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Footnotes

The Newsletter of FPRI's Wachman Center

Search

Teaching About the Military in American History: A History Institute for Teachers

By Trudy Kuehner, Reporter

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On March 24–25, 2007 FPRI's **Marvin Wachman Fund for International Education** hosted 44 teachers from 23 states across the country for a weekend of discussion on teaching about the Military in U.S. history. The Institute was held at and co-sponsored by the Cantigny First Division Museum in Wheaton, Ill. It was webcast to registrants worldwide (see **www.fpri.org/education/militaryushistory** for videocasts and texts of lectures).

The History Institute for Teachers is co-chaired by **David Eisenhower** and **Walter A. McDougall** and made possible by a grant from the Annenberg Foundation. Future history weekends include **Teaching Military History: Why and How**, also to be held at and co-sponsored by the First Division Museum.

Paul Herbert, Ph.D., Colonel, US Army (Ret.), Executive Director of the Cantigny First Division Foundation, welcomed participants to Cantigny. The Museum grounds were provided by the estate of Robert McCormick, editor-owner of the *Chicago Tribune* from 1911-55, a WWI veteran, and creator of the McCormick Tribune Foundation.

FPRI Senior Fellow David Eisenhower thanked the Annenberg Foundation for its generous and decisive support for these institutes, which bring together teachers from across the nation. He also expressed Americans' gratitude for the First Division, which continues to accrue honors in critical conflicts overseas.

W.W. Keen Butcher, an honored WWII veteran, member of FPRI's board of trustees, and benefactor of the **W.W. Keen Butcher Lecture Series on Military Affairs**, gave brief remarks, noting that it's a different world for today's military. In earlier U.S. wars, the enemy was identifiable; also, the power to destroy has drastically changed, increasing the terrorists' effectiveness; and independent judgment is required at a much lower level in this all-volunteer army. But from the organizational to the individual level, the military is meeting these ever higher expectations.

War and the Military in American History

Walter A. McDougall, professor of international relations at the University of Pennsylvania, observed that the U.S. was born in an armed revolution, saved in the Civil War, and achieved its Manifest Destiny and unprecedented world power largely through war. But most Americans are also loath to glorify war, and many imagine military service as alien to civilian values. If civilians are called to war, they deem it an interruption thrust upon the nation, an emergency to be gotten over with so that citizens can return to their lives. If, by contrast, professionals fill the ranks of their armed forces, then Americans tend to view them as a caste apart who sacrifice the blessings of civil society so that others may continue to enjoy them.

Americans like to believe that our winning record in war (except for Vietnam) was Providential, proof that our causes were just. And yet Americans imagine themselves a peace-loving people. A certain duality was inherent at the creation of the colonies. The Puritans were ready to fight if necessary for defense or expansion, New Englanders heartily supported the French and Indian Wars they later claimed they were dragged into, as did the Cavalier planters and indentured servants to the south. Indeed, except for the Quakers and German Mennonites, Americans always reacted with fury when anyone interfered with their pursuit of happiness.

The early Democratic Republicans professed to reject the idea that the Union's survival depended on a strong military,

but when they captured the presidency in 1801, they quickly learned otherwise. Thomas Jefferson slashed military spending but also founded the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, and his protege James Madison led the U.S. into its first discretionary war in 1812. Andrew Jackson understood the importance of a strong Navy, and when his protege James K. Polk waged the Mexican War, the professional Army and Navy distinguished themselves while the citizen militias performed miserably.

But Congress continued to slash defense budgets in peacetime, so that when the South seceded in 1861, the nation again went to war unready. Idealized notions of the actual performance of citizen-soldiers in the Civil War were reinforced over the next hundred years, and while the Army and Marines expanded over decades of repeated interventions in the Caribbean and Pacific, when big wars broke out it was volunteer and conscripted civilians who filled the ranks of instant armies and navies. Then, during the second half of the 20th century, came the transition from industrial-age warfare to the "revolution in military affairs," which places a premium on small, highly trained and mobile strike forces armed with high-tech weapons.

Simultaneously came the advent of protracted conflict and limited war. From 1946-91, whenever the Cold War turned hot, as in Korea, Americans were asked to fight and die with no expectation of early or total victory. Protracted conflict made expensive, frustrating demands on our nation. It also requires a professional, high-tech military. The U.S. today is defended by the postmodern equivalents of Roman legionnaires and centurions.

Teaching About the Military: Some Basics

Paul Herbert observed that while many teachers are apprehensive of teaching military history, which is terra incognita to them, in fact one can teach military history without being a soldier. And to leave the military out of the national story is to degrade that story. Teaching military history is also important to preserving civilian control of the military. We are a fortunate not to fear our military as citizens of many other nations do. We cannot take for granted civilian responsibility for military affairs.

To know about war is not to advocate war. Some of the disappearance of military history appears to stem from distaste for the subject, a manifestation of the peace-loving side of our nature. But to know about military affairs is not to be an advocate or a recruiter.

The ability to defend the country is a requirement of sovereignty. Our constitution seeks to provide for the common defense and the secure the blessings of liberty for the nation. It separates the powers of government over the military and war-making. Students need to appreciate past and potential stresses on these ideals.

Our armed forces have provided both services they were formally prepared for and also played other important roles, such as facilitating the expansion of the U.S. across this continent by exploration, engineering, and other auxiliary services. The U.S. Army on the verge of WWI was designed to protect this continent from a foreign invader. Most of its regiments were deployed along the U.S.-Mexican border to stabilize it from the effects of the Mexican Revolution. When President Wilson undertook in the spring of 1917 to send a division to Europe, we had no divisions. Four regiments were dispatched from Texas, and the First Division was literally organized on the docks of Hoboken.

The recent focus in the discipline of history on cultural and social issues is enriching, but it has pushed aside diplomatic and political history and the actual conduct of war. A secondary school teacher should be comfortable with the main terms of warfare, such as strategy, operations, and tactics. Logistics is hugely important. You've got no military power if you can't deploy it where it's needed and sustain it while it's there. Combat Power is a given military unit's capability to do in a given environment what it was designed to do. Comparing two opponents' combat power yields a force ratio. It's not just numbers, it's numerous subjective and objective factors: what are they armed with, how are they led, when were they trained, how well disciplined and motivated are they.

War is killing, destruction, death, pain, fear, chaos and extreme suffering. But sometimes wars are necessary, and their intensity tends to bring out admirable traits. A warrior who is terrified and exhausted and wants to go home is also a person who can be noble, determined, and committed. We can encourage our students to think about this, and about leadership in tough times, be it military or elsewhere. Soldiers often perform services "above and beyond the call of duty." As we raise young citizens, we can ask them to consider who in our lives has gone above and beyond the call of

duty to make a difference.

Teaching the Classics: What Americans Can Learn from Herodotus

Prof. **Paul Rahe** of the University of Tulsa discussed what Americans might find useful in Herodotus, who described a world that is in certain crucial regards very much like our own. Athens and Sparta were republics, with public debate, voting, rule of law, and citizen armies.

In the republicanism that first emerged in ancient Greece and spread to Etruria and Rome, liberty was coeval with the preeminence of massed infantry. Circa 700-650 BCE, a new kind of shield was invented in Greece, the *hoplon*, that was designed to yoke together a line of men. Because horses will not plunge into a wall of shields, these *hoplon*-bearers could face down a cavalry. A sizable army of smallholders could now easily defeat an aristocratic force on horseback. The old military aristocracy became redundant and was overthrown; populist tyrannies were established in many Greek cities. In time, as tyrants or their offspring abused the power they had seized, government by the army assembly arose.

In the second half of the fifteenth century, the impoverished pikemen of the Swiss cantons twice defeated Charles the Bold's mounted knights. War underwent the revolution detailed in Machiavelli's *Art of War*. Across Europe, Roman military tactics were studied in detail. Europe was set on the path that led to the French Revolution and to national armies drawn from among peasants. Works such as *The Histories* of Herodotus gained popularity as Europeans turned back to classical antiquity to understand their world.

By the 17th-18th centuries, many in Europe and North America found that in reading Herodotus they were reading about men rather like themselves. In the 20th century, when Americans took on Kaiser Wilhelm, Hitler, or communist dictators, they saw in Herodotus' epic tale of the struggle of the Hellenes against Xerxes, the Great King of Persia, a struggle of liberty against despotism.

Herodotus not only records the reasons for and deeds of the Persian Wars, but also provides a history of the Lydians, the Egyptians, the Babylonians, the Scythians, the Medes, and the Persians, describing their nomoi—their customs, laws, and ways. He invites his readers to reflect on their own nomoi and to consider whether political liberty and the rule of law are not, in fact, the distinguishing marks of those human beings who most deserve admiration and emulation on our part.

Herodotus' questions are questions that Americans must still ask themselves. Is our heritage of political liberty and the rule of law a treasure worth fighting for? Does this heritage produce today, as Herodotus claims it did in antiquity, a people brave and resolute in their defense? When Francis Scott Key spoke of America as "the land of the free and the home of the brave," he was borrowing language that had been used to describe classical Sparta. If the comparison is no longer apt, Herodotus would tell us that it is unlikely we will remain for long a free people.

The Creation of the U.S. Armed Forces

Peter Maslowski of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln explained how the U.S. military forces was created by a prolonged, complicated process that unfolded in three distinct periods.

In 1775, the Continental Congress created the Continental Army and a Naval Committee and authorized two battalions of Continental Marines. However, one cannot really identify that year as the birth of the Army, Navy, or Marine Corps. First, the U.S. never had one single army, but a dual army. Radical Whigs insisted on citizen-soldier militias, while Moderate Whigs insisted on a trained regular army. Colonial military affairs combined these two ideologies. Ad hoc expeditionary forces were recruited to perform garrison duty, patrol the front, and undertake campaigns against Native Americans or Europeans, which forces sometimes took on the attributes of a professional army. In the Revolutionary War, the colonies refurbished their citizen-soldier militia, reflecting the Radical Whig suspicion of a regular army, but it was the small, regular Continental Army the Moderate Whigs had insisted on that was best able to fight against a professional army.

Directly challenging the Royal Navy on the high seas was impossible, but the Americans did raise a Continental Navy, which was aided by state navies and privateers. Naval authorities began enlisting small groups of marines and

organizing them into companies who served as the Navy ships' guards and landing parties, boarded captured ships, and lent their musketry to sea battles.

The new Confederation faced severe economic problems, especially because Congress did not have the power to tax. Tensions arose between Congress and officers over the timing of discharges and payment, antimilitarism swept the country, and the government was able to maintain only a minuscule military. The institutions founded in 1775 disappeared completely. The only concession to military preparedness came in 1784, when Congress created the First American Regiment of 700 militiamen, providing a second possible birth date for the American Army of June 3, 1784.

The Confederation was challenged by Indian tribes in the west, the British in the Old Northwest, Spain in the Southwest, Barbary pirates in the Mediterranean, and Shays' Rebellion (1786) in western Massachusetts. It angered Nationalists that the government was unable quell that outbreak on its own. Accordingly, they sought a stronger union, but the problem remained how to avoid creating a despotic regime. The Constitution solved this problem through separations of federal/state powers and checks and balances between Congress and the president. The states and the national government shared control over the militia.

The next decade represented a refounding for all three services. In 1789 Congress created a Department of War; then it adopted the First American Regiment on September 29 of that year—the Army's third and perhaps real birthday. In 1792 Congress passed a Uniform Militia Act that in fact guaranteed that the U.S. would not have a uniform militia: it allowed each state to respond to the Act's "suggestions" as it saw fit. The U.S. still had no navy in 1793 when the French Revolution exploded into a world war and the Barbary pirates began preying on American shipping in the Atlantic. In response to this dual crisis, Congress passed a Naval Act on March 27, 1794—arguably the real birthday of an American Navy. Finally, on July 11, 1798, as the Quasi-War with France approached, Congress passed a law organizing the Navy's Marines as a Corps of Marines, thus marking the real birth of the U.S. Marine Corps.

While Radical Whigs had feared that the Constitution would create a standing army that could be used to suppress civil liberties, as it has turned out, for more than two centuries and counting, it created neither tyranny nor despotism.

Writing Narrative Military History

Rick Atkinson discussed his goals and research for his forthcoming *The Day of Battle: The War in Sicily and Italy, 1943–1944*, the second volume in his WWII trilogy. WWII historians are said to face public indifference and academic hostility: the *New York Times* asked in its review of the recent film *Flags of Our Fathers*, "is there anything left to be said about WWII?" In academia, John J. Miller recently wrote, military history is either dead or dying, under siege from the P.C. shock troops who see it as a subject for warmongers ("Sounding Taps," *National Review*, Oct. 2006). Then there are concerns like those expressed by Alan Moorehead, who warned that even years later it's impossible to know the truth, once falsehoods have become entrenched.

But history is, as Barbara Tuchman pointed out, a story, and storytelling taps one of most ancient art forms. Moreover, there does continue to be a wide audience for popular authors like Bruce Catton, Shelby Foote, and Max Hastings and for academically trained historians.

Paul M. Edwards, the bibliographer of Gen. Matthew Ridgeway, has estimated that the collected WWII archives weigh 14,000 tons. Atkinson read aloud the first few paragraphs of his new book, describing Churchill's arrival in Sicily in May 1943, and explained how writing them had required rooting like a pig for truffles in British War Cabinet and other archives for the rich details they contain.

WWII journalist Martha Gelhorn once wrote that "war was always worse than I knew how to say." That's the historian's task, to ensure that the realities of war come across. The narrative historian is trying to empower readers' imagination, to have them follow into the smoke and fear of war. For example, in his account in *Day of Battle* of the January 1944 battle of Rapido, Atkinson's ambition was to transcend the particulars to approach the timeless and placeless. War is an eternal, compelling, life and death matter; it is also corrupting, corroding decency and tarnishing the spirit. WWI soldier Wilford Owen spoke of sorting the incoming mail of dead soldiers with his senses so charred, "I don't even take the cigarette out of my mouth when writing 'deceased.'" The late Susan Sontag asked whether there was any antidote to the perennial seductiveness of war; it could be to write as truly as one can.

Historian Sir Michael Howard, who fought in the Italian campaign in WWII, observes that military history all too often is written to embellish national myth and record feats of derring-do. Demythologizing WWII is the job of future generations. Each generation has a new set of questions. Sir Michael speaks of having a generation with no personal memory of the war, whose parents have no memory of it, either. That generation is now in our classrooms.

The Social Dimensions of the Civil War

Mark Grimsley, Associate Professor of History, Ohio State University and author of *The Virginia Campaign: May–June 1864* (University of Nebraska Press, 2002), recalled that in 1990, an article in the *Journal of American History* asked, "Have Social Historians Lost the Civil War?," suggesting that American historians were losing overly focused on either the pre- or post-Civil War periods. Since then, the social history of the Civil War era has exploded, yielding new studies of the war's effects on women, children, and African Americans. The experience of Civil War soldiers, though, still provides an excellent window into many social issues.

In 1861, African Americans offered their military services to the North but were spurned; the few who offered their services to the Confederacy were also spurned, except for Louisiana's Native Guards, who were not allowed to perform any significant military duty. But beginning in July 1862 and especially after the Emancipation Proclamation in January 1863, the North actively began recruiting African American troops. Eventually some 186,000 Blacks served in the Union ranks, composing about 10 percent of the Union Army.

Finally, both sides resorted to conscription—the first time in U.S. history this had been done. In the North, conscription was mainly a threat lest Northern communities fail to provide their quota of volunteers. Once companies were raised, the governor organized ten of them into a regiment and placed it under command of a federal colonel. Some colonels were veterans of military service, but many owed their rank to political connections and to an assumption Harvard political scientist Samuel Huntington has called "popularism": that the same character and leadership that made for success in civilian life would also lead to success in military life.

Until recently, soldiers' reasons for enlisting were thought to be defending the homeland (particularly for Southerners), the call of adventure, proving manhood. For Union soldiers serving alongside men from their own community, if they shirked their duty, they literally could not go home again. More recent scholarship focuses on their courage and political convictions.

Although the U.S. government began the war vowing not to touch slavery where it existed, the fact remained that slavery depended on order and stability, and the war was profoundly disruptive. Blacks' labor buttressed the Confederate war economy. They served in the army as servants, teamsters, and cooks. Slave labor helped to construct Confederate field fortifications. It was substantial enough to make President Lincoln eventually regard the destruction of slavery as a military necessity. The initial Union policy of neutrality toward slavery was viable only if slaves remained passive once the war began. Instead, they flocked to Union lines whenever they could. To return the slaves would buttress, and harboring them undercut, slavery. The latter also provided labor for the Union.

After the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation, free blacks in the North enlisted in large numbers and African American troops were recruited from Confederate states. Black women served as nurses, spies, and scouts. Because of prejudice against them, Black units were little used in combat. Nevertheless, they served with distinction in a number of battles, including the famous battle at Fort Wagner, SC, immortalized in the film *Glory*. The Black military experience also included numerous atrocities at the hands of Confederates, most famously in the 1864 Battle of Fort Pillow, when cavalry under Nathan Bedford Forrest massacred Tennessee loyalists and particularly black soldiers even after their surrender.

The importance of conscription is hard to overstate in a republic based on limited national government. It was made necessary by the limits of volunteering. By early 1862 many white Southerners were already in the Confederate army, Southern defeats were dampening enthusiasm, and 12-month enlistments were near expiration. The Confederacy extended age limits to 16 and 45, leading to accusations that it was robbing both the cradle and the grave. Ultimately, conscription exacerbated strains in Southern society and undermined the South's will to resist. Union conscription, which like the South's provided for commutation, fared no better. The implementation of the draft in New York prompted the worst riot in U.S. history.

As to its legacy, the Civil War, which killed 620,000 Americans—2 percent of the total population-and maimed hundreds of thousands, continues to be largely remembered as a contest between valiant volunteers. This perception reflects a memory of the war consciously shaped by veterans and by proponents of the citizen-soldier. It created a real tension when the postwar Regular Army tried to expand and professionalize. The contributions of the African American volunteers were largely forgotten until recent decades, the "emancipationist memory" of the conflict suppressed in favor of the white-centric memory that assisted the North-South reconciliation. Civil War conscription was used in World War I as the example of how not to conduct a *draft*. Instead, every effort was made to implement the draft as equitably as possible.

WWII and Its Meaning for Americans

David Eisenhower, author of *Eisenhower at War, 1943–1945* (Random House, 1986), noted that the meanings of WWII are as varied as the individuals who fought it. When President Reagan spoke at Normandy in June 1984, he stated that the landings there had opened a phase of a victorious Allied campaign that would win the war in the West and secure freedom there for the indefinite future. This view was vindicated by the sudden end of the Cold War several years later. In an interview at Normandy twenty years earlier, Dwight Eisenhower had been more cautious. The Allied victory over the Nazis had not created peace in our time but had given the Allies a "chance to do better" in the decades ahead. Their assessments differed, but both agreed that the victory in WWII had had a positive and lasting result.

The study of WWII illuminates many positive aspects of Americans: their adaptability, innovativeness, and keen sense of citizenship. Americans do not routinely reflect on these. If the media is a guide, Americans are generally concerned about the manifold problems that public figures insist are all around us. American history is routinely presented not as a story to be celebrated but as a legacy to be redeemed. This paradoxical truth—an outwardly self-critical bent contrasted with America's steady record of growth and progress—is likely to interest historians well into the future. They will look back on America in the 1940s and trace the origins of globalization and of patterns of government, commerce, and society prevailing centuries from now.

It takes a long time for history's verdicts to take hold. In 1963, the centennial of the battle of Gettysburg, Alabama—the last state to do so—finally contributed a monument to the Alabamians who fought there. On hand for the dedication was Alabama's Gov. George C. Wallace, who would go on to wage bitter end resistance to the lessons of that war for another twenty years before finally seeing the light.

In WWII, the U.S. realized that its strategic objectives could not be achieved alone. Coalition warfare was new for the U.S. but essential. America's leaders were obliged to harmonize political and military aims within a diverse coalition. A vivid story of the time describes British Admiral Bertram Ramsay, days before D-Day, looking out from a promontory overlooking Portsmouth at the convoys passing and the ships loading in the distance. Ramsay remarked, "It is a tragic situation that this is a scene of a stage set for terrible human sacrifice, but if out of comes peace and happiness, who would have it otherwise?"

In Pericles' famed Funeral Oration, addressed to an assembly of free Athenian citizens, he observed that the citizens of Athens had a choice: to enjoy the fruits of success in that favored country or risk all for honor. "Make up your minds that happiness depends on being free, and freedom depends on courage. Let there be no relaxation in the face of the perils of war." As the ultimate defeat of Athens shows, the permanence of any country or way of life is best seen as an aspiration. How long the U.S. can retain its stature and way of life is a question we ask often these days. But Americans can be confident that unlike the principles of emerging Athens, the principles espoused by Americans have a large following, whether or not American sponsorship of those principles is welcomed.

If the demands of citizenship are now less vigorous than they were in WWII, it was planned that way. Those who fought in WWII wanted to leave a better world for those to come, and they succeeded. WWII should be taught and studied in order to comprehend both its warnings and its insights into American strengths and those inhering in a free society. It will always be studied, whatever the view of publishers and some educators these days, because the popular demand for these subjects shows that they answer a deep-felt need.

The U.S. and Unconventional War

Brian McAllister Linn, professor of history at Texas A&M University and author of *The Army's Way of War* (forthcoming, Nov. 2007), noted that it was unconventional wars that achieved the survival of the Anglo-American colonies, the conquest of the West, the acquisition of a Pacific empire, and U.S. power in the Caribbean. One can identify an American way of unconventional war, essentially adapting tactics and methods to local conditions, that has its origins in the long struggle between the colonists and the Native Americans. Colonists conducted an irregular war of raids and skirmishing, sending large expeditions into enemy territory for brutal forays that targeted crops, homes, and noncombatants. By 1814 these methods had proven so successful, Americans had destroyed any chance for Native Americans to hem in white expansion.

The regular army assumed this mission after 1815. It created a large cavalry to gain mobility and learned how to read the landscape for ambushes, use local intelligence, and communicate by sign language. Officers learned the futility of trying to chase down a highly mobile enemy and that victory doesn't terminate resistance; occupation brought the more arduous pacification process. Lessons learned were passed down piecemeal.

The years after the outbreak of the Spanish-American War in 1898 encompassed a multiplicity of missions in Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and elsewhere, from defeating enemy armies to imposing colonial government. After the conventional war ended in the Philippines, U.S. officers fought the continued resistance, operating on their own, separated from their regimental commands by jungles, water, and mountains, responsible for governing thousands of Filipinos in their area. Was the Army's role to fight and win the nation's wars, or to secure the results of war? Among others, Col. Robert Bullard observed that studying war was insufficient preparation for the greater burden of making peace. But the Army soon shifted its focus back to big war. It had developed from its imperial wars no theory of unconventional warfare. In fact, prior to WWII, its guidelines on this were a three-page pamphlet borrowed from the British. By the 1950s, it was convinced that communist revolutionary warfare rendered all previous warfare methods obsolete.

In the bitterness that followed Vietnam, the army all but rejected unconventional warfare. By the story that emerged to explain the defeat, conventional army tactics had won every battle but could not overcome a faulty strategy and the lack of popular will. The army turned its attention back to conventional war, the wisdom of which was purportedly demonstrated by the 1991 Gulf War. The very qualities that had characterized American unconventional warfare—flexibility, initiative, decentralized leadership—were now seen as attributes of big-unit war. This focus continued long after the collapse of the Soviet Union should have made evident that fighting a big-unit war in Central Europe was increasingly improbable.

Over those years the Army actually largely saw combat in unconventional wars (Grenada, Panama), but these victories were so easy they taught the wrong lessons. A few officers did foresee future warfare that would encompass entire populations and the growth of ideologies, but they went unheeded. *Army Vision 2010*, released in 2000, put its full faith in mass effects and modern technologies. Today in Afghanistan and Iraq, we are again learning the traditional American way of unconventional warfare.