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Bill Yenne, *Hap Arnold: The General Who Invented the U. S. Air Force*. Washington, DC: Regnery, 2013. Pp. 344. ISBN 978-1-62157-081-3.

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This new biography offers a popular rather than a comprehensive scholarly account of the life and career of Henry H. Arnold (1886–1950), chief of the American air force in the Second World War. It is well written, accurate, and informative as far as it goes. Independent historian Bill Yenne has chosen to concentrate on Arnold's personal life, with some observations on his role in creating the world's most powerful air force. He relies heavily on Arnold's diaries and papers and on interviews with family members.

Arnold graduated from West Point in 1907 and learned to fly at the Wright brothers' school in Ohio. In 1925, he testified at the court-martial of his mentor, Maj. Gen. William Mitchell, at some risk to his own career. In 1938, he became Chief of Air Corps, remaining so through its evolution into the Army Air Forces until the end of World War II. He was one of five men created General of the Army and became General of the Air Force in 1949, a year before his death.

Yenne devotes six chapters to Arnold's family life and early career, fourteen to his time as head of the air forces, and one to an anticlimactic discussion of his last years and legacy. Two appendices contain letters from Charles Lindbergh, written in 1938 and 1941. The richly anecdotal narrative places Arnold in the context of the emergence of air power as a factor in American defense, stressing his close personal ties with the aircraft manufacturer Donald Douglas.<sup>1</sup> It was Arnold who asked Douglas to form Project RAND at the end of the war, later spun off by Douglas into the RAND Corporation to avoid a conflict of interest. Arnold's initiative in creating this analytical agency reflected his determination to ensure that the new American air force would be at the cutting edge of technology. Yenne also describes Arnold's career as an author, including of the "Bill Bruce" novels, which feature a young aviator as their central character. He vividly (and protractedly) details the parlous state of Arnold's health during the war, when a succession of heart attacks did not prevent his grueling tours of all the war's major theaters.

As for Arnold's wartime experiences in general, Yenne spends too much time on his travels and too little on matters of strategy and the institutional development of the Army Air Force, despite the promise of his book's subtitle. While he does sketch Arnold's relationship with President Franklin D. Roosevelt and, in greater detail and nuance, with Gen. George C. Marshall, Chief of Staff of the Army, too many leading actors in the development of American air power and the US Air Force are omitted or mentioned only in passing. Thus, Assistant Secretary of War for Air Robert A. Lovett appears only as a friendly observer, with no hint of either his independent role or his vital collaboration with Arnold in creating the world's dominant air force.<sup>2</sup> Another largely overlooked key contributor is Gen. Leslie R. Groves Jr., who directed the Manhattan Project from 1942 on. He and Arnold worked together to develop the means to deliver the atomic weapon by air to its target.

On the larger question of strategy, Yenne's treatment of Arnold at the major conferences of the war is perfunctory and fails to tap current scholarly literature on the subject.<sup>3</sup> Even the author's own work<sup>4</sup> on the development of the B-29 Superfortress bomber gets short shrift in *Hap Arnold* and, though he acknowledges FDR's interest in the project, he gives little attention to Arnold's drive to provide the long-range aircraft

1. Arnold's son married Douglas's daughter.

2. See Jonathan A. Fanton, "Robert A. Lovett: The War Years" (diss. Yale 1978).

3. Esp. Herman S. Wolk, *Cataclysm: General Hap Arnold and the Defeat of Japan* (Denton: U North Texas Pr, 2010). Wolk's extensive use of materials in the National Archives, the FDR Library, and elsewhere makes his work indispensable to any study of Arnold's career.

4. He co-authored (with Curtis E. LeMay) *Superfortress: The Story of the B-29 and American Air Power* (NY: McGraw-Hill, 1988).

so critical for the mission of the bombing of Japan. Inadequate as well is the book's account of the reorganization of the air forces for the final campaign against Japan. Fuller discussion of Arnold's plans for an intensified air attack in 1945 would have clarified and contextualized his views on both the planned invasion of the Japanese home islands and the use of the atomic bomb.

Readers interested in learning more will be disappointed in Yenne's chatty style of discussing interviews, unfootnoted references in the text, and a bibliography confined to a few pertinent works.<sup>5</sup> The narrative is also flawed by numerous minor errors. For example, the commander of the Australian Military Forces during the Pacific War was Thomas Blamey (not Blarney) and Arnold became Chief of Air Corps (not Chief of Staff) in 1938.

There is, in short, much more to the story of Hap Arnold than appears in *Hap Arnold*. While the book does manage, with its entertaining style of presentation, to give some sense of what it was like to be Hap Arnold on a personal level, it does not advance our knowledge of this towering figure in the development of American air power.

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5. Including Thomas M. Coffey, *Hap: The Story of the U.S. Air Force and the Man Who Built It: General Henry H. "Hap" Arnold* (NY: Viking, 1982), and Dik Alan Daso, *Hap Arnold and the Evolution of American Airpower* (Washington: Smithsonian Inst Pr, 2000).