

BOOK REVIEWS

THE REPUBLICAN ERA: 1869-1901. A STUDY IN ADMINISTRATIVE HISTORY. BY LEONARD D. WHITE with the assistance of JEAN SCHNEIDER. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1958. Pp. ix, 406. \$6.00.

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This book is the final one in the series of four studies in the administrative history of our national government to which Leonard White dedicated the later years of his life. More than the earlier volumes (*The Federalists*, *The Jeffersonians*, *The Jacksonians*) the present one may profitably be read as a separate study.

Early in his long career of teaching and research, in fact, in the preface to the first edition of his textbook which appeared in 1926, White declared that the primary emphasis of his work was on administrative organization, personnel and management, rather than on law. This emphasis prevails in the present work. If justification is needed, it is amply provided in the general neglect which the study of our administrative experience, in the sense used by White, has suffered. Some valuable pioneering has been undertaken in our time by such scholars as Lloyd Short and Gustavus A. Weber; and more studies, some stimulated by White, are appearing. And for the period with which this book deals, there are the classic essays by Henry Adams, to which White also refers, as well as the penetrating later appraisals in chapters 7 and 16-27 of *The Education of Henry Adams*.

But White and Miss Schneider have culled the Archives here again to our advantage. The final third of the book, in which the narrative records the emergent new functions reflecting the development of the applied sciences and the growth of economic interdependence, and the resultant need for reform in civil service policy, is a uniquely valuable contribution. It begins with the passage of the first legislation in 1853 (which is also significantly the year of the Northcote-Trevelyan report in Great Britain on which subsequent development of the civil service merit system was based in that country), and continues through the work of Jenckes, the Act of 1871, and the Pendleton Act, which, as Adams said in his *Education*, was "an attempt to correct a vice that should never have been allowed to be born." It is here that the reader most keenly appreciates the author's special qualifications as a man who gave a major part of his creative effort, both in academic posts and in public positions, to the civil service in our own

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day. This is history from the inside, in which White as a Civil Service Commissioner describes the administration of legislation which he himself was called upon to administer fifty years later.

The earlier chapters give substance, setting and interpretation to White's account of the civil service question. He begins with one of general characterization of the administrative system as we emerged from the Civil War.

"During the thirty years from Grant to McKinley, two great controversies dominated the *administrative* scene. One involved the rejuvenation of executive power and leadership after the impeachment of President Andrew Johnson and the surrender of President Ulysses S. Grant to the Senate. The second was concerned with civil service reform, a battle that had an important if indirect bearing on the fortunes of executive power, on the nature of political parties, and on the standards of political morality." (p. 17).

But "the thirty-odd years from 1869 to 1901 had produced almost no interest in administration other than reform." (p. 19). The period was one, in Adams' word, of "tinkering"—although "the system of 1789 had broken down," when measured by the domestic and international problems that confront us. The lack of a concept of executive or of legislative responsible leadership, and the widely prevailing view of government policy as an aspect of private and speculative enterprise, were interrelated.

In two chapters, White describes the resultant chaos as "The Struggle for Power" in terms of President and Congress, and Congress and Administration; in two more, he treats "Congress and Departmental Business" and "The President and Departmental Business." In all this he searches, in keeping with his general conception of administration, for the appearance of some idea and practice of general administrative responsibility and leadership in a Presidency staffed to meet such responsibility throughout the executive branch. But while "the curve of presidential leadership was upward" (p. 18), the mind of the President "was directed primarily to Congress, not to the executive departments." (p. 392).

These, indeed, were tending to go their own way, as his seven chapters on the substantive departments and agencies illustrate in detail; and even within them, there was little sense of a corporate department. Root's proposals, at the end of the period surveyed, for a General Staff are indeed revolutionary (p. 153). Agriculture introduced on a larger scale a new and subsequently characteristic aspect of contemporary government—scientific services. "The key to the success of the Department of Agriculture consisted in the quality of its leadership and of its scientific corps." (p. 256).

White concludes that, "considering the state of administrative doctrine from 1870 to 1900, we must conclude that these were years of stagnation. . . . Reform was the dominant concern of the country, not the formulation of doctrine." (pp. 395-96).

There is little direct treatment of administrative law in this period in White's account, although larger constitutional issues relating to the Presidency and to the appointing and dismissal powers are given appropriate treatment and the case of *Ex parte Curtis*¹ is summarized (p. 334). Only at the close of the period was the work of Frank Goodnow in this field to shed its influence, and later still such distinguished works as John Dickinson's *Administrative Justice and the Supremacy of Law*. White's chapter on "Public Service Ethics," however, leads the reader into wide and fruitful aspects of our cultural history and invites the reappraisal of some of our present discontents. And as with the earlier volumes, there is a rich plenty in the discovery and citation of persons in the public service doing creative work that is some part of the base of our present civic life, a true "usable past." To read this final volume is to acquire a more mature conception of our institutions and culture. We owe this to one who marked out a strategy and practiced tactics of research with deliberation, and pursued both with great industry, integrity, and enjoyment.

THE MARCH OF CONQUEST. THE GERMAN VICTORIES IN WESTERN EUROPE, 1940. BY TELFORD TAYLOR. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1958. Pp. xiv, 460. \$7.50.

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In the spring and summer of 1940 it looked to the world as though nothing could halt the Nazi "march of conquest." Under the "inspired" strategic direction of Hitler and his generals, the Wehrmacht was sweeping through Scandinavia, the Low Countries, and France with a speed which took the breath away. The tactical brilliance of the German military forces appeared to make them unbeatable. Even in retrospect we tend to view this as a period of darkness—the beginning rather than the end of a long series of Allied reverses. Mr. Taylor, however, now offers convincing arguments that, at least in the strategic sense, this was the turning point of the war (p. 366). Far from being great strategists, Hitler and the professional soldiers of the German High Command were inflicted with a kind of myopia which clouded their objectives and launched them upon a series of strategic blunders which could not be offset by the tactical efficiency of the war machine they had created. These blunders ultimately cost them the war by causing them to neglect England at the only time when her defeat might have been possible.

1. 106 U.S. 371 (1882).

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Although the German leaders were agreed that Allied surrender was the desired goal, they were so taken up with the day-to-day course of conquest that they failed to consider how their march was to be brought to a successful conclusion. They *hoped* for England's capitulation as soon as she was isolated from the continent by the collapse of the maritime states, but their *plans* were not designed to make that hope a reality. Annihilation of the British armies in the Battle of France and an immediate amphibious assault across the Channel should have had top priority in German strategic planning from the outset, but they did not. The Navy was risked and severely battered in the invasion of Norway, thus making an assault on England virtually impossible, and preoccupation with the conquest of France permitted 350,000 allied troops to escape from Dunkirk to fight again. Only after the fall of France did the German leadership begin to consider what to do next. This delay was fatal, and Hitler was soon plunging into other ventures in the vain hope that England could be brought to her knees by German victories in North Africa, the Middle East and Russia.

The story told here is one of operational excellence brought to nought by incredible inefficiency and wrangling in the nation's political and military leadership. Years of bad relations between *Sword and Swastika*, which Mr. Taylor ably recounted in a previous volume of that name (1952), continued to haunt the German war machine in this period. Hitler's instability, his power to force through his own decisions, and his inability to prevent inter-service rivalries produced error and indecision. "By a strange but appropriate irony," Mr. Taylor says, "it was especially in the sphere of strategic decision-making, where by common supposition dictatorships are more swift, flexible, and cold-blooded than democracies, that the Reich was found wanting." (p. 373). Industrialists and Nazi politicians by their occupation policies wrecked any chance that Germany's enemies and the still neutral United States might let Hitler keep his conquests. The *Oberkommando der Wehrmacht* (OKW), the nation's "creaky super-command" structure, was unable to compel the three services—land, sea, and air—to function as a unit. The Navy, which was more strategic minded than the other services, and early saw the necessity of defeating England by battle rather than by terror, was without influence. The Luftwaffe under Hermann Goering insisted upon acting as it saw fit without regard to strategic operations as a whole. It was Goering, for example, who delayed tightening the ring at Dunkirk because he wanted a part in smashing the encircled forces from the air. The Army, however, was the senior service and ordinarily had its way. As a result the Wehrmacht was unbalanced. It had been created solely to overrun the continent and so was continent-bound in thought and action, unable to project itself beyond the coast because its reach was short and its endurance limited.

The author pulls no punches when he disagrees, as he frequently does, with the generals who fought the war and the historians who have recounted it. In the face of massive opinion to the contrary he denies that the initial

Gelb plan for attack in the West was a replica of Schlieffen's old plan (p. 161). He refuses to permit Halder to take credit for revising *Gelb*, and insists upon calling it the "Manstein variant" (pp. 177-78). In seeking the causes of the famous stop-order which made the Dunkirk evacuation possible, he does not permit himself the luxury of pinning the blame solely on one person as the German generals, Churchill and others have done. Instead he finds a variety of culprits: Hitler, Rundstedt, and Goering (pp. 255-56). A lawyer by training and profession, Mr. Taylor selects and marshals his evidence with care and presents it ably in these cases. Occasionally, it must be admitted, the reviewer looks in vain for sources to support minor points, but perhaps he should be content to rely on the conclusions of a man who has steeped himself in the literature of his subject. A vigorous analysis well documented in the main and always refreshingly presented probably justifies some license here and there.

It is only in the section on the "might-have-beens" (pp. 336 *passim*) that serious issues might be taken, if anyone could prove the "ifs" of history. This portion, going beyond the time limits of the story, is not always convincing to the historian. In speculating on whether *Sea Lion*, the projected invasion of England, might have succeeded, the author says: "In any event, it was not a project of desperation." (p. 362). And he cites as supporting evidence that the Army generals were prepared to undertake it. The Army, however, was willing to do so only on its own terms; that is, in such strength and on such a broad front that the Navy could not possibly have lifted and supported it. The Army was never prepared to execute *Sea Lion* on the restricted scale that the Navy considered feasible. When Mr. Taylor sticks to the facts rather than the fancies of history, however, his analyses are sound, and his prose always makes delightful reading. The scholarly apparatus—footnotes, appendices, maps and bibliography—are faultless. Altogether this is a worthy contribution to the literature of World War II.