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William A. Taylor, *Every Citizen a Soldier: The Campaign for Universal Military Training after World War II*. College Station: Texas A&M Univ. Press, 2014. Pp. xviii, 232. ISBN 978-1-62349-146-8.

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In the closing days of World War II, Army leaders began thinking about what the post-conflict security paradigm would look like. Specifically, how would they provide and maintain the manpower necessary to face any threat from the Soviet Union? In the next war, potentially an atomic war, the United States could not count on its geographic position to give it time to build up a force to deploy on foreign shores. The Army's proposed solution to these problems was the Universal Military Training (UMT) program.

In *Every Citizen a Soldier*, William Taylor (Angelo State Univ.) seeks to explain why the UMT program failed and why political support, even from President Harry Truman, proved detrimental to the cause of UMT's proponents. Although the program's supporters made cogent arguments about the Soviet menace, its critics argued that the time required to implement it would leave the United States too vulnerable for too long without a viable military force. Although Taylor concentrates on policy developments, he also carefully considers the broader political context as it influenced the national discussion of military preparedness.

Universal military training was not an entirely new idea. Gen. John Palmer, one of its leading backers, had promoted a similar program in the wake of World War I. The earlier proposal had failed to gain Congressional approval, because it did not clearly address pressing security concerns and would have been prohibitively expensive. Moreover, its advocates unwisely diverted attention from the military necessity of the program to its putative societal benefits.

After the Second World War, many Americans wanted to draw down the armed forces and return to the prewar status quo of the military services. Maintaining a sizable permanent force in peacetime would be both costly and largely unprecedented in American history. In addition, General Palmer and those who worked with him had to resolve the problem of infringing the personal liberties of every able-bodied eighteen-year-old male. Mandating participation for up to a year would be a drastic departure from previous conscription programs.

Consequently, UMT proponents worked to show that the USSR posed a dire enough threat to justify such a large program. Also, many of the Army advocates expanded the ways that UMT would yield social and cultural advantages: it could instill American youth with a sense of service to country or a better understanding of what citizenship meant, and, by training together, a young, diverse (albeit only white) cohort of males would gain a stronger sense of patriotism and unified identity.

For some, the onset of the Cold War provided the perfect reason to create such a program. Initially, Palmer emphasized the security problems needing solution, in hopes of avoiding the mistakes made by supporters of the post-World War I training program, who lost the policy argument by touting a myriad of benefits unrelated to security concerns. The Cold War UMT program, as initially conceived by the War Department, consisted of a year of training, starting with the tasks of the individual soldier and eventually moving to company- and battalion-level exercises. The intent was to form units around a core of enlisted soldiers who would be ready to quickly return to service, if needed. UMT's supporters argued that the time needed to put a force in the field would be shortened, since the nation would have many existing units needing only a short refresher course to be combat ready.

After World War II, Army leaders turned to politicians to help secure broader support for the UMT program. But their inclusion in the cause eroded the philosophical foundations of the Army's arguments for UMT. For example, while President Truman was eager to get the program established as soon as possible,

he also thought of it as a means to provide social and culture benefits for the American people. Thus, he wanted to extend the program to include even men medically disqualified from serving, who could yet learn a trade and otherwise profit from military training. The civilian commission Truman appointed to study the matter had an unanticipated effect:

No longer were the calls for UMT coming strictly from army officers in uniform. The commission's actions and the publicity they generated provided momentum for the campaign for UMT as well as ammunition for supporters. Time would tell whether such an impact would be enough to turn the tide for UMT. There was another outcome of the commission, though. By openly shifting emphasis towards broader social benefits, the commission's work unintentionally increased the social criticism of UMT. Now that the commission's work widened the discourse about UMT's impact on American society, the negative implications of UMT for American society also began to take center stage. (131)

Even as the public debate continued, the Army began to implement UMT. The first battalion of soldiers arrived at the Fort Knox training center with great fanfare. The commanding officer in charge of training, Gen. John M. Devine, made sure the men had first-rate accommodations and amenities. For example, a professional band was hired to play seventy-one shows in the first six months of training. Also, the trainees were spared the typical rough treatment and scolding of regular army basic training. Many of these changes continued long after the program ended. The initial program demonstrated that the Army could in fact train a cohesive group of soldiers in a year's time. But it did not prove it was the best military policy to meet the perceived Soviet security threat.

International events gave UMT critics more evidence of the program's inadequacies. As the USSR extended its influence in the late 1940s, critics argued that UMT could neither counteract Soviet expansion nor provide sufficient manpower in case of a war. They also maintained that airpower, not infantry, was vital in an age of atomic warfare. Then, in summer 1948, Congress passed a bill authorizing the draft, blunting the momentum of the UMT proposal, whose supporters never garnered enough congressional backing to pass implementing legislation.

Universal military training failed because selective service provided a quicker, cheaper alternative method of ensuring national security. The draft also allowed the government to sidestep thorny issues: the integration (or not) of UMT units in the regular Army, the economic impact of subtracting the whole cohort of eighteen-year-old males from the nation's labor pool, and the dispersive effects of trying to make UMT a social and cultural as well as a military program—the very thing that had undermined the World War I-era UMT proposal. Selective service continued through the early decades of the Cold War and the government did not again ask for the sort of large-scale sacrifices that UMT would have entailed.

William Taylor's novel study, the first comprehensive work on its subject,¹ will instruct anyone wishing to know more about the evolution of early Cold War military manpower policies. *Every Citizen a Soldier* explains how a sweeping policy proposal gained some traction with a swath of the American populace but fell short of becoming an established operational program. As a bonus, Taylor looks at the views not only of major military and political players but also of those outside the traditional power structures: labor leaders, minority groups, and ordinary civilians concerned with the nation's military policy.

1. One book that intersects in places with Taylor's is Michael J. Hogan's *A Cross of Iron: Harry S. Truman and the Origins of the National Security State, 1945–1954* (NY: Cambridge U Pr, 1998).