Seversky: Victory Through Air Power

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to negligence and lack of co-ordination. These are human failings which can be quickly remedied.

The really sinister passages were those indicating quite clearly that the responsible officers did not take the threat of air assault seriously.

There was even evidence that the commanding personnel regarded the presence of a strong fleet in Pearl Harbor as a safeguard against air raids!

Those men were ignorant of what every airman and most laymen knew by that time; namely, that only air power can fight air power. They did not realize that the presence of battleships was an invitation to aerial attack.

In the preceding years of war, they had failed to detect the clear pattern of a race between sea power and air power in which aviation relentlessly pursued naval forces all over the globe—and consistently won when it caught up with its quarry.

If this represented merely the state of mind of a few officers stationed in Hawaii it would be too trivial to bother with. We could treat the whole matter as an unfortunate accident.

But those men were typical of the pervasive mentality in the older services generally. The same discount of air power, the same inability to understand the same lessons of the war, have been evident in the words and acts of the whole American military hierarchy.

A month after Pearl Harbor we had new proof that the lesson had not penetrated the orthodox military mind.

In asking Congress for additional tens of billions of dollars, a ranking naval officer declared that, among other things, the investment would help America gain command of the sea by destruction of the enemy's seagoing forces."

The assertion amounted to a public confession of arrested strategic thinking. Yet it was accepted without protest by our legislators, press and public opinion.

THE ENEMY FLEET

To get some inkling of the emptiness of that threadbare naval promise, we need only assume that we actually succeed in annihilating "the enemy's seagoing forces." Then let us inquire whether that miracle would, in fact, give us "command of the sea."

Would it enable our battle fleets to steam boldly into Japanese waters and bombard the Mikado's harbors, submarine bases, and coastal fortifications? Certainly not. As long as Japan has reasonably effective air power, such intrusion within the radius of its shore-based aviation would be suicidal.

The fact is that destruction of Japanese sea power would leave us approximately where we were, as long as Japan retained sufficient air power to control the skies.

Our magnificent Navy would be obliged to keep at a respectful distance from all seas dominated by the enemy's air strength. For reasons that we have analyzed on other pages, aircraft from "floating bases" would not enable the Navy to overcome genuine land-based aircraft.

"MEANINGLESS PHRASE"

And thus the promised "command of the sea" through the employment of naval forces shakes down to a meaningless phrase. It is valid only if preceded by command of the air.

But—and there's the crux of the matter—once we have such aerial command, the Japanese "seagoing forces" are counted out anyhow; they become so many targets to be picked off at leisure even as the Repulse and the Prince of Wales were picked off.

This does not mean, of course, that advocates of autonomous air power crave to "abolish Army and Navies." It does mean that air power has achieved primacy in modern warfare.

It is useless to expect the necessary aerial strategy to be evolved for us by men whose ideas are rigidly set in older molds.

The most we can expect from them is aviation as a supplement to old-line surface strategy, when we need all-out plans to eliminate the enemy's air power and enforce full mastery of the skies. Everything else is secondary and follow-up procedure: the exploitation of air ascendancy down below.

We must have new men and an organization within which they can make fullest use of their creative energies.

The irony of our war with Japan is this. Although the body and heart of the enemy are closer to our American mainland than any of his outlying limbs, we are grappling with those limbs and cannot strike at his heart.

We have come to grips with Japan in the Philippines and Malaya and the Netherlands Indies, which represent, in terms of safe roundabout supply routes, distances from seven to twelve thousand miles.

This despite the fact that the enemy lives only a fraction of that distance from our back door: a scant three thousand miles from Alaska, some two thousand miles from bases in the Aleutian Islands.

What might have been—and what ultimately must be—a conflict across 3,000 miles has resolved into a conflict across 12,000 miles!

And the most melancholy part of the tale is that our inability to strike directly at the enemy across the shortest distance is not due to inherent flaws in the technique of war-making. It is the result of a flaw in our intellectual vision.

To grasp the strategic layout, think of Japan as a great octopus. Its body and its vital organs are in the Nipponese Islands proper.

Its tentacles stretch out across thousands of miles—into China, Malaya, the Indies, the Philippines, Guam, Wake. Others are reaching out toward Australia and New Zealand.

If we are able to strike at the heart of this sprawling beast, at Japan itself, and knock it out there, all the tentacles would instantly fall limp.

But because we lacked the revolutionary boldness to prepare the appropriate strategy and weapons, we have no alternative but to attack the tentacles one by one.

The course envisaged can be surmised from the kind of construction upon which our present Army-Navy command is lavishing the billions at its disposal.

It is implicit in the gigantic Armies and vast amounts of mechanized ground equipment being projected, and in the colossal fleets of merchant ships scheduled for production.

It is clearly implicit in the huge program of naval construction, much of it scheduled for completion only in 1943, and relatively little of it available in full force before 1945.

MILE BY MILE

The plan apparently is to retrieve lost ground in the Pacific mile by mile—to reconquer every island and every base that may have been seized by the enemy.

I submit that it makes no sense. The sooner we supplement this strategy by preparing for direct aerial assault on the heart of the enemy, the better.

In the meantime let us give the present strategists all they ask for in the conduct of the immediate phase of the conflict. Having been caught without guns, so to speak, we must make the best possible use of more primitive weapons. But that should not stop us from forging the new weapons without delay.

If even a fraction of the materials and man power and creative genius now embarked for expansion of the old weapons in line with the old strategy were diverted to true air power, we could construct the machinery and perfect the organization for the most direct road to victory.

SUPERBOMBERS

Specifically it is imperative that we undertake immediate construction of a fleet of superbombers of the Douglas B-19 and Glenn Martin Flying Boat size.

These have a range of nearly 8,000 miles. Japan is within a 3,000-mile range of Alaska. Such an aerial armada will have an adequate margin of range for maneuvering and tactical operations over the targets.

The present B-19 and Glenn Martin, having been designed years ago without benefit of recent aeronautical experience, leave much to be desired in the matter of military characteristics.

But the experience gained in the course of their construction and the lesson learned by our aerial strategists in the present war will enable superb American designers to put this type of plane into production at once.

When these bombers take to the air, they will be true dreadnaughts of the sky.

AVIATION INDUSTRY

The American aviation industry can now surpass the best available elsewhere.

Glenn L. Martin stated in his company's house organ for February, 1942, that his firm "can build a 250,000-lb. flying ship, able to carry 80 tons of bombs or cargo to Europe at a speed or more than 300 mph at any time and there is a demand for it. The preliminary designs have already been worked out."

The human mind is strangely flustered by the unaccustomed. The same people who do not consider it remarkable or "extreme" to build giant battleships costing a hundred million dollars are bewildered by the idea of building super-bombers, at a cost of between one and two million dollars, although from an engineering standpoint it is a much less difficult undertaking.

The superbombers and superfighters under discussion, we may be sure, will cease to be "fantastic" as soon as they are in production.

ALEUTIAN BASES

While these bombers operate from the primary base on Alaska, their accompaniment of convey fighters could start from Aleutian bases a thousand miles farther west. At the outset the convoy combat planes would therefore be of considerably shorter range.

The two types together would give us a well-balanced striking force, with the military characteristics described in the preceding chapter, fit to attack Japan, not evading or seeking combat, but as great naval armadas used to do in the days before the advent of aviation.

If the construction of this aerial striking force begins in 1942, it could safely be planned for action in 1945. And if aviation is given the right of way on all deficit materials, tools and labor, the whole process can be tremendously speeded up.

If some naval leaders object that this would be "too late," remember that their own construction program for mile-by-mile struggle cannot reach its apex until 1943. Should the war be won in the interim, Americans will regret neither the investment in a long-range air-force program for 1945 nor the investment in a naval program for 1946.

THE NEXT PHASE

Even while the minimal airpower project as outlined, on the basis of aviation types already in existence, is in progress, work must be begun on the succeeding phase, with ever larger bombers, of at least 10,000 miles range and convoy or combat planes of the necessary reach.

By making possible aerial attack direct from the American mainland, with additional protective combat planes joining the attacking force from Alaska and the Aleutian Islands as the aerial battle fleet passes this region on its way to Japan, it would constitute our next line of defense in the skies, and a further enhancement of aerial insurance.

ALL OVER THE GLOBE

Thereafter we would enter into the third stage, wherein, with a 15,000-mile range at our disposal, we could achieve mastery of the skies all over the globe. This is the concomitant of a war that is global in its sweep.

Immediate preparation for direct aerial attack on Japan, and ultimately on Germany as well, does not imply a cessation of the struggle with the forces now at hand.

The new organization for a single air force will also enable us to make more effective the present equipment and the aircraft already projected.

The most important thing that an air department could do immediately, while launching the program for long-range combat, is to release our existing aviation from its anachronistic dependence on surface transportation.

At this stage of aeronautical science it is ludicrous that our aircraft should be taken apart and loaded on ships, then dragged across vast ocean areas in constant dread of attack from undersea, on the surface, and from on high.

The same aircraft can be readily modified to enable self-delivery to Hawaii and Iceland and, through a series of jumps, to Africa.

It would require only minor adaptations of most fighter planes to give them over 3,000 miles of sustained flight; and there is not a bomber extant which could not be equipped with additional emergency range.

Nearly 200,000 aircraft are planned for production in 1942-43. If the greater part of these, as well as the craft already built, were equipped with a minimum range of 3,000 miles, avenues of operation now closed to us would suddenly be wide open. The terrible drain on our heavy burdened shipping facilities would cease.

The folly of shipping aircraft which could be made to fly under their own power is truly bizarre. Due to the bulk of airplanes, only a fraction of the tonnage of a cargo ship can be utilized.

At a generous estimate, a 10,000-ton freighter can transport a hundred pursuits. To assure its safety in transit, it must be adequately protected against teeming threats on, below, and above sea level.

It must move with an escort of warships in battle trim, under swarms of defensive airplanes brought along on the Navy's "floating bases", which, in turn must be protected by land-based aviation from intermediary bases.

A handful of airplanes conducted slowly, inertly, to some scene of action by a convoy many times larger than the total combat power of the cargo!

If the naval units, carrier-based aviation, gasoline, man power, and other elements entering into the undertaking were converted into direct striking air power, they would give us not only vastly greater offensive value but the kind of power that could be hurled directly at the vitals of the enemy country.

NO DESPAIR

This book has been in large part a chronicle of American error and shortsightedness and stubborn orthodoxy. But its moral is not despair. On the contrary, its message is one of soaring hope, as summoned up in the title—Victory Through Air Power.

America's aerial potential, as compared to that of the Axis, is so clearly greater that in the race for supremacy in the skies victory is assured. We must, however, bear in mind that the differential is being rapidly reduced as the Germans and the Japanese lay hands on new sources of supply.

Hence the immense importance of acting now, when the advantages are still overwhelmingly on our side. Tomorrow it may be a race between approximate equals: today our margin of superiority in materials, productive forces, and brains is still large enough to guarantee success.

Air power is the American weapon. It will not fail us, if only we unchain it and provide immediately the minimal conditions for its unhindered development.

I know that I speak for all my colleagues in the aeronautical legions of the land—our gallant pilots, designers, engineers and manufacturers, the aerial strategists and the humblest aeronautical mechanics — and especially for the millions of American young people born into the air-power age and attuned to its dynamic rhythm, when I say that we airmen feel frustrated by the artificial restraints.

We are eager to serve and ready to act when our beloved America says the word.

THE END

Hold Everything

"Nothing like a library for knowledge and culture, Herschel—and they're warm, too!"

Leading Sanford Man, Dan C. Lawrence, Dies

SANFORD—Final rites for Dan C. Lawrence, 70, long a leading Sanford citizen, were held Thursday afternoon from the Steele Street Methodist Church. The officiating ministers were the Rev. Allan P. Brantley, pastor of the church, and the Rev. H. E. Spence of Duke University, a former pastor. Burial was in Buffalo Cemetery.

Mr. Lawrence, the son of the late Capt. Lewis C. Lawrence and Mrs. Sue Southall Lawrence of Murfreesboro, was formerly engaged in business as a young man in Norfolk, Va., and Roanoke Rapids. He had resided in Sanford since 1905 and was formerly engaged in the wholesale grocery business.

When the National Bank of Sanford was organized in September, 1933, after a period of several months when there were no banking facilities in Sanford, Mr. Lawrence was chosen president. He was also president of the Seaboard Mills, and was interested in real estate, farming and other affairs. His business judgment was sought constantly.

FORMERLY BOARD MEMBER

A lifelong member of the Methodist Church, he was for many years a member of the official board of Steele Street Methodist Church, and was a former member of the Lee County Board of Commissioners.

Surviving are his widow, Mrs. Mary Egerton Thornton Lawrence; three children, Mrs. Robert J. Jenson, Daniel C. Lawrence Jr., and Lewis C. Lawrence of Sanford; four brothers, Lewis C. Lawrence of Marion, S. C.; Frank W. Lawrence of Raleigh, J. Southall and Carl C. Lawrence of Murfreesboro; and two sisters, Mrs. L. T. Singleton of Moyock and Mrs. Carter Page of Victoria, Va.

Say, "I saw it in The News." Thank you.

New Missionary Officers Named

WINSTON-SALEM —(AP)— Mrs. E. R. Trexler of Ch ·a Grove was elected president of the State Woman's Missionary Society of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church, which ended its annual meetings here yesterday.

Mrs. Aubrey Mauney of Kings Mountain was named vice-president; Mrs. J. Frank Davis of Shelby, recording secretary; Mrs. W. Clifton Deal of Hickory, statistical secretary, and Miss Rosa Sox of Hickory, treasurer.

Rock Hill Charities Join in Community Drive

ROCK HILL, S. C.—Combining their efforts under one head, the various charity organizations of this city have decided to pool their efforts into a community chest. Such organizations as the Boy Scouts, YMCA, Salvation Army and others will have one set-up. A goal of some $35,000 has been decided upon for the year's work and committees will shortly be appointed to map plans for the raising of this amount.

It is understood that the Red Cross, due to its peculiar national set-up, will not be included in the effort.