

March 14, 1983

Dear Paul:

I have preliminary comments from all the committee members now. The main concerns at this point are:

- repetitiousness-- the term was used independently by three separate reviewers

- the absence of interthreading of context, e.g., the flow of the war, both in a tactical sense, as well as in respect to mounting hostility toward the U.S. presence, the focus on hi-tech war in various modes, e.g., Dr. Snyder suggests that you might begin Chapter VIII with a discussion of the Tet offensive. He also suggested that the McNamara Line, Khe Sanh, close air support doctrine in toto, target selection as it was done rather than as the chart looked, and maintenance (which is underconsidered in air power history in general). He also shares my interest in how the Ranch Hands became so "tribal", and thereby somewhat insensitive (apparently) to the image that they had in the world at large, at home, or at the receiving end. "Why did the bosses allow it?" (Indeed, how aware were they of it?) How about some data on the background of unit members relative to other Air Force elements? Was it good duty? Did people ask for it? How did the flying profile of the crews and pilots stack up vis a vis SAC or TAC? Especially, what does the small-group bond and the desire to do their thing imply for the design of command-and-control logic as well as systems? What you suggest here is an important potential refutation of Clausewitz's aphorism on war as a continuation of policy by other means.

Dr. Melosi suggests that while the basic quality is pretty good, that the repetitiousness is worthy of remedy. He also suggests better stage-setting and linking vis-a-vis the terrain and physical geography of VN; the diplomatic and political constraints; and a closer identification of just where the decision to go/no-go is in the command structure. He also noted what you have observed: that you are too close to the subject, with a psychic stake in the operation. This conforms to basic problem with military history as a basis for post hoc exegesis: you can get a Liddell Hart, who endures the horrors, and castigates the system, or a Sir James Edmonds, who becomes an apologist. What I urge you to do in the final shaping is to assume as much as you can, and I know that is difficult (notice how I avoided saying I told you so), the posture of clinician, microbiologist whatever -- or historian.

Insomuch as this dissertation is very likely going to be read by at least a few environmentalists, it is incumbent upon you to be sensitive to the complex interdependency of people, policy and environment. The model is not separate boxes, but rather more like a box full of balloons, in which pressure or heat, or whatever, affects all the others. The fundamental difference between the environmentally sensitive and the anti-environmentalist may indeed be a classic confrontation between straight-line precise and curvilinear ambiguity-tolerating mindsets. You might have a look at Aldo Leopold's Sand County Almanac -- as he suggests how the ecologist lives in a psychic landscape of wounds. I appreciate that this may be difficult, but given the topic and the context in which it occurred -- e.g., cratering, Arclight, Rome plows, Georgia chains, napalm, CBUs -- and the

well-established pattern of "colossal cracking" as defined by JFC Fuller in re air war 1942-45, and the problems that US air power confronted in re propaganda back-lash in Korea, I cannot see how you can avoid dealing with it in some way. It is true that there are political overtones to environmentalism (although it is not consistent with right - left categories, e.g., the Nazi emphasis on conservation and land-use improvement, Teddy Roosevelt), and a key work is entitled The Subversive Science, central questions which emerge from this are: how much did practices like this generate reactions that far outweighed tactical advantage? And how much did the environmental movement spring and then grow from a reaction against such practices?

Don't get bogged down in this, but do show some awareness of the question of the critical impacts and linkages beyond the tactical short-range focus. I share Dr. Melosi's concern about the "plants versus people" observation, mainly because I don't think it is truly logical to be able to separate the two, especially since in World War II, schemes for attacking foodstuffs were rejected at high levels on that very basis. Beyond that, of course, is problem of a nation with less than ten per cent of the world's population and a consumer of nearly half its annual resource output, and well-fed, destroying food in a world of widespread hunger. (It was a problem well in view in discussions that took place at the policy level in the early 70s when the possibility of withholding US food production was proposed by some as a means to counter the threat of Third World oil cut-off.)

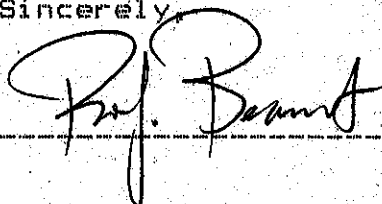
This leads, I think, to the question of what kind of responses are left to major industrial interventionist nations, if high tech or heavy-handed responses are fraught with danger? (It seems to be a problem in Afghanistan, nicht wahr?)

All of this is suggest that now that you are master of your ground, that you ponder such issues, and do not worry about soaring too far. Even if you follow the direction of "what went wrong?" and "how could it be avoided in the future?" you would be doing well. But I do think that some more stage-setting, and linking with implication is warranted. Actually, this can be the fun part, inasmuch as a dissertation can be viewed as fun. For one thing, this is an area that floats somewhat free of the mechanistic approach dictated by the data base in chronicling the story. Don't worry about a touch of multi-disciplinarity, either. That is perhaps the essence of the problem: policies and tactics shaped by the historically and the systemically insensitive or ignorant...??? Why, for example, in the bombing campaigns in the World Wars, did both sides see the other side as likely to give way under such attacks, while their own people would stand up under similar pressure?

Part of you job now is to ask questions and generate hypotheses based on what you have seen, without necessarily answering or testing them, and to suggest future vectors and topics of research, as well as dealing with problems that you encountered.

Keep plugging and keep in touch. (I was about to say there was light at the end of the tunnel).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Prof. Bennett". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping initial "B".