

made his name and fortune skewering and barbecuing some of the most prominent figures in Western society. Do you doubt that a publisher's announcement that Bob Woodward's next monumental project will be the life story of Mother Teresa would bring the entire Judeo-Christian world to ask, as one, "What's *she* been up to?"

One would think that any enlightened senior officer in the Pentagon, on being approached by Bob Woodward, would reach for either his aluminum athletic truss or his gun; especially if that officer was serving a Republican President who was Richard Nixon's national party chairman during Watergate and headed the CIA under Gerald Ford. One would think. Yet Woodward managed to find, in the TOP SECRET/CONFIDENTIAL/EYES ONLY ambience of the Pentagon, a Deep Brass; though not so Deep as to escape detection.

That Colin Powell is the primary chatterbox whose behind-the-scenes-gossip fills the pages of Woodward's latest docu-fiction is, by now, beyond question. *Exhibit A*: Everybody says he is and he has yet to deny it. We are not, keep in mind, operating in a civilian court of law where an accused's silence can't be used against him. When a national newsmagazine, hyping excerpts from the book, features Powell's face on its cover, tagging him "The Reluctant Warrior," it's a reasonable assumption that if he hadn't been just that, he'd be cutting off the story's head and killing it.

Exhibit B is the fact that, as everyone in the Pentagon corridors knows, Powell spent an inordinate amount of time gassing with Bob Woodward in the past year. To be sure, from the perspective of those who took part in the decision-making that went into the Persian Gulf war, anything over ten seconds might be considered too much. But we're talking *inordinate* here, like hours adding up to days. Woodward, as anyone who has watched him work can testify, is a total immersion inquisitor. Once a source makes it clear that he has a personal agenda to grind, Bob homes in like a smart bomb, morning, noon, and night. Colin Powell's personal agenda? Try these on for size:

From *The Commanders*, page 302:

The operation needed a field marshal—someone of the highest rank who was the day-to-day manager, Powell felt. The President, given his other domestic and political responsibilities, couldn't be chief coordinator. It should be the national security adviser. Instead, Scowcroft had become the First Companion and all-purpose playmate to the President on golf, fishing and weekend outings. He was regularly failing in his larger duty to ensure that policy was carefully debated and formulated. . . . Sununu only added to the problem, exerting little or no

control over the process as White House chief of staff.

For the record—and for those slow of wit in such arcane Washington matters as *How to Make People Who Cross You Look Like Jerks*—neither Scowcroft nor Sununu gave much quality time to Woodward while he was preparing *The Commanders*. Proving? It never hurts when the interviewee's agenda meshes with the interviewer's. And for those who do cooperate, there are always those sweet rewards a powerful Washington journalist can pass out to his friends, something no amount of PR money can buy.

From *The Commanders*, pp. 375-76:

He thought of the troops and pilots as kids, even teenagers. They would be flying in the darkness or dropping down behind the lines to spot targets. It would come down to one American kid dealing with one Iraqi kid. Both would want to live. . . . Powell felt a foreboding and a chill. The war was in the hands of these kids. And if they screwed up, it would mean that Powell and the generals—the adults—hadn't done their jobs well enough. That was as it should be. . . . It remained quiet in the Chairman's office. No one knew or had any real idea how many Americans would die in the war, he realized. . . . He was hoping it would not be a lot. On this most important day of his life, he had one overriding thought. There was no cheering, no thrill, no eagerness, no battle fever. None of the emotions of war raged. He thought only one thing: "How many will not come back?"

So much for the question of whether the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is on cozy terms with the author of *The Commanders*. Not since Alexander Haig was working up a caulflowered phone ear talking to Woodward during the Watergate days have we seen such buoyant prose about a military man written by the *Washington Post's* star performer. Haig, we were led to believe in *The Final Days*, saved the country from the clutches of a manic paranoid in the Oval Office. Powell, under the careful tutelage of his JCS predecessor, Admiral William Crowe—so we're told by Woodward—struggled to keep an "emotional" President in check, despite the negative input of Bush's top White House aides.

Thus do astute Washington game-players assure their politically correct place in history, if only instant-history. But how could Colin Powell have been that short-sighted? Didn't he know that when Woodward's book came out, the fat would be in the fire?

Not necessarily. For one thing, *The Commanders* was originally scripted as a study of the Pentagon and Operation Just Cause, the Panamanian venture. Powell's early contacts with Woodward might have been aimed at clearing the air on that subject. Then one thing led to another and there he was,

involved in a larger war. It's entirely possible, looking back at August 1990, that Powell, for all his public bravado, was concerned that the larger war might not turn out well; that by the time the book was published, American troops would be bogged down in bloody landfighting, and he wanted it on record that it wasn't *his* fault we had a *manic warmonger* in the Oval Office.

But more: A large measure of Bob Woodward's special gift—aside from his nonpareil ability to invent dialogue and slip inside people's brain cells—is that he knows how to give his interviewees the warm, reassuring impression that they can speak freely, he'll protect them. And when it's all over and he doesn't protect them? Too bad, General, that was yesterday's book.

Mother Teresa, screen your calls. □

DE GAULLE: THE REBEL, 1890-1944

Jean Lacouture/W. W. Norton/615 pp. \$29.95

Mark Falcoff

One day during the 1920s, a senior French general sat down under a tree at the Ecole de Guerre with one of his students, a field-grade officer, to refresh himself during a break between maneuvers. "My dear fellow," he said, "I have a curious feeling that you are intended for a very great destiny."

The young officer, who was Charles de Gaulle, replied quietly and even modestly, "Yes, so have I."

The story could serve as a leitmotif to Jean Lacouture's biography, published last year in France to mark the hundredth anniversary of de Gaulle's birth. And let there be no mistake about it: this is a book about a truly extraordinary man. If de Gaulle had died in



late 1940, he would still merit a significant mention in the history of the French army for his brilliant career as a cadet at St-Cyr, a distinguished combat record in the First World War, military attache in Poland, member of the French general staff, professor at the Ecole de Guerre, officer in Syria and in new model field units in France, author of a strategic doctrine of armored mobility, leader of the desperate effort to resist the German invasion in June 1940, and veteran of Dunkirk.

Yet all of this was but prologue to his role as the focal point of all those forces

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that refused to accept France's humiliation at the hands of the Germans. In this volume, Lacouture devotes half his text to the period up to the 1940 collapse, half to the subsequent four years.¹ In many ways they are two quite different books: one is a biography in the best sense of the word, rich in dramatic detail, and with a good sense of the relationship between the subject and his time; the second is a prolix, scrappy, contentious (and often tedious) history of French-American and French-British relations during the Second World War.

Although a veteran correspondent who covered most of the big stories of postwar France, including the wars of Indochina and Algeria, and author of commercially successful biographies of Andre Malraux, Pierre Mendès-France, and Ho Chi Minh, for most of his career Lacouture was associated with the French left, who have been remarkably ungenerous and ungrateful to a man to whom their country owed so much. Now, however, Lacouture (and perhaps the left in general) has gone over, bag and baggage, to the other extreme. Of the Lacouture who appears in these pages it could be said, at times at least, what Jean Villars recently said about Régis Debray: that he is "*un gaulliste hystérique à défaut d'avoir été un gaulliste historique*."² Is anti-Americanism the persistent link between the "old" and "new" Lacouture?³

The account of de Gaulle's early life—that is, the years before

¹The other two volumes, *The Politician* and *The Sovereign*, which carry the story from 1944 to de Gaulle's death in 1970, are being condensed into one; they will be published later this year.

²"a hysterical Gaullist, having not been a historical Gaullist."

1940—is rich in unexpected (and often contradictory) details. Though his father was a typical conservative Catholic of the Third Republic, he was also a Dreyfusard. When de Gaulle graduated from St-Cyr and was posted to his first infantry regiment in Arras in 1911, his commanding officer was Colonel Philippe Pétain—who would sponsor his rapid ascent in the officer corps, only to sign his sentence of death in absentia twenty-nine years later. (“Never did I take so much care of any young officer,” the old marshal summarized the relationship in his last days of captivity and disgrace. “It did not turn out well for me.”) As a prisoner of war in Germany in 1915 and 1916, de Gaulle shared quarters with a young Russian captain who would later become Marshal Mikhail Tukhachevsky.

In the 1920s de Gaulle began to write on military topics, and his books, particularly *The Edge of the Sword* and *The Army of the Future*, established him as an unusually learned and cultured exponent of armored warfare. Though little read in France, they were well known in Germany and the Soviet Union. Conversely, at a time when virtually nobody in France had even heard of the Nazi party, de Gaulle had already read Arthur Moeller van den Bruck’s prophetic book *Das dritte Reich*, which appeared in 1923, the year of the Munich beerhall putsch.

Like most French officers, de Gaulle was drawn to the right politically, but as a military reformer, he had more in common with men of the center and the moderate left, who were willing to listen to his proposals. In fact, his campaign for a Franco-Soviet pact in 1935, his denunciation of the Munich accords, and his eventual willingness to throw in with the defiant and near-defeated British led the royalist *Action Française* to denounce him as a warmonger. “It mattered little to him,” Lacouture writes, “whether someone belonged to the right or the left; it was by their attitude to the proceedings of the Nazis that he judged them.” If this seems unremarkable today, when so many people in France assert false claims to having been *résistants*, one has to recall how few men of de Gaulle’s profession, let alone education, temperament, and family background, refused to take an oath to the collaborationist Vichy regime.

Indeed, it is de Gaulle’s supreme act of defiance in 1940—while nearly

³In the recent Gulf crisis, the tiny “anti-war” movement in France, consisting of Communists, Trotskyites, Greens, Arabs (and Arabists), constantly appealed to the country’s Gaullist “heritage,” which the Socialist government was accused of traducing by fighting on the same side as the United States.

everyone else in *bien-pensante* France, beginning with his old mentor Pétain, was falling over himself to be of service to the Nazi occupiers—that justifies the title of this volume. But as Lacouture shows very well, the break with Pétain had actually come much earlier—over the issue of active versus passive defense against a possible German invasion. In *The Army of the Future* (1934), de Gaulle had argued that the Maginot Line “doomed France to impotence. The only defense against aggression was counterattack and movement.” This meant that, instead of mixing monumental quantities of concrete, France should have been building tanks—hundreds, if not thousands, of them.

To argue so was to take on not only Pétain but the entire French army establishment, which immediately recognized the threat to the enormous prestige it had invested in the Maginot concept. “When we have devoted so much effort to the building of a fortified barrier,” said War Minister Gen. Louis Maurin, “is it to be supposed that we should be mad enough to go outside that barrier, in pursuit of who knows what adventure?” General Henri Giraud was only slightly less wounding: “Colonel de Gaulle’s ideas may be brilliant, but they are the kind that may make us lose the next war.” As for Pétain himself, he now spoke of his former protégé only as “an ambitious man, and very ill-bred.”

The most exciting chapters deal with the period 1935-40, during which de Gaulle, having disentangled himself from the *pétainiste* military establishment, quietly, patiently, and persistently worked the French parliament and press on behalf of his ideas. He was ultimately rewarded by premier Paul Reynaud in the spring of 1940 with a temporary promotion to brigadier general and a position as undersecretary of state in the Ministry of War. It was in this capacity that he flew to London for the first time, to try to persuade the British to throw in more forces rather than withdraw at Dunkirk. Though de Gaulle was unsuccessful, he made a strong impact on Churchill, who knew a good man when he saw one. Thus was forged a relationship that would change the course of French history and, indeed, the course of the Second World War.

The rest of the story is how de Gaulle gathered up a handful of demobilized soldiers, proscribed intellectuals, and out-of-work parliamentarians and created something he called *la France libre*, and then *la France combattante*. It was as head of these forces (with a rather important assist from the British and American armies) that he was eventually to enter Paris as the Supreme Liber-

ator in 1944. A tale of this type must be projected on a very large canvas, and Lacouture does not always maintain an adequate sense of proportion. It is all too easy to forget that, for much of the time between 1940 and 1944, de Gaulle’s “fighting France” was a very small France indeed.

Lacouture lurches into an ultra-orthodox Gaullist version of the war, in which “France” and de Gaulle are virtually coterminous. Would that this had been the case. A more generous interpretation would have congratulated Churchill on having staked his prestige and resources on such a long-shot, and stuck with his investment through thick and thin. (And not without serious provocation from de Gaulle—it was Churchill, remember, who said, “Of all the crosses I must bear, the heaviest is the Cross of Lorraine.”) Instead, Lacouture dredges up every petty resentment, every paranoid suspicion, every unfortunate misunderstanding, and wrings from each problem as much currency as he can in order to add it to the historic account of French grudges against Great Britain.

Imaginez-vous, then, what Lacouture has to say about de Gaulle’s relations with the United States. The final two hundred pages read like a lawyer’s brief intended to justify the great Frenchman’s subsequent (at times nearly pathological) anti-Americanism. Lacouture does know something about the United States—but not as much as he thinks. (Among other errors of fact, Alger Hiss was *not* a “victim of McCarthyism,” nor was New York Mayor Fiorello La

Guardia a “Sicilian,” nor was Henry Wallace the “future” vice president in 1944.) Lacouture seems to have taken a look at some materials in English, a language he knows well, though not Herbert Feis’s *Our Vichy Gamble*, Sumner Welles’s *Time for Decision*, or other works that shed a more sympathetic light on American policy toward both Vichy and de Gaulle. Nor does he seem to be familiar with Raoul Aglion’s ground-breaking *Roosevelt and De Gaulle*, published in France seven years ago.⁴

I agree with Lacouture’s interpretation of FDR—that, when it came to European politics, he was a fool, and a dangerous fool at that. The nicest thing that can be said about his policy toward France and de Gaulle was that it was downright wrong. Even so, the case against Washington’s “Vichy gamble” is not nearly as one-sided as this book makes out. First of all, the great fear of both Britain and the United States after 1940 was that the French fleet, then among the world’s largest and most modern, would fall into Axis hands. This explains to a large degree why Roosevelt spent so much time cultivating Pétain, and later, the Vichyite or quasi-Vichyite officers in North Africa (Admiral Darlan and General Giraud). The decision to work with Darlan was also inspired by a desire to

⁴We are promised a complete bibliography in the second volume (yet to come), so it is possible that these works were consulted. They are not among those directly cited here.

“The postmoderns have caused us to lose our pride in the American Constitution. . . .”

HARVEY C. MANSFIELD, JR.



Beth Vangel

AMERICA'S CONSTITUTIONAL SOUL

Lately, Harvey Mansfield argues, Americans have begun to value the right of privacy above all others, to consider their rights entitlements, and to forget their pride in governing themselves. In essays on the Reagan “revolution,” the conservative movement, religion, affirmative action, the media, and the separation of powers, one of America’s leading political theorists and most penetrating thinkers on the Constitution describes what’s wrong with American politics today—and what can be done about it.

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minimize casualties in the North African landings.

If FDR was wrong in his judgment of individuals (seeing anti-German Vichyites where for all practical purposes none existed), and particularly wrong in his belief that de Gaulle was a fascist, he was helped to reach those conclusions by Alexis Leger, former permanent undersecretary of the Quai d'Orsay, who had taken refuge in Washington and was regarded as little less than an oracle on French affairs. As Aglion points out in his book, 85 percent of the French community in the United States was anti-Gaullist, when not Vichyite through-and-through: this included not merely the business community in New York but the French Embassy and such cultural luminaries as André Maurois and Antoine de Saint-Exupéry.

Moreover, in France itself—this is the dirty secret of the war and the Resistance—most people were Vichyite until almost the last year of the war. As late as April 1944 the perfidious Pétain was welcomed by friendly crowds in occupied Paris. And if, as Lacouture says here, the *maquis* grew tenfold between January and August 1944, might one be permitted to connect this less to growing opportunities for action than to a correct reading of the signs of the times? If Americans failed to swallow the Myth of the Resistance whole, on this at least they were not misinformed, even if they sometimes arrived at their conclusions by twisted, even bizarre routes.

The real problem facing American (and to some extent, British) policy was when to recognize that de Gaulle's forces had attained sufficient critical mass to be taken seriously in the high politics of the war. It seems this point was never really reached—certainly not by Roosevelt at any time—and a subsequent generation of Americans were left to pay the bill, as they paid for so many of his other wretched policies. This is the sad tale that Lacouture could have told so much more compellingly had he been willing to cut his Gaullism with a bit of soda and ice.

What is particularly irritating is not so much Lacouture's views as his tone. Writing in the late 1980s, he finds everything so much simpler than it appeared more than four decades before; armed with the foreknowledge of de Gaulle's later greatness, he artificially (and wrongly) reduces the dimensions of all his wartime contemporaries. This and the breathless, liturgical prose leave one feeling that there is more to the story than we are being told. We close *The Rebel* hoping against hope that the subsequent volume will not merely match this one in detail, but also surpass it in balance and fairness. De Gaulle deserves no less. □

BENJAMIN O. DAVIS, JR., AMERICAN: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Benjamin O. Davis, Jr./Smithsonian Institution Press
442 pp. \$19.95

Dave Shiflett

It was reported recently that a gentleman, on hearing that the jetliner he had just boarded was being piloted by a female, promptly deplaned. That he was the only chicken speaks highly of our society, which believes that all God's children should have the opportunity to smash 747s into the sides of mountains. How times have changed. It wasn't too long ago we were particular not only about who flew our passenger planes, but who was allowed to drop bombs on our enemies. Black Americans were denied this opportunity (as are women, for the moment). Why was this?

As Gen. Benjamin O. Davis, Jr. reports in this autobiography, a 1925 War College report put blacks lower on the human totem pole because of "their smaller cranium, lighter brain, [and] cowardly and immoral character." The result of this study was that blacks were not encouraged to fly, and absolutely forbidden to command white pilots. Gen. Davis is the man who broke the color barrier, doing so with quiet dignity, and surely leaving many observers with a bad case of the shakes.

Consider the times in which the general was raised. During the 1920s, to

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mention but one incident, young Davis and his family were confronted by the Ku Klux Klan during one of that organization's intimidation exercises. The Klan was riled over plans to award many of the jobs at a new black VA hospital to, of all people, blacks, and in an attempt to reverse the decision the Klansmen donned sheets, lit torches, and went marching past the Tuskegee Institute and environs. Local black residents were advised to lie low, preferably under their beds, lest their presence inspire the marchers to set the neighborhood afire.

The Davis family declined to hug the floorboards, and instead took to their front porch, with Davis's father, a regular Army officer, reviewing the sad parade in his dress uniform. This might not seem like much these days, but back in the 1920s it could take authorities quite a while to answer a black man's call to 911. Gen. Davis inherited his father's guts.

The general's book has attracted the greatest attention for its section on West Point, which he entered in 1932, having been nominated by a black Republican representative who was not a member of the Congressional Club. These were lonely times for the young man: he had no roommate, nor did any-

one talk with him except in the line of duty. The silent treatment went on for four years, the social monotony broken only when Davis met his future wife, Agatha. He graduated thirty-fifth in a class of 276, then set out to get himself into a command cockpit. Heavy flak awaited him.

Even though Davis had graduated in the top fifth of his West Point class, that War College study, with its lighter brains, smaller craniums, and other goblins, put a command position out of his reach. Davis feared he would spend his life teaching, but was saved from that fate when FDR ordered the creation of the nation's first black air squadron. Davis was chosen commander.

The 99th Pursuit Squadron, headquartered at Tuskegee, Alabama, was a great step forward, but hardly the answer to the local white community's prayers. It was bad enough that black MPs carried sidearms when they drove their Jeeps into town, and indeed the locals demanded that these men be disarmed. Worse yet was the fact that these black men had wings—P-40 fighters, to be exact. One can imagine Jim Bob and friends looking up from their fishing holes to see these fellows zoom past, machine guns and bombs glistening in the sun. Visions of the Apocalypse, no doubt. The 99th failed to live up to these expectations, readying themselves for battle rather than dive-bombing the local country clubs. Davis's men had other plans for members of the master race.

The idea that blacks were unfit for air combat was destroyed once and for all over Anzio, when on two days in 1944, twelve Teutonic gentlemen were blasted from the sky by black pilots, which no doubt did not go over well with the welcoming committee at Valhalla. The press's first reaction to those victories was to downplay them, as did *Time* magazine in a piece that drew a response from Agatha Davis, whose letter was full of blood, guts, and razor blades.

Davis is at his best when describing the war years, but the book could have benefited from some tighter editing; even great Americans can get a little heavy on detail. "On Christmas Day," General Davis writes early in the book, "besides celebrating with decorated trees, fruitcakes and assorted nuts, we flew an escort mission to provide cover for a bomber formation attacking Brux, Germany." By the time we get to his remembrances of life as a bureaucrat, we find this: "Transportation is a public service, and therefore its benefits had to be assessed in terms of broader societal goals. If a proposed facility had environmental effects that were too severe, then it was open to ques-

