Cold War, the chief concern seems again very different: it was with the essential unity and goodness of eighteenth- century American society, not contrived at Philadelphia in 1787 so much as sprung from the basic equality and security of life, and from the basic soundness of belief, in colonial and Revolutionary America, giving the nation the strength and purpose- then and now- needed both to defend itself and to lead the world by example. Needless to say, the most recent generation of historians has begun to raise questions about this view, less by direct refutation than by exploration of some of the disturbing sides of life in eighteenth-century America-slavery, poverty, violence, Indian relations, and the place of women, to mention a few.2

But our focus is not the Revolution as a whole, but the role played by armed force in the Revolution. More than a decade ago there was noted a revival of interest in the military side of the Revolution.3 Between the Civil War and the Second World War historians had moved away from the study of military history. Many, reacting to the horrors of the First World War, simply found war a repulsive subject (which of course it is), and others thought (not unreasonably) that for too long excessive attention to military history had caused other important aspects of the past to be neglected. But with the Second World War and the Cold War came another shift.4 War again seemed interesting and its study respectable. By looking at a few examples of the forms taken by this revived interest in military history, we can see again how the mid-twentieth century "present" and the Revolutionary "past" have interacted.

Piers Mackesy of Oxford gave us a radically new perspective on the Revolutionary War by putting it into a global context and by making us see it from London; King George III and his cabinet could not match the British performance of 1939-1945, but it is hard to imagine Mackesy's book without the Second World War to serve as a concealed analytical framework.5 My own study of the British Army in America before the Revolution, and what some reviewers thought excessive preoccupation with the confusion and contradictions in British military policy for America before 1775, was at least partly a product of what seemed the appalling confusion of American military policy under Eisenhower, the dreary interservice wrangling, and contemporary failure to think through basic assumptions about the use of force.6 Ira Gruber of Rice, in his study of the unfortunate Howe brothers, focused on the actual use of force; and if I do not misunderstand him, he has been fascinated by the effort to make war an extension of politics in the formulation of Clausewitz, whose reputation as a military thinker rose in the course of the great strategic debate of the later 1950s and early 1960s (when Professor Gruber was doing his work) over how, after Korea, the United States could best make war an effective political instrument.7 Whether his study of the Howes contains any lesson for our own times, or whether the author ever thought about Clausewitz, Flexible Response, and all that, only Professor Gruber can say.

Don Higginbotham of North Carolina is a last example. Daniel Morgan, the subject of his first book, was not exactly a guerrilla, but he certainly was irregular in many respects, and he was the kind of effective and charismatic soldier who turns up in the revolutionary wars of our own time.8 Vietnam, especially, created an interest in seeing the American Revolution as a truly revolutionary war, with guerrilla tactics, popular attitudes, and even counterinsurgent methods getting new attention. Higginbotham's next book, a general history of the war, gave full scope to these "revolutionary" elements in the military conflict, but he also pointed a still more recent trend- toward interest in the deeper effects of the war on American society. More than any previous military historian, Higginbotham began to ask particularly about what mobilization of manpower and ruinous inflation did to people, how the Revolutionary War as a protracted, strenuous public event affected thousands and thousands of private lives. Somehow, as I compare the air fare to Colorado Springs this year with what it was in 1969, when I last attended the symposium, or watch my own personal response to the televised ordeal of Watergate, I find those few pages in which Higginbotham discusses wartime psychology and the effects of runaway inflation highly relevant.9 It seems strange that military historians have waited so long to study war, not merely as a series of maneuvers and battles, but as a kind of revolution in its own right.

Now it is important to be as clear as possible about how the historian's own present world impinges on his understanding of the past. The present has a powerful effect on what seems most relevant, but it does not dictate conclusions, although it may nudge those conclusions in a certain direction. Mackesy thought that Britain might have won the war had it persevered a year or so longer. Gruber thought the Howes virtually lost the war because they let their political role fatally compromise their military performance. Other historians, equally fascinated by the global nature of the conflict and by the interplay of politics and strategy, would strenuously disagree. The danger that historians will tell lies about the past in order to serve present political or ideological ends is less than the risk that, by responding to the lure of relevance, we will distort the past by being one-sided. To have many students of British strategy and military policy but too few of the grass-roots American response to wartime pressures will produce a lopsided understanding of the Revolutionary War. But that kind of risk is not peculiar to the study of history and the perils posed by a quest for historical relevance; it goes with simply being alive and trying to understand anything.

What then is the right approach to the American Revolutionary War today? My audience is mainly military, brought together primarily by a felt need to do something about the two-hundredth anniversary of the Revolution. Military professionals hope, like militant students, to learn something relevant. Over us all looms the Bicentennial, so far an embarrassing mess, in part because so far too few have had the heart or displayed the imagination required to celebrate it properly. Our lack of heart, and our paucity of imagination, are themselves symptoms of a "present" that seems all the more disheartening when we look at the evidence of energy and brilliance two hundred years ago. And so, speaking directly to soldiers, who seek guidance, and impelled but disconcerted by the Bicentennial occasion and its doomed desire for profundity, what is there to say about the Revolutionary War? Or is there anything to say?

We can begin to find an answer if we let ourselves be guided by the pressures of relevance. The military, like all other professions outside of the academic world, seeks knowledge not for its own sake but for its professional uses. Humbly consulting experts, soldiers try to pick out the professionally useful in whatever the experts convey. Are there lessons, or is there other useful knowledge, for the American military professional in the story of the Revolution? It is a fair question, better brought into the open than suppressed by academic impatience with utilitarian concerns.

The other side of "today"- the Bicentennial- does not point so clearly. But let me try to define the problem: it is mainly in the sense of remoteness that we feel from the Revolution. It is not only a problem of distance in time. For many people today, the Civil War has an immediacy, a palpability, that the Revolution lacks, however much we may admire George Washington, Monticello, or early American furniture. Lincoln lives, but Washington is a monument. The heart of the matter is in the very success of the Revolution. The Civil War, like every other major event in American history including (we now begin to see) the Second World War, has a tragic, human, two-sided quality that the Revolution seems to lack. Whatever was done or decided in 1775 or 1777 or 1781, the outcome justified it, and the whole complex of events takes on a smooth, self-contained character that makes getting the right emotional grip on the subject very difficult. The American nation was a success story from the beginning; the nation began with the Revolution, quod erat demonstrandum. In short, finding something useful to the military profession, and breaking down the barrier posed by time and success,

is the task imposed on me by "today." Let us start with the most basic facts, and try to work our way toward some useful and satisfying result.

The first fact about the Revolutionary War is that the British lost it. And the inevitable question follows, for soldier as well as historian, why? It is easy to assemble a whole catalogue of answers: military failure to adjust to American conditions; blunders by the field commanders, incompetence and corruption in London; stubborn and obtuse misunderstanding of American grievances by both Crown and Parliament; and collapse of British public support for the war after Yorktown. But a second look at each of these answers raises a new set of questions.

From early on, the British and their German and American allies seem as adept at irregular warfare, at the tactics of hit and run, as do the rebels. For every tactical blunder like Bennington there is a comparable rebel blunder. British tactics might have been better, sooner, but it is hard to put much weight on the tactical factor.10 The quality of high command in America is another matter. From the faulty planning of the march to Concord in 1775, through the Yorktown fiasco in 1781, British field commanders made serious mistakes. More than anything, they repeatedly misjudged the American military and popular response. In retrospect, it is easy to say what they should or might have done. But as I look at the men and their decisions, several things occur to me: one is that none of these men-Gage, Howe, Clinton, Carleton, Cornwallis, even Burgoyne-was notably incompetent.11 Their military accomplishments justified giving each of them high military command. Second, a few mistakes- like the failure to seal off the southeastern exit from Trenton on January 2, 1777- are the kinds of lapses that inevitably occur in every war, that every commander in history has been guilty of committing or permitting. Third, the other mistakes- like not destroying Washington's army in the autumn of 1776, like expecting to reach Albany from Canada without too much trouble in the summer of 1777, like expecting to re-establish a sea line of communication from the Virginia tidewater in 1781- seem reasonably calculated risks, which of course in the event were miscalculated. That historians can still argue vigorously about these decisions suggests that the commanders themselves, however hapless they may have been, were at least not stupid or grossly incompetent. For example: Professor Gruber thinks Howe should have pursued Washington to destruction after the battle of Long Island in 1776.12 Hindsight strongly suggests that Gruber is right. But the length of the British casualty list at Bunker Hill, plus Howe's belief that the beaten American army would probably fall apart and his fear that pointless killing of the King's American subjects might have a boomerang effect, led him to play a catand-mouse game during those months after Long Island. A mistake, probably, but not a foolish or irresponsible one. We may hold high military commanders to an unrealistic, Napoleonic standard; when they fail to meet the standard, we may judge them too quickly as incompetents. British commanders, as a group, were not unusually bad, and I think it is a mistake to tie the can of British defeat to their tails.13

As for the situation in Britain itself, Lord George Germain and the Earl of Sandwich may have been unattractive people, but the sheer size of the unprecedented British financial, administrative, and logistical effort which Germain and Sandwich, as the responsible cabinet ministers for army and navy, mobilized and directed suggests that corruption and confusion in London is at most a marginal part of our explanation for failure.14 Likewise, the crucial collapse of British public opinion after Yorktown needs to be seen against fairly solid popular support for the war at the outset, even among many who had been critical of British policy in America before 1775, and a miraculous revival of that solidarity when it was threatened in the aftermath of Burgoyne's defeat by French entry into the war, by the danger of a cross-Channel attack, and by an almost revolutionary economic and political crisis in the home islands themselves.15 Finally, whether greater political flexibility in the cabinet and House of Commons, more generous and timely concessions to American demands, might have split and dissipated the revolutionary movement, is a fascinating but impossible question to answer. Certainly American leaders were afraid of just such an event. The timing of the Declaration of Independence was, in part, a congressional coup intended to foreclose serious negotiations which the British seemed ready to undertake.16 But the basic British line on negotiation was that previous flexibility had been repeatedly misread by Americans as weakness and irresolution and that only major concessions, extracted by the pressure of armed force from the Americans themselves, could mean the start of a negotiated peace. A wrongheaded position, perhaps, but one which we, of all people, ought to be able to recognize as not completely unreasonable.

Should we conclude then that the root cause of British defeat was not so much in the failure of British leaders or British people but in the circumstances of the war; or that Britain's objective was simply not attainable without great good luck or divine intervention, or that there was a radical disjunction between British ends and British means? Or were the British trapped in a set of basic assumptions about their problem that made the American Revolutionary War a British Tragedy?

"Tragedy" is a word with a seductive ring to it, especially when the tragedy happened to someone else, long ago. But if we stay close to the facts, we find some knowledgeable, relatively detached observers on the spot who did not see the British problem in tragic terms. They thought the British had a good chance to win, and they believed the margin between winning and losing lay well within the available range of military power and strategic perception. To take only one example: Col. Louis Duportail was one of the ablest French officers to serve the American cause. He became chief engineer and rose to the rank of major general in the Continental Army. He was also a spy for the French Minister of War. In a long, brutally candid letter written after Burgoyne's surrender and on the eve of Valley Forge, a letter that never reached its destination because the British intercepted it, Duportail stated that the British could win if they replaced Gen. Howe, which they did, and if they could maintain an army in America of 30,000 men, a figure actually surpassed in 1776 and not maintained subsequently because forces were dispersed.17 Duportail based his estimate on weaknesses in the American situation, which I will turn to in a moment. Deciding whether Duportail and some others who agreed with him were exactly right is less important than seeing that such opinions existed. Major American defeats in Canada in 1775, around New York City in 1776, on the Brandywine in 1777, at Charleston and Camden in South Carolina in 1780, as well as the collapse of the American position in New Jersey in 1776, later in large areas of the South, and still later in the trans-Appalachian West, suggest that we must take Duportail seriously. The British lost, but they were fighting within that zone of contingencies where both winning and losing are not unlikely outcomes.

And what of the American Revolutionaries? The second most obvious fact about the Revolutionary War seems to be that the rebels won. But a safer, more accurate statement is that they did not lose. If we look closely at the American side of the war, we see a very mixed pictureimpressive in some ways, but very unedifying in others. From the outburst of enthusiasm in the spring of 1775, genuine support for the war appears to have declined through the next six years. The service and pension files in the National Archives indicate that a large proportion of the white male population, and a significant part of the black male population as well, performed active military service, but only a tiny part of the population performed truly extended military service.18 People seemed to get tired. They got tired of serving, and they got tired of contributing. Of course, they got angry when British or Hessian or Tory troops misbehaved, but they also grew weary of being bullied by local committees of safety, by corrupt deputy assistant commissaries of supply, and by bands of ragged strangers with guns in their hands calling themselves soldiers of the Revolution. They got very tired of worthless and counterfeit money. Duportail, for one, also thought Americans were soft. He said that supply shortages were wrecking the Revolution, not shortages of munitions but of things like linen, sugar, tea, and liquor. They were not, he said, a warlike people, but were used to living comfortably without working too hard. Of course the European peasant was his standard of comparison, but those peasants- the poorest, most miserable and desperate, toughest ones- comprised the backbone of every European army. Duportail, himself committed fully to the American side, told the French government, "There is a hundred times more enthusiasm for this Revolution in any Paris

cafe than in all the colonies together." Surely he exaggerated, but too much other evidence supports the line of his argument to reject it out of hand.19

This realm of simple and obvious facts in which we have been operating is slippery. American Revolutionaries did not win the war; but they did not lose it. What do these words mean, and what is the point of the distinction? Clearly, they mustered enough strength from internal and foreign sources of support not to be defeated decisively, and they hung on long enough to discourage the British government and people. Though not beaten as the Confederacy in 1865 and Germany in 1945 were beaten, neither did they win militarily as the Union won and the Allies won. The point of the distinction has to do with the character of the struggle, which went on for more than seven years. In characterizing the war from the Revolutionary viewpoint, what stands out is weakness, part of which Duportail noted, the rest of which was not yet apparent to him.

In discussing American Revolutionary weakness, we must be careful. There is danger of distortion and exaggeration. Obviously, the rebels could have been much weaker than they were. Moreover, military historians are too apt to look for someone to blame. As we asked about the British, so we ask about American revolutionaries: were the generals incompetent, Congress irresponsible, the States selfish, and the people apathetic? These may be the wrong questions, leading us to irrelevant answers. If politicians squabbled endlessly, if commanders repeatedly committed elementary military mistakes, if States ignored Congress while the Army damned it, if ordinary people quit and went home or hid their cows or even packed up and went to Vermont or across the mountains to get away from the war and its ceaseless demands- and all these things did in fact happen frequently in the later years of the war- then it is beside the point to blame the politicians, the soldiers, or the people. One wonders why the whole affair did not simply collapse, what kept it going so long.

Some good American patriots at the time wondered the same thing. Did war take on a life of its own, like the Thirty Years war as portrayed in Berchtold Brecht's "Mother Courage," with people virtually forgetting what it was about, and trying to do no more than survive, even if survival meant collaborating with the impersonal machinery of mobilization? That is not the way we like to think about the origins of the American nation, but there is evidence to support such a view (though the Revolution never attained the far-flung ferocity of that most brutal and protracted of the religious wars). The years from 1776 to 1782 might indeed be recounted as horror stories of terrorism, rapacity, mendacity, and cowardice, not to blame our ancestors for these things, but to remind us what a war fought by the weak must look like. The bedrock facts of the American Revolutionary struggle, especially after the euphoric first year, are not pretty.

But everything turned out all right. The British went home, even the French went home; thousands of German prisoners of war blended into the Pennsylvania landscape, and only the Spanish, the Indians, and black slaves were left to deal as best they could with the victorious Revolutionaries. How a national polity so successful, and a society so relatively peaceful, could emerge from a war so full of bad behavior; including perhaps a fifth of the population actively treasonous (that is, loyal to Crown), must be a puzzle.20

Duportail, like many other observers on all sides, thought that the United States would split into fragments once the war was over. The Hessian Col. Dincklage was even more pessimistic as he looked into the future:

They may have peace but not happiness when the war is over. It matters little whether the Americans win or lose. Presently this country is the scene of the most cruel events. Neighbors are on opposite sides, children are against their fathers. Anyone who differs with the opinions of Congress in thought or in speech is regarded as an enemy and turned over to the hangman, or else he must flee. We give these refugees food, and support most of them with arms. They go on patrol for us in small groups and . . . into their home districts to take revenge by pillaging, murdering, and burning. If peace comes after an English victory, discord between the two parties will flare up underneath the ashes and nobody will be able to resolve it. If the rebels should win, they will break their necks, one by one. What misery the people have plunged themselves into.21

Dincklage, like Duportail, was too pessimistic and his prediction was wrong. Yet even the most prominent leaders of the Revolution had similar fears.

A brilliant young staff officer, Alexander Hamilton, after several years of watching the course of the war from Washington's headquarters, confided to his closest friend:

"...Our countrymen have all the folly of the ass and all the passiveness of the sheep in their compositions. They are determined not to be free and they can neither be frightened, discouraged nor persuaded to change their resolution. If we are saved, France and Spain must save us. I have the most pigmy-feelings at the idea, and I almost wish to hide my disgrace in universal ruin."22

Thomas Jefferson, who saw most of the war from Philadelphia and Virginia, and whose optimism allegedly contrasts with Hamilton's cold-eyed conservatism, occasionally revealed similar fears, especially once the unifying British threat had passed:

"I know no danger so dreadful and so probable as that of internal contests.... The states will go to war with each other in defiance of Congress; one will call in France to her assistance; another Great Britain, and so we shall have all the wars of Europe brought to our own doors."

Jefferson predicted that "From the conclusion of this war we shall be going down hill."23 Having faced apathy, riot, and even secessionism as governor of Virginia when he had tried to mobilize the State against British invasion in 1781, Jefferson had reason to worry about the postwar prospects of the United States.24 Jefferson, at his gloomiest, sounded not unlike Dincklage and Duportail.

Why were they all wrong? When Shay's Rebellion broke out in 1786, and again when the Whiskey Rebellion erupted in 1794, many thought that the beginning of the end had come. As predicted, the unwieldy, centrifugal Republic, like Poland, was collapsing into anarchy. Even Hamilton and Jefferson, as emergent party leaders in the 1790s, were acting out the scenario both had written: sectional conflict and violent rhetoric followed by apparent appeals for foreign intervention and cries of treason. But it did not happen. Affluence- what Duportail disparaged as the soft life- is part of the explanation; no matter how aggrieved or deprived, no one was likely to starve in America, so insurrection seemed to lack the desperate edge that it could have in England, Ireland, or France.25 But more than mere affluence explains post-Revolutionary success.

Part, perhaps the most important part, of the explanation lies in the character of the war itself and in contemporary perceptions of the armed struggle. Bitter experience of fighting from weakness had all but obliterated the naive optimism of 1775 and had sensitized Americans to their own political peril. Fearful prophecies, based on dismal fact, functioned to defeat those prophecies by channeling political energies into the struggle against anarchy. Leaders thought, talked, and even compromised, shrinking from the last act of the scenario that they knew so well; people listened, talked back, occasionally resisted, but ultimately acquiesced, at least for the crucial season when the future of the Republic hung in the balance.

Nothing was feared more by leaders in the postwar era than disunion, and most people felt the same way. Disunion meant failure and disgrace, so widely predicted and expected, and the fear itself

generated extraordinary efforts to prevent it. All had learned the lessons of a dirty revolutionary war that had ended not with Napoleonic victories or massive defections from the enemy armies but with ragged unpaid American soldiers drifting down the Hudson valley to sign on as sailors in the ships which were evacuating British forces, while American officers back at Newburgh halfheartedly planned a coup d'etat to get the money owed them by Congress.26 The Revolution, as an armed struggle, ended with a whimper.

Where in all this are the lessons for the soldier and the Bicentennial message? For the Bicentennial there is only a greater sense of reality, of immediacy, of (I hope) honesty in looking at the Revolutionary War as it actually was. In a way, the Bicentennial itself, and our anxiety about it, are a continuation of the national myth which began in the 1780s, when the elation of ultimate victory combined with the sour memories of widespread human weakness and depravity as revealed in the seven-years struggle, to produce a wonderfully creative period in American politics. The ink was barely dry on the Treaty of Paris before myth and reality about the Revolutionary War were becoming entwined. The Bicentennial is indeed a birthday, and we all know the strange emotional effects induced by birthday parties. Being born the way we were was glorious? We think. Or was it? Or is it? Much about the event called the Revolutionary War had been very painful and was unpleasant to remember; only the outcome was unqualifiedly pleasant. So memory, as ever; began to play tricks with the event, which is not always a bad thing, though it makes the historian's task difficult.

And the lessons for soldiers? The most important lesson may be more philosophical than practical. Soldiers, like other professionals, learn to see themselves as the center of the activity which defines their professionalism. But the use of force is a weird activity. What most impresses me about the War of the Revolution is the sort of thing that professional military education does not dwell on because it does not seem very practical and even sounds vaguely defeatist. It moves the commander from stage center into the chorus, if not, like Tolstoy's Kutuzov, into the orchestra or the audience. It reminds all of us, civilians as well as soldiers, of the deeply relativistic and contingent nature of violent encounters. Killing is a terribly easy thing to measure, and the results of killing called "victory" and "defeat" seem al most equally unequivocal. The British lost, so the Americans won. But when we stop fixating on military failure and success, and start scrutinizing that dynamic, unstable process of collectively trying to kill and not get killed which George Patton labeled war, then the commander and his intentions and decisions become no more than one in a set of complexly interacting elements.27 Because it may be an extreme case, the Revolution drives home the lesson that in war reality always seems to escape perception, results outrun intentions, and the final outcome is much more than the sum total of decisions made at headquarters. It may be a bleak sort of lesson for the professional soldier; but realism is better than illusion, and the lesson, if properly regarded, carries a certain cold comfort.

1. Among the views of the many historians and philosophers of history who have discussed this point, the most stimulating and instructive are the early statements by Carl L. Becker, "Everyman His Own Historian," American Historical Review, XXXVII (1932), 221-232; the extreme statement that "relevance" not only does but ought to dictate by Edward Hallett Carr, What is History? (New York, 1963); and the iconoclastic second thoughts of I H. Hexter, particularly "The Historian's Day," in his Reappraisals in History Evanston, III., 1962) and "The Historian and His Society: A Sociological Inquiry-Perhaps," in his Doing History (Bloomington, Ind., 1971).

2. An excellent brief survey of historical writing on the Revolution is by Wesley Frank Craven, "The Revolutionary Era," in The Reconstruction of American History, edited by John Higham (New York, 1963); longer and more recent is the introduction by Jack Greene to his Reinterpretation of the American Revolution (New York, 1967); one view of the younger generation is expressed by Jesse Lemisch, "The American Revolution Seen from the Bottom Up," in Towards a New Past: Dissenting Essays in American History, edited by Barton I Bernstein (New York, 1968). 3. Don Higginbotham, "American Historians and the Military History of the American Revolution," American Historical Review, LXX (1964), 18-34.

4. Wesley Frank Craven, Why Military History? (US Air Force Academy, 1959).

5. Piers Mackesy, The War for America, 177S-1783 (Cambridge, Mass., 1964).

6. John Shy, Toward Lexington: The Role of the British Army in the Coming of the American Revolution (Princeton, 1965).

7. Ira D.Gruber, The Howe Brothers and the American Revolution (New York, 1972). On the new appreciation of Clausewitz, see, for example, Bernard Brodie, Strategy in the Missile Age (Princeton, 1959).

8. Don Higginbotham, Daniel Morgan: Revolutionary Rifleman (Chapel Hill, NC, 1961).

9. Don Higginbotham, The War of American Independence (New York, 1971).

10. The best picture of the "little war" of constant skirmishing, raid, and ambush is in the journal of Carl Leopold von Baurmeister, Revolution in America, translated and edited by Bernhard A. Uhlendorf (New Brunswick, NJ, 1957).

11. On British military and naval leadership, see George A. Billias (editor), George Washington's Opponents (New York, 1969).

12. Gruber, Howe Brothers, 112-126.

13. In addition to the works already mentioned, William B. Willeox, Portrait of a General: Sir Henry Clinton in the War of Independence (New York, 1964), and Franklin and Mary Wickwire, Cornwallis: The American Adventure (Boston, 1970), are important.

14. Mackesy, War for America. A forthcoming book by A. R. Bowler probes the question of corruption and British strategy more fully than any previous study.

15. Herbert Butterfield, George III, Lord North, and the People, 1779-80 (London, 1949).

16. Evidence that the timing of the Declaration of Independence was in part intended to block negotiations with the British is in Weldon A. Brown, Empire or Independence: A Study in the Failure of Reconciliation, 1774-1783 (Baton Rouge, 1941), 90-107. See also George Washington to John Augustine Washington, Philadelphia, 31 May 1776, The Writings of George Washington, edited by John C. Fitzpatrick, vol V (Washington, 1932), 91-92.

17. A copy of the letter from Duportail to the Minister of War, the Comte de Saint- Germain, dated at the Whitemarsh camp, November 12, 1777, is in the papers of Sir Henry Clinton in the William L. Clements Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan. A summary of the letter is in the papers of the Earl of Shelburne, then in political opposition, also in the Clements Library. A published translation by Arthur P. Watts, based on another copy in the British Public Record Office, is in Pennsvlvania History, 1(1934), 101-106. The summary in the Shelburne papers indicates that the letter was intercepted in the English Channel, which Duportail himself guessed (see Elizabeth S. Kite, Brigadier-General Louis Lebegue Duportail [Baltimore, 1933], 59). Duportail was Minister of War early in the French Revolution, later fled to the United States, and died in 1802 on his way to join Napoleon.

18. In fact, pension files exaggerate the amount of longer service because the pension law of 1818 required a minimum of nine months service with Continental forces, and the law of 1832 required a minimum of six months with the militia. The large number who served even less than these minimum periods is apparent only in antiquarian local studies, like that by Howard K. Sanderson, Lynn [Mass/in the Revolution, 2 vol (Boston, 1909).

19. See, for example, the entries from 1779 onward in Extracts from the Diary of Christopher Marshall edited by William I Duane (Albany, 1877).

20. The best estimate of numbers of Loyalists is Paul H. Smith, "The American Loyalists: Notes on their Organization and Numerical Strength," William and Mary Quarterly 3rd series, XXV (1968), 259-277.

21. Undated letter quoted in Ernst Kipping, The Hessian View of America, 1776-1783, translated by B. A. Uhlendorf (Monmouth Beach, NJ, 1971), 34-35.

22. To John Laurens, [Ramapo, NJ], June 30, 1780, The Papers of Alexander Hamilton, edited by Harold C. Syrelt and Jacob E. Cooke, vol II (New York, 1961), 347-348.

23. To Edmund Randolph, Baltimore, February 15, 1783, The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, edited by Julian P. Boyd, vol VI (Princeton, 1952), 248. The prediction about "going down hill" appears in his Notes On the State of Virginia, edited by William Peden (New York, 1972), 161. The Notes were written in 1781.

24. Jefferson Papers, V, 455, 513, 556, 583-584, 593, 622, et passim.

25. Hannah Arendt, On Revolution, (New York, 1963), stresses the absence of a "social question" in the American Revolution.

26. Lt. Benjamin Gilbert to his father, New Windsor, NY, [June or July], 1783, Benjamin Gilbert letterbook, Clements Library. On the Newburgh officers' "coup," there is Richard H. Kohn, "The Inside History of the Newburgh Conspiracy; America and the Coup d'Etat," William and Mary Quarterly, 3rd series, XXVI I (1970), 187-220; Paul David Nelson, "Horatio Gates at Newburgh, 1783: A Misunderstood Role," with a rebuttal by Richard H. Kuhn, ibid., XXIX (1972), 143-158; and C. Edward Skeen, "The Newburgh Conspiracy Reconsidered," with a rebuttal by Richard H. Kohn, ibid., XXXI (1974), 273-298.

27. This definition of war is in Maj. George S. Patton, Jr.'s unpublished thesis of 1932 in the Army War College archives, acc no 387-52, p.46. The full passage is, "The guiding principle of [military] organization should be the endeavor to devise means of killing without getting killed."

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