

TASKER H. BLISS AND THE CREATION
OF THE MODERN AMERICAN
ARMY, 1853-1930

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ABSTRACT

A commonplace observation among historians describes one or another historical period as a time of “transition” or a particular person as a “transitional figure.” In the history of the United States Army, scholars apply those terms especially to the late- nineteenth century “Old Army.” This categorization has helped create a shelf of biographies of some of the transitional figures of the era. Leonard Wood, John J. Pershing, Robert Lee Bullard, William Harding Carter, Henry Tureman Allen, Nelson Appleton Miles and John McCallister Schofield have all been the subject of excellent scholarly works. Tasker Howard Bliss has remained among the missing in that group, in spite of the important activities that marked his career and the wealth of source materials he left behind.

Bliss belongs on that list because, like the others, his career demonstrates the changing nature of the U.S. Army between 1871 and 1917. Bliss served for the most part in administrative positions in the United States and in the American overseas empire. Seeing hardly any combat and spending only a few years commanding troops, Bliss contributed instead to the creation and development of the army’s post-graduate educational system, and he was deeply involved in the Elihu Root reforms of the army and the War Department. Thus what makes his career especially noteworthy, more than many of the soldiers on that list of biographies, is that Bliss helped to create the changes that laid the foundations for the modern army.

During the First World War, Bliss worked more closely with the Allied leadership than any other American with the possible exception of Edward M. House. President Woodrow Wilson named Bliss as one of the five commissioners leading the U.S. delegation to the Versailles Peace Conference in 1919. In this position he influenced many members of the American delegation who would remain leaders in the foreign policy elite into the 1940s, and he helped to create the Council on Foreign Relations, an important organization for the foreign policy elite.

For Frederick Palmer, the author of the family-authorized biography, the Great War and the Peace Conference were the climax of Bliss's career. A substantial modern scholarly literature exists on Bliss's service in the Great War and the Peace Conference, but none of those works present his earlier career in any detail. As a result, when planning this dissertation with the late Professor Russell F. Weigley, we decided to concentrate on Bliss's activities before 1917.

Bliss helped shape the institutions the United States needed as it became a world power, and he trained some of the leaders who would exercise that power. He left a legacy of thoughtful consideration of the organizational, political and moral issues that the exercise of power posed for the United States. It was a life that still teaches us how to face the issues involved in the exercise of world power.

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No archivist runs a more researcher-friendly facility than Dr. Richard J. Sommers of the Army's Military Heritage Center in Carlisle, Pa. Not only did he guide me to several collections beyond the Tasker H. Bliss Papers, but also he readily shared his inexhaustible knowledge of the late-nineteenth century army and especially the Civil War veterans among its officer corps. I was never able to come up with a name for which he could not supply detailed information about the officer's Civil War record.

Both the U. S. Army Center of Military History and the Military Heritage Center supported my research with grants, and George School provided both a full-year and a term sabbatical to make available the time for research and writing. The Temple University History Department deserves my thanks for its decision to schedule graduate classes in the evening so that full-time pre-college teachers have the opportunity for graduate study. Dr. Shawn Schurr in the Deans Office of the College of Liberal Arts blended encouragement with deadlines in a helpful manner.

My late parents encouraged my interest in history and the military from grade school on; they would be proud to see the finished dissertation. Victor H. English loved the army and his fellow veterans, especially the 35th Infantry Division and General George S. Patton, Jr. My long-suffering wife Renukha has lived with this project for a majority of the time since our marriage. I thank her for her tolerance as well as her support.

Finally, the dedication of this work is taken from the works of Johann Sebastian Bach: *Sola Dei Gloria*.

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Preface

A commonplace observation among historians describes one or another historical period as a time of “transition” or a particular person as a “transitional figure.” In the history of the United States Army, scholars apply those terms especially to the late- nineteenth century “Old Army.” This categorization has helped create a shelf of biographies of some of the transitional figures of the era: Leonard Wood, John J. Pershing, Robert Lee Bullard, William Harding Carter, Henry Tureman Allen, Nelson Appleton Miles and John McCallister Schofield have all been the subject of excellent scholarly works.¹ Tasker Howard Bliss has remained among the missing in that group, in spite of the important activities that marked his career and the wealth of source materials he left behind.

Bliss belongs on that list because, like the others, his career demonstrates the changing nature of the U.S. Army between 1871 and 1917. Bliss served for the most part in administrative positions in the United States and in the American overseas empire. Seeing hardly any combat and spending only a few years commanding troops, Bliss contributed instead to the creation and development of the army’s post-graduate educational system, and he was deeply involved in the Elihu Root reforms of the army and the War Department. Thus what makes his career especially noteworthy, more than many of the soldiers on that list of biographies, is that Bliss

¹ Biographies of these officers are cited in several chapters and included in the bibliography.

helped to create the changes that laid the foundations for the modern army. Graduating from the Military Academy in 1875, Bliss soon returned to teach at West Point. His work attracted the attention of Major General Schofield, the Superintendent, and when Schofield became Commanding General of the Army, he selected Bliss as one of his aides. Serving under Schofield from 1888 to 1895, Bliss gained a broad knowledge of the issues facing the military, with a special emphasis on the importance of professional education and training for officers and the impact of changing weapons technology on every part of the army. Schofield consciously prepared his staff for future high positions, and as an “incremental reformer,”² he taught Bliss about the politics that was an essential part of military service in a democratic republic.

When Schofield retired, the Secretary of War, Daniel S. Lamont, retained Bliss in Washington, D.C., to help him with special projects until Bliss was assigned as military attaché at the U.S. legation in Madrid. Returning from Spain when war broke out in 1898, Bliss served in the brief Puerto Rico campaign. In the newly-acquired American colonial empire, Bliss served as Collector of Customs in the Military Government of Cuba. Most of the reforms the occupation government brought to Cuba depended on the customs service because tariff collections provided the bulk of the government’s revenue. When the effort to create a tariff reciprocity

² Donald B. Connelly, *John M. Schofield and the Politics of Generalship* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 301.

treaty between the United States and newly-independent Cuba failed, Bliss returned to Cuba and successfully negotiated a new treaty that won approval from Congress. His outstanding performance administering the Cuban customs earned him national notice and promotion to brigadier general. It was one indication of the new nature of military service that an army officer could reach the grade of brigadier general with almost no combat experience.

From 1902 to 1905, Bliss served in Washington, D. C., playing an important role in the Elihu Root reforms. He became the workhorse of the Army War College Board, Root's *de facto* general staff. When Congress passed Root's reform legislation, he served on the original general staff and was the founding president of the Army War College. As president, Bliss guided the creation of the school's initial curriculum, employing the students' talents in writing the first comprehensive war plans the United States ever developed. As the army's chief planner, he became the service's leading voice on strategic questions as a member of the Joint Army and Navy Board. He helped to shape the institutions that trained the U.S. Army's leaders as the United States became a great power.

From 1905 to 1915, with brief interludes in other duties, Bliss commanded troops in the field, first in the Philippines, then in California, and finally along the Mexican border. His service placed him in some of the most challenging positions that an American general could face during that tumultuous decade. Almost everything about the U.S. colonial administration in the Philippines was controversial, especially in the Moro Province where Bliss spent the bulk of his time.

When he commanded troops along the border, Mexico writhed in the throes of revolution and civil war. American soldiers had to protect the border while dealing delicately with the various Mexican factions and trying to prevent cross-border arms trafficking.

From this politically sensitive duty, Bliss returned to Washington, D.C., serving as Assistant Chief of Staff while the First World War raged in Europe. When the United States entered the war, Bliss remained in the same position, became Acting Chief of Staff when Major General Hugh Scott left for Russia, and eventually Chief in his own right. Bliss spent little of his time in the capital city, because President Woodrow Wilson appointed him as the American representative on the Supreme War Council, the international body created to give coherence to Allied strategy. Bliss generally supported John J. Pershing's efforts to create an independent American army, and he argued consistently for a concentration of Allied and American forces in France to fight the Germans in the decisive theater. This service required Bliss to function as much as a diplomat as he was a soldier, another unusual experience for an American general.

During the First World War, Bliss worked more closely with the Allied leadership than any other American with the possible exception of Edward M. House. It was a sensible decision when President Woodrow Wilson named Bliss as one of the five commissioners leading the U.S. delegation to the Versailles Peace Conference in 1919. In this position he influenced many members of the American delegation who would remain leaders in the foreign policy elite into the 1940s, and he helped to

create the Council on Foreign Relations, an important organization for the foreign policy elite. Although Bliss believed Wilson did not utilize his knowledge effectively during the negotiations, he nonetheless remained an ardent Wilsonian and served as an honorary pallbearer at Wilson's funeral. A deeply reflective man, Bliss found the destruction and barbarism of the First World War a stunning example of the worst aspects of human nature; the experience turned this general and former Army Chief of Staff into a crusader for arms limitation and for American membership in the League of Nations.

For Frederick Palmer, the author of the family-authorized biography, the Great War and the Peace Conference were the climax of Bliss's career.³ Palmer took an almost teleological approach in his life of Bliss, devoting nearly three-quarters of his book to those events and presenting everything else in his hero's career as preparation for that supreme service. There is also a substantial modern scholarly literature on Bliss's service in the Great War and the Peace Conference, but none of those works present his earlier career in any detail.⁴ As a result, when planning this dissertation with the late Professor Russell F. Weigley, we decided to concentrate on Bliss's activities before 1917, since there were numerous excellent works available on the war years.

³ Frederick Palmer, *Bliss, Peacemaker: The Life and Letters of General Tasker Howard Bliss* (New York: Dodd, Meade & Company, 1934).

⁴ For instance, see these works of David F. Trask, *The United States in the Supreme War Council: American War Aims and Inter-Allied Strategy, 1917-1918* (Middletown, Ct: Wesleyan University Press, 1961); *General Tasker Howard Bliss and the "Sessions of the World:" 1919*. Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1965; and *The AEF and Coalition Warmaking, 1917-1918* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993).

For most of those who knew him, Tasker H. Bliss was an appealing personality, and for subsequent scholars, he displayed many traits unusual in a general officer. As Donald Smythe commented in his biography of John J. Pershing, Bliss “would have ornamented any university faculty.” Fluent in five foreign languages, Bliss could read Greek “as easily as his native English.”⁵ This accomplished man served his country for fifty-six years in a wide range of tasks and assignments, on active duty and in retirement. He helped shape the institutions the United States needed as it became a world power, and he trained some of the leaders who would exercise that power. He left a legacy of thoughtful consideration of the organizational, political and moral issues that the exercise of power posed for the United States. It was a life that still teaches us how to face the issues involved in the exercise of world power.

⁵ Donald Smythe, *Pershing: General of the Armies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 7.

CHAPTER 1

JOINING THE PROFESSION OF ARMS

“Hold your head up, Tad!” That was Mary Ann Bliss’s most frequent injunction to her son Tasker.⁶ Well ahead of his peers he had grown to be big and big, and as many young people do in that situation, he slouched. His parents would not allow it. Personal discipline was important the Old Testament household maintained by the Rev. Dr. George R. Bliss and his wife, Mary Ann. Their seventh child, a son, Tasker Howard, entered this world on the last day of December 1853.

The home he joined was both scholarly and biblical. The Rev. Dr. Bliss was graduated from Madison (now Colgate) University in Hamilton, New York, from which he went on to the Hamilton Theological Seminary.⁷ After serving as a university tutor for three years and then as a parish pastor for six, Dr. Bliss became professor of Greek at the newly-established University at Lewisburg, Pennsylvania (now Bucknell University) in 1849.⁸ He would spend the next quarter century in that position.

⁶ Frederick Palmer, *Bliss, Peacemaker: The Life and Letters of General Tasker Howard Bliss* (Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1970, reprint of 1934 edition), 14.

⁷ Pennsylvania Baptist State Convention, *Annual Report, 1893*, 7-8.

⁸ Palmer, *Bliss, Peacemaker*, gives the date as 1850, but according to J. Orin Oliphant, *The Rise of Bucknell University* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, A Division of Meredith Publishing Company, 1965), 36, it was 1849.

In the autumn of 1849, the Rev. George W. Anderson joined the faculty as Professor of Latin. The two men worked together on curriculum, the rules for students, and the student catalog, and while Dr. Bliss served as librarian, the Rev. Anderson belonged to the library committee. In 1851, the two jointly recommended a change in the course in English, suggesting the program lead to a Bachelor of Philosophy degree. This close collaboration ended in 1854, when the Rev. Anderson resigned, but their friendship continued.⁹ It would have important consequences for Tasker.

When Tasker Bliss was eight years old, the sectional conflicts of the 1850s led to civil war, and Tasker had many memories of the political turmoil of his boyhood and the martial scenes of the war years. The impact of these struggles was especially important in the Bliss family. George Bliss's father had been an upstate New York farmer and an ardent Jeffersonian; he raised his son to continue in the Democratic path. Ultimately, the slavery issue forced George Bliss to abandon the political faith of his father, becoming instead a Republican and eventually an enthusiastic supporter of Abraham Lincoln.¹⁰ Yet there were limits to his dislike of the South. When Confederate General Robert E. Lee led his Army of Northern Virginia into Pennsylvania, Tasker's father left for the front lines, not as a soldier but in the "Biblical role of the Good Samaritan." For the rest of his life, he would tell the story

⁹ Oliphant, *Bucknell University*, 40-44, 55, and 71.

¹⁰ Palmer, *Bliss, Peacemaker*, 5-9.

of the wounded Alabama soldier for whom he found food and water. The lad, a victim of his misguided political leaders, “was a fine boy.”¹¹

The Rev. Dr. Bliss had found a “fitting companion” for the “notable educational work to which he gave his life.”¹² She was Mary Ann Raymond, who had been born into a substantial middle-class family in New York City in 1821. At the age of fifteen, she “professed Christ and was baptized.”¹³ It must have required a substantial adjustment to move from her urban, middle-class home to become the wife of a professor at a small and struggling university, but Mary Ann Bliss learned to manage her household. Eventually she gave birth to thirteen children, and – remarkably, for that time – only one of them died in childhood, while she herself lived to be ninety-one.¹⁴

Because a local Baptist church needed a minister but could not afford one, Dr. Bliss added those duties to his work at the university, without any extra pay. The family had to make do with his annual salary from the university, which was five hundred dollars; doing so of course became more difficult as the family grew. Perhaps it was not so difficult to get by on that income in a household where religious and personal discipline were essential parts of the daily routine. Dr. Bliss was strict in his theology, and such strictness carried over to the home. As one acquaintance wrote after Dr. Bliss’s death:

He was the strictest close communionist I ever knew.
He held the Lord’s Supper to be an institution of the

¹¹ Ibid., 9.

¹² Ibid, 7-8.

¹³ Pennsylvania Baptist State Convention, *Annual Report, 1912*, p. 349.

¹⁴ Palmer, *Bliss, Peacemaker*, 14.

individual church; and, when a pastor, he did not invite to participation in it, as almost all Baptist pastors do, “members of the same faith and order,” any more than he invited them to vote in church meeting.¹⁵

One of the rules of the household was a modified primogeniture. Only the oldest child of either sex could have new clothes; the rest had to live with remodeled hand-me-downs.¹⁶

Another of the family rules was that mother administered discipline except in the most severe cases. One of those arose when Mary, the eldest daughter who served also as “assistant mother,” reported that she had heard one of the boys use a word that she could not possibly repeat. The offender went off to his father’s study to receive punishment, while mother asked Mary to write the word on a piece of paper. When she saw it was “Thunder!” she suppressed her laughter and quickly conveyed the news to the study, where mercy prevailed.¹⁷

In this traditional atmosphere, much of the family’s recreation took place together. Croquet on the lawn at home was a favorite activity, and another was badminton. For Tasker, an enjoyable pastime was walking, and he was especially happy when he could go for long walks through the country alongside his father. On summer evenings they both enjoyed strolls along the bank of the Susquehanna River.¹⁸

¹⁵ Quoted in *ibid.*, 6.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 12-13.

With no surplus family income, there was little opportunity to travel, but thanks to the family's relatives, there was never a shortage of interesting visitors. One of Mrs. Bliss's brothers, John H. Raymond, was the second president of Vassar College.¹⁹ While certainly no advocate of women's equality, Uncle John did harbor some progressive ideas that he shared frequently and enthusiastically with the Bliss family. As he put it in his baccalaureate address to the Class of 1871, Vassar's goal was to

make an honest effort at organizing a liberal education for women and taking students at the point where thorough education leaves off at existing ladies' seminaries, and carrying them through a well digested, well balanced course of higher culture adapted to the sex. . . . God created woman to be a companion of man Herein the creator determined her general relations to man to be that of an auxiliary. But He said nothing of limits within which this assistance was to be confined, and beyond which it was not good for man to be alone. . . . Wherever it is right for man to go it is right for woman to accompany him.²⁰

Tasker Bliss enjoyed the company of his uncle; John Raymond was a scholar like Tasker's father but lived and worked in a completely different world. When Uncle John visited, the two would often take long walks through the countryside, and Raymond had a Shakespearean message for some of the trees, stones, or flowers.

¹⁹ The first president was Milo P. Jewett, but Vassar Female College was chartered in January of 1861 and the Civil War delayed the opening. The first class entered the College in September of 1865. By that time Jewett had resigned and John H. Raymond had succeeded him as president. (http://www.admissions.vassar.edu/about_hist.html, accessed on June 26, 2005.)

²⁰ Quoted in Palmer, *Bliss, Peacemaker*, 15.

Along with his eccentricities, Uncle John shared with Tasker Bliss his knowledge of the developing world of scholarship.²¹

After several years in the Lewisburg Academy, Bliss took the next step, going on to the university. The faculty consisted of five men, including his father; they taught Greek and Latin languages and literature, mathematics and natural philosophy, and the natural sciences. The curriculum at Lewisburg was typical of traditional denominational colleges in the middle of the nineteenth century.²² There were few electives, and the students lived a highly regulated life with almost every hour of the day structured for them. The academic day began with morning chapel at 7:15, followed by first recitation at 7:30 for an hour. Students and faculty then enjoyed thirty minutes of free time, but from 9 to 11 there were enforced study hours. At 11 the second recitation began. Another study period filled the time from 2 to 4 p.m., with another recitation at 4. The final two hours of study hall lasted from 7 to 9 p.m. The school regulated students' dress, and once when the president found an intoxicated student on the campus, he caned him.²³ The philosophy of this curriculum along with this campus atmosphere emphasized character building as the central purpose of the liberal arts.

The combination of the large family and its small income led Tasker Bliss to consider attending one of the service academies. In these institutions, not only did the students need no money, they actually earned pay. According to his authorized

²¹ Ibid., 15.

²² Laurence R. Veysey, *The Emergence of the American University* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1965), ch. 1.

²³ Palmer, *Bliss, Peacemaker*, 9-10.

biographer, Frederick Palmer, Bliss was originally more interested in the Naval Academy, but no appointment was available, so he settled for the United States Military Academy at West Point.²⁴ He had also made friends with a Civil War veteran who had attended Lewisburg, John C. Cooke. According to Bliss's own account, he listened intently to Cooke's stories of battles and campaigns, including the four times the old soldier was wounded. When Bliss asked, "Jack, what kind of soldier do you think I would make?" Cooke answered, "Tad, you'd make a good professor at West Point." While Palmer wrote that Bliss had no interest in such a position, he would in fact twice attempt to obtain a professorship at the Military Academy, but fail.²⁵ In any case, Bliss did secure his appointment to the Military Academy, walking barefoot several miles to meet the representative who appointed him. He kept the shine on his shoes for the meeting, Bliss said later, by carrying them tied together and strung over his shoulders.²⁶

The U. S. Military Academy was a proud institution when Bliss arrived in 1871.²⁷ It could well rest on its laurels, since Academy graduates had proven their

²⁴ Ibid., 18, citing a letter from THB to Palmer.

²⁵ Ibid., 19. Bliss served as a language instructor at West Point from 1876 to 1880, and he later applied for the position of professor in the same field.

²⁶ Palmer mentions this interview, and he gives the distance as sixteen miles and his source for the story as Bliss himself. According to *The Washington Post*, Nov. 10, 1930, Bliss said he walked ten miles (clipping in Cullum file for Tasker H. Bliss, U.S.M.A. Archives).

²⁷ This discussion of West Point in the 1870s draws from Stephen E. Ambrose, *Duty, Honor, Country: A History of West Point* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1966), ch. X; Theodore J. Crackel, *West Point: A Bicentennial History* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002), ch. 6; George S. Pappas, *To the Point: The United States Military Academy, 1802-1902* (Westport, Connecticut, and London: Praeger Publishers, 1993), ch. 19; and Sidney Forman, *West Point: A History of the United States Military Academy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950), 134-163. In an unpublished doctoral dissertation, Walter Scott Dillard argued that the Military Academy in the post-Civil War years was actually an institution uncertain and **defensive** about its mission, but that view is unusual; see "The United States Military Academy, 1865-1900: The Uncertain Years" (University of Washington, 1972, UMI # 72-28, 589), especially the Preface.

leadership abilities during the recently concluded Civil War. Great commanders such as Ulysses S. Grant, William T. Sherman and Philip H. Sheridan were not just names and memories at West Point, but frequent visitors. As Commanding General of the Army, Sherman in particular enjoyed returning for graduation to hand the cadets their diplomas personally. Such events kept the Academy's eyes on the past, and there is no indication that Bliss thought differently when he arrived. He had grown up in Pennsylvania, a center of the developing industrial power of the United States.²⁸ Perhaps his boyhood in a traditional and religious academic community had insulated him from the dramatic economic changes that were altering national life. While he was at the Academy, the country endured the Panic and Depression of 1873, interrupting its rapid recovery from the Civil War. As a plebe, he was not thinking of a career in the military, and some of his career decisions make it clear he did not yet perceive the army as an agent of the growing power of the United States. During Bliss's career that is what the army became, and he would be one of the principal architects of its transformation, but there is no hint that he had such a role in mind when he took the oath of allegiance at Trophy Point.

Many of the pre-Civil War professors continued to sit on the Academic Board, controlling the curriculum and the methods of instruction. These men thought the emergence of Academy graduates as the best leaders during the war had vindicated their system, which therefore needed few if any changes. When in 1839 the War

²⁸ For an outstanding introduction to the topic of American industrial growth, see Glenn Porter, *The Rise of Big Business, 1860-1920*, The American History Series (Wheeling, Ill.: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 3d ed., 2006).

Department made the Superintendency of the Military Academy a tour of duty rather than a permanent position, the effect was to give the Academic Board control of most aspects of the Academy, since the professors remained at the head of their departments for long periods of time. The methods of the pre-war years remained, along with the textbooks and the professors themselves. Even when the heads of the departments changed, the outgoing professor would usually select as his replacement one of the assistants whom he had taught himself and who had taught under him. The system perpetuated methods that dated, in many cases, to 1817. At a time of tremendous change in American higher education, West Point stagnated.

In particular, the ideal teaching method remained daily recitation by each cadet in every class, even in the laboratory sciences, leading to instruction in theory rather than practice. When critics challenged the Academy's emphasis on mathematics, which occupied almost as much space in the curriculum as all other subjects combined, an instructor of modern languages, Cornelius deWitt Wilcox, responded: "Like the house that defied the storm, West Point is built on a rock, and that rock is mathematics."²⁹ As the most recent scholarly history of the Academy puts it, "The Academy's leaders were convinced that their emphasis on mathematics and the sciences developed mental discipline – the key to success regardless of what difficulties the future officer might encounter."³⁰ In other disciplines also, the old curriculum and methods survived. Even after the new nation of Germany attained dominance in European military affairs, the U.S. Military Academy refused to teach

²⁹ Quoted in Ambrose, *Duty*, 213-14.

³⁰ Crackel, *Bicentennial History*, 137.

German. Beginning in 1893, the Professor of French was Edward Edgar Wood, an Academy graduate and for several years an assistant professor there. He concentrated on teaching cadets French grammar without any attention to spoken French, because he himself could not speak the language.

Another factor limiting the academic program was the poor academic training of some entering cadets. Because most of them came as congressional appointees, political patronage often determined their selection. As a result, many cadets reported for the entrance examinations with little hope of passing, or if they passed, with little hope of remaining cadets for very long. Of the class entering in 1875, only 40 percent graduated.³¹ In 1870, there were charges that members of Congress sold appointments to the highest bidder, charges that were confirmed in hearings before the House Armed Forces Committee. In spite of the scandal, Congress refused to change the method of appointment.³² An additional problem was that the entering cadets did not all arrive at the same time. Many of them came in June and suffered through the summer camp known as “Beast Barracks,” but others arrived in September and missed the worst of the hazing and ill treatment. This situation created resentment among the June arrivals, and they expressed their feelings by hazing the “Seps.”

A more general reason for the academic weaknesses at the Military Academy was the school’s sense of its mission. Like the denominational colleges of the mid-nineteenth-century United States, West Point’s primary purpose was to build

³¹ Ibid., 194.

³² Pappas, *To the Point*, 372.

character. This goal was – and remains – the result of an Academy education. When other undergraduate institutions changed their philosophy, West Point did not. As Robert Richardson, Jr., an alumnus and a former instructor, put it in his book about the Academy published just after the United States entered the First World War, every cadet has “a certain look in the eye and a certain feeling of strength about the features that is the same. It is the look of men who have accomplished something and of the strength that comes from character.” What was it that developed that evident character? “It comes from discipline, the discipline of the body . . . of the mind . . . of the soul.”³³

Neither the Spartan regime of West Point nor the academic demands came as a shock to Tasker Bliss, given his home life and his one year of university study. He compiled a strong academic record at the Academy, but not an outstanding one, graduating eighth in his class. His best marks were in French and in ordnance and gunnery, while his lowest were in drawing and discipline. He accumulated a number of demerits for minor infractions involving tidiness and attention to detail, and these lowered his class rank. What his classmates remembered about him was that he read more outside the curriculum than anyone else.³⁴ At West Point he acquired the reputation that followed him throughout his career, that he was more nearly a scholar than a soldier.

³³ Robert C. Richardson, Jr., *West Point: An Intimate Picture of the National Military Academy and of the Life of the Cadet* (New York and London, G.P. Putnam’s sons, 1917), 277.

³⁴ Palmer, *Bliss, Peacemaker*, 21-22.

There is reason to think that Bliss earned this reputation. One of the records of cadet life in Bliss's period that is available to the academic researcher is library borrowing. According to this source, Bliss spent nearly every Sunday afternoon of his plebe (freshman) year in the library. He read history, biography, and literature ranging from Mark Twain's *Innocents Abroad* to the novels of James Fenimore Cooper, as well as Alexandre Dumas's *The Three Musketeers* – in French. One must remember, however, that Academy regulations made the library a haven for plebes from the harassment of upperclassmen. To know how much of a factor the search for a sanctuary may have been requires checking Bliss's borrowing to see if there is a pattern. On the one hand, not only as a plebe but also in his second year, he was in the library nearly every Sunday afternoon. On the other hand, as a first classman, he did not check out a book from the Academy library all year.³⁵

Bliss was one of the September arrivals, but he quickly made friends. His classmate Hugh L. Scott, who had arrived in June, commented to his family that most of the Seps did not seem to count for much, but “one, Bliss, from Pennsylvania, seems a fine fellow.”³⁶ Scott and Bliss were destined to follow very different paths in their careers, but they would serve together as Army Chief of Staff and Assistant Chief of Staff respectively as the United States entered the First World War. From the beginning of their days at West Point, the difference between them became clear. While Bliss arrived in September and spent his spare time reading, during “Beast

³⁵ U.S. Military Academy Archives, Special Collections, Library Borrowing Records; U.S. War Department, *Regulations for the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y.: 1873*.

³⁶ Hugh L. Scott (hereafter HLS) to Mother, September [no date], 1871, HLS Mss., USMA Archives.

Barracks,” Scott had celebrated the Fourth of July holiday by swimming the Hudson from the west shore to east and back again. He gleefully told his mother:

It was lonely as it took me over an hour and it was 9 o'clock before I got back and they all thought I was drowned. We are all going to church about 10 o'clock to hear the “Declaration of Independence” read and we are going to have some nifty old fireworks tonight.

His mother protested, as one would expect, and Scott responded that he would “promise very willingly not to do it without company but I have done it once since then and there is not the slightest danger as there are always plenty of boats around.”³⁷ This was the type of achievement that would earn any first year student favorable notice; in Scott’s case it was the beginning of his reputation as a man’s man and a soldier’s soldier.

From Tasker Bliss’s letters home as a cadet, a reader can reconstruct his relationship with his parents. He felt a deep affection for them, but he was also realistic about their financial situation and felt a need to help when he could. These letters stress financial issues to a degree that make family finances appear to have been the major reason for his decision to attend West Point. In one of his earliest letters home, Bliss wrote happily that the pay of cadets had gone up from \$500 to \$600 per annum.³⁸ A month later he wrote:

I find that I can get along first rate on my pay and even have considerable left over, so that I won’t be any

³⁷ HLS to Mother, July 4 and 9, HLS Mss, USMA Archives.

³⁸ Tasker H. Bliss [hereafter THB] to ?, letter fragment, probably Sept. 30, 1871, Bliss Mss., U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pa. [hereafter USAMHI].

expense to father any more, and, I hope to soon be able to pay back the money he borrowed . . . for me.³⁹

By the middle of his first year, Bliss reported that he had paid all of his debts and the government owed him “the nice little sum of \$37.70. Taking it all together I think that this is doing pretty well.”⁴⁰ By September, he thought that he was “about \$100 out of debt” and thus would have “at least \$200 for furlough, “the summer leave after his second year at the Academy.”⁴¹

Tasker’s older brother George pressed him to get some photographs taken, promising to pay for them himself. Unfortunately when the photographs were ready, a letter from home told Bliss that his brother was having financial difficulties. Bliss wrote to his parents, asking if they would pay for the photographs, in which case he would send them home rather than to George. He added, “You can scarcely imagine how I feel in asking this of you, as I have . . . taken great pride [in being] perfectly independent. . . . I cannot bear to think that I am causing you any more trouble in this respect.”⁴² From the frequency of these financial updates, it is clear that the finances were always precarious in the Bliss household.

Bliss wrote frankly of his feelings, sometimes even with a hint of mischievousness. Soon after classes started his first year, he mentioned that “Mail hour is getting to be one of the most desired for periods in the day,” even though it rarely “brings me anything to repay the eagerness with which I have looked for it.”

³⁹ THB to Mary Ann Raymond Bliss [his mother; hereafter MARB], Oct. 25, 1871, Bliss Mss., USAMHI.

⁴⁰ THB to George Ripley Bliss [his father; hereafter GRB], Jan. 25, 1872, Bliss Mss., USAMHI.

⁴¹ THB to MARB, Sept. 19, 1872, Bliss Mss., USAMHI.

⁴² THB to GRB, Sept. 9, 1871, Bliss Mss., USAMHI.

His classmate Hugh Scott, for all of his masculine exploits, experienced the same feelings, telling one correspondent that in his first weeks at the Academy, he was “the most homesick fellow you ever saw.” The best antidote was mail, because “a fellow has need of all the friends he can get hold of.”⁴³ As did most college freshmen, Bliss and Scott wanted more mail, and as would any student who has just gone away to school, Bliss wrote home about his routines. He explained to his family:

They make a great point here of cleanliness. Everything must be as clean and bright as a new pin. Clothes are washed twice each week, and an account is kept of every one who puts clothes in the wash and those who do not are reported and get demerits for it. Also every one who does not take a bath *at least* once a week is reported and punished.⁴⁴

No doubt his family found this emphasis on hygiene reassuring. What he may not have told them was what Scott explained in one of his letters, that “we sleep on the floor one blanket above and another underneath and when we get up at . . . reveille we pile the bedclothes up in a pile in the corner” When upperclassmen entered to inspect the plebes’ rooms, if they found the blankets improperly piled, they would kick over the entire pile.⁴⁵

In many ways, West Point’s facilities were primitive in the 1870s. Bliss’s arrival coincided with the beginning of a building boom that would last to the turn of the century. In 1871, a new Administration Building opened, and new homes for enlisted men appeared in 1872. A steam laundry had opened in 1865, but in the

⁴³ HLS to “Tom,” June 4, 1871, HLS Mss, USMA Archives.

⁴⁴ THB to GRB, Sept. 9, 1871, Bliss Mss., USAMHI.

⁴⁵ HLS to “Tom,” June 4, 1871, HLS Mss, USMA Archives.

cadets' rooms the only water was what they carried in using buckets. There was a sewer system, but the outlet was on the tidal flats of the Hudson, which meant there were problems at low tide. Steam heat arrived in 1867, which had the benefit of providing hiding places for cadet contraband in the screened fireplaces. The roads around the grounds did not gain a macadam surface until 1894.⁴⁶

As for Bliss's studies, he had two especially challenging recitations each day, in mathematics for ninety minutes and in French for sixty.⁴⁷ As had been the practice since Sylvanus Thayer's time as superintendent, every cadet recited in each class every day, and the professor in each discipline kept a record of each cadet's performance. Sectioning was based on performance and changed with each week's ratings. His parents carefully monitored his academic progress. In the middle of Bliss's second year, he wrote his father a lengthy description of the West Point method of reporting academic standing. The parents received monthly estimates, he explained, but his exact general standing within the entire class was reported only in January and June. As so many students have told their parents, "Don't get discouraged if you don't see me go up very soon and think that I am not studying, as whatever may be the result, I shall certainly try."⁴⁸ By the middle of his third year, Bliss reported that the classes were harder than ever. In mid-January, he wrote:

My next six months course of study is if anything harder than the last because there is more of it. We finish Acoustics, Optics and Astronomy, and also Chemistry, and we take up Magnetism and Electricity and all of tactics. Cavalry exercise continues as before and

⁴⁶ Forman, *West Point*, 143-144.

⁴⁷ THB to GRB, Sept. 30, 1871, Bliss Mss., USAMHI.

⁴⁸ THB to GRB, Feb. 13, 1873, Bliss Mss., USAMHI.

practice with the saber. This with two hours of drawing and painting every other day, about fills up my time.⁴⁹

Bliss found the schedule frustrating because drawing and painting was his weakest subject, and “just as I begin to think that I am making satisfactory progress,” instruction in that subject ended.⁵⁰

Learning foreign languages was a major part of a West Point education, and in that area Bliss excelled. His foundation in Greek and Latin served him well in French and then in Spanish. In December of his second year, he asked his parents whether his brother George, who worked for the *New York Star*, received at his office the Spanish language newspaper *El Mundo Nuevo*. If he did, Bliss hoped George would send it on so that Tasker could practice his Spanish. “I have got that far . . . in my study of Spanish . . . that I can read it without any difficulty at all except in so far as [looking up] new words, and I think that I can learn the language so that it shall be of use to me more readily by such means.” He then added to the letter a request that his father send him the copy of Voltaire’s *Life of Charles XII*, in French, that Tasker had seen in his father’s library.⁵¹ In this area especially, it is easy to see how Cadet Bliss developed a reputation as an academic among soldiers.

Most parents worry about their children’s behavior when the children first leave home, and the Rev. George and Mary Ann Bliss were no different. Tasker assured them that he was eager to receive and follow their advice about “the moral

⁴⁹ THB to MARB, Jan. 18, 1874, Bliss Mss., USAMHI.

⁵⁰ THB to Mrs. Anderson, no date but 1874, Bliss Mss., USAMHI; a date of “1878” has been penciled in on the letter, but the internal evidence makes it clear the letter comes from 1874.

⁵¹ THB to MARB, Dec. 17, 1872, Bliss Mss., USAMHI.

aspect of [his] present mode of life,” but he also reassured them that he was not acquiring bad habits. He informed them that “smoking is expressly forbidden except during . . . a half hour after each meal. . . . *I have not seen a playing card since I have been here, . . .* [and] neither have I heard of, or seen, a drop of liquor on the post.”⁵² Even without the formal honor system, which had not yet been created, Bliss attributed these conditions to the cadets; “each one is considered *on his honor* not to use [liquor], and this has a great effect.”⁵³ Bliss did not mention that Benny Havens still presided over his tavern in Highland Falls, welcoming cadets when they could get to his establishment. By the time of his death in 1877, the cadets’ song about this legendary figure had reached more than twenty verses.⁵⁴

Even more pleasing to Tasker’s parents must have been his report that the cadets were applying to the Superintendent for permission to hold nightly prayer meetings. These gatherings “always have a good attendance, [and] never since I have been here, have I heard a word of ridicule about the meetings themselves or of the persons who attend.”⁵⁵ An important factor in the success of the prayer meetings was the presence of Brevet Major General Emory Upton, a Civil War hero and the

⁵² Bliss may have been choosing his words carefully. The best known places where cadets found alcohol were in the town right outside the Academy’s gates, but such places were, of course, not “on the post.”

⁵³ THB to MARB, Oct. 25, 1871, Bliss Mss., USAMHI.

⁵⁴ William F. H. Godson, Jr., “A History of West Point, 1852-1902,” Ph. D. dissertation, Temple University, 1934, 39.

⁵⁵ THB to GRB, Jan. 25, 1872, Bliss Mss., USAMHI.

Commandant of Cadets. A devout Christian, Upton rarely missed Sunday worship and sometimes attended the cadets' evening prayer meetings.⁵⁶

Scott's letters, as usual, display the contrasting attitude. In his case, he explained to his mother that he had attended church in order to hear a newly-arrived preacher who "used the queerest service . . . half Presbyterian and half Episcopalian." The new clergyman was more popular among the cadets than was his colleague "because he preaches shorter sermons." The long sermons of the other minister "did more harm by the swearing that was done [at their length] than he ever did good."⁵⁷

As at any college, the cadets spent some of their free time exploring ways to break the rules, but of course Bliss did not inform his parents of those activities. It is not clear whether he joined in some of the routine violations. His friend and classmate Hugh Scott certainly was involved. Scott commented in one letter, probably written to his parents, that it was routine for the cadets to break the rules by visiting each other after "Taps." He reassured them, "It does no one any harm and the only reason it is forbidden is that if it were not there would be a great many not go to bed all night. I was out every night last week." He then offered the classic justification, "1st class officers and everyone do it."⁵⁸ Another time Scott reported to his mother that for two months, a telegraph system had operated between the First and Eighth Divisions of the barracks, with the wires running through the garret and

⁵⁶ Peter Smith Michie, *The Life and Letters of Emory Upton* (New York: Appleton and Co., 1885); Ambrose, *Duty*, along with Stephen E. Ambrose, *Upton and the Army* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1964), ch. V.

⁵⁷ HLS to Mother, Sept. 3, 1871, HLS Mss, USMA Archives.

⁵⁸ HLS to [?], undated fragment of a letter, HLS Mss, USMA Archives.

over the roof. When some officers found the wires of course they traced them and found the batteries that powered the system, but they never found the culprits.⁵⁹

Naturally the food in the mess hall was of the utmost importance. During their second year at West Point, Hugh Scott exulted in a letter home that

It being Easter today we had eggs for breakfast – and *buckwheat cakes*. We’ve had them twice a week now for a month, Thurs. & Sunday. Such as they are you’d turn up your nose at them but . . . no matter how bad they were so long as they had ever laid on a griddle I’d eat them.⁶⁰

Less appealing was the meal during which a “great big rat ran into the Mess Hall.” Several officers chased it until it “jumped up and struck one of them on the breast,” which allowed the others to corner it and kill it with a sword. Probably many cadets reacted as Scott did, saying “[you] may imagine how much dinner I ate afterward.”⁶¹ Until 1876, when it became a Regular Army mess, the management of the dining hall was in the hands of a civilian caterer. Such contractors found that the worse the food they provided, the better the profit they earned. The result was many instances of cadet raids on local vegetable gardens and chicken coops, and the practice of cooking cadet “hash” in the fireplaces and then over the gas burners in the barracks.⁶²

There were many times when the loneliness of cadet life oppressed Bliss. His sense of isolation appeared not just in his requests for more frequent letters, but also in his requests for newspapers. He asked his parents to subscribe for him to the *Lewisburg College Herald*, as well as to pass on issues of the *National Baptist* and

⁵⁹ HLS to Mother, Nov. 2, 1873, HLS Mss, USMA Archives.

⁶⁰ HLS to Mother, March 28, 1873, HLS Mss, USMA Archives.

⁶¹ HLS to Mother, August [no day] 1871, HLS Mss, USMA Archives.

⁶² Forman, *West Point*, 145-46.

The Examiner and Christian Chronicle. Later in his plebe year, Bliss asked that his parents ask his brother George, in New York city, to send the *New York Star*. Bliss told them that he heard “absolutely no news from the outside world, which is very unpleasant to one accustomed to reading newspapers as much as I have.”⁶³

As for contact with the outside world, the cadets were happy to hear of anything that would reduce their isolation. Bliss told his family that the cadets eagerly awaited the construction of the West Shore Railroad, with a station near the Academy.⁶⁴ The line would “sometime or other add more life to the place,” though he supposed it would be completed too late for his own benefit.⁶⁵ Until then, the best connection was by boat with New York City. Bliss was overjoyed when relatives arrived to visit him, but they had “the provoking habit of coming on one boat and leaving [on] the next,” which left hardly any time for a real visit.⁶⁶

The family’s concerns soon focused on the demerits Bliss earned. After having been chastised by his father, he reported happily that he had

passed through the last 6 months with less than my allowed number of demerits and with a considerable margin to spare. . . . [Y]ou can rest assured that you won’t have to worry on that score again, because it is as inconvenient to me as it is unpleasant to you.⁶⁷

⁶³ THB to GRB, March 18, 1872, Bliss Mss., USAMHI.

⁶⁴ Congress granted the right of way through the West Point military reservation in 1867. Godson, “History of West Point,” 32.

⁶⁵ THB to GRB, March 18, 1872, Bliss Mss., USAMHI. Bliss was correct; the railroad opened in 1881.

⁶⁶ THB to GRB, Sept. 9, 1871, Bliss Mss., USAMHI.

⁶⁷ THB to GRB, Dec. 11, 1872, Bliss Mss., USAMHI.

While his intentions were good, Bliss accumulated more demerits. They must have been especially troubling for his parents, since they were for tobacco stains as well as the odor of tobacco in his room. He soon found a way to make effective use of his parents' fears to solve one of his other problems. When he heard from his mother that she might visit relatives in Brooklyn but not continue her trip to see him, he responded with anguish.

Language fails me in my vain endeavors to say what I will do if you don't [come to visit]. The least however is that I will be obliged to resort to the stimulus of the nicotine fumes to drown my sorrow . . . , and surely you will take enough interest in that, to make a very pleasant little journey to prevent it. But I will resign my fate into your hands.⁶⁸

The blackmail worked and Mrs. Bliss soon appeared. There is no record of their discussions when they met.

An important break in the routine and the isolation came with the March 1873 inauguration of President Ulysses S. Grant for his second term as president. The Corps of Cadets was invited to march in the inaugural parade, and Bliss eagerly looked forward to the trip. His letters give no hint of any awareness of the many financial and political scandals that stained the Grant administration. From Bliss's point of view, the timing was ideal. He told his parents, "I am more homesick now than I ever was in my life, even [as] a 'plebe' [or] a 'beast.'" He was glad to have something to look forward to as a change in the routine before his summer furlough at the end of his second year. As it turned out, the trip took place during fierce winter

⁶⁸ THB to MARB, Nov. 5, 1873, Bliss Mss., USAMHI.

weather, but it did leave some time for unofficial visiting. The Corps of Cadets assembled in the middle of a snow storm and marched across the frozen Hudson River to catch a special train at Garrison, New York. It took them into New York City, where they boarded a steamer for Jersey City and another train. Leaving there at 8 pm, they arrived in Washington the next morning, just in time for a cold snap. The cadets were allowed free time whenever possible, and two of Tasker's relatives who lived in Washington took him to see the sights. On Inauguration Day, the weather was so cold that several of the cadets suffered frost-bite. Fortunately President Grant's address was characteristically brief, although Bliss could hear none of it. After passing in review, the cadets could finally return to their hotel and get warm.⁶⁹

Most important of all the breaks in the routine at West Point was the summer furlough following Bliss's second year. The cadets celebrated the end of each academic year with a big dance in May. In 1872, according to Hugh Scott, the last number at the dance was "The Elephant Now Goes Round," and to fit the music, an elephant appeared, "seven feet high [with] a man riding on his back and a keeper It had all the reactions of an elephant, wagged its tail and its ears . . . , swayed from side to side You should have seen us, we were just like . . . children around a real elephant though not so respectful."⁷⁰

The end of the school year was even more special for those cadets concluding their second year; they enjoyed a furlough that would be their first opportunity to

⁶⁹ THB to MARB, March 9, 1873, Bliss Mss., USAMHI.

⁷⁰ HLS to Mother, May 19, 1872, HLS Mss, USMA Archives.

home since arriving on the Plain. Bliss looked forward to it with eager anticipation, so much so that his last letter home before he left was written so hurriedly it is almost illegible. The exact day when he would be on leave was not clear until about a week ahead of time, so he had to make quick arrangements for his travel. As usual with cadets, he had “hardly a minute’s time unengaged,” but he told his parents he expected to be relieved immediately after reveille on the next Monday morning and would get the first possible train, which should get him home on Tuesday morning.⁷¹ Once at home, he quickly shed his uniform and refused to put it on again, in spite of his younger sisters’ pleading that he do so, at least for a stroll around the Lewisburg campus. He did wear his uniform to a relative’s wedding, but clearly he intended to be a civilian again, at least for the summer.⁷²

Dislike of the uniform is hardly unusual among cadets even today, but in Tasker Bliss’s case, he had not enjoyed his first two years at the Military Academy. It was his plan to serve the required time in the army and resign as soon as possible to seek civilian employment, possibly looking for an academic position. He had not come to West Point because of any attraction to the military as a career, and two years there had not changed his mind.⁷³ Even Hugh Scott felt some dislike for the Point at first. He wrote that “even the first classmen who are going to graduate in a few days say they wish they had never come here. It is a regular dog’s life for you are always in trouble, if not from the Professors [then] with the fellows or you’ve

⁷¹ THB to MARB, June 19, 1873, Bliss Mss., USAMHI.

⁷² Palmer, *Bliss, Peacemaker*, 20.

⁷³ THB to MARB, May 22, 1873, Bliss Mss., USAMHI.

been drunk or you are in debt. There is always something the matter.”⁷⁴ In Scott’s case, it is easier to see why he found life difficult at the Academy, at least until he learned how to break the rules without getting caught.

There was another important aspect to this furlough for Bliss. On his way back, he stopped in suburban Philadelphia to visit the family of the Rev. George W. Anderson.⁷⁵ Briefly a colleague of Professor Bliss at Lewisburg, Anderson had moved on to pastor the Lower Merion Baptist Church in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania. From there in 1864 he had moved to the National Baptist Publication Society, headquartered in Philadelphia, to serve as book editor.⁷⁶ The families had remained friends in spite of the moves, and Bliss had a particular interest in the Anderson household: Miss Eleanora Anderson. In 1874, the Rev. Dr. Bliss decided to leave Lewisburg and move to the Crozer Theological Seminary in Chester, Pennsylvania, where he would be professor of biblical exegesis. His son was not happy about the move, but writing to Mrs. Anderson, he was able to point out that it had one benefit. He commented, “I don’t like the change at all, though I suppose that it is all for the best. It has the great advantage of being near Philadelphia.”⁷⁷

Since the start of his second year at West Point, Bliss had seen another important improvement in his cadet life. One of his relatives, Charles Raymond, was a captain in the army and had joined the Academy faculty as an assistant professor of

⁷⁴ HLS to “Tom,” June 4, 1871, HLS Mss, USMA Archives.

⁷⁵ THB to MARB, Aug. 31, 1873, Bliss Mss., USAMHI.

⁷⁶ Pennsylvania Baptist State Convention, *Annual Report: 1903*, 13-14; *The [Baptist] Examiner*, July 16, 1903, 926-27.

⁷⁷ Bliss to Mrs. Anderson, no date, Bliss Mss., USAMHI.

philosophy. Tasker soon went to visit Charles, his wife Clara, and their children, all of whom welcomed Bliss into their home.⁷⁸ They had not been close previously, but soon Tasker relied on them and their home as a substitute for his own. By the time he was a First Classman, Bliss felt deeply obliged to them:

Please don't forget what I asked you [he wrote to his mother] in regard to a Christmas present for Clara. If you could but have the slightest idea of the kindness that I have received from her and Charlie and what temptations I have been kept from, by having a home, a real home at their house, I think that you would be even more anxious than I to express your appreciation of it. This is my last Christmas at West Point and I can't let it pass without giving her, as I told you, a *handsome* present. I am so anxious about this latter condition, that I assure you, I will repay you the cost as soon as I get [out] of here.⁷⁹

This feeling of obligation must have been great if Bliss was willing to raise the delicate issue of family finances with his mother.

As Bliss resumed his cadet duties after his furlough, there were new challenges to face. Not only were the academics more demanding, but there were also physical challenges. When his parents asked again about his daily routines, he responded in detail. Writing in November, he mentioned that in previous years outdoor drills ended in October but were now being prolonged. As a plebe, he drilled with an artillery battery, but a stationary one, posted and ready for action. As a second year cadet, or “yearling,” he had drilled at the “Light battery,” which was drawn by horses. Because of the “vast number of combinations of movements”

⁷⁸ THB to MARB, Sept. 19, 1872, Bliss Mss., USAMHI.

⁷⁹ THB to MARB, Dec. 1, 1874, Bliss Mss., USAMHI.

involved, that drill was “altogether more lively and interesting.” Now, in his third year, he drilled using heavy mortars, siege guns, and a 15-inch gun:

This has always been what I may call the “aristocratic” drill, simply because it has always been engaged in by the highest class which attends artillery drill at all, viz. the 2nd. It is, however, the hardest, physically, of them all, because the guns are vastly larger and heavier, with no increase in the number of men to man them. Besides this, we have a great deal of firing, and . . . I don’t think there can be any harder work than sponging and loading for an hour one of the 15-in. guns. . . . The charge of powder for each discharge is 70 lbs. . . . and the projectile weighs about 650 lbs. You can imagine that it is no fun to play with marbles like that.

In addition to this heavy artillery work, another new drill for the 1st and 2nd classes was “Flying Horse Artillery.” In the case of the earlier light battery drill, all the artillerymen had walked or ridden on the caissons. In the new drill, they all mounted horses and carried sabers. In this case,

it is in fact a combination of cavalry and artillery and at the same time allows of much greater celerity of movement. We had our first trial at it today and I think the name *flying* artillery does not express it. We went spurring over the plain in a way that made pedestrians somewhat cautious.⁸⁰

The work was physically challenging, but exhilarating.

Bliss enjoyed similar experiences in horsemanship class. In his second year he injured his right arm in a fall when he and his horse “mutually dissolved our partnership and . . . he did not select the softest part of the wall against which to throw me.” According to Bliss, most of the cadets, like himself, did not know how to

⁸⁰ THB to MARB, Nov. 3, 1873, Bliss Mss., USAMHI.

ride when they arrived at the Academy. The experienced horses at the riding hall took full advantage of their novice riders. “It is all the harder because they make us ride in the most reckless style which, although it makes better horsemen in the end, is the most difficult to learn at first.”⁸¹ By the First Class year, the riding became even more demanding because it was bareback.

When we first go down, the instructor puts us around the hall at a furious gallop, until the horses are fairly reeking with foam and slippery as eels, and then we have to take off the saddle, and go around firing at the heads, leaping the hurdles, taking off the rings and worse than all make the cuts at the heads on the ground *on the left side*. As the rider has no support whatever except what he can get by desperately clinging to the horse with his legs (and you can imagine how hard he has to cling in order to keep being thrown headlong when he leans over far enough to to cut a head lying on the ground on his left side) he has to actually overstrain himself and I tell you, it makes a fellow pretty stiff by the next day. But we soon get used used to that and it’s splendid fun anyway.⁸²

Once again, while the work exhausted Bliss physically, it was entertaining and exciting. Thinking back to his beginning experiences, he must have been conscious of how much he had grown in horsemanship and confidence.

As a plebe, Bliss’s first roommate was Santiago Francisco Hubbell, from New Mexico, one of the oldest plebes, nearly twenty-two.⁸³ Bliss told his family that Hubbell “speaks Spanish as well as I do English.” Even more, he had “led a life of adventure” that had taken him throughout the west, from Mexico to Canada, to the

⁸¹ THB to GRB, Dec. 11, 1872, Bliss Mss., USAMHI.

⁸² THB to MARB, Dec. 1, 1874, Bliss Mss., USAMHI.

⁸³ U.S.M.A. Archives.

Pacific and back to the Mississippi.⁸⁴ Perhaps he had gained too great a sense of adventure, because by the end of October, he had been dismissed for harassing new cadets, the Seps. Thus Bliss had an early lesson in the strictness of the Academy's disciplinary system. The honor code of today was not then in place as the basis for discipline the cadets often took military justice into their own hands, and often they were more harsh than the faculty.

Stephen Ambrose offers one explanation for the hazing problem of the late-nineteenth century Academy. At a time when other colleges were increasing the number of extracurricular activities, West Point took no such steps. Therefore, the cadets devised mischievous ways to pass the time. The most popular such activity was hazing, which changed in nature. Before the Civil War, it had consisted largely of pranks and practical jokes and was limited to the plebes' summer camp. For example, one history of West Point mentions two popular methods for hazing plebes during "Beast Barracks":

[Plebes] were posted to keep sparrows from alighting. The birds, called "eagles," were dispersed with exaggerated display of mock terror. The other "cadet grind" was used when any [plebe] designated to clean up the Company street left a pin or match stick on the ground. The culprit and two classmates were required to assemble with pick, shovel, and wheelbarrow, and to remove the offending article after elaborate serio-comic preparations.⁸⁵

It is clear from these accounts that the emphasis was on the humorous aspect of the activities.

⁸⁴ THB, letter fragment, probably Sept. 30, 1871, Bliss Mss., USAMHI.

⁸⁵ Godson, "History of West Point," 42n.

In the years following the war, hazing changed and became instead a variety of physical exercises that could – and sometimes did – lead to permanent injury.⁸⁶ Yet no one supported the practice more heartily than the cadets themselves. Bliss explained some of his reasons in a letter home in which he contrasted hazing at West Point with hazing at Lewisburg:

There such a thing happens comparatively speaking so seldom that it is . . . an event Here, on the other hand, for weeks after the “plebes” first come, it happens a hundred times daily, at all times and places, and is done by everybody. So that to remember from one day to the next the particular circumstances of any one of these affairs [in order to give evidence against the perpetrators] is utterly impossible.⁸⁷

Truly hazing had become a fundamental part of the daily routine at the Academy.

Ambrose speculates that enduring the hazing made the plebes feel like better men. It was something that gave them status among their peers, and they could always look forward to the time when they would be on the giving end rather than the receiving. In any case, the most brutal physical hazing became a routine part of life at West Point. Superintendents condemned the practice and tried to stop it, but without the cooperation of the cadets, the plebes, the alumni, or the faculty, their efforts were doomed to fail.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Ambrose, *Duty*, Ch. XI, esp. 221-24, and Dillard, “The Uncertain Years,” Ch. X, 292-317.

⁸⁷ THB to MARB, Oct. 25, 1871, Bliss Mss., USAMHI.

⁸⁸ For a defense of the practice, see Richardson, *West Point*. Richardson was an alumnus, an army officer, and a former instructor; the book includes an introduction by General Hugh L. Scott, then the Chief of Staff of the Army.

The issue of hazing may be better understood through the recent scholarship on gender roles and especially concepts of masculinity.⁸⁹ E. Anthony Rotundo argues that the value of such activities was that they set apart the world of men from the world of women. The young male's world featured activities that directly contrasted with those of young women; male activities emphasized "energy, self-assertion, noise, and a frequent resort to violence. The physical explosiveness and the willingness to inflict pain contrasted so sharply with the values of the home that they suggest a dialogue in actions between the values of the two spheres." For young men at the Military Academy, self-assertion and inflicting pain would have been privileges gained after the first year, the period of initiation. Also, for young men close together in age and size, there were all sorts of "rankings based on skill," especially athletic skill and skill at games.⁹⁰ In student writings at Harvard there was an explicit contrast between the pre-Civil War image of masculinity, featuring a pale, sickly, introvert, and the post-Civil War image, when "an honorable man . . . would be strong, firm, resolute, [and] active." Nothing at Harvard was more important in this context, and nothing was more frequently described as "manly," than athletic contests.⁹¹ In the era

⁸⁹ For a discussion of these issues, see Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Donald D. J. Mrozek, "The Habit of Victory: The American Military and the Cult of Manliness," in J.A. Mangan and James Walvin, eds., *Manliness and Morality: Middle-class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1940* (Manchester, Great Britain: Manchester University Press, 1987), pp. 220-241; E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: Basic Books, a division of HarperCollins Publishers, 1993), esp. chs. 8, 9, and 10; Judy Hilkey, *Character is Capital: Success Manuals and Manhood in Gilded Age America* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), esp. chs. 6 and 7; Kim Townsend, *Manhood at Harvard: William James and Others* (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Co., 1996), 97-149; and Barbara Melosh, ed., *Gender and American History Since 1890* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993).

⁹⁰ Rotundo, *Manhood*, 37 and 41.

⁹¹ Townsend, *Manhood at Harvard*, 97-98.

before intercollegiate athletics, such exploits as Scott's swimming the Hudson would have placed him high in the masculine rankings among his classmates. His enthusiasm for hazing had the same result.

Hugh Scott's letters give graphic details of hazing, since Scott enjoyed it both as a recipient and as a practitioner. While he had heard some plebes comment that they did not want to pass the entrance examinations once they had seen the "loving," he "like[d] it very much. The deviling as they call it does not amount to anything at all and I cannot help laughing when they do it to me and I got a great deal of scolding for it."⁹² Soon he wrote again, having experienced two forms of hazing. In the first, he had to hold a book at arm's length while standing at attention. While the upperclassmen allowed him to lower the book momentarily, after forty-five minutes, this experience left "every bone and muscle" aching. On another occasion, Scott was one of a group of about sixty plebes crowded into a small room to stand at attention for forty-five minutes. The room was packed, the plebes could hardly breathe, and the upper classmen stood outside, laughing.⁹³

Scott's enjoyment of the practice led him into trouble when he was supervising "Beast Barracks" after his own plebe year. Caught hazing plebes, Scott was put under arrest, but he did not worry about his situation. He wrote home that "they will devise some punishment for me before long or they would have let me go. They are making it as hot as they can now for me [by] keeping me in arrest [which

⁹² HLS to Mother, June 2, 1871, HLS Mss, USMA Archives.

⁹³ HLS to Mother, June 4, 1871, HLS Mss, USMA Archives.

may be deemed] sufficient punishment.”⁹⁴ The Academy took Scott’s behavior more seriously and he was expelled, but he was allowed to return after a one-year absence. When he returned to the Plain in August of the next year, his reception thrilled him. He told his mother his former classmates asked about him, so he went looking for them. “[A]s soon as they caught sight of me they . . . crowded all around and on top of me. . . . They broke my glasses, ruined my hat, tore the buttons off my coat, almost *forty* of them kissed me and then carried me about ten yards until I kicked loose. Then we all got hold of hand[s] and rushed yelling [into camp].”⁹⁵ This enthusiastic reception indicates Scott’s popularity as well as the cadets’ attitude toward hazing. Most likely, the entire incident contributed even more to Scott’s reputation as a soldier’s soldier.

The contrast between Scott and Tasker Bliss could not be stronger. Bliss never mentioned hazing in his letters. Having arrived at the Academy in September, he had not experienced the worst of it, but he never discussed it in his later letters when he could have been a practitioner. He would have recognized that such activity would not fit his parents’ ideal of Christian behavior, and he certainly made sure to make every possible Christian reference in his letters home. Yet Bliss remained an active and sincere Christian throughout his life, so he may well have found hazing unappealing. At Lewisburg, he had joined a fraternity, so he was happy to enjoy that form of male fellowship.⁹⁶ At various times in the early years of his career, Bliss

⁹⁴ HLS to Mother, July 2, 1872, HLS Mss, USMA Archives.

⁹⁵ HLS to Mother, August 29, 1873, HLS Mss, USMA Archives.

⁹⁶ Palmer, *Bliss, Peacemaker*, 13.

wrestled with his reputation as a scholar in uniform, but he made many decisions that reinforced that image rather than revised it.

There were many other disciplinary issues in any given year at the Military Academy. A decade before Bliss arrived, there were numerous cases of theft, and cadets investigated and concluded that Orsemus B. Boyd of the Class of 1867 was the guilty party. In an unofficial action, the cadets drummed him out of the Corps, but Superintendent George W. Cullum happened to meet him at the boat dock and brought him back. A War Department investigation eventually found Boyd innocent, reinstated him, and punished several cadets for their part in forcing him out. Ostracized by his peers, Boyd nevertheless was graduated. Years later, another alumnus admitted his guilt for the thefts.⁹⁷

In 1870, another issue put West Point in the national news. For the first time, two African-American cadets had been appointed. At a time when the country was in the midst of the Reconstruction era and the Civil War had ended just five years earlier, West Point had remained a white institution. If Eric Foner, among the foremost historians of Reconstruction, is correct in arguing that the era of the Civil War and Reconstruction witnessed the emergence of “a national state possessing vastly expanded authority and a new set of purposes, including an unprecedented commitment to the ideal of a national citizenship whose equal rights belonged to all Americans regardless of race,” then the situation at the Military Academy already

⁹⁷ Pappas, *To the Point*, 363-84.

reflected the federal government's loss of zeal in the pursuit of equality.⁹⁸ During the war, black troops had played an essential role in the Union Army, and by the end of the war, a few black officers could be found in the Union ranks. Finally in 1870, black men had an opportunity to enter the Corps of Cadets, but their experiences at West Point reveal much about the continuing racism in the army, as well as the country's abandonment of the civil rights goals of Reconstruction.⁹⁹ The first to report was Michael Howard of Mississippi; with only about a year of formal schooling, he failed the entrance examination and quickly departed. The other African-American cadet was James W. Smith, who had attended a Freedmen's Bureau school and, briefly, Howard University. Both of those institutions had been under the leadership of Major General Oliver O. Howard, a committed Christian who believed in a biblical basis for racial equality.¹⁰⁰ Congress had created the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands with the task, among others, of protecting the rights of the newly-freed former slaves, while the university was founded to provide blacks with the opportunity for a college education. Smith passed the entrance examinations and spent five tumultuous years at the Academy, constantly battling various forms of harassment and insult. On two separate occasions, Smith's

⁹⁸ Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc. for the History Book Club, Francis Parkman Prize Edition, 2005), xxvi.

⁹⁹ Walter Scott Dillard, "The United States Military Academy, 1865-1900: The Uncertain Years," Ph. D. dissertation, University of Washington, 1972, includes a chapter, "The Black Cadets: Dilemma, Agony, and Failure," 183-225, that gives a detailed account of the national news coverage of the experiences of the African-American cadets.

¹⁰⁰ See William S. McFeely, *Yankee Stepfather: General O. O. Howard and the Freedmen* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., paperback edition 1970).

assertion of his equal rights led to “violent physical altercations with white cadets.”¹⁰¹ Having been turned back earlier, he failed the end-of-year examinations in June 1875 and was dismissed.

Racial issues would not go away, because Henry Ossian Flipper, another African-American, arrived with the Class of 1877. Flipper roomed with Smith until the latter’s dismissal, but Flipper took a very different approach to cadet life. Where Smith had battled for his rights, Flipper simply endured. Commandant of Cadets Emory Upton, a Christian abolitionist, had earlier informed the Corps of Cadets that black cadets had every right to attend the Academy and should be welcomed there, thus making his position clear. The cadets did not welcome Flipper, but they did not actively undermine him; instead, they only spoke to him in line of duty. After Smith’s dismissal, Flipper usually lived alone; any other black cadets became his roommates but they usually failed quickly and left. By the end of his four years, Flipper even found some support. As long as it could be done in secret, he later wrote, there were some cadets who spoke to him of their respect for his efforts and their support for his graduation.¹⁰² According to one study of Flipper’s years at West Point, Flipper himself always described the faculty as “fair and helpful . . . [an] evaluation [that] would seem to be confirmed by . . . [his graduating] number fifty in

¹⁰¹ Theodore Delano Harris, “Henry Ossian Flipper: The First Negro Graduate of West Point,” Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1971, 105-06.

¹⁰² For Flipper’s own account, see Henry Ossian Flipper, *The Colored Cadet at West Point* (New York: Homer Lee & Co., 1878, reprinted New York and London: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1968).

a class of seventy-six students. . . [a class that originally] numbered one hundred and fifteen.”¹⁰³

About these issues, Bliss’s surviving letters say nothing. Examining Hugh Scott’s letters, one finds an outspoken racist, but most of the incidents he mentions occurred before Bliss had arrived on the Plain. His accounts give a complete picture of how intense the discrimination could be. In early June 1871, Scott wrote his mother to say there were in the class “a darkey and a son of Brigham Young’s . . . and they get nearly loved [hazed] to death.”¹⁰⁴ Only three days later, Scott wrote that there had almost been trouble when the rumor mill reported that Cadet Smith would be drilling the plebes. “[T]he whole class . . . swore that they would all leave before they would be bossed around by the n[egro] and the whole class to a man would cut any man who did not go with them and I would not stay here if my class cut me for it is as much as I can stand as it is without that.” The tension eased because Smith focused his attentions on one of the new African-American cadets, but Scott added that Smith was “the meanest looking man I ever saw.”¹⁰⁵

A month later, there was another problem when the plebes formed up to go to dancing class “but when the drums beat the n[egro] came out and fell in with the rest and all the rest of us fell out and when he saw it he turned round and smiled . . . and he marched down all alone and we did not know how to fix it and let him march with us today and spoke to the master about it and he said he would arrange it.”

¹⁰³ Harris, “Henry Ossian Flipper,” 111-12.

¹⁰⁴ HLS to Mother, June 2, 1871, HLS Mss, USMA Archives.

¹⁰⁵ HLS to Mother, June 5, 1871, HLS Mss, USMA Archives.

Apparently there were African-American women in the area who, in these circumstances, could be invited to take part in the dancing lessons.¹⁰⁶ If that was the arrangement, it would be an extraordinary testimony to the power of racism at West Point in 1871, since white cadets would never have been allowed such interactions with women during any class. It was more important for racial taboos to be enforced than for Academy classes to remain gendered gatherings. Another measure of the intensity of racial hatred can be found in a book of cadet songs published in 1878. One of the songs, accompanied by a caricature of an African American, is “Nigger Jim,” the story of James Smith as told by Cadet Howland of the Class of 1876. The song features five pages of racist commentary on Smith’s experiences. As significant as the song itself is its publication in a book intended to present “West Point and Army Life” and “surpass every other work of the kind” available to the public.¹⁰⁷

As Bliss observed the treatment of these African-American cadets, he was certainly aware of the obvious problems with the system of discipline that prevailed at the Academy during his cadet years. When a First Classman came up on charges in February of 1873, Bliss described the incident to his father and remarked that dismissal at that point in the cadet’s career

will be a little “rough,” after having been here almost 4 years, but nevertheless if [the charges] are true, I think that he deserves it. For my part, I believe in living up to the full letter of the law If I ever obtain the command of troops, I shall go on the principle that the first time a soldier commits any misdeed or makes any

¹⁰⁶ HLS to Mother, July 7, 1871, HLS Mss, USMA Archives.

¹⁰⁷ *West Point Tic Tacs: A Collection of Military Verse* (New York: Homer Lee & Co., 1878), preface; the song about Smith is on pages 62-66.

blunder, it is his own fault, the second time, it . . . most
most certainly will be mine.¹⁰⁸

Living up to the letter of the law is a reasonable principle, of course, but one wonders whether Bliss applied it to the situation of the African-American cadets.

Perhaps the most significant part of the letter is that Bliss spoke of possibly commanding troops himself some day. He had sought his appointment to West Point primarily to gain a good education at minimal cost to his family. He had disliked the school during his first two years there, but then his situation had improved. With a relative on the faculty, he enjoyed a substitute home. He enjoyed his summer furlough, and when he came back, he knew the worst part of the four years was over. During the summer camp between his third and fourth years at West Point, when he was one of the cadets in charge of training and hazing the plebes during “Beast Barracks,” he reflected on his situation at length in a letter to his mother.

In fact to none but a sentimental schoolboy who liked to declaim “*dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*” [it is sweet and noble to die for one’s country], there is not the faintest approach to romance in military life. [The hazing] plebes have to submit to is the very best thing for them. For it soon crushes-in the foundations of their castles in the air; their visions of plumes and epaulettes and double rows of buttons soon vanish into thin air and they wake up to a realization of the stern fact that they have adopted a profession that requires the hardest of hard work. Yet after these youthful visions fade away, if they be true men, they will love their work all the better; for there is after all a great deal of sentiment, and that of the highest kind, about a profession that has called men to heroic deeds since time began.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ THB to GRB, Feb. 13, 1873, Bliss Mss., USAMHI.

¹⁰⁹ THB to MARB, July 11, 1874, Bliss Mss., USAMHI.

This is a remarkable letter for a twenty-year-old student to write to his parents. It also makes clear that in Bliss's case, in three years West Point had done its work well.

The Academy had taken an unlikely cadet and made him proud of his new life. Bliss was becoming enamored of the military profession.

CHAPTER 2

MAKING A REPUTATION

Tasker Bliss graduated eighth in the West Point Class of 1875. While his classmates considered him the most scholarly cadet, his demerits and a certain lack of focus on academics had lowered his class rank. The difference was important, because the first seven graduates joined the Corps of Engineers, at the time considered the most prestigious appointment for a graduate. Bliss came next and was assigned to the First Artillery. Beginning his career with an artillery regiment rather than as an engineer had important consequences for his career that he could never have foreseen.

A story, perhaps a family legend, surrounds this assignment. As his son Goring told it in an obituary, his standing as eighth in the class allowed Bliss his choice of any vacancy for a second lieutenant, anywhere in the Army. The romantic in him thought it would be adventurous to join the Seventh Cavalry, the best-known regiment on the frontier. Joining the Seventh would blot out his reputation as a scholar rather than a manly combat officer. One of his classmates, though, was James S. Sturgis, son of Samuel D. Sturgis, the commanding officer of the Seventh, and Lieutenant Sturgis wanted to serve in his father's regiment. He persuaded all of his classmates who stood ahead of him, including Tasker Bliss, to pass up the vacancy in

the Seventh Cavalry so that he could have that position. They all agreed, with the result that Lieutenant Sturgis died the next year at the Battle of the Little Bighorn.¹¹⁰

If that story is true, and there is no evidence that it is not, it demonstrates that Bliss still wrestled with a romantic notion of military service. He continued to think of frontier service as something he should experience. Of course in the Army in 1875, such duty could mean combat, but it also meant a life of stagnation and routine. Bliss was not yet thinking of himself as a serving officer in the army of a great power. There were some officers thinking in those terms. As Edward M. Coffman puts it, “The end of the frontier conflict which had been the basic reason for the army’s existence . . . posed some danger to the continuance of the institution. . . . [T]he army must come up with another mission . . . [which became] to prepare for war.”¹¹¹ Bliss was not yet one of the officers thinking in these terms.

His first post was Oglethorpe Barracks in Savannah, Georgia. As the junior officer at that post, he quickly found out how much work there was, even in the routine of garrison life. The post quartermaster was under arrest and Bliss took on his duties. Along with all the drills and the daily guard mounts, Bliss became, along with temporary quartermaster, the adjutant, commissary of subsistence, treasurer, and signal officer for Oglethorpe Barracks.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Bliss’s son, Goring, told the story in detail in his father’s obituary, and Frederick Palmer mentions Bliss’s continuing interest in service on the frontier in *Bliss, Peacemaker: The Life and Letters of General Tasker Howard Bliss* (Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1970 reprint), 30. There is no indication of it in Bliss’s letters at the time.

¹¹¹ *The Old Army: A Portrait of the American Army in Peacetime, 1784-1898* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 270.

¹¹² THB to Maria Anderson, Nov. 16, 1875, THB Mss, USAMHI.

As a northerner serving in the South, Bliss found a fascinating new world to explore. From his correspondence both then and later, the strong impact this brief experience in a small part of the South becomes clear.¹¹³ To start with, there was the famous southern Spanish moss, which “adds such a picturesque charm” to the trees. He was able to reach through the window of his quarters to gather in handfuls to send to his curious relatives in the North. Of course the most noteworthy difference between life in Lewisburg and in Savannah was the latter’s cotton culture, and Bliss soon made his way to the riverfront to watch laborer’s unloading cotton bales from wagons. Savannah claimed to have the largest cotton press in the world, and Bliss wrote to his parents in detail about its operations.

Let us take a look at the Press in operation at night. The black forms of the workmen looming up in an unnatural size Elbowing our way through crowds of Negroes [with] white eyeballs and shining teeth . . . , passing along the wharves having upon our right great size and eight story warehouses crowded from cellar to rooftrees with solidly packed cotton, upon our left the long low sheds which protect the bales . . . , and these against the river with its forest of shipping, we come [to the press, surrounded by cotton bales. The bales are cut open and placed in the press.] The two enormous jaws press slowly together . . . , setting their teeth more and more firmly into the snowy morsel. [When] the engineer turns his wheel back again, the closing jaws stop their motion, [and the bale is removed.] The white delicate looking mass (now so hard that it would be impervious to a 15-inch solid shot) bulges out Then the workmen again fall upon it, it is thrown upon the car, trundled over the platform, and within five minutes of the time that the operation . . . began, it is quietly reposing in the hold of a [Europe-bound] steamer.

This passage reveals both his descriptive powers and his fascination with a sort of work he had never seen before.

¹¹³ THB to Maria Anderson, Nov. 8, 1875, THB Mss, USAMHI.

Bliss wanted to make the most of his experience, because by December 1, he was moving to join another part of his regiment, stationed at Plattsburgh, New York. Looking back on his time in Savannah, Bliss later observed that while he missed the chance to go on regular “coon hunts,” he most wished that he had taken the time to visit the sea islands and also caught a steamer to Havana to have “a good look at Cuba.”¹¹⁴ He learned why it was difficult to go for a good ride. The roads were poor and it was hard to find good horses.¹¹⁵

Bliss quickly discovered that regimental duty was not especially to his liking; fortunately, he soon found a means of escape. Beginning in September of 1876, he left the First Artillery to become an instructor of French at West Point on a four-year appointment. He did enjoy being there, though it was not so much the teaching that he found appealing; rather it was the proximity to his family and family friends.

When Bliss joined the faculty of the United States Military Academy, the school was in the midst of a difficult period of change. The army responded to several criticisms of West Point, especially for the mistreatment of African-American cadets, by assigning a new Superintendent, Major General John M. Schofield.¹¹⁶ President Ulysses Grant personally asked Schofield to take the position because Schofield enjoyed the prestige of an outstanding Civil War record. Since Schofield

¹¹⁴ THB to Maria Anderson, Jan. 27 and Feb. 6, 1876, THB Mss, USAMHI.

¹¹⁵ THB to Maria Anderson, March 19, 1876, THB Mss, USAMHI.

¹¹⁶ For the situation at West Point during Schofield’s Superintendency, see Stephen E. Ambrose, *Duty, Honor, Country: A History of West Point* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1966), chs. X and XI, and Theodore J. Crackel, *West Point: A Bicentennial History* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 149-153.

was a major general commanding a geographic division, Grant made West Point into a department so it would appear a worthy position for a general, rather than the colonels who had been the usual choice for the duty. It was also a change that would give Schofield more control over the institution. “As a department commander, Schofield was able to appoint officers to serve on courts martial, approve personnel actions such as officers’ requests for leave, and—at least theoretically— command all activities” in the department.¹¹⁷ In his memoirs, Schofield described his decision to accept this appointment as “the mistake of my life.”¹¹⁸ He proved unable to change the racially prejudiced atmosphere at the academy, but other reforms he instigated had a significant impact on Bliss’s career.

Perhaps the most embarrassing of all the incidents involving African-American cadets took place late in Schofield’s tenure. Cadet Johnson C. Whitaker entered the Academy in 1876 and struggled academically. He clashed with a cadet in one incident involving an exchange of blows. Schofield tried to protect him, acknowledging that one reason to do so was “that he is the only one of his race now at the Academy.”¹¹⁹ On April 6, 1880, Whitaker did not appear at reveille, and when the cadet Officer of the Day investigated, he found Whitaker bound and beaten on the floor of his room. The incident provoked a long investigation along with great publicity, especially when a Court of Inquiry decided that Whitaker had created the

¹¹⁷ George S. Pappas, *To the Point: The United States Military Academy, 1802-1902* (Westport, Ct. and London, Praeger Publishers, 1993), 390.

¹¹⁸ John M. Schofield, *Forty-Six Years in the Army* (New York: The Century Co., 1897), 439.

¹¹⁹ Quoted in Ambrose, *Duty*, 234.

entire incident, presumably to avoid expulsion on academic grounds.¹²⁰ Intense political pressure then led President Rutherford B. Hayes to replace Schofield as Superintendent with Major General Oliver O. Howard, whose support for African-American rights could not be questioned. The decision created resentment among the officers of the army. There is nothing in the surviving Bliss papers to indicate his view of the issues involved, but as a protégé of Schofield's, he probably shared the general's outrage

Schofield was one of the officers dedicated to reforming the army. He believed that the West Point junior faculty was a good place to begin. His goal was to create a means for outstanding young officers continue their professional education. Many of the senior faculty at the Academy opposed him, thinking that there was no need for further instruction after a man was graduated from the Point. Schofield built on the Academy's Thayer Club, founded in 1873, to create a sort of military discussion group that would substitute for a post-graduate course, featuring lectures, campaign studies, and group discussions of important military writings.¹²¹

Bliss was one of those outstanding young officers whom Schofield sought to influence, and Bliss responded to the challenge. He prepared a lengthy paper and presentation on the recent siege of Plevna during the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78. Coming on top of his teaching, it was a burden, and he worked on it for months. In

¹²⁰ Pappas, *To the Point*, 399-406; Ambrose, *Duty*, 234-36 Crackel, *Bicentennial History*, 146-147; for Schofield's role in the incident, see Donald B. Connelly, *John M. Schofield and the Politics of Generalship* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 261-268. A book-length study of the case is John F. Marszalek, *Assault at West Point: The Court-Martial of Johnson Whittaker* (New York: Collier Books, 1994).

¹²¹ Ambrose, *Duty*, 210-11.

this task, he had the help of Maria Anderson and her daughter, Eleanora. Mrs. Anderson helped him by translating articles from German, saving him much time. He paid her the highest compliment for a translator, commenting that in her work, it was “quite hard to trace any German construction.”¹²² By the time he was nearing the presentation, he felt he had “crossed over the Danube half a dozen times” and traveled “across the Balkans to Adrianople and back again.” He thanked both women profusely since their help had been essential.¹²³

The morning after his presentation, Bliss wrote with elation about the response it had received: “I feel . . . like tossing my cap into the air and giving three cheers . . . it was a complete success and the compliments I received have quite turned my head. General Schofield spoke of the paper in the highest terms all of which you may be sure pleases me greatly.” In fact, the society immediately passed a resolution asking Bliss to prepare a version for publication at the society’s expense, an honor accorded only one other paper.¹²⁴ Bliss’s paper would eventually appear in print, but even more important was the impression Bliss made on General Schofield.

Immediately after Bliss presented the paper, Schofield talked with him about turning it into a book-length study of Plevna or the entire Russo-Turkish War. Bliss was interested in such a project, but he never found time to pursue it. Instead, he turned the paper into an article for the army’s new professional periodical, the

*Journal of the Military Service Institution of the United States.*¹²⁵

¹²² THB to Maria Anderson, Feb. 6, 1879, THB Mss, USAMHI.

¹²³ THB to Maria Anderson, Feb. 4, 1879, THB Mss, USAMHI.

¹²⁴ THB to Maria Anderson, Feb. 14, 1879, THB Mss, USAMHI.

¹²⁵ vol. II, #5, 1881, 11-59.

Bliss prepared his Plevna study to impress General Schofield, and it is easy to see why he succeeded. His sources came from four other countries and three other languages. He quoted at length from books, articles and reports he had translated from the French, German or Russian (with some help from the Anderson family). He included several classical references, including a provocative one at the beginning from Plutarch, setting the theme for the paper: “ ‘If thou art a great general, Marius, come down and fight.’ To which Marius replied, ‘If thou art a great general, Silo, make me come down and fight!’ ” Bliss made no claim his article represented the definitive study of his subject. He wrote that his aim was “exciting discussion” about the many important aspects of this recent battle. He gave all credit to his sources, claiming “nothing original in the matter.” In spite of his modesty, this presentation was an impressive display of scholarship from a junior officer.

Bliss divided his paper into six sections. The first three presented the geography of the Plevna region and its strategic importance in the Russo-Turkish War. The fourth and fifth presented brief accounts of the Russian attacks of July 20, July 30, and September 11 and 12. The last and most important section considered the general lessons that made this battle important for officers to study. The final three sections are the most important, especially the last one, since they contain Bliss’s own comments and conclusions.

Bliss criticized Russian tactics at various stages in the battle. A failure of reconnaissance in the early fighting prevented the Russians from using their artillery effectively. They could have occupied positions from which their guns would have

rendered the entire Turkish position untenable. When the Russians attacked, they failed to concentrate adequately, and they committed their reserves too early so that they missed opportunities for a breakthrough. Bliss called attention to the enormous expenditure of ammunition on both sides, noting that the Russian troops had used up an allocation of 132 rounds per man in only six hours of fighting. He was not one of those officers who criticized breech-loaders because the men used too much ammunition, but he realized that expenditures at such a rate created significant logistical problems.

Bliss discussed in detail the Turks' methods of fortifying their positions, creating a large and complex trench system to connect semi-independent redoubts. While he noted that historically, the Turks had always favored extensive field fortifications, he analyzed their importance in modern warfare to reach a different conclusion.

Each great war is characterized by an advance marking an Epoch in the personal armament, and through this, by an essentially important modification in grand and minor tactics. . . . [In this] war, [that change is] the latest development of the system of modern small-arms which outdid itself in regard to range and rapidity of fire, and in connection with this, the employment, no longer as an exception but as a rule, of field fortifications on a grand scale.¹²⁶

Later Bliss would see this trend confirmed in wars in Asia, the Balkans, and finally, of course, in the First World War.

In the article's conclusion, Bliss focused on several questions. First, should the defending infantry use its rifles at long range or reserve fire until the attackers

¹²⁶ Ibid., 41-2.

were much closer? In general he thought that the latter would be more effective, although “it is also known that from the modern breech-loader can be obtained a fire much exceeding” the intensity required to stop an advance. Then the second question became what sort of tactical formation could the attacker employ to succeed in his attack, in spite of the volume of rifle fire? Another major issue Bliss considered involved the use of artillery, but again it brought up the issue of range. Were guns better employed at long range or in close support of attacking infantry? If Plevna was any indication, then the answer was that both types of fire support were necessary, which made a high level of mobility imperative for artillery units. As Bliss argued:

In a great battle [artillery] may be needed at but one moment and one place, and it may well be believed that point for artillery officers to decide is . . . how to bring upon the field an artillery so mobile that the General can with certainty count upon it at the critical time and place, when the issue of the battle is hanging in the balance.¹²⁷

In his final words, Bliss stressed that Plevna had been the scene of “terrible disasters.” Anyone seeking “the picturesque in war” should realize that it had disappeared from modern combat. In considering a modern battle, he noted, he had been analyzing “a terrible force,” but one that could produce “disastrous results.” He was destined to see at close range exactly how terrible and disastrous modern war could become.

This paper was an impressive piece of scholarship and military thought. Bliss’s discussion of the tactical and strategic issues involved in the siege shows an impressive gift for military analysis; the questions the paper addresses – of men against firepower and the importance of leadership – have been some of the most

¹²⁷ Ibid., 56.

important issues for armies since the 1870s. It indicates as well that Bliss was beginning to think differently about his career. He recognized that in Schofield he had found a role model and mentor. Not only was Schofield a Baptist, he had taught at West Point and, after resigning from the army before the Civil War, he had become a professor of physics at Washington University in St. Louis. Schofield, Bliss recognized, “deplored the condition of [the] army with no war college or staff schools to teach young officers how to think for a large army.”¹²⁸ Bliss responded enthusiastically to Schofield’s effort to encourage professional development among the West Point faculty; Schofield responded enthusiastically to Bliss’s extraordinary efforts. The two had formed a partnership that would benefit both of them and would contribute greatly to the professionalization of the army.

Along with the siege of Plevna, another siege had developed in the life of Tasker Bliss. He was pursuing Eleanora Anderson, but she was not responding with enthusiasm. The Anderson family had been at Lewisburg, where the Rev. Dr. George W. Anderson taught Latin while Dr. Bliss taught Greek. The two men also served together on various committees. After the Andersons moved on, the two families remained in close contact. The Anderson family took up residence in Bryn Mawr, one of the Main Line suburbs of Philadelphia; Dr. Anderson worked for the National Baptist Publication Society, headquartered on Chestnut Street in center city Philadelphia. When the Rev. Dr. Bliss moved from the University at Lewisburg to the Crozier Theological Seminary in Chester, a suburb to the south of Philadelphia, it

¹²⁸ Quoted in *Bliss, Peacemaker*, 33.

was easy for the families to visit. With the full cooperation of his future mother-in-law, Bliss set out to capture Eleanora. As she later explained it to Bliss's official biographer, Frederick Palmer, "I always told Tasker that he only took me because my mother was not available. I was just second choice. He married me to get a charming and learned mother-in-law."¹²⁹ Mrs. Anderson favored the idea; what is not clear is whether Eleanora favored it.

Palmer's biography mentions a trip that Eleanora, known at home as Ellen and to Bliss as Nellie, made to Florida to accompany her sick brother in early 1879.

Palmer begins the next paragraph with the comment "the pair were now engaged."¹³⁰

It is not surprising that about that time Ellen wrote to Bliss that he must take better care of himself, a particular concern being that he get enough exercise. She urged him to hire a horse two or three times a week to go for long rides. "Walking is not real exercise for you cannot enjoy a solitary walk and you know you will be thinking of your work all the time," she wrote. "If you hire a horse and ride it will do you twice as much good."¹³¹

In any case, it was to be two or three more years before they married, as a series of obstacles intervened. One problem was the financial demands of marriage and a family, because Bliss was contributing to his parents' support at this time. His mother had been reluctant to discuss the situation with him, but he discussed it with Mrs. Anderson. Finally his mother made mention of his courtship, and he told Mrs. Anderson that his parents would never "be satisfied till I am married and settled in life. [Mother] wants me now to save money for my marriage." He thought he could save for a period, then return to contributing to his parents "for the rest of my life or as long as God pleases." If necessary, he would try to find

¹²⁹ Quoted in *ibid.*, 28.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹³¹ Eleanora Anderson to THB, Feb. 21, 1880, THB Mss, USAMHI.

some sort of additional work he could take on in order to increase his own income.¹³²

Under these circumstances, the summer of 1880 brought Bliss good news and bad news. On the good side, he received a promotion to first lieutenant as of July 1, which meant an increase in his pay.¹³³ On the bad side, he rejoined his regiment at Fort Trumbull, Connecticut.¹³⁴ And, as Bliss moved east, Ellen moved west, once again because of her sickly brother. Edward Anderson was in Colorado for the benefits of a better climate. In the summer, Ellen and her mother traveled with Edward, but Nellie planned to return east in the fall. That trip suffered several postponements, and she did not return to the Bryn Mawr residence until late October.¹³⁵ Edward remained in Colorado for a year, along with his mother, and the family went west to bring him home in the summer of 1881.¹³⁶ By that time, the army had intervened once again, transferring Bliss from Connecticut to Fort Point San Jose [in 1882 it became Fort Mason] in the San Francisco area in November.¹³⁷

The one advantage Bliss found in this change of duty station was seeing more of the West. When he arrived at his new post, he had to inform his family and prospective in-laws that they needed to be careful in addressing letters to him. “I find there are so many San Jose’s and Point San Jose’s in California that . . . the letters for

¹³² THB to Maria Anderson, April 8, 1879, THB Mss, USAMHI.

¹³³ A.C.P. file, RG 94, Doc. file 3525, Box 665, NARA.

¹³⁴ S.O. 99, 166, and 179, A.G.O., May 5, August 6 and August 23, 1879, respectively.

¹³⁵ Eleanora Anderson to THB, Oct. 3 and 18, 1880, THB Mss, USAMHI.

¹³⁶ Maria Anderson to THB, Feb. 20, 1881, THB Mss, USAMHI.

¹³⁷ A.C.P. file, RG 94, NARA.

here sometimes go astray.” The journey across the country had been “exceedingly pleasant,” and

from Omaha to Laramie City the scenery was . . . a prairie country, yet very different from what I saw on the [Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad]. . . . We saw plenty of antelope and . . . a good many coyotes. . . . When we reached . . . the border of Utah, Maj. McCross and I rode on the engine and it was worth a trip around the world to see what we did. From noon until the stars came out we rode through the famous Canyons, Echo and Weber. At one moment we were in a blinding, drifting snow storm, the next we came out into a sky of the purest blue and sunlight of dazzling brilliance, now we passed over bridges that seemed to have nothing beneath them and then through tunnels in the very heart of the mountains.¹³⁸

Like so many other Americans, Bliss found the scenery of the West a stunning change from what he had known in the East.

There were other pleasures he detailed in the same letter. While describing his new post, he conveyed the overwhelming splendor of San Francisco Bay:

All I can say now is that I never dreamed it could be so beautiful. You know how I loved West Point. Well, it seems almost like treason to say that this is more beautiful, yet I almost think it is. . . . A hundred feet below me lies the bay Far off to the west is the narrow outlet to the sea, the Golden Gate. Beyond, I can get a glimpse of the Pacific Ocean. My quarters are built on a beautiful terrace . . . surrounded with the greatest profusion of flowers, such as in the East I never saw out of a hothouse.

Another new aspect of life in California was having a Chinese servant with a long queue. While it turned out to be a brief posting, Bliss gained some memorable experiences.

¹³⁸ THB to Maria Anderson, Nov. 21, 1881, THB Mss, USAMHI.

The Andersons were mindful of what these delays were doing to Tasker Bliss. Ellen wrote frequently to encourage him. She knew he was frustrated. "I know my dear that all this delay and uncertainty is very unpleasant for you I do not mean to keep you waiting."¹³⁹ Three weeks later she wrote a longer message of encouragement.

I think that I do truly love and honor you a great deal more than I did three years ago. You know so much has been put into these three years that I think we are really a great deal older than our birthdays count. . . . I mean understanding and knowing what there is in life and knowing one's own strength and weakness. I have just been thinking . . . how little I thought that your consideration and kind thoughtfulness would be put to the test in the way they have been. If we had been married in the summer of '78 as you asked . . . , you might have been my husband for fifty years without holding the place that you hold now.¹⁴⁰

As the anticipated event remained in the future, Ellen wrote again. Along with her usual recommendations for his good health, she told Bliss he had "been patient, more patient than anyone had the right to ask . . . and I do not want you to pay for your kindness by getting laid up with no one to take care of you."¹⁴¹ During the winter, Mrs. Anderson wrote as well, trying to sound optimistic.

You know the subject which occupies our minds now and you must not imagine that we do not feel how deeply you are interested in any plans which we may form. Ellen has no doubt written to you the Dr.'s opinion,- which gives us the comforting assurance of decided improvement and the prospect of complete recovery. But at the same time urges the imperative necessity of a longer stay in this pure atmosphere and dry climate. I know how much

¹³⁹ Eleanora Anderson to THB, Aug. 15, 1880, THB Mss, USAMHI.

¹⁴⁰ Eleanora Anderson to THB, Sept. 7, 1880, THB Mss, USAMHI.

¹⁴¹ Aug. 14, 1881, THB Mss, USAMHI.

you will feel this. . . . But I felt I must write to you and tell you that we think of you as we talk over one plan after another.¹⁴²

In spite of this encouragement, Bliss must have wondered whether his marriage would ever take place.

Yet one more problem stood in the way. According to Palmer's biography, as Bliss and Elearnora waited for their marriage day, the latter "was stricken with partial deafness," which the physicians said would be permanent. She thought they should break off their engagement because her deafness would be too burdensome for him and could hinder his career. He responded by mail and in person that "he had not fallen in love with her ears" and nothing had changed in his feelings for her. Her deafness was no greater problem than his developing baldness. According to Palmer, Bliss responded to Eleanora's hearing loss by remaining near her whenever they were in a group, so that he could clearly and quietly repeat anything she had not heard, thus taking the "effort out of the occasion for the others present." Ellen, already shy, reacted to her deafness by becoming quieter and more withdrawn.¹⁴³

Finally on May 24, 1882, they were married in the bride's family home at Bryn Mawr.¹⁴⁴ Two days before the wedding, Nellie wrote again, promising to be a good wife for a soldier.

Some people say that they cannot understand how a woman can be willing to have one she loves separated from her, but I don't call that separation. I could not bear for you to go off to the cavalry or to fling yourself into . . . danger . . . , but I should be indeed separated widely from you if I could not say to you go when it is your duty and your honor demands it. I know you will always fight

¹⁴² Maria Anderson to THB, Feb. 20, 1881, THB Mss, USAMHI.

¹⁴³ Bliss, *Peacemaker*, 29-30.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 30.

or endure as a true soldier and I want to do the same and to help you always.¹⁴⁵

Nellie was ready to sacrifice to support her husband's career, but the protracted courtship provides insights into Bliss's personality as well. His desire to marry Eleanora dated back a decade and had endured despite many obstacles, highlighting his dogged determination. Why was she the only woman in his life? Bliss was the son of a minister and theologian; Eleanora was the daughter of a minister and sometime professor. Her mother had taught her French and German. She was a woman who appreciated the academic life that Bliss enjoyed, and her commitment to the Baptist faith was as strong as his own. These were solid foundations for the marriage.

Their wedding trip took them west, but only briefly. As soon as they arrived they must have started packing for Bliss's next assignment, the Artillery School at Fort Monroe, Virginia.¹⁴⁶

The Artillery School was the oldest of the army's postgraduate schools, and it was located at one of the oldest coastal defense forts. The work in the two-year course was not troubling to Bliss; indeed he excelled. In February 1883, in the middle of the first year, he wrote to his mother describing the daily routine.

Law every morning, followed by practical work in Photography, and drill in the afternoon. The latter just now consists of target practice with the Infantry rifle and as there is an order requiring all officers to attend the practice I have been bruising my shoulder black and blue with firing a musket that kicks with a 98-lb. recoil. But that will soon be varied with practical work in Chemistry.

¹⁴⁵ Eleanora Anderson to THB, May 22, 1882, THB Mss, USAMHI.

¹⁴⁶ S.O. No. 150, A.G.O., June 29, 1882.

In the summer there may be some rest for a week or two, when
I hope to run up to Chester.¹⁴⁷

As always, Bliss thrived in the classroom, finishing first in his class. As his wife commented, it was even more impressive that he did so well because, since 1883, there had been a “little disturbing element in the house,” a reference to their daughter, Eleanor.¹⁴⁸ Bliss’s outstanding record led Lieutenant Colonel John O. Tidball, commanding the Artillery School, to request his continuation at the school for a third year, to serve as adjutant. In the letter requesting the assignment, Tidball commented that Bliss’s knowledge of French and German was one reason, but also he found the young officer “proficient in many matters advantageous for an Adjutant of the Artillery School to know.”¹⁴⁹

While Bliss was pleased to be recognized for the quality of his work, he was equally interested in finding better quarters. For two years, he and his family had lived “under the casemates with eighteen feet of earth over their heads, which required fires in midsummer to dry” the moist air. Thus when his wife visited her family outside Philadelphia, she included a shopping trip in the visit, buying gloves, warmer underwear and stockings, and shoes for baby Eleanor (for 30 cents).¹⁵⁰ Another way to improve the family’s situation was to transfer out of the artillery to one of the staff bureaus, which would bring an immediate promotion, with the

¹⁴⁷ THB to mother, Feb. 26, 1883, THB Mss, USAMHI.

¹⁴⁸ Eleanora Bliss to THB, May 9, 1884, THB Mss, USAMHI.

¹⁴⁹ Tidball to the Adjutant General, March 29, 1884, A.C.P. file, RG 94, NARA.

¹⁵⁰ Palmer, *Bliss, Peacemaker*, 30; Maria Anderson to THB, April 10, 1884, and Eleanora Bliss to THB, May 3, 1884, THB Mss, USAMHI.

additional prospect of faster promotion in the future. Bliss applied to become a captain in the Quartermaster's Department, but he did not receive the promotion.¹⁵¹

Another important duty intervened at this point in his career. While still serving as adjutant at the Artillery School, he was appointed Recorder for a board of officers studying the inland waterways and how they might aid the Atlantic and Gulf coast defenses.¹⁵² The board completed its work quickly, transmitting the report on June 14, 1884, recommending that more study be undertaken of the possibility of creating a connected intercoastal waterway from New England to the mouth of the Mississippi.¹⁵³ From this work, Bliss developed a paper that he read at the graduation exercise of the Artillery School in 1884. Titled "The Strategical Value of the Inland Canal Navigation of the United States," the paper attracted favorable attention in the Army, leading to its publication as "Ordnance Note, No. 346," dated May 12, 1884. The development of such an inland waterway was a popular idea at the time; one advocate who had suggested something similar was Captain Stephen B. Luce of the U.S. Navy.¹⁵⁴

By 1885, Luce was a Commodore and had another project in hand. He was the president of the new Naval War College that was about to open its doors in Newport, Rhode Island. By August, he was scrambling to find faculty members. One of his choices, Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan, would not arrive in time for this

¹⁵¹ THB to the Adjutant General, March 23, 1885, A.C.P. file, RG 94, NARA.

¹⁵² S.O. 111, A.G.O., Washington, D.C., May 13, 1884, and A.C.P. file, RG 94, NARA.

¹⁵³ Copies of the letter of transmittal and other related papers are in the THB Mss, vol. 1, MSD, LC.

¹⁵⁴ See an editorial in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, Sept. 15, 1877.

first session. While it is not clear exactly how Luce came to ask for Bliss to be assigned, it is clear that Luce did ask for him.¹⁵⁵ Presumably Bliss had a sufficient reputation in the Army as a student of military history and theory that Luce heard of him in that connection. Yet it is also possible that Luce had read Bliss's paper and recognized their shared interest. Palmer attributes his selection to "his reputation as a broad student" having become so general in the army that he "appeared the obvious selection."¹⁵⁶ Bliss had been expecting to attend the Pennsylvania National Guard summer encampment, but it was smaller than expected, so he was free for this new duty. There would be a rush to get ready. Bliss received his orders only in late August to report by September 1, and in October the Adjutant General ordered him back to Fort Monroe to "settle [his] business affairs" at that post.¹⁵⁷

Luce conceived of the Naval War College as an institute for advanced study of naval strategy and national policy. He had pushed the project for years, gaining more success with various Secretaries of the Navy than he had with his fellow officers. Finally, in 1884, Secretary William E. Chandler created a board of officers to study the concept of a postgraduate professional school for naval officers, with Luce one of the members. Of course the board reported favorably. As Ronald H. Spector summarizes:

¹⁵⁵ Ronald H. Spector, *Professors of War: The Naval War College and the Development of the Naval Profession* (Newport: Naval War College Press, 1977), 28, quotes Adjutant General Richard C. Drum promising Luce "the best man we have for the position," indicating that the army chose Bliss for the duty; but see Telegrams, SecWar William C. Endicott to A.G., June 26, 1885, A.C.P. file, RG 94, NARA.

¹⁵⁶ Palmer, *Bliss*, 31.

¹⁵⁷ A.G. to THB, Oct. 8, 1885, A.C.P. file, RG 94, NARA.

the Luce Board's report summed up the attitudes and hopes of the progressive camp of the Navy. All the ideas were there: the confusion over changes in technology, the faith in history and in the "immutable principles" of naval strategy, the frustration at the condition of the Navy and the stubborn conviction that the proper study for warriors was war.¹⁵⁸

As a result, in October of 1884, Chandler issued the orders to create the institution, with Luce as its president.¹⁵⁹

The essence of the curriculum, as Luce proposed it, was the comparative study of warfare at sea and on land in the effort to find general principles or a philosophy that applied to both. There were no books on this subject; indeed, one of Luce's hopes was that the War College faculty would produce such a literature.¹⁶⁰ Luce wanted the officers to think broadly, study both military and naval history, then try to develop their own synthesis of the historical theories. To make this method work, he needed an army officer who could lecture credibly about military strategy and tactics. After the first year's course, when the Navy Department considered dropping Bliss from the faculty, Luce wrote to the Secretary:

I learn now that the department disapproves of the detail of an Army Officer as instructor. The absence of this officer would materially change the most important object of the curriculum. The recommendation . . . was made with a special view to a comprehensive course of study in the art and science of war and by a method which will have the merit it is believed of being entirely original with our Navy.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁸ *Professors of War*, 25.

¹⁵⁹ For the beginnings of the College, see Spector, *Professors of War*, chs. 1-3, and John B. Hattendorf, B. Mitchell Simpson, III, and John R. Wadleigh, *Sailors and Scholars: The Centennial History of the U.S. Naval War College* (Newport: Naval War College Press, 1984); for biographical sketches of Luce and faculty member Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan, U.S.N., see James C. Bradford, ed., *Admirals of the New Steel Navy: Makers of the American Naval Tradition, 1880-1930* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1990).

¹⁶⁰ John B. Hattendorf, "Stephen B. Luce" in Bradford, ed., *Admirals*, 13.

¹⁶¹ Quoted in Spector, *Professors of War*, 29.

The Department relented and Bliss remained on the faculty, but it is easy to understand the suspicion with which many naval officers viewed this new school. In its first brief term, it had only two permanent faculty members; one was Bliss, an army officer, and the other, a lecturer on international law, was James R. Soley, a civilian.¹⁶²

According to Palmer, Bliss felt uncertain about this assignment and suggested that he should begin with some introductory lectures; if those went well, then Luce would retain him.¹⁶³ Bliss quickly established himself as an effective lecturer; according to Spector, “He soon became the equal of [Alfred Thayer] Mahan in popularity.”¹⁶⁴ While Mahan’s lectures became the basis for his famous book on sea power, Bliss did not do likewise, and his lecture notes did not survive. According to the official history of the War College, Bliss gave eighteen “lectures on military tactics, minor military operations, and the principles of modern strategy” in the second year of the course.¹⁶⁵ When the *Army and Navy Register* published a lengthy report on the Naval War College, it included this summary of Bliss’s work:

Military tactics, strategy and history formed the subjects of a series of lectures delivered by Lieutenant T. H. Bliss, U.S. Army, which covered the ground from the simpler questions of company formations and tactics to the grand tactics of armies and the general operations of war. The fundamental principles underlying strategy and military movements, generally, as illustrated in these lectures, the student is expected to apply to the military movement of

¹⁶² Spector, *Professors of War*, 27-8.

¹⁶³ Palmer, *Bliss, Peacemaker*, 31.

¹⁶⁴ Spector, *Professors of War*, 28.

¹⁶⁵ Hattendorf, Simpson and Wadleigh, *Sailors and Scholars*, 24.

ships, and no occasion is omitted of bringing out the many points common to military operations on land and those at sea. . . . 166

Bliss taught in a way that fit exactly with Luce's desires. After the first year's course, Luce wrote to the new Secretary of the Navy, William C. Whitney, expressing his "great satisfaction" with Bliss's performance and asking that Whitney convey this appreciation to the Secretary of War. Luce soon left the College, to be succeeded as president by Mahan. When Bliss left the faculty in 1888, Mahan praised him as effusively as Luce had, describing him as a "most willing and untiring worker." Mahan also asked that Secretary Whitney pass on to the War Department his appreciation of "the extent of his information, and the clearness and interest which he has imparted to his treatment of the Art of War."¹⁶⁷

Bliss had no trouble persuading the War Department that his work was valuable; his superiors sent him to Europe to deepen his knowledge of the European professional armies. His wife and infant daughter were able to follow him, staying with relatives in Britain until Bliss returned from the continent at the end of his tour.¹⁶⁸ Unfortunately the report he wrote about his tour has been lost.¹⁶⁹ Years later, in his retirement, Bliss wrote to Major General E. F. McGlachlin of his stay in Berlin: "Any morning when I went for an early walk in the Thiergarten, I would see [Field Marshal Helmuth] von Moltke browsing over a secondhand bookstore near the Brandenburg gate. He was so spare that he looked as though his frame were held

¹⁶⁶ Dec. 31, 1887.

¹⁶⁷ Luce to Whitney, and Mahan to Whitney, May 16, 1888, A.C.P. file, RG 94, NARA.

¹⁶⁸ Palmer, *Bliss, Peacemaker*, 31.

¹⁶⁹ My thanks to Dr. Timothy Nenninger of the National Archives and Record Administration, who spent an afternoon leading me through the possible locations for these materials, without success.

together by his uniform.”¹⁷⁰ For a soldier, seeing the military mastermind of the German wars of unification must have been a case of a celebrity sighting. The mental capacity of the German military leaders impressed Bliss as much as their physical condition.

Bliss left the Naval War College with a well-established reputation as a scholar-soldier who could effectively convey his ideas through both his lectures and his writing. He had played an important role in a pioneering institution, one of the first of its kind in any profession.¹⁷¹ His European trip showed him the methods, institutions and military thinking of the great imperial powers. He had also been exposed to the ideas of Mahan, whose great book, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783*,¹⁷² based on his lectures at Newport, was a plea for the United States to become one of the great imperial powers of the late-nineteenth century. Bliss was now working in the world of national policy and international relations, just as the United States was entering the arena of great power competition.

Bliss completed his work for the Navy at a propitious time in another sense, too. John M. Schofield, whom Bliss had so impressed with his work as a faculty member at West Point, had become the Commanding General of the Army, succeeding Lieutenant General Philip Sheridan. Now he wanted Bliss on his personal staff. In March 1888, Bliss became one of Schofield’s two aides-de-camp, an

¹⁷⁰ Quoted in *ibid.*, 32.

¹⁷¹ For a discussion of the revolutionary nature of the Naval War College, see Spector, *Professors of War*, 12-20.

¹⁷² (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1890).

assignment that committed him to a period of hard work on a variety of tasks that would permanently shape his thinking about the needs of the Army.

CHAPTER 3

AIDING THE COMMANDING GENERAL

The late-nineteenth century army reflected the contradictions of life and culture in the United States at that time. One image of the country in that period, implanted in many minds through countless adventure stories and Hollywood westerns, features cattle, cowboys, Indians and frontier settlers. Another image emphasizes the industrial and urban transformation of the nation as it became the leading economic power in the world. In the same contradictory fashion, “the glow of romance” has left us with a vivid picture of the army as a frontier constabulary attempting to control aggressive land hunters and their victims, the native peoples of the West.

While the casual observer dwells on this traditional part of the army’s work, the more careful investigator finds that the army still managed to transform itself while carrying out such duties. Focusing on the Indian-fighting function emphasizes the elements of continuity in the army’s role, with the implication that nothing much had changed. After the Civil War the army reverted to what it had been doing before; as Russell Weigley observes, “Once more the army appeared a place where officers learned all about commanding fifty dragoons on the western plains but nothing about

anything else.”¹⁷³ In fact, these years of isolation were less isolated than the frontier constabulary image implies, as many officers maintained close ties with friends and relatives outside the military. In any case, these years proved fruitful for the army intellectually and organizationally. The Military Academy may have stagnated intellectually, but new post-graduate schools appeared, furthering the professional education of the officer corps. The army’s leadership encouraged military intellectuals such as Emory Upton, Arthur L. Wagner and Tasker Bliss, who found outlets for their writings in a growing number of professional journals.

Much of that encouragement came from the Commanding Generals of the Army, especially General William T. Sherman and Major General John M. Schofield. Sherman strongly supported Upton’s work and founded the School of Application for Infantry and Cavalry at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Schofield served as Commanding General in a period (1888-1895) when the army was grappling with the technological progress of modern weaponry, and he brought about many changes in the daily routines of soldiers to help them make the necessary adjustments. He sponsored the professionalization of the officer corps and the creation of new professional associations.¹⁷⁴ Schofield chose Tasker Bliss as one of his aides-de-camp and used him as his instrument in many of these actions. As a result, Bliss gained numerous

¹⁷³ Russell F. Weigley, *History of the United States Army*, Enlarged Edition (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 265.

¹⁷⁴ Two classic works address the issue of the professionalization of the military. One is Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait* (New York: The Free Press, 1960), and the other is Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1957). More recent scholarship on this subject includes Edward M. Coffman, *The Old Army: A Portrait of the American Army in Peacetime, 1784-1898* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986) and Paul A. Hutton, *Phil Sheridan and His Army* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985).

insights into the issues of military modernization, the professional education of officers, the army's high command, and the relationship among the headquarters of the army, the administrative bureaus, and the Secretary of War. These lessons contributed to his thinking later in his career.

These years also saw the United States emerging as a new world power. While the country had not yet acquired overseas colonies, nevertheless the national political leaders of both parties began to assert American power in a number of disputes. In the late-nineteenth century, United States foreign policy became more active and more bellicose. Among the diplomatic conflicts of this period were negotiations with Britain over the Pribilof Islands seal hunting reserve, the Valparaiso incident in Chile, the Samoan conflict with Britain and Germany, and the Venezuelan boundary dispute with Britain. Historians have debated for years whether this new direction represented a dramatic new departure or the final development of a continuing process of territorial expansion and imperialism.¹⁷⁵ It would culminate in

¹⁷⁵ There is an enormous literature on this topic. An insightful recent synthesis is Frank Ninkovich, *The United States and Imperialism* (Problems in American History) (Malden, Mass. and Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, Inc., 2001). An excellent recent examination is Richard H. Immerman, *Empire for Liberty: A History of American Imperialism from Benjamin Franklin to Paul Wolfowitz* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010). Two of the most important works are Walter LaFeber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860-1898* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1963) and Robert Beisner, *From the Old Diplomacy to the New, 1865-1900*, Second Edition (Arlington Heights, Ill: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1986). Other important works that discuss the United States drive for expansion in the late-nineteenth century include Emily S. Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream: American Economic and Cultural Expansion, 1890-1945* (New York: , 1982), Ernest R. May, *Imperial Democracy: The Emergence of America as a Great Power* (New York, Evanston, San Francisco, London: Harper Torchbook paperback edition, 1973), Charles S. Campbell, *The Transformation of American Foreign Relations, 1865-1900* (New York, Hagerstown, San Francisco, London: Harper and Row, Harper Colophon books, originally 1976), David Healy, *U.S. Expansionism: The Imperialist Urge in the 1890s* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1970), and the dated but still useful John A. S. Grenville and George Berkeley Young, *Politics, Strategy and American Diplomacy: Studies in Foreign Policy, 1873-1917* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1966). Two studies of important individuals are Ernest N. Paolino, *The Foundations of the American Empire: William Henry Seward and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Ithaca, New

the war of 1898 against Spain. Serving at the Headquarters of the Army, Bliss saw the final act of the frontier army and the beginnings of the army' new role as the military arm of a great power. The operations culminating in the massacre at Wounded Knee in 1890 brought down the curtain on the Indian wars, while the numerous threats of war in the 1880s and 1890s foreshadowed the future role of the United States Army.

Perhaps the most important part of Bliss's education in these years involved the work of the Headquarters of the Army. The position of Commanding General had always been an anomaly. As Schofield put it in his memoirs:

I determined to . . . avoid further attempts to accomplish the impossible In fact, long study of the subject . . . had led me to the conclusion . . . that under the government of the United States an actual military commander of the army is not possible . . . and that the general-in-chief, or nominal commanding general, can at most be only a "chief of staff,"—that or nothing.¹⁷⁶

Any Commanding General's efforts to exercise real command of the army had always failed except in the most unusual circumstances. For the day-to-day management of the War Department, the Secretary of War necessarily relied on the staff bureau chiefs such as the Adjutant General, the Quartermaster General, or the Commissary

York: Cornell University Press, 1973), and David Pletcher, *The Awkward Years: American Foreign Relations under Garfield and Arthur* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1962). On British-United States relations in this period, see especially Kenneth Bourne, *Britain and the Balance of Power in North America, 1815-1908* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967) and Bradford Perkins, *The Great Rapprochement: England and the United States, 1895-1914* (New York: Atheneum, 1968). On the general racial thinking that underlay American policy, see Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny: American Expansion and the Empire of Right* (New York: Hill and Wang, A Division of Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1995) and Thomas R. Hietala, *Manifest Design: Anxious Aggrandizement in Late Jacksonian America* (Ithaca, New York and London: Cornell University Press, 1985).

¹⁷⁶ John M. Schofield, *Forty-Six Years in the Army* (New York: The Century Company, 1897), 421-422.

General of Subsistence. The Commanding General's position would be vital in a war, if one broke out, but in the ordinary daily routine, the work of the bureaus was more important. When Brevet Lieutenant General Winfield Scott, or later Sherman, challenged the power of the bureau chiefs, the Secretary of War supported the staff.¹⁷⁷ Schofield had studied the situation at the behest of Generals Ulysses S. Grant and Sherman, and he had briefly served as Secretary of War. He had watched Sherman and Lieutenant General Philip H. Sheridan attempt to exercise real command, and he had reflected on the causes of their failure. This combination of experiences led him to try the different approach quoted above, because he recognized the essence of the situation.

The President being, by the Constitution, commander-in-chief of the army and navy, no law of Congress, even with his own consent, could relieve him from that responsibility. There is no law, and there could not constitutionally be any law passed, establishing any such office as that of commanding general of the army, and defining the duties and authority attached to it. Such a law would be a clear encroachment upon the constitutional prerogatives of the President. The only constitutional relation [that can exist] is that usually called "chief of the staff"—the chief military adviser and executive officer of the commander-in-chief.¹⁷⁸

Schofield correctly saw that the root of the difficulties in this relationship lay in the Constitution of the United States, and thus it was not going to change. The only possible change had to come in the attitude of the Commanding General.

¹⁷⁷ For a more detailed account of these conflicts, see Weigley, *History*, 192–195 and 284–290; see also Allan R. Millett and Peter Maslowski, *For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States of America* (New York: The Free Press, A Division of Macmillan, Inc., London: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1984), 120-122 and 263-264. For a discussion of Schofield's approach to the position, see Donald B. Connelly, *John M. Schofield and the Politics of Generalship* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 301-06.

¹⁷⁸ Schofield, *Forty-Six Years*, 536.

Of course the position was equally difficult for the senior officer of the army. It was only natural that someone referred to as the Commanding General of the Army would expect to command something. The attempt to do so inevitably led to conflicts with the Secretary of War, the President's direct representative. Thus the Commanding Generals most often had occupied a "position of great importance in the absence of that confidence which is necessary to make such a position even tolerable to himself or to the army."¹⁷⁹ Under these circumstances, Schofield followed his own advice and tried to serve as a chief of staff to the Secretary of War, hoping to be the chief military adviser to the President. The result, he believed, was "perfect harmony" between the War Department and the Headquarters of the Army.¹⁸⁰

Early in Schofield's tenure as commanding general, he prepared a lengthy memorandum, "Questions and Suggestions Relative to Military Administration and Command," apparently at the request of President Grover Cleveland.¹⁸¹ In the memorandum, Schofield argued that the proper work of a staff was "to watch, to inspect, to inquire, to investigate and to report . . . , all things which require correction . . . not to decide nor to command."¹⁸² He suggested that the army needed a chief of staff who would outrank all of the bureau chiefs so that he could enforce the Secretary's decisions on all of them. Without such an officer, the Secretary of War had to enforce all of his decisions and that was too much to expect. When the

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 537.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 423.

¹⁸¹ A copy of this memorandum, "Questions and Suggestions Relative to Military Administration and Command," is in the John M. Schofield Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, hereafter cited as Schofield Mss, LC.

¹⁸² Ibid., 5.

secretaries did not make decisions or did not enforce them, then the bureau chiefs effectively commanded the army, creating “a ‘hydra,’— more dangerous to the country than to its enemies.”¹⁸³

The power of the bureaus came from their control of the day-to-day administration of the War Department; the theory behind this situation was that routine administration and command could be separated. Schofield rejected this division of labor. “Whether or not this might be desirable, it is not possible. The duties of command, and those of administration relative to the troops commanded, are so closely interwoven and inter-dependent, that their separation is practically impossible.”¹⁸⁴ Instead, Schofield asserted that “the fundamental principle upon which sound military administration must be based” was the recognition of the Secretary of War’s authority whenever he chose to exercise it, “coupled with the rule . . . that the concurrent opinion of the Commanding General and the Chiefs of Staff Departments is requisite and sufficient, in all matters with which the Secretary does not choose to concern himself.”¹⁸⁵

Schofield had expressed similar ideas in an 1888 speech on “Our Military and Naval Policy.”¹⁸⁶ Speaking of recent decisions of the Supreme Court and the War Department, he commented that if one accepted the doctrine that “the Secretary of War is the representative, *in all respects* [emphasis in original], of the Commander-in-Chief . . . , [then] the Secretary has become, in fact, the actual Commander-in-

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 18-19.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 25-26.

¹⁸⁶ A copy of the speech is in Box 95, Schofield Mss, LC.

Chief. Much more . . . the War Department makes every Chief of a Staff Department, so far at least as concerns the affairs of his Department, the actual Commander-in-Chief of the Army.” Schofield characterized this dysfunctional system as a “hydra, with many heads.” He added that “the history of the world is replete with the records of disasters resulting from this . . . system of military command.” In the case of the United States, this method of administration meant that generals, selected and trained for command, did not exercise it, while the actual commanders were the civilian secretary and the bureau officers who had not been educated for that purpose.

Speaking of his own time, Schofield wrote in his memorandum that

the command of the army had become . . . little more than nominal. The functions exercised by the General had become extremely limited . . . while the Secretary of War was so over-burdened . . . as to feel the need of an Assistant Secretary. . . . [T]his burden resulted from the assumption of duties which properly belong to the Commanding General of the Army, or might properly be intrusted [sic] to him.¹⁸⁷

While he was Commanding General it was his practice, to abandon these efforts to command the army and instead act as military adviser to the Secretary of War, tantamount to an informal chief of staff. He believed that without such a position, the Secretary of War had to exercise the control over the bureaus, even though such a practice “would be destructive to the efficiency of any military system.”¹⁸⁸ Instead, “The solution of all these difficulties” had to lie with the Commanding General, who must accept the principle that he was “subordinate, in all things, to the Secretary of

¹⁸⁷ “Military Administration and Command,” 11.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

War.”¹⁸⁹ Only with such a lessened ambition would the Commanding General find support from the Secretary in his efforts to control the officers of the administrative bureaus.

One particular aspect of this situation that clearly rankled Schofield was that “the great majority of orders were issued to the army without [the Commanding General’s] consideration and frequently without his knowledge, though in his name.” As he put it in his memoirs, he “usually learned for the first time of routine orders issued in his name by seeing them published in the New York papers the next day It became necessary to call attention to the question of veracity involved in such a use of the general’s name.”¹⁹⁰

Unfortunately Schofield submitted his memorandum on army reform in February of 1889, after Cleveland had lost the election of 1888 and had only one more month to serve in his term. According to Schofield’s notes at the end of the memorandum, Cleveland “returned [it] with his endorsement on the 3rd of March 1889.” Schofield’s notes go on to say that he then submitted it to the new Secretary of War, Redfield Proctor, the appointee of new President Benjamin Harrison. Presumably the ideas expressed in this study helped to create the harmony that Schofield enjoyed in his relationship with Proctor and his successors, Stephen B.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 17.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 12-13; Schofield, *Forty-Six Years*, 422. Bliss had the same experience while serving as Schofield’s aide-de-camp and dealing with many artillery matters. An officer wrote with a complaint about a just-published order involving the artillery. Bliss replied: “Had I known that the order was in preparation I might have been able to get these details provided for. The order was prepared by an Ass[istan]t A[djutant] G[eneral] and I heard nothing of it till I saw it in print.” THB to Harris, Nov. 15, 1890, THB Mss, MHI.

Elkins and Daniel S. Lamont. Schofield prepared this paper in the first year Bliss joined his staff, so the new aide must have known of it and may have contributed to it. Serving at Schofield's headquarters became a seven-year seminar on American civil-military relations.

For Tasker Bliss, duty on the staff of Major General Schofield began with elements of confusion. In April 1888 Bliss had just been ordered to West Point when he received a letter from Major Joseph Sanger,¹⁹¹ already one of Schofield's aides, offering the position. Bliss replied that he had received an "unsolicited detail for duty at West Point," which he would "gladly" give up to serve as one of Schofield's aides-de-camp.¹⁹² The Adjutant General, Richard C. Drum, wrote on the twenty-seventh, asking Bliss for his preference,¹⁹³ which he communicated rapidly and the orders soon changed.¹⁹⁴

There are indications that there was one further problem. Bliss wrote to Schofield on April 19 to say that he would appreciate having the rest of the month to settle his affairs in Newport. The letter includes two paragraphs that seem odd.

In view of the fact that I have not, directly or indirectly, sought any detail which I have received, I sincerely hope that the fact that the War Department has in the past selected me, of its own motion, for special duty, may not now be regarded as a bar to my assignment to so honorable a position

But whatever action the War Department may take in

¹⁹¹ S.O. No. 85, Hqs of the Army, A.G.O., April 13, 1888. He was to have served as Assistant Professor of History and Ethics, according to a later career summary from The Adjutant General's Office in the THB Mss, MHI.

¹⁹² Bliss to JMS, April 17, 1888, JMS Ms, LC, Box 10.

¹⁹³ AG to THB, Bliss Mss, MHI.

¹⁹⁴ S.O. No. 108, Hqs of the Army, A.G.O., May 10, 1888. The copy in the Bliss Mss at the MHI has a handwritten note, "Delivered May 12, 1888. A.T. Mahan, Captain, U.S.N., Pres't War College."

the matter, I . . . thank you for the honor which the mere application confers upon me. It is a stronger stimulus to professional pride than any promotion could be.¹⁹⁵

The wording indicates that Bliss thought there was a chance that he would not be ordered to join Schofield after all, and that the reason lay in the War Department. Schofield had been working with Commanding General Philip H. Sheridan and Rear Admiral Stephen B. Luce to plan combined Army-Navy maneuvers for the summer of 1888. Ultimately, the maneuvers never happened, and at least one factor seems to have been a falling out between Schofield and Sheridan. As Captain J. E. Walker of the Navy informed Luce in early May, “There was some friction between Sheridan and Schofield growing out of some change of aides, I *think* [emphasis in original]. Sheridan was very much disgusted.”¹⁹⁶ There is no further indication what the issue could have been. If Schofield had had a struggle to gain the officers he wanted as his aides-de-camp, then that situation explains the anger evident in some of his writings about the duties of the officers on his personal staff.

In 1885, when he was commanding the Division of the Missouri, Schofield wrote a memorandum on aides-de-camp. Apparently the War Department was considering a new regulation that would impose “conditions and restrictions” on a general’s choice of aides. Schofield responded that such a regulation would be “plainly in violation of law,” as well as contradicting “time honored custom and . . . sound military principle.” He argued that aides must depend for their position on the general appointing them; otherwise, the junior officer would be in the impossible

¹⁹⁵ THB to JMS, April 19, 1888, JMS Ms, LC, Box 10.

¹⁹⁶ Walker to Luce, May 2, 1888, SB Luce Mss, LC.

situation of “sustaining the closest confidential relations with *one* superior” while he was “dependent upon the will of *another* for the tenure of his office [emphasis in original].”¹⁹⁷ Clearly Schofield intended to make use of his aides in important roles.

The same issue came up again in 1889 and led to another Schofield memorandum. On this occasion apparently there had been complaints of favoritism in the selection of aides, and a proposed remedy was the detail of officers on a rotating basis. Schofield responded to both ideas. First, he pointed out that a general chose his aides from “those who are *in his judgment*, best qualified to *assist him* [emphasis in original].” Thus there should be no question of favoritism, since serving as a general’s aide was a duty to which “no officer has any right or color of right whatsoever.” Once again he insisted that aides played a special role, and turning the position into a routine detail would “make a radical change in the character of this *confidential* office of Aide [emphasis in original.]”¹⁹⁸ Again, Schofield stressed the importance of confidentiality in the work he asked his aides to perform.¹⁹⁹

While Schofield was able to control his ambitions enough to serve as an unofficial chief of staff to the Secretary of War rather than seek to maintain his authority as Commanding General, he was sensitive about who served on his staff. That attitude is understandable, since the Commanding General actually commanded very little except his own staff. When the adjutant of the First Artillery Regiment wrote to Bliss to remind him of the need to file a monthly Personal Report with the

¹⁹⁷ “Memorandum on Aides-de-Camp,” Dec. 18, 1885, Box 90, Lot A, 71-80, JMS Mss, LC.

¹⁹⁸ “Memorandum In Reference to Aides-de-Camp,” 1889, Box 90, Lot B, 1-10, JMS Mss, LC.

¹⁹⁹ Donnelly, *Schofield*, 310, considers Schofield’s ideas on this topic to be a failure of his reform impulses.

regiment, as required of officers on detached duty, Schofield's responded with official anger. He reminded the regimental adjutant that aides were staff officers of the Commanding General, not on detached duty. His draft added that Schofield desired "an explanation" from regimental headquarters of their presumption in "sending an order to a staff officer of the Commanding General."²⁰⁰ Schofield was determined to protect his control over the small part of the army that he did actually command.

What were the Commanding General's expectations of an aide-de-camp? Schofield had made that clear in a presentation at West Point in 1877, explaining to the young officers on the faculty what they should aim to accomplish in their study of war.²⁰¹ Schofield observed that the U.S. Army lacked a permanent staff, a true general staff, as existed in most countries in Europe. Therefore American generals had to look to officers of the line for their staffs. Schofield believed that it was "those officers who enjoy the good fortune" of a tour teaching at West Point "who have the best opportunities to fit themselves for such staff duty, and by their known fitness, make themselves eligible to appointment." This staff service, he thought, comprised an important step on the path to high command.²⁰²

Since Bliss was one of those young officers teaching at the Military Academy when Schofield made this presentation, one can see part of the reason why Schofield

²⁰⁰ Letter and Endorsements, regarding the position of Aides-de-Camp, April 2 and 3, 1891, THB Mss, MHI.

²⁰¹ "Introductory Remarks upon the Study of the Science of War," from a paper read to the U.S. Military Service Institute, West Point, Oct. 11, 1877, printed for the Institute by D. Van Nostrand, N.Y., 1877, copy in the THB Mss, MHI.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 19-20.

chose him as an aide. Bliss's paper on the siege of Plevna also impressed Schofield. In his memorandum opposing the idea of rotating staff appointments, he acknowledged that service as an aide facilitated "the instruction of young officers of the line in the duties of the staff," but he objected to the rapid rotation of officers through this school of instruction. In that case, "instead of having an educated staff to assist him in the duties of command," the general would frequently have inexperienced aides learning on the job. Thus it would be "better to let the Generals have real Aides rather than pupils."²⁰³ From all of these sources, it is clear that Schofield saw himself as an educator, preparing his aides for future command while relying on them for important and confidential tasks.

On a personal level, one annoying part of an assignment as aide-de-camp to the Commanding General was that Schofield maintained the Headquarters of the Army in Washington, D. C. Since Schofield worked amicably with the Secretaries of War, unlike his predecessors Winfield Scott or William T. Sherman, he did not feel compelled to remove his headquarters to New York City or St. Louis, as they had done. For Tasker Bliss, that meant long separations from his family, because he did not want them in Washington for the summer. Each year in May, Eleanora went to her family's home in Rosemont, Pennsylvania, outside Philadelphia, taking daughter Eleanor with her, and they would return in September or early October.²⁰⁴ Although Schofield tried to be understanding and permit Bliss to make frequent trips to see his family, inevitably those trips were difficult to arrange. Once, when Bliss was

²⁰³ "Memorandum. In Reference to Aides-de-Camp," 1889.

²⁰⁴ For example, see EAB to THB, April 24, 1889, and March 27, 1893, both in THB Mss, MHI.

determined to be with Eleanora for her birthday, Schofield remarked: “Oh, with your wife; that goes without saying. You can go to her whenever you like and stay as long as you like. If I had a staff officer who had such a wife as you have and who did not want to go to her, I would relieve him!”²⁰⁵ It was a pretty compliment, but the fact remained that Bliss usually found it difficult to get away to Rosemont or to see his own parents in Chester, Pennsylvania.

The letters Bliss and his wife exchanged dwelt constantly on the terrible Washington heat – not surprising in the era before air conditioning. For instance, Tasker complained in July 1889, that “The weather is warming up again and I suppose it will be really hot again by tomorrow. I don’t know when I can get up to see you but I hope before long as it is very debilitating here.”²⁰⁶ Each year by September he was impatient to have them return, writing in 1889: “I wish the time would go more quickly. I am almost without patience. But you will come eventually and I won’t worry you by expressing my impatience. Only keep very well, dear love, and get very strong and add 10 pounds to your weight.”²⁰⁷

The next summer Bliss complained similarly about the heat: “Yesterday was the hottest day we have had here and at night it was very bad. I tried to sleep all over the house. The only comfortable place was on the floor in the front parlor.”²⁰⁸ Two days later, a Sunday, he indulged himself in another wistful letter.

²⁰⁵ THB to EAB, Aug. 12, 1891, THB Mss, MHI.

²⁰⁶ THB to EAB, July 18, 1889, THB Mss, MHI.

²⁰⁷ THB to EAB, Sept. 10, 1889, THB Mss, MHI.

²⁰⁸ THB to EAB, Aug. 1, 1890, THB Mss, MHI.

We have had another very hot day, the fifth successive one. I have stayed in the house all day, but now (nearly 10 o'clock) I think I'll have a talk with you. . . .

I have read a little Russian, and picked up and laid down again about twenty books A volume of sermons followed a critique on modern French novels and was in turn succeeded by a French novel itself, the thin plot of which was then buried under a discussion of the latest phases of Socialism. And so on

Once . . . on the lounge . . . I watched a noisy fly on the outside of the screen. Presently another came, perhaps the ephemeral wife of the other for he immediately made a more joyful noise than ever as though welcoming the mate with whom he would lead a long, long life [then] they darted away to some distant connubial bower . . .

Then two sparrows came down to drink some melted ice water on the back steps. They drank and chirped and caressed each other and then . . . flew away.

I began to be envious of all these happy thoughtless soulless creatures whose little lives . . . were spent in the companionship of their mates

No matter how far away your dear form might be, I could close my eyes and my soul could commune with you as though you were sitting by my side with my hand in yours. I could hear your dear voice and Eleanor's merry prattle, I heard your words of love and encouragement I knew that you had been there and had talked with me and I was happy.²⁰⁹

This is by far the most lovesick letter in the extant Bliss manuscripts. He was a lonely man during these summers when he served in the Headquarters of the Army. His desire to spend more time with his wife and children would soon shape an important career decision.

Bliss often accompanied the general on inspection trips, and these journeys became excellent opportunities to learn about various aspects of the army. For

²⁰⁹ THB to EAB, Aug. 3, 1890, THB Mss, MHI.

instance, the two officers accompanied the Secretary of War on an 1889 visit to the Rock Island Arsenal in Illinois. After an official breakfast, the large party (including the Secretary and four generals) toured the facilities. Bliss told his wife: “It is a beautiful spot, with the finest collection of workshops that I have ever seen. There are 30 huge buildings,” which in wartime would employ up to 15,000 workers. Bliss “picked some of the flowers with which the whole island is covered” because whenever he saw something beautiful, it reminded him of Eleanora. He enclosed them in his letter. After dinner, the general and the Secretary went fishing together.²¹⁰

The trip continued with a tour of western posts and sites of possible future posts. In particular, Secretary of War Redfield Proctor and General Schofield wanted to visit the post-graduate schools at Forts Leavenworth and Riley. As with any trip by a party of high-ranking government officials, each stop included receptions and formal luncheons and dinners, including once a speech by Bliss that he “did not enjoy so much.”²¹¹

Tasker often found himself taking care of personal business for his general, and he learned many of the tricks of the frequent traveler. During one summer trip, he wrote to his wife that Schofield had asked him not to stop in Philadelphia on the way to New York City, and he would make it up to Bliss by letting him make a longer stay on the return. As a result, the trip caused Eleanora to postpone a visit to

²¹⁰ THB to EAB, May 6, 1889, THB Mss, MHI.

²¹¹ THB to EAB, May 9 and May 11, 1889, THB Mss, MHI.

Tasker in Washington as well, because they hoped for the longer reunion.²¹² Bliss thought that “the General is a little uncertain about what course to take from [New York City] and I think he depends somewhat on me to straighten it out for him.”²¹³ His estimate was exactly correct, and he was able to perform an important service for Schofield. They had been in New York to check on the continuing work on the coast defenses.

It was not until Friday that the General finally decided to take a boat to Newport, Rhode Island. Another officer went [to arrange the staterooms for the trip, but he] has not had much experience in this sort of thing and he made the mistake of going himself to the ticket office They told him that they were all sold. . . . Of course the General was much put out I said I could arrange it. . . . [A]t this time of year, every stateroom on the Friday night boat for Newport is engaged twice over. . . . At the last minute lots of people . . . try to get one in the name of some distinguished person for whom they think the Company will have some consideration. . . . I just went to the hotel proprietor and asked him to get me two staterooms He did so without any trouble. The General Passenger Agent, when he found the General was going, simply scratched off the names of two people who had engaged rooms and whom he did not care about and gave them to us. It was a mean thing to do but there was no other way out of the difficulty. I would not do such a thing for myself but under the circumstances I had to do it for the General.²¹⁴

As any old soldier would testify, rank has its privileges, including staterooms on the Friday evening boat to Newport.

The voyage was not purely one for recreation. Schofield was the head of the Board of Ordnance and Fortification, created by Congress to review the progress

²¹² THB to EAB, Aug. 5, 1890, THB Mss, MHI.

²¹³ THB to EAB, undated but Aug. 14 or 15, 1890, THB Mss, MHI.

²¹⁴ THB to EAB, August 17, 1890, THB Mss, MHI.

made on the program of improved coast defenses set forth in the Endicott Board report of 1886.²¹⁵ In this role, he made several trips to see personally the state of the coast artillery and the coast defense fortifications. As the National Park Service explains, “By the 1880s, a sizable segment of the American public in government and out, and in the military, became increasingly alarmed at the deterioration of coastal fortifications and the development of modern steam battleships in foreign navies.”²¹⁶ In this case, the general’s party caught the 4:25 a.m. train to Boston and immediately went on to Portland, Maine, to inspect the fortifications there. In the evening, Schofield and one other officer went to “Kennebunk Port” [sic], but the next morning they all moved on to northern New York. From there, Bliss told his wife, the plans were uncertain. Schofield was making a brief social call on “his friend Mr. [George M.] Pullman of the Pull[man Palace] Car Co.” at Alexandria Bay on the St. Lawrence River, but the general intended to visit another post and the Watervliet Arsenal.²¹⁷

When Bliss returned to Washington, he wrote Eleanor about another reason for their separation. There had been an outbreak of diphtheria in Washington. In early October, Bliss informed her: “Dr. Huger tells me that the trouble . . . is all passing away. He says there is not the least objection to your coming whenever you wish.”²¹⁸ Less than a week later, Bliss asked Eleanora to wait in Philadelphia a little longer; “I shall not allow Eleanor to come until [Dr. Huger] tells me *positively* that

²¹⁵ Weigley, *History*, 284; the work of the Endicott Board is discussed on 40–43 below.

²¹⁶ National Park Service, “Cabrillo, NM: The Guns of San Diego – Historic Resource Study,” from http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/online_books/cabr/hrs4.htm, 1, accessed June 20, 2006. For Schofield’s interest in the seacoast defenses, see Connolly, *Schofield*, 290-296.

²¹⁷ THB to EAB, Aug. 17, 1890, THB Mss, MHI.

²¹⁸ THB to EAB, Oct. 4, 1890, THB Mss, MHI.

there is no danger.” Bliss added that he dreaded diphtheria more than any other children’s disease.²¹⁹ The doctor’s belief was that “such illness here comes mainly from the W.C.’s [toilets] in houses, because he thinks that Washington plumbing is very bad. . . . He says that everybody ought to use disinfectants in the bathrooms.”

It is not clear when the Bliss family made the move, but they had probably just moved from 1706 R. St. N.W. to 1911 N. St. N.W., and the state of the new house worried Bliss, especially given his concerns for his family’s health. The checks for the rent went to Thomas J. Fisher and Co., but Fisher was managing the property for a Captain Davis, who insisted on approving all repairs. In 1892, Bliss and Fisher corresponded about a leaky roof, chimneys that needed cleaning, and a water closet that should be replaced. Fisher replied that the chimney cleaning was up to the tenant, the estimates for the roof repairs were on the way to Davis, but Davis would replace the water closet only if it was absolutely necessary “for sanitary reasons.” Fisher wrote that he had urged Davis “to have the work done at once,” but of course the final decision lay with his client.²²⁰

In 1891 Bliss accompanied Schofield on another inspection trip, this time across the country to southern California. They reached Chicago in early June, and Bliss wrote to his wife that he was bored and feeling sick, which left him “angry as a bear.” The next day he wrote again, with an air of secrecy.

The news in the Chicago papers of this morning will
doubtless reach you tomorrow. Whether it is true or not
I do not yet know, but I have suspected it for a year. . . .

²¹⁹ THB to EAB, Oct. 10, 1890, THB Mss, MHI.

²²⁰ Fisher to THB, Oct. 29, 1892, THB Mss, MHI.

If true it explains the delay in our movements. A certain high personage has intimated that he wants me to “see him through.” So I think the report is true. You will think this a most mysteriously worded letter, but the fact is the reporters in this city would steal a letter (if they could) which they saw me post this afternoon.²²¹

It turned out that Schofield had managed a secret romance, and on June 18 he married Miss Georgiana Kilbourne in her hometown of Keokuk, Iowa. She had been his daughter’s college roommate. As *The Army and Navy Journal* commented,

The relations that lead to marriage are of a nature so personal and confidential that few care to have them made the subject of general gossip. It was this, no doubt, that led General Schofield to withhold from many who expected his confidence . . . the knowledge of his approaching marriage. When, therefore, the telegraphic announcement of the coming event appeared in the daily papers, we received a despatch from an officer in intimate relations with the Headquarters of the Army questioning the truth of the report. . . . All the Army will heartily congratulate General Schofield now that the report . . . is confirmed, and as all the world loves a lover the daily papers are bringing to his wedding the hearty good wishes of the whole country.²²²

If Schofield was as nervous about the wedding as Bliss’s letter indicated, then no doubt he found the national publicity a trial, but an unavoidable one.

Bliss wrote again the next day, assuring Eleanora once more that he had known nothing of the impending nuptials until he had seen the comment in the press. He tried to restrain himself, remarking that he had “no comment to make except that I hope the General will find all happiness in the future.” But he continued,

²²¹ THB to EAB, June 4, 1891, and THB to EAB, June 5, 1891, both THB Mss, MHI.

²²² *The Army and Navy Journal*, June 13, 1891, clipping in the THB Mss, MHI.

“Personally, it makes me a wee little bit sick at heart, but ‘many men many minds.’”

The most disturbing aspect of the situation was that the new bride would accompany the general on his inspection trip to the West coast. Bliss expected that “the General will be at the call of his young wife and will do just as she pleases.”²²³ Evidently Mrs. Bliss found the marriage disturbing, because Bliss wrote, asking her to “write a note to the General congratulating him; also one to Miss K. . . . Make it as hearty as you can. I swallowed my feelings and did just as if I was immensely pleased at the whole affair.”²²⁴

While waiting for the general’s wedding, Bliss bought a wedding present of pearl- handled fruit knives. He set out on his own inspection trips, to Fort Leavenworth and Kansas City. He skipped a planned trip to St. Louis because of the heat; he told Eleanor that “it is always phenomenally hot at Leavenworth, and this was a phenomenally hot day even for Leavenworth.” Fortunately he found two Academy classmates there, Robert K. Evans and Arthur L. Wagner, and the day ended pleasantly. He confessed to his wife that traveling expenses were a problem. In fact, he had made the trip to Leavenworth in part to accumulate official mileage to help pay his hotel bills, which had gone up because of the delays.²²⁵ As Bliss crisscrossed the country, he assured her, she was “always at the center” of his thoughts.²²⁶

²²³ THB to EAB, June 6, 1891, THB Mss, MHI.

²²⁴ THB to EAB, June 19, 1892, THB Mss, MHI.

²²⁵ THB to EAB, June 13, 1891, THB Mss, MHI.

²²⁶ THB to EAB, June 10, 1891, THB, MHI.

It was an unusual military inspection trip, with the new Mrs. Schofield along. On June 20, in Wyoming, General Schofield suffered an attack of vertigo because of the altitude, but the group pressed on to Salt Lake City and then California. As soon as they reached San Francisco, Bliss wrote again, remembering the cross-country trip that he and Eleanora made after their own wedding.

We spent all day yesterday traveling through the Nevada desert of which you have still a vivid recollection. But of course we were more comfortable this time, as we had a car all to ourselves, with our own cook and porter. But the heat and dust were something tremendous. The trip that you and I made in '82 was bad enough but this was worse. It was impossible to see the length of a car for the clouds of alkali dust. . . . [Charlie] Schofield and I have a room together and I am writing while waiting for my turn at the bath. I am as dusty as a tram.²²⁷

From the Mohave Desert of southern California Bliss reported to Eleanora that he was “having lots of fun” and looking forward to a visit to Yosemite. He remembered his daughter’s birthday (July 15) and would be looking for a present for her.²²⁸

When the group reached San Diego, the weekly *Union* hailed the arrival of the “commander-in-chief” with his bride, adding that San Diego “was honored” to be included in his itinerary.²²⁹ According to newspaper accounts, the trip was official business to examine possible sites for fortifications around San Diego. One paper quoted Schofield saying: “That San Diego will have fortifications is a settled fact, but just how soon and how extensive they will be I cannot say at this time.”²³⁰

²²⁷ THB to EAB, June 22, 1892, THB Mss, MHI.

²²⁸ Both letters THB to EAB, THB Mss, MHI.

²²⁹ Clipping from the San Diego Weekly *Union*, June 25, 1891, no page number, in the THB Mss, MHI.

²³⁰ Another clipping, not identifying the paper or the date, also in the THB Mss, MHI.

By 1891 the United States had become a world economic and power, but not all of the people of the country, and not all of the nation's political and military leaders, had fully grasped that fact. From Bliss's personal correspondence, it is not clear whether he understood this new reality. If any experience would have driven home the growing power of the nation, it should have been this sort of cross-country trip, with its visits to military facilities and to the Pacific Coast. Schofield had been the commander of the Department of California, and in 1873 he had visited Hawaii; his report of that trip urged that the United States acquire a military and naval base at Pearl Harbor. In addition, Bliss had lectured at the Naval War College as a colleague of Alfred Thayer Mahan, whose theories of sea power stressed the necessity of a great nation acquiring overseas colonies, naval bases, and coaling stations.²³¹ As an active young professional officer, Bliss must have been aware of the development of the new navy of steam-powered steel ships. Bliss and Schofield would have spoken of these issues during a long journey to the Pacific Coast.

Furthermore, these inspections were part of the continuing work of the Board of Fortifications or Other Defenses appointed by President Grover Cleveland on March 3, 1885. Chaired by Secretary of War William C. Endicott and thus known as the Endicott Board, the group's report had recommended fortifications around twenty seven, later twenty eight, harbors, including San Diego. The concerns about harbor protection and fortification also reflected an awareness of the new place of the United

²³¹ Mahan's lectures from the Naval War College formed the basis of the first of his books on the theory of sea power, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1890).

States in the world, and of the sometimes brutal competition and conflict that characterized the behavior of the great powers.²³²

Bliss reported to his wife with a different emphasis. What most impressed him was the ocean, especially as seen from the window of his room in the Hotel del Coronado, which stood on rocks on the ocean side of an island that guarded the entrance to San Diego Bay. Tasker wrote to Eleanora that

I doubt if one can see elsewhere a more splendid illustration of the power of a great ocean. For hours before going to bed I sat by my window, from which a pebble vertically dropped would fall into the surf. . . . The water seemed absolutely motionless, but all the time, of course, it was heaving with the tremendous swell . . . [a]nd at regular intervals, up out of the darkness and gruesome solitude, came the most awful roar that the mind can conceive of. . . . With every crash the rock and the hotel shook.

In the morning, the group inspected the proposed sites for the new fortifications as well as for a new post. The visit closed with an afternoon reception, after which the general's private railway car was attached to a train leaving for Los Angeles. Along the way, Bliss reported, he found especially interesting the ruin of the mission at San Juan Capistrano.²³³

The justification for this extensive trip was Schofield's work on coastal fortifications. On their return to San Francisco, the Commanding General found outspoken support in the press for improved defenses. While the *Chronicle* took a neutral tone on the issue, the *Examiner* headlined Schofield's inspection as "Military Archaeology," with the sub-headline "General Schofield inspects the antiquities of

²³² The work of the Endicott Board is discussed in more detail below, 40-43.

²³³ THB to EAB, June 26, 1891, THB Mss, MHI.

the Harbor.”²³⁴ The presence of the young Mrs. Schofield led to a newspaper story that must have charmed the readers. During the inspection of the torpedo [mine] defenses, Schofield “was shown the method of tracking a vessel. So interested became the General that he expressed a desire to see the method demonstrated practically,” which led to the loading of an eight-inch smoothbore gun with powder and solid shot. At that point, “Mrs. General Schofield . . . unhesitatingly pulled the lanyard [sending] forth the missile of destruction, as though she was an experienced artilleryist.”²³⁵ Bliss clipped the story and sent it to Mrs. Bliss, with a marginal comment on Gilded Age journalism, “Not true.”

Other stops on the same trip included Victoria, British Columbia, Yellowstone National Park, and St. Paul, Minnesota, after which they traveled directly to the East coast, arriving in Philadelphia on July 31.²³⁶

Tasker’s reunion with Eleanora was brief; by August 10, he was back in Washington. General Schofield had left the capital city for the rest of the summer, but Bliss had to remain there. One of his duties there was to forward paperwork to Schofield.²³⁷ Of course in August in Washington, the heat was oppressive. One night, he wrote Eleanora, at 11 pm. the temperature in the bedroom of their Washington house was ninety degrees [F.]!²³⁸

²³⁴ Front pages of both San Francisco newspapers, July 7, 1891, clippings in the THB Mss, MHI.

²³⁵ THB to EAB, with a clipping from the S.F. *Chronicle* for July 7th, THB Mss, MHI.

²³⁶ Telegrams of July 11, 25 and 30, 1891, THB to Anderson family, all in “Letters Sent, 1886-1895,” THB Mss, MHI.

²³⁷ See for instance letter and telegram from Schofield to THB, both Aug. 17, 1891, THB Mss, MHI.

²³⁸ THB to EAB, August 10 and 11, 1891, both in THB Mss, MHI.

Inspection trips did not constitute all of the work of the aide-de-camp; there were many duties of the most mundane sort Bliss had to undertake. He accompanied Schofield to the memorial service for Lieutenant General Philip Henry Sheridan. Schofield, and therefore Bliss, played a role in two presidential inaugurations, in 1889 and 1893. Also in 1893, Bliss accompanied a group from the War Department to the funeral of former president Rutherford B. Hayes. While Schofield was in Chicago and Eleanora was with her parents in Rosemont, Bliss spent an evening with Louis-Philippe-Albert d'Orleans, Comte de Paris, who was visiting the United States. He wrote to his wife that he had carried a message from Schofield and expected to deliver it and leave. Instead the Comte de Paris "took me into a corner, called up the young [Philippe,] Duc d'Orleans, insisted on my smoking a cigar and both talked as though I was their best friend." Bliss concluded that the French noblemen were "exceedingly amiable."²³⁹ This encounter was a good beginning in Bliss's education concerning personal diplomacy.

Because of his official position, Bliss endured a constant barrage of letters requesting favors. His U.S.M.A. classmate Arthur L. Wagner wrote, asking for information about the forthcoming publication of Wagner's book *The Service of Security and Information*.²⁴⁰ Robert Smith of the Pennsylvania Railroad wrote, thanking Bliss for sending him "Corean" maps that allowed him to follow the war

²³⁹ The program for the memorial service, held on Sept. 19, 1892 by the Phil Sheridan Post, No. 14, of the Grand Army of the Republic, is in the THB Mss, MHI. The inaugural involvements are mentioned in a circular from Schofield, Feb. 24, 1893, copy in the THB Mss, MHI. For the Hayes funeral, S.O. No. 13, Hqs. of the Army, A.G.O., January 18, 1893. THB to EAB, Oct. 16, 1890, THB Mss, MHI.

²⁴⁰ Wagner to THB, Dec. 21, 1892, THB Mss, MHI.

between China and Japan.²⁴¹ Another classmate, George L. Scott, wrote asking for a set of “Rebellion Records” and promising “to remember you in my prayers for a whole month.” He thought Bliss owed him this favor because of the “many demerits I saved you by my hard work and scrupulous neatness . . . , rendering it possible for you to come out near the top, thereby securing you the many soft snaps you have enjoyed & still enjoy.”²⁴² James O’Hara wrote from Key West Barracks, Florida, that he needed one or two lieutenants assigned to the post as soon as possible, as he had only one at the time who had to carry too much of a workload.²⁴³ Captain Robert Wainwright wrote to urge that the First Cavalry be sent east after years on the frontier, but the regiment remained in the West.²⁴⁴ Lieutenant Colonel Royal Frank from the Artillery School at Fort Monroe supported a request from one of his officers to take the course on electricity at the Johns Hopkins University.²⁴⁵ Major Wallace Randolph wrote from the Light Artillery School trying to arrange to have a particular captain assigned to the school when one of his current instructors left; it was “essential to the well being of the school.”²⁴⁶ The letters went on and on. They are nevertheless valuable because they illustrated how a significant portion of the Army’s work was done, as was true of most of the federal government during the Gilded Age. Even as officers criticized politicians for favoritism, they assumed the War

²⁴¹ Smith to THB, Oct. 4, 1894, THB Mss, MHI.

²⁴² Scott to Bliss, Feb. 29, 1892, THB Mss, MHI.

²⁴³ O’Hara to THB, Feb. 1, 1893, THB Mss, MHI.

²⁴⁴ Wainwright to THB, April 29, 1894, THB Mss, MHI.

²⁴⁵ Frank to THB, July 22, 1892, THB Mss, MHI.

²⁴⁶ Randolph to THB, March 12, 1894, THB Mss, MHI.

Department ran on the same principles and tried to take advantage of them if they could.

One of the most important efforts Schofield pursued during his tenure as Commanding General of the Army was to increase the professionalism of the officer corps. In doing so, he was following in the footsteps of an earlier Commanding General, William T. Sherman. Sherman had supported professional growth in a variety of ways.²⁴⁷ He was an important role model of the soldier refraining from partisan political involvement, especially at a time when both major parties sought Civil War heroes as presidential candidates. A more direct method was Sherman's support for officers' post-graduate education. He sustained the revived Artillery School at Fort Monroe and helped transform the Essayons Club at Willet's Point, New York, into the Engineering School of Application. In 1881, Sherman founded the School of Application for Infantry and Cavalry at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, which would evolve into the General Service and Staff College and then into the Command and General Staff College, still at Fort Leavenworth. Sherman also sponsored the travels and studies of a group of three officers that led to the publication of Emory Upton's *The Armies of Asia and Europe*,²⁴⁸ an important step in the U.S. Army's intellectual development.

²⁴⁷ For a discussion of Sherman's importance in encouraging professionalism, see Weigley, *History*, 273-274, and John F. Marszalek, *Sherman: A Soldier's Passion for Order* (New York: The Free Press, a Division of Macmillan, Inc., 1993), 214-44. For an extended discussion of the entire topic of professionalism in the officer corps, see Edward M. Coffman, *The Old Army: A Portrait of the American Army in Peacetime, 1784-1898* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, paperback ed., 1986), 269-286.

²⁴⁸ (New York: Appleton, 1878).

Both Sherman and Schofield encouraged the younger officers who created the new professional journals. After Major General Winfield Scott Hancock founded the Military Service Institution of the United States in 1878, it was soon publishing a bimonthly journal, joined in 1888 by the *Cavalry Journal* and in 1892 by the *Journal of the United States Artillery*.²⁴⁹ In creating such organizations and publications, these military men were part of a national trend. Professionals were organizing associations and those associations were becoming more and more specialized.²⁵⁰ Tasker Bliss was one of these younger officers, and he became deeply involved in professional activities. He was a founding member of the Military Service Institution, and he helped create the new Army-Navy Club in Washington, D. C. As a member of the latter, he would have continued his education about the “new” navy of steam-powered steel ships. Encouraged by Schofield, he frequently contributed to its journal. Along with the article discussed in the previous chapter, Bliss wrote a number of book reviews.²⁵¹ His activities demonstrated what Schofield, the army’s professional leader, considered important in officers’ careers.

In pushing for a more professional officer corps, Schofield supported a congressional measure to change the army’s system for officer promotions. In his Annual Report for 1888, Schofield had asked for such a law, a request he renewed in

²⁴⁹ Weigley, *History*, 274.

²⁵⁰ See Burton J. Bledstein, *The Culture of Professionalism: The Middle Class and the Development of Higher Education in America* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1976), especially 80-86.

²⁵¹ These reviews will be discussed in greater detail, along with other writings from these middle years of Bliss’s military career, in a later chapter.

his 1889 Annual Report.²⁵² The most important part of the act ended the practice of regimental promotion and instead listed all officers within their branch of service, following another of Schofield's recommendations.²⁵³ As Edward M. Coffman puts it, "A system of promotion based on seniority made it impossible to control standards of competence, much less reward merit."²⁵⁴ In the same legislation, Congress ordered the army to create physical and professional examinations for line army officers being considered for promotion.

Seniority remained the basis for promotion, but the law sought to create a minimum standard. It would be up to the Commanding General's staff to draft the appropriate orders and to structure the examinations. On October 4, 1890, Bliss informed his wife: "The Secretary [of War] told [Schofield] this morning that he was going to give me the whole subject of examination of officers I can make enemies enough in five minutes to literally d—n me if I do not do the work properly. For the first time in my life I want to back out of a job."²⁵⁵ He was certainly correct about making enemies, since failing the examinations could effectively end an officer's career.

After the legislation passed, Bliss presented a memorandum to Schofield with his plan to implement the new law. The first principles for designing any system of

²⁵² United States War Department, *Annual Reports of the War Department for the Fiscal Year 1889* (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1889) vol. I, 63; all of the Annual Reports of the War Department will hereafter be cited as *WDAR*, with the year. See also Donnelly, *Schofield*, 306-10.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 66.

²⁵⁴ Coffman, *The Old Army*, 281.

²⁵⁵ THB to EAB, THB Mss, MHI.

examinations, Bliss wrote, were

- 1) To keep at a minimum the expense . . .
- 2) To avoid the possibility, or even appearance of doing an injustice to any individual; and
- 3) To have a system which will command the respect of all officers . . . thus providing that stimulus to continued individual exertion which is assumed to be the main purpose of the law.²⁵⁶

Bliss further recognized that the law had to be applied to officers coming from different backgrounds. The army at that time contained officers appointed from civilian life, officers who came from the Civil War Volunteers, militia officers who had joined the regular army, former enlisted men, and the graduates of the Military Academy. Bliss proposed a system based on the army's own schools system; the "courses of instruction at the Artillery School and at the Infantry and Cavalry School represent . . . the combined judgment of [the army]" on the necessary qualifications of line lieutenants. That being the case, the logical place to hold the examinations would be at those schools. "All apparatus, books and general facilities . . . are there; the Examining Boards . . . are there; and at sometime or other all [Second and First] Lieutenants of the line will in future be there. And what fairer examination can there be than one held after the officer has had every facility for two years to prepare for it?"²⁵⁷ Schofield sent the memorandum to the Secretary of War, commenting that "the project seems to me to fairly cover the whole ground and to be what is desirable and necessary."²⁵⁸

²⁵⁶ "Memorandum on the law establishing examinations for promotion in the army," in THB Letterbook, Aug. 1, 1890-March 14, 1892, THB Mss, MHI.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ Schofield to Secretary of War, October 9, 1890, in THB Letterbook.

Other draft memoranda for the same purpose appeared from other sources, and there were objections to parts of Bliss's proposals. Two weeks later, Bliss wrote at the Secretary of War's direction, answering the criticisms. One draft suggested that all second lieutenants be examined in field engineering. Bliss asked: "Where have they learned this? Either at West Point, or at the service Schools. But what is to be done with those who neither graduated at West Point nor have studied in the service Schools?"²⁵⁹ Bliss noted that the draft used the phrase, "Among other topics," but he thought it unfair to mention specifically one topic and no others.

Furthermore, there were many other topics equally important for a lieutenant to know, and some were more important for the lieutenants in certain branches of the service. He suggested that examinees should be familiar with any of the books authorized in the military schools. "To prescribe any one in particular will . . . make the examination merely a book examination. Officers should be examined on general principles and encouraged to study many books . . . Moreover, two out of the three books named . . . are studied only at the Infantry and Cavalry School. Other text books on the same subjects are used at West Point and at the Artillery School." He closed with a nationalistic caveat. He believed that "an order which will be studied in the Intelligence Bureau of every Army should not mention foreign authors as our standard authorities, however true it may be in practice."

²⁵⁹ Bliss, letter to the Secretary of War, Oct. 25, 1890, in THB Letterbook, THB Mss, USAMHI.

This exchange of memoranda led to the publication of a general order that Bliss drafted.²⁶⁰ A board of five members, two from the Medical Department, would examine lieutenants in these categories: “physical condition, personal and professional character, and professional efficiency.” The order defined the latter as “related to fitness for practical service,” which would “embrace such subjects as pertain to the actual practical working of the arm of service or department to which the officer belongs: viz: Drill Regulations, Army Regulations, Discipline, Records, Correspondence and Administration, and the methods of procedure by Courts-martial, and due consideration will be given to the officer’s record for professional efficiency.” For captains, there would be additional topics:

1. The Art of War, with special reference to the operations of their own arm.
2. International Law, especially as regards the laws of war.
3. Constitutional Law, especially with reference to the relations between the civil and military authorities.
4. Military Law.

As Bliss had suggested, the examinations of lieutenants would be held at the postgraduate schools when the officers finished their course of study there, and the standard texts to be read would be prescribed by the military schools. Finally, the order allowed officers to submit for consideration “any individual investigations, papers, reports, or books” on professional subjects, giving an advantage to those officers who were active in the new professional organizations.

According to Coffman, these examinations were “not taken lightly.” He relates the story of First Lieutenant George Duncan, who had already spent six and a

²⁶⁰ G.O. No. , HQs of the Army, October 1890; the draft general order is in the THB Letterbook, THB Mss, MHI.

half years in grade. “His written examination covered army and firing regulations, law, guard duty, and drill. After he turned in his hundred pages of answers to those detailed questions, he had to drill a company in the presence of the examining board. [Completing] these requirements and the physical examination took a month.” In the first eight months of these examinations, only seventeen of 276 officers failed, and only two of the failures were on the written material, as opposed to the physical examinations or the drill performance.²⁶¹

When Redfield Proctor was Secretary of War from March 5, 1889 to November 5, 1891, not only did he required these examinations, but also he directed that all officers below the rank of colonel periodically file reports on their professional skills and activities. The information he required was the officer’s “professional reading, the titles of articles or books he had published and of lectures he had given, his ability in foreign languages, and any other attainments in science or business.” The efficiency report asked for assessments of an officer’s “ ‘professional zeal and ability,’ general conduct, condition of troops under his charge, his ‘care and attention to their welfare,’ and his ‘capacity for command.’ ”²⁶² Proctor sought a personnel evaluation file for each officer, so that assignments could be made on a basis other than the personal views of those at the War Department who might have some knowledge of the individual.

²⁶¹ Quoted in Coffman, *The Old Army*, 281.

²⁶² *Ibid.*

Bliss carried a heavy burden in all of this paperwork; one of his duties was to read and write memoranda on all sorts of subjects for the Commanding General and the Secretary of War. In a postscript to a short, hurried letter to Mrs. Bliss, he commented that he had been “making memoranda . . . all day which accounts for this scrawl.”²⁶³ Someone had to read such papers, and they led to decisions that someone had to make, but for the Major General Commanding to spend his time reading them would be a waste. Therefore the work fell on his aides.

One of the most important tasks Schofield assigned to Bliss was naming him “inspector of artillery and small-arms practice at Headquarters of the Army.”²⁶⁴ Many of Bliss’s inspection trips involved these duties, and the position generated paperwork immense in its range and quantity.²⁶⁵ Once again, he dealt with lots of minutiae. Some examples of issues — seemingly ridiculously minor — Bliss handled included investigating whether the Presidio had one or two “base line station houses” (part of the targeting data system for coast artillery) already built, a task requiring three letters.²⁶⁶ Major Edward B. Williston, Third Artillery, commanding the Light Artillery Brigade at Fort Riley, Kansas, wrote to request a silk flag similar in size, shape and color to the ones used during the Civil War.²⁶⁷ Colonel James W. Forsythe of the Seventh

²⁶³ THB to EAB, Aug. 5, 1890, THB Mss, MHI.

²⁶⁴ General Orders No. 8, Headquarters of the Army, A. G. O., Feb. 8, 1895, mentions that Bliss “continues” in that position.

²⁶⁵ See his comments in THB to EAB, Sept. 7, 8, and again 8, 1890, in THB Mss, MHI.

²⁶⁶ August 1889 letters in THB Mss, MHI.

²⁶⁷ Williston to THB, April 5, 1890, THB Mss, MHI.

Cavalry wrote to inquire about the instructions for “revolver firing” in Circular Number 5, Adjutant General’s Office, of 1889; he wanted to be sure he was properly instructing his men.²⁶⁸ First Lieutenant J. E. Myers served in the Office of the Inspector of Rifle Practice in the Department of Texas. He wrote asking Bliss to have Congress appropriate \$400 to buy land for a rifle range. The farmer who owned the land was letting the army use it rent-free but preferred to sell it.²⁶⁹ Williston wrote again in 1891, reporting conditions at the Light Artillery School at Fort Riley. There was no 3-inch ammunition available and some of the 3-inch guns had carriages that were unsafe to use; it was incredible that these conditions prevailed at a school!²⁷⁰

The conditions prevailing on many posts would be appalling by today’s standards, although for a population not accustomed to luxuries the situation was less dire. Nevertheless, hard service encouraged desertions and decisions not to re-enlist. Those were the conclusions of Lieutenant Colonel Royal T. Frank of Bliss’s regiment, the First Artillery, who commanded the Artillery School at Fort Monroe. Frank wrote to Bliss that the barracks were too small for the full complement of a battery, and there were not enough batteries to accommodate the needs of the post and the Artillery School. The result was that the “men are too hard worked, not having a single day off duty nor a pass that excuses them from any duty except for special reasons. . . . A good soldier wants at least one day in a week to go as he pleases.” Lacking that free time, there were “very few re-enlistments of old soldiers.”

²⁶⁸ Forsythe to THB, April 19, 1894, THB Mss, MHI.

²⁶⁹ Myers to THB, Jan. 26 and Feb. 12, 1892, THB Mss, MHI.

²⁷⁰ Williston to THB, May 11, 1891, THB Mss, MHI.

With not enough men, quarters that were too small, and the demands of the post and the school, Frank believed the conditions seriously hindered the instruction.²⁷¹ He was further concerned that the drill the school batteries had to undertake involved twenty rounds from the 15-inch guns. That was extravagant, Frank believed, since those guns used so much powder, which was in short supply; equally worthwhile practice could be had with smaller guns which did not lack ammunition.²⁷²

Another problem at Fort Monroe was equally significant. Two years earlier, Joseph Story had written to Bliss, telling him that the “drainage system is so bad here that I do not think that more than one or two families [of the permanent garrison] have escaped an attack of some ‘filth’ disease.” About the same time Colonel Frank had written about the need to expand the barracks. Apparently someone at army headquarters had the idea of converting one building into a general mess for ten batteries stationed at Fort Monroe. Frank replied that such a project would not work because Carroll Hall had solid brick walls that divided it into several smaller rooms.²⁷³ Frank’s proposal was to convert the building into barracks for two batteries; improvements would still be needed but at least there would be fewer of them, giving more benefit for the expenditure.²⁷⁴

Under these conditions, it is not surprising that Captain William Van Ness of the First Artillery wrote from Governor’s Island in New York harbor that “the best

²⁷¹ Frank to THB, Jan. 23, 1899, and see also Frank to THB, Jan. 13, 1889, both in THB Mss, MHI.

²⁷² Frank to THB, June 7 and July 11, 1893, both in THB Mss, MHI.

²⁷³ Frank to THB, May 15, 1892, THB Mss, MHI.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, June 17, 1892.

men we have in the artillery are leaving it.” He attributed the exodus to two problems. First, artillerymen believed they did much more mental work than other soldiers, so if they re-enlisted they chose the cavalry or infantry. Van Ness had just lost one of his best men who planned to shift to the infantry, “saying that he could gain a sergeant’s grade there with less work than is required of him as a private of artillery.” The second problem was the low pay for non-commissioned officers and skilled gunners, which also encouraged them to leave the service.²⁷⁵ But not everyone agreed with this analysis. Another officer, serving at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, authored an unsigned report arguing the major reason for problems with artillery equipment was the low quality of the enlisted men. He suggested that the gun carriages had to be made stronger than necessary “in order to stand the chances which careless or unintelligent treatment subjects them to.” The problems in his command were not unique; “such as our men are they are common to the whole service.”²⁷⁶

Such contradictory information made it hard to identify the problem, let alone solve it, but the army’s need to recruit and retain soldiers remained a constant problem. Except in the four regiments of black troops, desertion was the plague of the late-nineteenth century American military. Schofield attempted to address the issue both by improving the quality of life for the enlisted men and by reforming

²⁷⁵ Van Ness to THB, March 22, 1894, and see also Thomas C. Patterson to THB, March 17, 1892, both in THB Mss, MHI.

²⁷⁶ Unsigned “Report on some problems with 3.2” gun carriages,” Dec. 4, 1890, copy in THB Mss, MHI.

disciplinary procedures as well.²⁷⁷ In both areas, Schofield's efforts served as a model for Bliss in later years when he reached high positions in the service.

There were other problems at the Artillery School as well. Schofield faced the issue of housing on post at Fort Monroe, because the post did not have enough quarters to assign to both the officers who were part of the garrison and the officers assigned to the school. He ruled that the officers attending the school were there "on their own application, and by way of special favor." By contrast, the officers in the regular detail were "there because they cannot prevent it, whether they like it or not." As a result, the second group was "entitled to, and must receive, first consideration. . . . [T]hey are entitled to quarters over all officers who may be at the School by special favor." In his endorsement to this report, which Bliss probably wrote, the Major General Commanding went on to assign specific officers to specific quarters.²⁷⁸ For the senior officer of the army to spend his time this way demonstrated one of the major administrative problems of the army and the War Department. Trivial matters too easily made their way up the chain of command.

All of these matters crossed Bliss's desk, but so did more important work. The Endicott Board, named for Secretary of War William C. Endicott, was convened to study the need of the United States for improved seacoast defenses.²⁷⁹ In the late nineteenth century, many people in American seaports feared a sudden naval

²⁷⁷ Donnelly, *Schofield*, 314-16.

²⁷⁸ Endorsement on L.R. 3055, Headquarters of the Army, Sept. 13, 1894, THB Mss, MHI.

²⁷⁹ Weigley, *History*, 284, and Allan R. Millett and Peter Maslowski, *For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States of America* (New York: The Free Press, A Division of Macmillan, Inc. and London: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1984), 253-54.

attack.²⁸⁰ The Endicott Board produced extravagant recommendations to protect most of the nation's major harbors with modern earthworks and long-range guns.²⁸¹ Congress did not provide funding to implement this program until 1888, and thereafter the work proceeded slowly.²⁸² The program's greatest importance, as the Endicott Board expected, was the stimulus it gave to the manufacturing capacity to produce modern, long-range steel guns. Schofield became the commander of the Division of the Atlantic in April 1887; it contained four of the army's five regiments of artillery and several of the most vulnerable ports listed in the Endicott Board report.²⁸³ That experience disposed him to follow up the work of the Endicott Board when he became Commanding General.

In Schofield's Annual Report for 1889, he opined:

The problem [of the evolution of a system of target practice for

²⁸⁰ See for instance, H. A. Smalley, "A Defenseless Seaboard," *The North American Review* 137: 3 (March 1884), 233-245; Francis V. Greene, "Our Defenseless Coast," *Scribner's Magazine* 1: 1 (January 1887), 51-66; and Henry Wells, "The Defense of Our Sea-Ports," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 71: 11 (November 1885), 927-937.

²⁸¹ One of the few consistent national defense policies of the United States was the construction of coastal fortifications. Considering its importance in national policy, there is a surprisingly small literature on the subject, with most of the works being either technical or popular. Some of the most useful are Robert S. Browning III, *Two If By Sea: The Development of American Coastal Defense Policy*, Contributions in Military History, No. 33 (Westport, Ct. and London: Greenwood Press, 1983), and David A. Clary, *Fortress America: The Corps of Engineers, Hampton Roads, and United States Coastal Defense* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1990), and Emmanuel Raymond Lewis, *Seacoast Fortifications of the United States: An Introductory History* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1970). For the specifics of the Endicott Board, see Browning, *Two If By Sea*, 149-182; Edward Ranson, "The Endicott Board of 1885-1886, and the Coast Defenses," *Military Affairs* 31 (Summer 1967), 74-84; and also by Ranson, "The Endicott Board—Vision and Reality," *The Journal of the Council on America's Military Past* 11 (Summer 1979), 3-17. Ron Barr, *The Progressive Army: U.S. Army Command and Administration, 1870-1914* (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1998), 18, says that Bliss "worked for" the Endicott Board, but that does not appear to be correct.

²⁸² Weigley, *History*, 284, gives 1888 as the date for "an initial appropriation to begin carrying out the proposals," while Millett and Maslowski, *Common Defense*, 254, gives 1890 as the year "funding for construction began."

²⁸³ Edward Ranson, "The Endicott Board," *Military Affairs* 31 (Summer 1967), 77; see also Schofield, *Forty-Six Years*, 457-460.

field and garrison artillery] is at present a more difficult one in the case of garrison artillery, owing to the antiquated character and great variety of our sea-coast armament. Nevertheless, much instruction is to be derived from an intelligent use of the materials now on hand. An important step has been taken in making the method identical, as far as local conditions will permit, for all of our sea-coast garrisons. This will permit a system of comparison between regiments, garrisons, and batteries essential to an enthusiastic prosecution of such work.²⁸⁴

Schofield's report raised two issues; one was the obsolete equipment of the coast artillery, the other was his desire to establish competition among the artillery units. Both desires of the Commanding General led to additional tasks for Tasker Bliss. The more constant of Schofield's concerns was upgrading the equipment of the seacoast garrisons. Schofield commented in the same Annual Report that the congressional appropriation of 1888 for experimental equipment recommended by the Endicott Board allowed testing to determine which would be most suitable. By supplying experimental equipment to four posts, "a thorough test of the appliances" could be obtained, which would then show how best the rest of the appropriation could be spent.²⁸⁵

There was also the issue of manufacturing modern guns, something no company in the United States could do in 1885. Under pressure from the Navy, Congress created the joint Army-Navy Gun Foundry Board in 1883, which recommended that the government itself undertake to produce such guns "at the Naval Gun Factory and the Army's arsenals," a recommendation Congress

²⁸⁴ U. S. Department of War, *Annual Report of the Commanding General*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1889), 11, hereafter cited as *WDAR*.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

followed.²⁸⁶ In a memorandum Schofield wrote in 1887, he observed that the weight of guns and armor plate was a serious issue in ship design but was far less important in constructing coastal fortifications. As a result, “*The guns we first make may not be the best possible, [but] they will be good enough for the service required of them.*”²⁸⁷ This common sense approach was typical of Schofield.

The particular problems the coast artillery faced involved the adaptation to the new technology of long-range, indirect fire. The 10-inch Rodman smoothbore gun of the Civil War era fired a 123-pound shot and had a maximum range of 4,000 yards. By 1890, a 10-inch rifled gun could fire a 604-pound shot 12,000 yards.²⁸⁸ Bliss exchanged many letters with many officers discussing these problems and the new equipment they required. Erasmus Weaver wrote from Fort Adams, Rhode Island, about the need to acquire a range-dial and then to fire only ten rounds with an 8” muzzle-loader to “install” the system. That was all Weaver’s unit could afford, even though at Fort Monroe a similar system required thirty rounds for test-firing. Major Wallace Randolph of the Third Artillery at Governor’s Island, New York, sent plots of practice firings. First Lieutenant Garland Whistler of the Fifth Artillery, working for a gun-making company, sent Bliss technical papers for new equipment, and he expected to talk about them when he next visited Washington, D. C. Lieutenant Henry L. Harris wrote frequently from Fort Hamilton, New York, discussing methods

²⁸⁶ Weigley, *History*, 283-84.

²⁸⁷ JMS, “Notes on *Steel for Heavy Guns*,” Memorandum, Feb. 14, 1887, JMS Mss, Box 91, Lot C, #11, MsD, LC.

²⁸⁸ National Park Service, “The Guns of San Diego,” 1.

of plotting targets, of drill for gun crews, artillery duties, and the nature of the enlisted men in the artillery.²⁸⁹ Other letters came to Bliss about experiments with ballistic instruments, experiments in reconnaissance photography from captive balloons, and the need for instruments in the Division of the Pacific.²⁹⁰ The new guns and material also required regular revisions of General John C. Tidball's *Manual of Heavy Artillery Service*,²⁹¹ the standard drill manual for the coast artillery. Bliss compiled the material for the revisions which appeared in 1889 and 1892.²⁹²

Another aspect of Schofield's interest in artillery problems was the often-overlooked issue of training the men in artillery regiments to serve as gunners. Heavy artillery trained as both gunners and infantry, and during the post-Civil War years, those troops spent most of their time drilling as infantry. In 1873, then Commanding General William T. Sherman lamented that of the twelve companies in an artillery regiment, "only one is equipped and instructed as a battery of artillery, the other eleven companies . . . being armed with muskets and instructed as infantry."²⁹³ Other officers commented on the situation into the 1890s but without producing any major change.²⁹⁴ As Commanding General, Schofield attempted such a change. He

²⁸⁹ Weaver to THB, no date, Randolph to THB, May 8, 1890, and Whistler to THB, April 26, 1892, and Harris to THB, Jan 28, 1891 (2), March 28, 1891, and April 7 and 8, 1891, all in THB Mss, MHI.

²⁹⁰ Robert F. Gaylord to Major W. F. Randolph, Jan. 21, 1891, forwarded to THB by Randolph on Jan. 28; Major Alexander C. M. Pennington to THB, Feb. 8, 1890; and Major Jonathan I. Rodgers to THB, April 20, 1891, all in THB Mss, MHI.

²⁹¹ (Washington, D. C.: J. J. Chapman, 1880).

²⁹² See J. C. Kelton, Adjutant General's Office, "Memo Re: Tidball's Manual," Sept. 9, 1889, and endorsement by THB, Sept. 24, 1889; Major Jonathan I. Rodgers, Inspector of Artillery, Division of the Pacific, to THB, July 5, 1890; Lt. Col. Royal T. Frank to THB, Sept. 7 and Nov. 11, 1892, and Lt. Col. Samuel Breck, A.A.G., to THB, July 10, 1893, all in THB Mss, MHI.

²⁹³ *WDAR*, 1873, I, 25.

²⁹⁴ Randon, "Endicott Board," *Military Affairs*, 79.

proposed a reorganization of the artillery regiments, and of course his aide, Tasker Bliss, produced most of the paperwork in support of this reform. It led to proposed legislation to consolidate the artillery with the Marine Corps creating a corps of “marine artillery,” a bill which went nowhere.²⁹⁵

The other idea for improving the coast artillery that Schofield mentioned in his Annual Report for 1889 was to begin a system of competitive drills and target practice. Again developing Schofield’s ideas, Bliss produced an enormous amount of paperwork. The starting point was a new system of artillery drill that would turn the army’s artillerymen into trained gunners, ready to use the new technology that the Endicott Board proposals should put into their hands. The drill was set out in a lengthy general order.²⁹⁶ The “details of the method of instruction” were left to regimental commanders, subject to approval by department commanders, but the goal was “to secure uniformity in their respective commands.” As a concession to reality, the order recognized that the new system could only go into immediate effect at “such posts as may be provided with the necessary apparatus;” at other posts, “it will be taken up as soon as the apparatus is received.” As Congress provided appropriations, the “old forts of the Civil War era were abandoned . . . for earthworks, armor-plated concrete pits, and ten- and twelve-inch ‘disappearing’ rifled guns.”²⁹⁷

²⁹⁵ For details of the proposal, see JMS to the Sec. of War, Nov. 27, 1894, enclosing a memorandum by THB, “Notes on S. 2324,” Nov. 26, 1894, in the THB Mss, MHI.

²⁹⁶ G.O. No. 49, HQA, AGO, June 11, 1889; see also unsigned, undated memorandum on “Heavy Artillery Target Practice,” THB Mss, MHI.

²⁹⁷ Weigley, *History*, 284.

Hoping to stimulate enthusiasm for the new drill and the new technology, Schofield pushed the idea of competitions among the gunners. Bliss proposed a “Scheme for Competitive Gun Practice,” based on a proposal from Major Wallace F. Randolph.²⁹⁸ Batteries from all the regiments stationed along the Atlantic coast would meet annually at Fort Monroe for an artillery shooting match. The Commanding General would specify almost every detail: the time of the contest, the type of guns to be fired, the distances of the targets, and the number and kind of shots to be fired at each one. The selected gun crews were to have a week to practice before the competition. The proposals led to all sorts of practical issues that had to be resolved; Bliss compiled a handwritten list of nine. Among them, artillery instruction had to provide thorough training for the non-commissioned officers, and that training had to include their use of the tracking instruments and the plotting board. Bliss expected the non-commissioned officers to have to be convinced of the value of scientific plotting instruments for accurate firing, since his list included the note that the plotting had to be done “readily” in order “to illustrate to non-commissioned officers the practical utility.”²⁹⁹ Schofield and his staff knew that these were just the first steps in what would be a long process of creating well-drilled coast artillery units.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁸ The “Scheme” is with a variety of materials relating to artillery matters all in the same box in the THB Mss, MHI. One of the items, along with “Materials on Target Practice and Tracking Drill,” is a letter crediting Randolph for the “Scheme.”

²⁹⁹ “Notes on Artillery Instruction and Instruments for Tracking Drill/Scheme for Competitive Gun Practice,” THB Mss, MHI.

³⁰⁰ See the article written long after the events by another of Schofield’s aides, Joseph Sanger, “First Steps towards a System of Target Practice and Fire-Control for Sea-Coast Artillery,” *Artillery Journal*, XLIX (May-August 1918).

Another aspect of modernization involved the School of Application at Fort Riley, Kansas. When Major Randolph commanded the Light Artillery Battalion at the school, he and Bliss developed an extensive correspondence about the practical problems involved in the new emphasis on realistic drill. There was ill-feeling between the cavalry and artillery officers sent to Fort Riley because of the shortage of quarters. There were problems locating necessary materials at reasonable cost, and Randolph was determined that his batteries have enough ammunition so that, if they were called to field service, they would have a supply. He recalled “the time of the Pine Ridge affair [the events surrounding the massacre at Wounded Knee in 1890], when the guns were sent out without a round of ammunition.” Eventually ammunition arrived, but Randolph found it insufficient, and while instruments could be borrowed from other posts, he knew they had to be returned quickly.³⁰¹ In 1893, Colonel James Forsyth of the Seventh Cavalry, the school’s commandant, reported that the “disproportion of cavalry to artillery is very marked, and planning of exercises which approximate to real conditions is thereby rendered difficult.”³⁰²

The officers’ course at the school was a two-year program, while non-commissioned officers were there for four years. Randolph had the batteries drill first as batteries; only when they had completed this small unit instruction did he take

³⁰¹ Randolph to THB, June 28, June 30, Sept. 23, and Dec. 5, 1893, all in the THB Mss, MHI. The problems with shortage of quarters had been reported to THB earlier, see First Lt. Alexander D. Schenck to THB, Oct. 30, Nov. 17, Dec. 6, and Dec. 22, 1891, THB Mss, MHI.

³⁰² “Annual Report of the School of Application for Cavalry and Light Artillery School,” Fort Riley, Kansas, 1893, 16, copy in the THB Mss, MHI.

them into the field as an artillery battalion. In doing so, he carried out the ideas of the Commanding General, as Bliss expressed them in a memorandum on the curriculum:

The ideal course of instruction at this place is a series of practical exercises in the field followed by discussion and criticism. . . . The work is conducted according to the judgment of the officer who is for the time in charge. He is specially selected on account of his presumed fitness for the duty. He is supposed to know and ought to know before he goes there what he has to teach. Then he teaches his command, not by lectures and recitations, but by personally superintending work in the field.³⁰³

It was usual in the U.S. Army at that time to emphasize the practical, rather than theoretical instruction. Since there had been so little actual instruction of any kind, especially with larger units, this school represented a major step forward in the professional development of the field artillery.

In the midst of these intense reform activities and daily minutiae, Bliss had an opportunity to pursue a personal dream. When the Chair of Modern Languages opened at West Point, he began pulling strings trying to gain the position. Bliss realized the position would allow him more time with his wife and family. They could stay together during the summers, his frequent changes of station would come to an end, and there would be no more lengthy trips around the country with the commanding general. Bliss also still found the academic life more appealing than the military profession. Apparently Bliss did not fully appreciate the importance of the work he was doing for Schofield and what it meant for the future of the United States.

³⁰³ Bliss wrote his memorandum in reply to a "Memorandum relating to the Light Artillery School, Fort Riley," (3953 H.Q.A. 1889) and the two are filed together in the THB Mss, MHI. There is also a complete curriculum for the School, written in longhand by First Lieutenant Alexander D. Schenck, December 21, 1891

Despite his privileged position at army headquarters, , he did not comprehend that his country was becoming one of the great powers of the world.

Bliss first raised this possible career change in a letter written to his wife just after a trip to Chester to visit his ill father. Eleanora had stayed behind with her family in Rosemont. On his return, Bliss learned of the opening, which would occur in “about a year.” He told Nellie:

There are already a great many applicants. Professor Hardy (of Amherst or Dartmouth, I don't remember which . . .) is one of them. I have about made up my mind to try for the place myself. But it will depend entirely on influence,-- social, personal, political. Do you think that you, through your family, could help me? The influence of men such as [John] Wanamaker, G[eorge] W. Childs, and others like them would be invaluable. The idea was suggested to me on my return here on Friday and I don't see why I should not try. But there is no use in trying without the assurance of some backing. I wish I could talk the matter over with you, but I had not the slightest idea of it when I was at Rosemont. But I want your advice for I am nearly helpless without it. There is not a soul here to whom I can talk about such a thing – the General, [Schofield's other aide, Joseph] Sanger, everybody is away.³⁰⁴

Another letter followed quickly, after Schofield returned to Washington. Bliss told Eleanora that the General advised him “to go ahead.” Schofield thought his “chances, with reasonably good backing, are very good. . . . I must begin my campaign with very little delay. But nothing must be done until I have my plan all worked out.”³⁰⁵

Professor Arthur S. Hardy seemed to be the other strongest applicant. Hardy was an Academy graduate, and he had served over a year in the Third Artillery. After

³⁰⁴ THB to EAB, Sept. 6, 1891, THB Mss, MHI.

³⁰⁵ THB to EAB, Sept. 11, 1891, THB Mss, MHI.

leaving the army, he had become a distinguished professor at Grinnell College and Dartmouth College -- but a professor of mathematics and of civil engineering! He did speak French fluently, had studied in France, had written three novels (in English), and had been offered academic positions ranging from principal of Phillips Exeter Academy to the chancellorship of the State University of Iowa.³⁰⁶

Bliss wrote to his relative Charles W. Raymond, no longer on the faculty at West Point but had moved to the Corps of Engineers office in Philadelphia. Raymond replied that since he was *persona non grata* (is that right?) with this administration [at the Military Academy], [he] believed that the only way I could help you would be through my personal friends at West Point.” He conveyed the disheartening news that those friends “are all committed to Hardy; but . . . they would all prefer you to any one now in the Service.”³⁰⁷ That news led to another letter, this time from E. R. Bliss in Chicago, presumably a relative, which was a direct comparison of the two candidates, pointing out that Hardy resigned without completing his four year commitment, while Bliss had seventeen years service.³⁰⁸

Postmaster General John Wanamaker, the Philadelphia department store magnate, wrote on Bliss’ behalf, too,³⁰⁹ but the most important influence Bliss could bring to bear was the Pennsylvania Railroad, one of the largest and most influential

³⁰⁶ This information comes from an unsigned, untitled, undated note in the THB Mss, MHI, and most of it is confirmed at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arthur_Sherburne_Hardy, accessed August 26, 2012.

³⁰⁷ Raymond to THB, July 11, 1892, THB Mss, MHI.

³⁰⁸ E. R. Bliss to William J. Campbell, July 12, 1892, THB Mss, MHI.

³⁰⁹ Copy in the THB Mss, MHI. Other letters of support are from George W. Anderson, Bliss’s father-in-law; Lt. Col. Lewis Merrill, a member of the Union League of Philadelphia; John H. Harris, President of Bucknell University; and Marshall Ransdell, a personal friend of President Benjamin Harrison, according to letters in the THB Mss, MHI.

corporations in the United States. Like Wanamaker, Robert W. Smith, a vice president, was a family friend of the Andersons'. He reported in a "Personal and Confidential" letter that General Sewell [?] called on him one day to report that he had seen "President Harrison and, in mentioning your name, stated to him how desirable it would be to have the position filled by a regular army officer thoroughly qualified for the berth, in which the President agreed with him." In spite of this encouraging news, Smith advised Bliss never to feel "sure of your game until the hunt is up and the bird in your possession."³¹⁰ Five months later Smith wrote again, detailing the support the Pennsylvania's top executives gave Bliss. He had sent Bliss copies of letters written by "Vice President [John] Green, and W.[illiam] L. Elkins, one of our Directors," to the Secretary of War, both marked personal. The Secretary, Stephen B. Elkins [a distant relation],

knows both of the writers well, Mr. Wm. L. Elkins having dined with the Secretary the day before the letter was written. Yesterday I mailed a similar letter to the Secretary of War from Mr. Frank Thomson, our First Vice President, and tomorrow hope to forward him one from Mr. George B. Roberts, our President.

I had heard of Mr. Cassatt's appointment [Alexander J. Cassatt, the brother of the painter Mary, would be the next President of the Railroad] as one of the visitors at West Point, and had intended . . . having him write to the President, or the Secretary of War in your behalf. . . .

All our people have been, and are, intimately associated in business operations in West Virginia with Secretary Elkins, in connection with Senators [Arthur] Gorman and [Henry G.] Davis, and I consider their influence with the Secretary very great. If he is able to withstand all these letters requesting your appointment he can do more than I think he is capable of, and I feel pretty confident . . .

³¹⁰ Smith to THB, Dec. 15, 1891, THB Mss, MHI.

although we never can feel certain of anything until it is
 “au fait accompli.”³¹¹

As it turned out, Smith’s last advice was his best. The position went, not to Bliss or Hardy, but to Captain Edward E. Wood of the 8th Cavalry. Wood was a Civil War veteran who had then gone to West Point, graduating in 1870, and he had served briefly on Schofield’s staff.³¹² Bliss wrote Wood a warm letter of congratulations, though he must have been bitterly disappointed.³¹³ The episode demonstrates that Bliss continued to view an academic posting at West Point as the most desirable career move he could make. The army was his career, but he desired the combination of academic and military life best enjoyed at the Military Academy.

When that bid failed, Bliss quickly turned his attention to another possibility, earning promotion to captain by transferring from the artillery to the Subsistence Department. It was typical of the era that officers sought transfer to a staff department because promotion within the combat arms was so slow. Bliss had to consider his family situation, because Eleanora was expecting again. There was also the possibility that by transferring to one of the staff bureaus, Bliss would be more likely to be stationed in an eastern city, especially Washington, D. C. By transferring, he would receive higher pay, it could be a better situation for his own family, and

³¹¹ Smith to THB, May 12, 1892, THB Mss, MHI.

³¹² Wood joined the 17th Pennsylvania Cavalry as a private but became the regiment’s youngest commissioned officer by the end of the war. He then gained appointment to the USMA and served tours both on the frontier and on the Academy faculty. *History of the Seventeenth Regiment Pennsylvania Volunteer Cavalry* (Lebanon, Pa.: Sowers Publishing Co.), found at http://ranger95.com/civil_war_us/penna/cavalry/rosters/pictures/edward_e_wood_17cav_co_c.htm, accessed on August 26, 2012.

³¹³ Wood to THB, Oct. 12, 1892, THB Mss, MHI; this is Wood’s reply, of course, but it makes clear what Bliss said in his letter.

they would remain close to both his parents and his wife's family. The attractions were overwhelming.

It is not clear how much pressure from which people helped with this application. Schofield wrote to the Secretary of War making it seem the promotion should go to Bliss because the appointment to the West Point faculty had not.

Schofield predicted:

It seems but a slight promotion as compared with the Professorship . . . , [but] it would give him the necessary step in advance, whereby he would become eligible for further promotion before he becomes too old to profit by it, and thus make possible a career commensurate with his great abilities. Indeed, in this way he may ultimately reach a rank superior to and much more responsible than the West Point Professorship.³¹⁴

Thus in December, 1892 the Adjutant General notified Bliss of his promotion to "Commissary of Subsistence with the rank of Captain."³¹⁵ His father had already written, having seen the notice in the Philadelphia *Public Ledger*. George Bliss confessed that "what change, exactly, this involves in your duties or your interests . . . we have no proper, martial, information; but we take it for granted it is . . . preferable to [duty with] . . . your Regiment."

Ironically, Lieutenant Harry R. Anderson of the Fourth Artillery had also written Bliss. He had heard there was an opening for a Commissary and asked Bliss to lay his application before Commanding General Schofield. Four months later he wrote again, sending his congratulations, commenting that he had had no idea he was

³¹⁴ Schofield to Elkins, Nov. 10, 1892, copy in THB Mss, MHI.

³¹⁵ A.G. to THB, Dec. 22, 1892, THB Mss, MHI.

competing against such a capable applicant, adding that it was too bad Bliss was leaving the artillery.³¹⁶ It is worth noting that Anderson had nearly twenty-six years of service at that time. Many of the other letters of congratulation from fellow officers echoed Anderson's, combining congratulations with sadness because "your good fortune will deprive our Corps of the services of so good an artillerist, and of a member who has done so much to cause the army to understand and *appreciate* the artillery."³¹⁷

These two applications for different positions, one successful and one not, reveal Bliss's thinking about his career at the time. As he became aware of the new role the army as the agent of the government of a great power, he was willing to move out of a position that placed him near the center of national policy making. The academic life at West Point still had more appeal to him than working with Schofield to reform the army to meet the challenges of the industrial age. It would have completely changed the nature of his work, but Schofield encouraged his application. Both officers thought that influencing young men as they trained to become officers was of great importance. His shift to the Commissary Department is more easily explained; it was the best way to speed the promotion process and increase his household income. It had no immediate impact on his duties because he continued to serve as one of Schofield's aides. Bliss was like many other officers in that he complained bitterly about political influence when it made work for him or when

³¹⁶ Anderson to THB, Sept. 29, 1892 and Dec. 23, 1892, THB Mss, MHI.

³¹⁷ Captain Constantine Chase to THB, Dec. 25, 1892; see also Arthur L. Wagner to THB, Dec. 26, 1892, and C. W. Raymond to THB, Dec. 27, 1892, all in THB Mss, MHI.

others employed it, but he used it quickly when it could help him. Yes, his transfer was the sort of move that many reformers protested against, taking a promising line officer away from the combat arms and placing him in one of the bureaus. He must have known that in the long run his transfer was not for the good of the service, but like the position at the Military Academy, it promised a better domestic situation. The promotion to captain meant more pay but carried the possibility of a future permanent residence in Washington.

After the joy of this promotion and of the arrival of their son, whom they named Edward Goring, Bliss and his wife suffered a great loss early the next year when his father died. George R. Bliss had been in poor health since at least 1891; his death was not a surprise. Eleanora was at her parents' home with the children while Bliss was in Washington, but he reached his parents' home quickly, which was a comfort to his mother. Fortunately, Bliss's siblings were able to help out in this difficult situation.³¹⁸

Schofield retired in September of 1895, bringing to an end Bliss's service in the Headquarters of the Army. The seven years he spent with Schofield were of critical importance to him personally and to the army as a whole. Because Schofield chose to act as a chief of staff to the Secretary of War rather than contest command authority, he was able to accomplish important reforms in the daily lives of soldiers. The army he left behind was significantly more professional and better drilled than the army he inherited in 1888. These years gave Bliss a comprehensive education in

³¹⁸ EAB to THB, March 29, 1893; a note about the death appears in the *Washington Star*, March 28 on 5.

the issues facing the army, everything from the need for better professional education of officers to the acute need for more quarters on posts. His reputation as a scholar in uniform remained, but now he was well-informed about practical problems as well. Many officers shared Schofield's opinion as expressed in one of his efficiency reports; Bliss was "one of the young officers among whom, as far as can be foreseen, the future leaders of the army in time of war must be found."³¹⁹

³¹⁹ ACP file 3525, 1880, RG 94, NARA.

CHAPTER 4

COLLECTING FOR CUBA

In the late-nineteenth century, United States foreign policy became more active and bellicose, an aggressiveness that eventually focused on Spain's attempts to defeat a revolution in Cuba. The people of that island had revolted against Spain in 1868, leading to a destructive ten-year war ending in a shaky Spanish victory. Revolution broke out again in 1895, and many of the revolutionaries rested their strategy on the hope of American help.³²⁰ The American imperial venture began with such an intervention and a pledge of independence for Cuba in the Teller Amendment

³²⁰ For the history of these two Cuban revolutions, see general histories of Cuba such as Geoff Simons, *Cuba: From Conquistador to Castro* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), Jaime Suchlicki, *Cuba: From Columbus to Castro and Beyond* (Washington, D. C.: Brassey's, 2002), and Hugh Thomas, *Cuba, The Pursuit of Freedom* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971). On the revolution of 1868, see Edward Gonzalez, ed., *Jose Marti and the Cuban Revolution Retraced* (Los Angeles: UCLA Latin American Center Publications, University of California, 1986) and Ada Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba: Race, Nation, and Revolution, 1868-1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999). On the revolution of 1895, especially its connections to U.S. policy, see Thomas W. Crouch, *A Yankee Guerrillero: Frederick Funston and the Cuban Insurrection, 1896-1897* (Memphis: Memphis State University Press, 1975), Philip S. Foner, *The Spanish-Cuban-American War and the Birth of American Imperialism, 1895-1902* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972), Jorge Ibarra, *Prologue to Revolution: Cuba, 1898-1958* (Boulder, Colo.: L. Rienner Publishers, 1998), three works by Louis A. Pérez, Jr., *The War of 1898: The United States and Cuba in History and Historiography* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), *Cuba Between Empires* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1983) and *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2d. ed. 1995), and John L. Tone, *War and Genocide in Cuba, 1895-1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006). A recent gender-based analysis is Kristin L. Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998). Works that give the flavor of pro-intervention thinking in the United States are Richard Harding Davis, *Cuba in War Time* (New York: R. H. Russell, 1897) and Redfield Proctor, *The Real Condition of Cuba* and Tomas Estrada Palma, *Appeal of the Cubans* (New York?: s.n., 1898?).

of 1898, but that war for the liberation of Cuba also brought the United States its first overseas colonies.³²¹

In its choice to pursue a policy of overseas expansion, the United States was joining the European powers and Japan in their drive to create world empires. One of the most important developments in modern world history was this second expansion of Europe, but any study of the new imperialism needs to include the United States. Nonetheless, as historian Frank Ninkovich cautions, the American venture was different from the European. “America’s imperial surge came late . . . , was more limited in its territorial sweep, and . . . broke up more quickly on the rocks of history” than did European imperialism.³²² One indication of that difference is that the United States never created a colonial office; instead, it governed its colonies through a

³²¹ The War of 1898 continues to attract scholarly attention. The standard work on the war in its entirety is David F. Trask, *The War with Spain in 1898* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., and London: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1981), but see also Ivan Musicant, *Empire by Default: The Spanish-American War and the Dawn of the American Century* (New York: A Marian Wood Book, Henry Holt and Company, 1998). An important work on the military aspects of the war is Graham A. Cosmas, *An Army for Empire: The United States Army in the Spanish-American War* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1971). A brief recent treatment of the war in its international context is Joseph Smith, *The Spanish-American War: Conflict in the Caribbean and the Pacific, 1895-1902*, Modern Wars in Perspective (London and New York: Longman Group, 1994). A work that is highly critical of U.S. policy in 1898 and since is Thomas Schoonover, *Uncle Sam’s War of 1898 and the Origins of Globalization* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2003). A popular history that is noteworthy for its illustrations is Frank Friedel, *The Splendid Little War* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1958), while a traditional narrative that remains worthwhile is Walter Millis, *The Martial Spirit: The Story of Our War with Spain* (New York: Viking Press paperback, 1965, originally 1931). For a contemporary account by a leading journalist, see Richard Harding Davis, *The Cuban and Porto Rican Campaigns* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1898). The diplomacy of the conflict is the topic of H. Wayne Morgan, *America’s Road to Empire: The War with Spain and Overseas Expansion* (New York: John Wiley, 1965), Lewis L. Gould, *The Spanish-American War and President McKinley* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1982), John L. Offner, *An Unwanted War: The Diplomacy of the United States and Spain over Cuba, 1895-1898* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992), and Philip S. Foner, *The Spanish-Cuban-American War and the Birth of American Imperialism, 1895-1902* (2 vols., New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1972).

³²² Frank Ninkovich, *The United States and Imperialism: Problems in American History* (Malden, Mass. and Oxford: Blackwells Publishers, Inc., 2001), 10.

bureau in the War Department which eventually passed on its responsibilities to the Department of the Interior. Army officers became colonial administrators but without any training or experience, and often without any particular knowledge of the work they were supposed to do. Tasker H. Bliss handled such a situation so well that his performance earned him promotion to brigadier general.

Bliss played a small role at the center of the new foreign policy. On September 29, 1895, Lieutenant General John M. Schofield retired, terminating Bliss's duties as his aide-de-camp. Lieutenant General Nelson A. Miles did not replace Schofield as commanding general until October 5. In the interval, Daniel S. Lamont, the Secretary of War, assigned Bliss to "special duty" in the War Department.³²³ While his activities are for the most part impossible to reconstruct from the extant archival record, probably he continued to work with the Military Information Division. Another task Secretary Lamont assigned him was to pare the budget estimates for the War Department. Bliss wrote to his wife that his "inexperience in [this] sort of work makes it an awful job." Bliss knew a related problem was that "I may make enemies whichever way I go. . . . If the tables I am preparing should be published they would make a sensation."³²⁴ A year later he had to testify to the Senate, mostly off the record, about the work he was doing; the Senators "asked only half a dozen questions with the stenographer present, but kept me on an hour after he had left."³²⁵ Later that same year, he was still a special

³²³ Adjutant General to Bliss, October 5, 1895, from ACP file, #3325, NARA.

³²⁴ Bliss to Mrs. Bliss, Oct. 21, 1895, THB Mss, USAMHI.

³²⁵ Bliss to Mrs. Bliss, May 15, 1896, THB Mss, USAMHI.

assistant to the Secretary, who sent him to New York City under “special instructions.”³²⁶ When Bliss finished his work for Lamont, the orders stated that he was “detached” from the Military Information Division of the War Department.³²⁷

Captain Henry C. Taylor, the president of the Naval War College, imposed on Bliss another task by asking that he present a course of lectures at Newport in the 1895 session. Bliss told the Adjutant General that he would gladly prepare the lectures in his spare time if he would be allowed to go to Newport for a week or so to deliver them. He received permission.³²⁸

In the midst of secret projects and the politics of the contested 1896 presidential campaign between William McKinley and William Jennings Bryan, Bliss still found time for his family. When his wife took the children to her family’s home in Rosemont, in suburban Philadelphia, to escape the summer heat and sickness of Washington, D. C., he wrote thanking her “for saying that [she was] going to take good care” of herself. He noticed that his son, Goring, had a good memory, since the boy learned various songs and tunes quickly. For his daughter Eleanor, he supervised her education in foreign languages. In one letter, Bliss told his wife that when Eleanor “gets well grounded in her Latin and reads simple French and German easily we will take up Greek.” On another occasion he sent her a book in French, assuring his wife that “there is nothing in it that is not eminently proper” but suggesting that she read it first, just to be sure. Finally, he maintained his interest in higher

⁴ Adjutant General to Bliss, Oct. 10, 1896, also from *ibid.*

³²⁷ S.O. No. 51, A.G.O., March 3, 1897.

³²⁸ Taylor to Sec of the Navy, June 1, 1895, Memorandum, Bliss to General Thomas Vincent, June 8, 1895, approval given in a letter to Bliss from Vincent, June 14, 1895, all in *ibid.*

education, asking Mrs. Bliss to thank one of her relatives for sending a book on German universities that Bliss had found “exceedingly interesting.”³²⁹

At a time of growing hostility between Spain and the United States, Bliss occupied a position that made him privy to American strategic thinking, and he probably made contributions to those plans. At the Naval War College, for instance, Captain Taylor had chosen a possible war with Spain as one of the subjects for a season’s work in 1895, and the plans were updated in 1896 and 1897.³³⁰ Spain was a decaying imperial power; one source of that decay was Cuba. The war strained Spanish resources, while the rebels attacked American property hoping to provoke American intervention.

Based on this situation and his previous work with the Military Information Division, it must have been a calculated decision to send Bliss to Spain as Military Attaché at the U.S. legation in Madrid.³³¹ From his work in Washington, he was intimately familiar with the issues facing President McKinley, and he would know the information the War Department needed. Another hint of what was expected was the appropriation he had at his disposal as he took up his new duties. While the attaches in Berlin, London and Paris had \$600 to spend on necessary books, periodicals, maps

³²⁹ Letters Bliss to Mrs. Bliss, all in THB Mss, USAMHI. About her health and Goring’s memory, Oct. 21, 1895; about Eleanor’s language instruction, June 10 and Oct. 26, 1896; about the book, June 10, 1896.

³³⁰ Grenville and Young, *Politics, Strategy and American Diplomacy*, 272.

³³¹ S.O. No. 51, A.G.O., March 3, 1897. The position of military attaché is a strange one, since the officers are essentially spies who operate openly. The standard work on this institution remains Alfred Vagts, *The Military Attaché* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1967).

and models and his predecessor in Madrid received a mere \$150, the War Department allocated \$1000 for Bliss.³³²

Bliss traveled to Spain via England and France along with the new American Minister. Stewart L. Woodford was a Civil War veteran, an experienced politician but a novice diplomat. On the voyage, Bliss wrote his wife that Woodford “asked me to smoke a cigar with him [and] asked my opinion of [the Cuban situation] and that of army officers generally. I told him that I did not believe the matter was worth a war under any circumstances.” Bliss hoped that fair dealing with Spain would lead that country to reform its colonial administration and encourage a revived trade with the United States. He would prefer to have the island remain under the control of Spain.³³³ Bliss did not presume to speak for the entire officer corps, and one wonders how many officers shared his views. More important, the letter demonstrates the confidence Woodford already entertained for the attaché’s opinions. The two men had already formed a close working relationship.

One activity that kept Bliss busy in Paris was Spanish language lessons. He had been brushing up on his Spanish since learning of his pending appointment, and he continued with a tutor. He proudly told his wife that his “teacher said that in a month after getting to Madrid I should be speaking Spanish as well as English.” Already Bliss had found that he “could carry on a conversation . . . and both understand and make myself understood.” He hoped that improved Spanish would be

³³² Memo letter, [Bliss?] to the Adjutant General, September 28, 1897, RG 165, Serial 296, WCD-639, Box 1, file numbers 4 – 20, NARA.

³³³ Bliss to Mrs. Bliss, quoted in Palmer, *Bliss: Peacemaker*, 40.

one benefit from his assignment as attaché, not knowing how important it would prove in the near future.³³⁴

On September 1, 1897, Woodford and his party left for San Sebastian, the summer capital of Spain.³³⁵ Sitting up all night in the train, Bliss admired the French countryside. When the train reached the Spanish border, police and soldiers joined to protect the Americans from possibly hostile crowds. Bliss recommended to Eleanora that she should read the papers but not worry about the situation. Knowing that she would worry regardless, as anxious about his health as about the diplomatic situation, he told her that he was eating well, and the fruits available “would almost make you forswear your allegiance to the United States.” He was especially thrilled with the figs, which he said he absorbed more than ate.³³⁶ He also promised that in all the advice he was giving General Woodford, he would suggest “nothing that is not right in the sight of God and all reasonable Americans.”³³⁷

In spite of Woodford’s diplomacy and the sincere efforts of President McKinley, the United States and Spain moved steadily closer to war. Woodford had left his family in France because he feared the hostility of the Spanish people; Bliss had left his family in the United States for the same reason. When Spanish officials commented on the absence of the Minister’s family, Woodford sent for his wife and three daughters to join him, but eventually he decided that the women needed to leave

³³⁴ Bliss to Mrs. Bliss from Paris, Aug. 24, 1897, *ibid.*

³³⁵ This date is from *ibid.* For another account of the atmosphere surrounding the United States mission, see Offner, *Unwanted War*, ch. 4, “The Woodford Mission,” 54-67.

³³⁶ Bliss to Mrs. Bliss from San Sebastian, September 9, 1897, quoted in *Bliss, Peacemaker*, 43.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*

again for their own safety in the event of war. He gave Bliss the task of escorting them back to France. The attaché worried that he would be alone on a Spanish railroad car when war was declared, but he returned safely to Madrid.³³⁸

When the two governments did finally break off diplomatic relations, the Spanish government provided a train to take the Americans out of the country. On the way, angry Spaniards pelted the cars with stones, but everyone arrived safely in Paris.³³⁹ Once war was declared, the War Department ordered Bliss to Washington, D.C. Then he was assigned to duty as chief commissary of subsistence on the staff of Major General, U.S. Volunteers, James H. Wilson, commanding the Sixth Army Corps at Chickamauga National Park, Georgia.³⁴⁰ Wilson had been one of the “boy generals” of the Civil War. Pleased with Bliss’s work on his staff, he would prove to be an important friend in the next few years.

While the Sixth Corps trained in its camps, the first United States forces sent to Cuba landed in the southeastern part of the island near the city of Santiago de Cuba, in order to cooperate with the Navy in its efforts to destroy the Spanish fleet that had sought refuge in that port. Eventually the troops gathering and training at Chickamauga National Park were ordered to prepare to join the army at Santiago, or if it had fallen, to join an expedition against Puerto Rico. The lack of clarity in the orders reflected the general confusion of the American war effort as well as the administrative disarray in the War Department. Directing the war were President

³³⁸ Offner, *Unwanted War*, 55; Palmer, *Bliss, Peacemaker*, 52.

³³⁹ Palmer, *Bliss, Peacemaker*, 54.

³⁴⁰ S.O. No. 120, A.G.O., May 23, 1898.

McKinley and the Adjutant General, Henry C. Corbin. McKinley had found he could trust neither the Commanding General, Nelson Miles, nor Secretary of War Russell A. Alger. Miles urged an invasion of Puerto Rico as an alternative to the landing in Cuba. The President accepted the idea of an attack there at least in part as a way to divert Miles, with his well-known presidential aspirations, into orchestrating a sideshow.³⁴¹

According to Palmer, Bliss became chief of staff of the First Division of the Sixth Corps.³⁴² By the time of the Puerto Rico expedition, the War Department had learned that it needed more than one port to handle the embarkation of a large expedition. This unit was to sail from Charleston, South Carolina. The men quickly found that the confusion of the mobilization had not yet ended. According to Bliss, their transport was the *Rita*, which was intended for General Wilson and his staff. New orders arrived to prepare the ship for another unit, then for five hundred laborers who were being sent to Santiago to build wharves. At this point, “a score of telegrams must have passed each way” between Charleston and the War Department. Wilson had received explicit authority to take over the *Rita* and spend the money necessary to make her a troopship. After they had sailed, Wilson received a note from the War Department saying that apparently there was a Spanish prize in Charleston harbor, the *Rita*, and he should inspect her to see if she would make an

³⁴¹ An outstanding recent biography of Miles is Robert Wooster, *Nelson A. Miles and the Twilight of the Frontier Army* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1993). The war of 1898 is the subject of ch. 13, “The Spanish-American War,” 214-231.

³⁴² Palmer, *Bliss, Peacemaker*, 54.

adequate transport. He and his staff were already in that ship, approaching Santiago.³⁴³

When it appeared that the American forces might not be adequate to capture Santiago, General Miles brought his units there as reinforcements. He became involved in the negotiations leading to the surrender of Santiago, leaving him free to move against his preferred target of Puerto Rico. Before he could lead his forces away from Cuba, he believed he needed an armored naval vessel as an escort. The Navy refused to provide one. Miles appealed to the President, and McKinley quickly settled the argument by ordering a battleship as escort. It was one of several instances in this short war when the president had to intervene personally to settle inter-service squabbles.³⁴⁴

With the capitulation of the Spanish at Santiago, Wilson's force sailed directly to Puerto Rico. Miles had already landed his troops at Guanica, a small port near the Puerto Rican city of Ponce. He directed Wilson's transports to follow the battleship *Massachusetts* into the harbor, wait while the warship bombarded any resisting Spanish units, and then land Wilson's men. Everything went smoothly, and the people of the city welcomed the Americans.

As further units arrived, Miles' forces eventually totaled about 15,000 men, outnumbering the island's Spanish garrison two-to-one. Miles desired minimal

³⁴³ Bliss to Mrs. Bliss, quoted in *ibid.*, 55.

³⁴⁴ Smith, *The Spanish-American War*, 171; for the official correspondence, see United States, The Adjutant General's Office, *Correspondence Relating to the War with Spain, Including the Insurrection in the Philippine Islands and the China Relief Expedition, April 15, 1898 to July 30, 1902* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1993), 1: 297-300.

casualties and conducted his campaign in a manner designed to overawe the enemy, not grapple with him in battle. The campaign was cut short by the signing of an armistice that granted possession of the island to the Americans, but Miles remained proud of the minimal casualties — seven killed and thirty-six wounded — his men suffered in the two-week campaign.³⁴⁵

In such a brief struggle, Bliss found one opportunity to distinguish himself. Miles divided his forces into four separate columns, and he sent Wilson's unit on the direct route to San Juan, the capital. The road passed through a difficult mountain pass. On August 11, the advance encountered Spanish troops firing from a trench, according to the correspondent Richard Harding Davis,

Colonel Bliss of General Wilson's staff went forward to the enemy line with a flag of truce, and explained that peace negotiations were almost concluded, and that their position was untenable and demanded their surrender.³⁴⁶

The Spanish commander asked for an overnight delay, which Wilson granted, to allow him to consult with the Governor. The next day the armistice was concluded and with it the Puerto Rico campaign. For Bliss, it was his first experience of combat.

When the armistice gave way to the Treaty of Paris of 1898, the United States had gained colonies, and for the first time the U.S. government controlled an alien population on non-contiguous territory. The situation required that the government for the first time provide some sort of colonial service on a large scale. Important

³⁴⁵ Smith, *ibid.*, 175.

³⁴⁶ Dispatch in the *New York Herald*, August 11, 1898, quoted in Palmer, *Bliss, Peacemaker*, 56.

questions followed in the wake of this departure. Would these lands be treated as additional territories, preparing for statehood? Would they remain as permanent colonies in an American Empire? If they were not territories preparing for eventual statehood, then how would overseas colonies be governed? Did the U.S. Constitution apply to the inhabitants of these areas? To what extent would the peoples there share in their own governments?

Most historians agree that the United States' acquisition of overseas colonies in 1898 was a watershed event in the nation's history -- though they often disagree about exactly why it was so important. One of the most influential historians of American foreign relations was Samuel Flagg Bemis, and he contended that the acquisition of overseas colonies in 1898 represented a "great aberration" in U.S. foreign policy. Never before and almost never again did the country take direct control of overseas colonies.³⁴⁷ Other historians observed that the critical element of the Bemis interpretation is the acquisition of formal colonies. Walter LaFeber, for instance, noted that "Americans attempted to build a new empire, an empire which differed fundamentally from the colonial holdings of European powers."³⁴⁸ The difference was that the Americans based their empire on informal economic control, thus escaping the burdens of direct colonial administration. Many historians, for instance Ernest R. May, argue that the most important opinions about foreign relations come from an elite of influential actors, primarily political leaders,

³⁴⁷ Samuel F. Bemis, *A Diplomatic History of the United States* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1936).

³⁴⁸ *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860-1898* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, paperback edition 1967), 408.

businessmen, intellectuals, a few federal bureaucrats, and newspapermen.³⁴⁹ In the late-nineteenth century, this group became committed to national expansion for a variety of reasons. For some members of this group, expansion was a continuation of America's mission, or Manifest Destiny. For others, it was a necessity of life among the great powers, a Social Darwinist view that the world system involved growing predator nations and declining nations that were on their way out of existence.

Robert L. Beisner writes that the foreign policy elite followed traditional ideas until changing circumstances at home and abroad forced them to adopt a "new paradigm" of aggressive diplomacy and national expansion.³⁵⁰ More recently, Frank Ninkovich contributes a nuanced argument that American imperialism was a new creation, born out of the changing circumstances of the late-nineteenth century and the arguments of the imperialists and the anti-imperialists. The result, he believes, was a specific American version of imperialism, adjusted to fit the conditions of different regions of the world, and in tune with the "liberal, generally optimistic tone of American foreign relations."³⁵¹

Trying to prevent the acquisition of colonies, an anti-imperialist effort brought together an unusual political alliance.³⁵² Senator George G. Vest of Missouri presented a resolution to the Senate in December 1898 that stated the acquisition of

³⁴⁹ Ernest R. May, *American Imperialism: A Speculative Essay* (Chicago: Imprint Publications, 1991).

³⁵⁰ *From the Old Diplomacy to the New, 1865-1900*, The American History Series (Arlington Heights, Ill.: Harlan Davidson, 2d ed. 1986), esp. 77-95.

³⁵¹ *The United States and Imperialism*, 2.

³⁵² This summary is based on Beisner, *Twelve Against Empire*, and H. Wayne Morgan, *America's Road to Empire: The War with Spain and Overseas Expansion* (New York, Chichester, Brisbane and Toronto: John Wiley and Sons, 100-109).

an overseas empire was a violation of American traditions, since all previously annexed territory had been intended to become states. Senator George F. Hoar of Massachusetts, universally recognized for his honesty in politics, directly challenged the president, arguing that liberty and empire were opposites. Joining these political leaders were many others from a variety of careers, including the well-known reformer Carl Schurz, the author and humorist Mark Twain, the industrialist Andrew Carnegie, former President Grover Cleveland, and a number of “artistic and literary figures.”³⁵³

With such a range of characters opposing the American empire, it is not surprising that their arguments spanned a range as well. Cleveland and Hoar considered annexation unconstitutional and a violation of American political traditions, but Hoar supported the annexation of Hawaii, believing that the residents supported it. Twain believed that the United States would lose its position as the last refuge of liberty once it became an imperial nation. Others believed the War of 1898 had been a mistake created by the “yellow” press and certain immoral business executives; annexation would compound the problem. Still others thought that an overseas empire would require an imperial constabulary which would convert the United States into a militaristic state. Finally, many of the anti-imperialists used racism as a reason not to take tropical colonies. One anti-imperialist senator explained that “you can no more produce a white man, a man of our blood, in the Tropics than you can a polar bear.”³⁵⁴ Of course many supporters of annexation

³⁵³ Morgan, *Road to Empire*, 103.

³⁵⁴ Quoted in Ninkovich, *United States and Imperialism*, 44.

argued that the “inferior races” found in the tropics were exactly the people who needed help from the “civilizing” nations such as the United States.

The best evidence that American political leaders had not fully considered these questions before the War of 1898 is that in its aftermath, the United States developed distinctly different policies for the Philippines, Puerto Rico, Hawaii and Cuba. Puerto Rico eventually became part of the United States and its people became citizens; Cuba remained an independent country, though for several years it had a U.S. Military Government. Hawaii eventually became a state. The Philippines became a colony, and immediately the United States confronted the ugly side of colonialism as it fought a bitter and protracted guerilla rebellion against its colonial rule. This variety of outcomes indicates a lack of predetermined policy.

Another indication of the confusion in the minds of U.S. government leaders is the series of statements Congress passed in an effort to define Cuban policy. The Teller Resolution of 1898 promised that the United States would not annex Cuba; this country was fighting for Cuban independence to end the brutal, misguided Spanish colonial government. The Foraker Amendment of 1899 prohibited the U.S. Military Government of Cuba from granting any economic concessions or franchises of any kind to any businesses, a measure intended to “prevent the exploitation of Cuba by unscrupulous promoters whether of American or other nationality.”³⁵⁵ Finally, there was the Platt Amendment of 1902, which the United States forced the Cubans to add to their constitution, granting the United States among other things the right to

³⁵⁵ Harry F. Guggenheim, *The United States and Cuba: A Study in International Relations* (Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1969 reprint of original 1934 edition), 58.

intervene in Cuba's internal affairs. In other words, Cuba became an American protectorate. These congressional actions demonstrate the continuing evolution of American policy and the number of officials involved in creating it. The United States government is not a unitary actor.

Most scholars writing on the history of United States--Cuba relations utilize dependency theory, either stating or implying that the United States deliberately pursued a policy of maintaining Cuba's economic dependence on the American market and its openness to American investments.³⁵⁶ David Healy, author of the one monograph on the United States military occupation of 1899-1902, claims that actually there was great uncertainty over U.S. policy.³⁵⁷

One way to explore this question more deeply is to examine the work of Tasker H. Bliss as Collector of Customs for Cuba during the Military Government. Bliss administered the Cuban Customs Service at a time when trade with the United States was vital to Cuba's efforts to recover from years of revolution and war. He

³⁵⁶ Two prolific scholars writing on this subject are Jules Robert Benjamin and Louis A. Pèrez, Jr. Benjamin's works are *The United States and Cuba: Hegemony and Dependent Development* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1977) and *The United States and the Origins of the Cuban Revolution: An Empire of Liberty in an Age of National Liberation* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990). Pèrez's works include *Cuba Between Two Empires, 1878-1902* (mentioned earlier in note 1 above); *Army Politics in Cuba, 1898-1958* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1976); *Cuba Under the Platt Amendment, 1902-1934* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1986); and *Cuba and the United States: Ties of Singular Intimacy* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990). The standard survey of Cuban history in English is Thomas, *Cuba: The Pursuit of Freedom*. Other useful works with material on the occupation include Guggenheim, *United States and Cuba*, cited above in n. 1; Robert F. Smith, *The United States and Cuba: Business and Diplomacy, 1917-1960* (New Haven: College and University Press, 1960); Ramon Eduardo Ruiz, *Cuba: The Making of a Revolution* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., paperback edition, 1970); and Michael J. Mazarr, *Semper Fidel: America and Cuba, 1776-1988* (Baltimore: The Nautical and Aviation Publishing Company of America, 1988). Benjamin, Pèrez, and Mazarr utilize dependency theory.

³⁵⁷ David Healy, *The United States in Cuba, 1898-1902: Generals, Politicians and the Search for Policy* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1963).

was also the principal author of the Cuban tariffs after independence and the principal negotiator of what became the Reciprocity Treaty of 1902. His work illuminates the U.S. government's policies and how they developed.

As Samuel Huntington pointed out, when the United States acquired its colonies, it did not have an existing colonial civil service to staff these overseas governments.³⁵⁸ The army was a logical place to turn for this corps of civil servants, because army officers were accustomed to working in administrative hierarchies. They were generally honest in an era of great political corruption, they had much experience in following orders, even in sensitive political situations, and they were likely to have a sense of intelligent discretion about those orders. The Military Government of Cuba was one example of this type of military service.

The structure of the occupation government together with the provisions of the treaty ending the war gave the Customs Service an essential role. The Americans ruled through the Military Government of Cuba, which began on January 1, 1899. Major General John R. Brooke was the Military Governor and the Commanding General of the Military Division of Cuba, which the War Department established in December, 1898. Thus Brooke answered to only two superiors, the Secretary of War and the President of the United States. Brooke's Military Government faced a daunting task of reconstruction in Cuba, but according to Article One of the Treaty of Paris which ended the war, it was also responsible for Cuba's international

³⁵⁸ Samuel Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957), 261, 354-360.

obligations. This debt had been one of the major points of contention in the peace negotiations. The Cubans deeply resented having to pay it, since Spain had incurred the debt largely through its efforts to suppress the Cuban revolution. The United States committed its occupation government at least to paying the debt service for whatever length of time it remained in Cuba.³⁵⁹ Most of the money would have to come from the customs revenue.

The civil administration under Brooke included a cabinet of four, each of whom headed one of the departments: Justice and Public Instruction; Agriculture, Commerce, Industries and Public Works; State and Government; and Finance. These four men, an advisory body for the Military Governor, gained the informal title of the Cuban Cabinet, but their powers were limited, especially those of the Secretary of Finance. Customs revenue provided most of the government's money, but the Customs Service was independent of the Department of Finance. Bliss turned over the receipts to the North American Trust Company, which acted as the fiscal agent of the Cuban government. There was an auditing system, but it was also independent of the Secretary. The Department actually controlled only the small internal revenue. From the customs receipts, Bliss had to pay the cost of the Customs Service and leave as much as possible for every other government operation.

One more indication of the confusion in the U.S. government as it faced the question of what to do with Cuba was its effort to construct the Military Government. When the war was over, in the course of the ten days from December 15 to December

³⁵⁹ This summary is based on Healy, *United States in Cuba*, 53-58.

24, 1898, Bliss received three sets of orders. First he was to leave Puerto Rico for a new assignment at Chickamauga Park, Georgia, the base camp to which Wilson's corps returned. Then his orders sent him to Cuba as part of a board to select campsites for the army of occupation. Finally he went to Havana as the Collector of Customs for Cuba and for the Port of Havana.³⁶⁰

There is no certain indication in the surviving documents why Bliss became Collector. He had no knowledge of tariffs, either from theory or practice, but within the Army he was known as a scholar with special skill in foreign languages. He was fluent in Spanish, which certainly proved to be of great assistance. He had shown his ability in a diplomatic post as military attaché in the months before the war. He had displayed a talent for administration in several positions, including organizing the return of those American citizens caught in Spain by the declaration of war. In several of these positions he displayed tact and political sensitivity. Since his superiors did not think of him as a combat soldier, this new assignment fit his talents well.

When Bliss arrived at the Havana Customs House, he found that the departing Spanish administrators had left behind almost nothing. He later commented that without a personal appeal, he would have had neither a table to work at nor a chair to sit on. The files of the customs service were gone, although how helpful they might have been was questionable. Bliss was to find that an atmosphere of casual corruption had been a part of the Spanish administration. Thus he began his

³⁶⁰ Special Orders No. 295, Dec. 15, 1898; No. 299, Dec. 20, 1898, and No. , Dec. 24, 1898, all War Department, copies in THB Mss, USAMHI, and Palmer, *Bliss, Peacemaker*, 57-58.

administration not only with no knowledge of the tariffs or of customs administration, but also without business records or the most rudimentary office equipment. The collectors in the other ports were in the same situation; they each had to make do, for example, using whatever customs forms they could improvise and have printed locally. These circumstances meant that Bliss devoted much of his time at the start to setting up the office. For instance, he sent out a special agent to consult with the collectors at the other ports to develop one common set of forms for their use, to ease the paperwork burden both for him and for importers.³⁶¹

The Customs House itself was in desperate need of repair. The building was old; it had been a monastery dating to the early days of Spain's colonial rule. Over the years, the breezeways and arches of the cloister had been closed off and bricked up, creating a stifling atmosphere inside. The heat and humidity made mold a constant problem. Bliss had the brick walls torn out to allow the breeze to pass through. The floors were rotting wood, and when the workmen started to tear them out, they found a series of cesspools underneath. Bliss later estimated that the workmen removed 1,200 cubic yards of refuse. All of these problems had to be fixed quickly, but it was the kind of work the Americans were doing throughout Cuba. When Bliss arrived in Havana, he wrote to his wife that "The harbor of Havana is indescribably filthy . . . and there is the accumulated filth of centuries. . . . No

³⁶¹ William Schurman, special agent, reports to Bliss, Sept. 1899, on his trip to compare forms and recommending new ones to be standard throughout the island. Military Government of Cuba, Office of the Collector of Customs, General Correspondence, Box 1, file no 94 (hereinafter cited as GC and box number), RG 140, NARA.

description can give you any idea of the filthiness of this city.”³⁶² The improvement of public health in Havana became one of the proudest achievements of the American administration.³⁶³

One odd incident occurred during this reconstruction that could have led to worsened relations with the Cubans. The workmen found bones buried under the Customs House, and the local legend seemed fulfilled that some great hero of Cuban history had been buried in the monastery. Bliss called in forensics experts who found that the bones were not those of the legendary hero; they were reinterred elsewhere and the work of rebuilding went on.³⁶⁴

It was important that the American occupation be as scandal-free as possible. The Army officers constantly complained about the corruption they found in the remnants of the Spanish colonial government, so they needed to do a better job than their predecessors. Many critics in the United States, in Cuba, and abroad were ready to seize on any alleged wrongdoing as evidence of incompetence. At the end of the first month of the Military Government’s operations, Assistant Secretary of War George D. Meiklejohn wrote a personal letter to Bliss offering congratulations, but also reminding him

It is of the utmost importance that our control of the fiscal affairs of Cuba, and especially of its customs, should show not only a marked increase of revenue, but should establish indelibly in the minds and upon the institutions of the Cuban people the rectitude and earnestness of our

³⁶² Quoted in Palmer, *Bliss, Peacemaker*, 58-59.

³⁶³ *Annual Report of the Collector of Customs for Cuba for 1899*, copy in the THB Mss, USAMHI.

³⁶⁴ Palmer, *Bliss, Peacemaker*, 63-66.

efforts to inject in the administration of their affairs the principles of honesty, truth and justice.³⁶⁵

An important part of Bliss's job was to ensure those principles were apparent in the administration of the Cuban Customs Service.

As an example of these efforts to maintain purity, Bliss was closely questioned by the Treasury Department and the War Department when his monthly financial records did not match up with those of the Cuban Treasury, where he recorded the daily deposits, which then went to the bank. As he explained in a letter to General Joseph Sanger at the War Department, he made the deposits and received deposit receipts, but the Treasurer did not always issue a formal receipt, which had to be countersigned by an auditor, until a day or two later. This interval sometimes caused the discrepancy in the monthly reports. The War and Treasury Departments accepted this explanation, but their questions indicated close supervision.³⁶⁶

The Spanish tariff system was a remnant of the mercantilist economic philosophy; at least on paper, it directed all Cuban trade to Spain. Although the system certainly did not function that way by the late-19th century,³⁶⁷ no one knew with certainty what would happen if the Customs Service actually enforced the tariff

³⁶⁵ Meiklejohn to THB, Feb. 11, 1899, THB Mss, USAMHI.

³⁶⁶ Bliss to Joseph Sanger, Sept. 7, 1900, and also see Meiklejohn to Bliss, June 11, 1899, THB Mss, USAMHI.

³⁶⁷ Thomas, *Cuba*, in ch. 35 gives a detailed socio-economic portrait of Cuba in the aftermath of war; Mazarr, *Semper Fidel*, 91, says that from 1892 to 1894, trade between the United States and Cuba averaged \$100 million annually, despite the Spanish tariffs.

regulations as written. In fact, this problem applied to the entire Spanish tax system.³⁶⁸

To solve some of these problems, President William McKinley sent his own special representative to Cuba to investigate. Born in England, Robert Porter arrived in the United States as a youth and made a successful career as a journalist specializing in world trade and economic conditions. He developed excellent political connections and worked in a variety of government positions, such as the Tariff Commission under President Chester A. Arthur and Director of the 1890 Census under President Benjamin Harrison. McKinley knew Porter as a supporter of the American protective tariff.

As the president directed, Porter studied the Cuban tariff and recommended a completely new schedule. In general, he cut the rates about 60 percent, lowering rates on essential consumer items and leaving them high on luxury goods. With rates dramatically lower, there would still be enough revenue for government operations, because under the Americans the tariff would actually be enforced as written. Bliss and his employees vindicated Porter's decisions.³⁶⁹ Bliss received high praise from the War Department when the revenues proved higher under the American administration than they had been under the Spanish.³⁷⁰

³⁶⁸ See Brooke to Adjutant General of the Army, Jan. 16, 1899; Jan. 27, 1899; and Jan. 28, 1899, all in Brooke Mss., Historical Society of Pennsylvania (hereinafter cited as HSP). The Brooke papers for this period are concentrated in three boxes, arranged chronologically and filed by month.

³⁶⁹ The details about Porter's career and his mission to Cuba are from Healy, *United States in Cuba*, 42-44; see also Sec. War Russell A. Alger to Brooke, Jan. 27, 1899, Brooke Mss, HSP.

³⁷⁰ Assistant Secretary of War Meiklejohn to THB, May 12, 1899, THB Mss, USAMHI.

Bliss had to acquire his knowledge of tariff administration on the job. So did some of his subordinates, Army officers who served as collectors in other ports around Cuba. Bliss learned so well that when the U.S. occupation was ending, the Consul General of Mexico sent him a letter of appreciation.

[I]t gives me great pleasure to state that during the time I have been in this capital, I have been very pleased with the official relations between your Department and this Consular Office. Those relations have been the most cordial and all the cases presented were resolved with great justice and goodwill by you and your staff. Please accept my personal appreciation.³⁷¹

This unsolicited praise from another country's diplomat is a striking endorsement of Bliss's administration of the Cuban customs system.

With experience Bliss developed a philosophy of administration that shows why he became such a valued and trusted subordinate and supervisor. When one of his employees, W. Morgan Shuster, was leaving to take over the customs service in the Philippines, Bliss shared his philosophy with him.

[W]hen you get to Manila [remember] one thing, and that is that the services which make a subordinate customs official . . . invaluable to his chief . . . are in some respects very different from those which make the services of that chief valuable. . . .

[C]ustoms law is much more rigid and severe than perhaps any other class of law . . . ; but if customs law were to be applied at all times and in every case exactly as it is written, its operation would become almost intolerable.

³⁷¹ Gilbert Crespo y Harting to Bliss, May 16, 1902, in GC, Box 59. In Spanish the letter reads "Tengo la mayor satisfaccion en ma nifestar a Vd, con motivo de la proxima entrega del Cobierno a las Autoridades que llevo en esta capital, he quadado complacido en las relaciones oficiales sostenidas entre eso Departamento del Cargo de Vd y esta oficina consular, las cuales han sido las mas cordiales, habiendose resuelto por parte de Vd y de los empleados a sus ordenes todos los casos presentados, con la mayor justificacion, y buen deseo. Sirvase aceptar el testimonio de mi sincera consideracion y persona aprecio." My thanks for this translation go to Theodore J. Visbeek.

You cannot, as the Collector can in Havana, write a letter to the War Department explaining some attempted fraud . . . , so that the minds of the authorities would already be prepared on the right side when they receive the inevitable complaint of the detected defrauder. In your case, the first thing you will know will be that some foreign Minister in Washington reports to the Government that his home office informs him that their Consul in Manila transmits complaint of some merchant in that country. Bear in mind that it is always embarrassing to any Government to receive such complaints in that way, no matter how ill-founded they may be. The Government in Washington will be far better pleased if you relax here and there, where you can do it without real detriment to the Service, rather than to be obliged to enter into arguments with foreign Ministers to prove that you are right.³⁷²

In this advice, Bliss demonstrated a fine understanding of the personal politics of government administration.

Learning the specifics of the tariff laws and their administration was a more specialized task. One way to gain that knowledge was to have expert employees, but those had to come from the United States. One of the constant requests Bliss made to the War Department was to have experienced employees sent from the United States to help in Cuba. In March 1899, Meiklejohn was able to promise to secure “from the Treasury Department, a man of rare executive ability and administrative capacity” to come to Cuba, though it is not clear who that person was. The problem did not go away, because in April Meiklejohn first cabled “will send you man of broad experience for Chief Clerk,” then followed that up with a second promise of “one of the best experts and most competent and reliable men.” in the Treasury

³⁷² Bliss to Shuster, July 8, 1901, THB Mss, USAMHI.

Department.³⁷³ Even as he acquired veteran employees and developed his own understanding of the work, Bliss wrote as late as 1901 for explanations of the most difficult situations.³⁷⁴

Without question the most difficult and continuous problems Bliss faced at the Customs House were the interrelated ones of personnel and corruption. At the inauguration of the Military Government, an acute issue was the hostility between the Cubans and the Spanish. General Brooke feared possible rioting when the celebrating Cubans, especially the revolutionary army, mixed with the departing Spanish military and colonial officials; he ordered the Cuban veterans to stay out of Havana during the official ceremonies marking the changeover in administration.³⁷⁵ In the Customs Service, this conflict took the form of battling over jobs, and Bliss had to keep the peace. One step that helped was compelling Spanish citizens in Cuba to declare their allegiance within one year of the peace treaty's approval.³⁷⁶ Given the need for honest and experienced help, Bliss found it difficult to referee these disputes. He wrote to Brooke that of the "77 Spaniards in the Customs House 69 are employed [in positions which] are not desired . . . by the native Cubans. They involve hard work and exposure day and night. The Spaniards now filling these positions are among the most faithful and reliable of my employees." Nevertheless, he was "eliminating them

³⁷³ Meiklejohn to Bliss, March 24, 1899 letter, April 1 or 7 cable, and April 11 letter,; with Bliss to Adj. General, Cuban Division, Dec. 24, 1900, all in THB Mss, USAMHI. For a case of declining offered help, see Bliss to Meiklejohn, March 30, 1899, THB Mss, USAMHI.

³⁷⁴ Bliss to Shuster, July 9, 1901, and Bliss to W. F. Wakeman, Appraiser of Merchandise for the Port of New York, July 9, 1901 (letterbook), THB Mss, USAMHI.

³⁷⁵ Healy, *United States in Cuba*, 53-55.

³⁷⁶ General Orders, Hqs, Cuban Division, Havana, July 11, 1899, reprinted in *Foreign Relations of the United States: 1899* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1901), 715; hereafter cited as *FRUS*, the year and the page number.

as rapidly as . . . possible . . . without perfect disorganization.” What pained him was that these “so-called Spaniards” had “lived here all their lives, and have married Cuban wives. Their children are as much Cuban as any one in [the revolutionary] Army.” Since it was a matter of policy, he followed orders and “every vacancy that I can make shall be filled by a native Cuban.”³⁷⁷

Even knowledgeable and honest employees faced great and unrelenting temptations. At first, the McKinley administration regarded the Military Government as subject to the usual spoils system methods for personnel appointments. Assistant Secretary Meiklejohn wrote to Bliss of one employee, “It has been necessary for me to appoint [him] an employee in your department. I know nothing of his ability or capacity.” Meiklejohn admitted that another appointee “was unknown to me but [he] was highly recommended by the above named gentlemen [two U.S. Senators] for ability and character and, without further investigation, I unhesitatingly appointed him to the position.” When Bliss expressed some doubts about this man’s integrity, Meiklejohn went to New York City to check with some of his previous employers. He learned from the district attorney that this man was facing an indictment for embezzlement; the New York authorities happily suggested that he be arrested and detained for them in Cuba.³⁷⁸ Such appointments did not help avoid scandals in administering the Cuban tariff regulations.

The most amazing appointment, though, was a loyal Republican whom Meiklejohn described as potentially “a second [Charles J.] Guiteau.” (Guiteau was the

³⁷⁷ Bliss to Brooke, April 6, 1899, THB Mss, USAMHI.

³⁷⁸ Meiklejohn to Bliss, July 1, 1899, Jan. 22, 1899, and Jan. 30, 1899, all in THB Mss, USAMHI.

assassin of President James A. Garfield.) To avert this threat, the administration appointed the potential murderer to the Cuban Customs Service! Eventually Bliss was able to fire the man when a special investigating agent reported that more than a year of careful surveillance indicated the employee was “mentally unbalanced” and “unfit to fill any of the various positions to which he has been appointed.” The fired employee then complained to the Secretary of War, a complaint that the War Department forwarded to General Leonard Wood, the new Military Governor. Bliss protested that being forced to hire a “man of disordered brain” put a black mark against his record. Acting Secretary of War William Cary Sargent tried to soothe Bliss’s feelings by praising “the faithful and efficient way” he had handled his “arduous duties;” the man’s protest was ignored.³⁷⁹

This case creates the impression that the Cuban occupation government was a dumping ground for American political discards, but General Brooke also appealed for help for his friends. Bliss declined several of Brooke’s requests, which seemed to violate the axiom of military life that superior officers make suggestions that are indistinguishable from orders. Bliss cited the financial needs of the Military Government as the reason not to add employees to the Customs Service payroll. As he explained to the general,

Yesterday [in a letter to the Secretary of War] . . . I stated that I was loaded down with employees; that I had increased the force about 150 over the number formerly employed [because of temporary needs in the Statistical Bureau]; . . .

³⁷⁹ Meiklejohn to Bliss, Dec. 16, 1899, and Aug. 23, 1901; Bliss to Acting Sec. War Wm. Cary Sargent, July 19, 1901, all in THB Mss, USAMHI.

that I hoped to discharge a considerable number of employees; that at no time was there any need for Americans in this Service except expert stenographers and typewriters and a few men of first-class executive ability trained in Customs business, . . . that any additional appointee would be simply a loafer supported by the Cuban revenue.

Bliss went on to say that while there might be some openings for appraisers or inspectors, these were positions requiring technical expertise as well as fluency in Spanish.³⁸⁰ As governor, and under pressure about the finances of the occupation, Brooke could not press his requests in the face of these objections. It was one of the strategies Bliss used to gain control of personnel decisions.

Bliss recognized the constant temptations facing his employees. With his Old Testament view of human nature, he thought it was just a question of time until virtually any employee succumbed to the temptations. Late in his tenure in Havana, he wrote that after “two years [of] very bitter and disheartening experience,” he had tried appraisers of several nationalities, but the record was one of “dismissals and enforced resignations.” The fundamental problem was temptation. Anyone in the position of appraiser faced so many choices and decisions that he was “almost certain sooner or later to yield.” Even though eventual detection was very likely, “this certainty does not seem to be sufficient to preserve integrity.”³⁸¹

In the struggle against corruption, he found no support whatever from the local Cuban culture. Early in his administration, an employee provided a tip that

³⁸⁰ Bliss to Brooke, Oct. 4, 1899, but see also other letters, of that date, June 3, 1899, and Sept. 2, 1899, in Brooke Mss, HSP.

³⁸¹ Bliss to Adj. Gen., Cuban Division, Dec. 24, 1900, and Shuster to Bliss, Feb. 24, 1901, THB Mss, USAMHI.

young men from Havana's leading families who had sought positions, they claimed, out of patriotism were in fact accepting bribes. They were passing fine cigarette papers as wrapping paper, which paid a much lower duty. Incensed that men who had enjoyed considerable advantages in life acted so duplicitously, Bliss had them arrested and jailed, much to the shock of the local population.³⁸² A more entertaining example of this problem involved livestock. The years of revolution and war had drastically reduced the herds in Cuba, so the Military Government experimented with a regulation allowing the free importation of farm animals for breeding purposes. Bliss shared the result with Brigadier General Adna R. Chaffee, Chief of Staff of the Cuban Division.

I have always maintained that the abolition of duty upon cattle imported . . . for breeding purposes would give rise to attempted entries . . . that would materially add to the gaiety of nations, provided nations are ready to laugh at things which should make the ordinary man ashamed of that portion of his race born and reared between certain parallels of latitude and longitude, which need not be accurately specified here.

Yesterday the first entry of cattle imported for breeding purposes . . . was made at the Custom House. The entry was for eight *mules* and three *oxen*. The importers – a firm of reputable merchants of Havana, as reputation here goes -- presented a certificate granted by [a Puerto Rican local government official. The official wrote] that the “eight *mules* and three *oxen* are of the best quality, breed and blood, and are, therefore, specially adapted for breeding purposes in any country the climate of which is similar to ours [in Cabo Rojo].”

I don't know whether the climate of Puerto Rico is specially adapted for breeding from mules and oxen. Nor do I know whether to attribute special ignorance to the limited functions of mules and oxen for breeding purposes in any climate whatsoever. But I am rather

³⁸² Palmer, *Bliss, Peacemaker*, 67-69.

inclined to think that it illustrates the facility with which certificates can be obtained for any purpose and the utter absence of humor, from the composition of the native mind, which allows an importer of Havana to gravely present such a certificate at the Custom House.

The next day Bliss wrote General George W. Davis, Military Governor of Puerto Rico, that “The peculiarities of the climate prevailing at Cabo Rojo . . . might afford you the subject of an exceedingly interesting report.”³⁸³

This letter to Chaffee is the only writing by Bliss that conveys a racist attitude. Prejudice toward the black or darker-complexioned Cubans was strong among Americans in the Military Government; one officer commented in a published article that “[w]herever Cubans . . . have been trusted to exercise the reigns of government, the result has been worse than failure.”³⁸⁴ No less a figure than General Leonard Wood, whom McKinley would appoint as the U.S. Military Governor in Cuba, told the president: “[W]e are dealing with a race that has been going steadily down for a hundred years and into which we have got to infuse new life.”³⁸⁵ David Healy reminds readers in his study of the occupation that “the views of the Cuban situation held by even the best-informed Americans were strongly colored by the racism which was rampant at the time throughout the western world.”³⁸⁶ From this letter, Bliss appears to have been ready to ascribe corruption to the Cuban “race” in general, but his work at the Customs House makes clear that he dealt with individuals on a person-by-person basis.

³⁸³ Bliss to Chaffee, Oct. 3, 1899, and to Davis, Oct. 4, 1899, THB Mss, USAMHI.

³⁸⁴ Quoted in Ninkovich, *The United States and Imperialism*, 96.

³⁸⁵ Quoted in *ibid.*, 98.

³⁸⁶ Healy, *United States in Cuba*, 209.

While prejudice may have contributed to Bliss's views, his realism appeared when he wrote to a former employee: "How indeed could I say that [there are no frauds committed in his administration] when the Secretary of the Treasury in Washington cannot make such an assertion about the Customs Service of the United States?"³⁸⁷ He recognized that the problem was in part cultural conditioning. When he found employees involved in corrupt activities, usually he dismissed them without attempting prosecutions. The reason was simple; he could not rely on the Cuban courts to convict. To Captain W. H. Hay, Collector at Matanzas, Bliss explained: "[I]t is desirable to keep the Custom House out of the courts as much as possible and to apply executive action wherever that will answer the purpose." Taking the case to court meant it would "drag on indefinitely with no assurance as to the results."³⁸⁸ In Cuba, "the absolute unreliability and general worthlessness" of the courts could be assumed. Bliss reached this conclusion after his inspectors caught a smuggler with expensive jewelry hidden on his person and in his luggage. The court acquitted the man without calling even a single witness from the Custom House. Clearly it was the "sentiment in the community which [made] it difficult to detect Cubans, or to prove their guilt."³⁸⁹ Bliss found no influences in the community to help enforce the customs laws.

Nevertheless, the Customs Service under Bliss always contained a large majority of Cubans. There were several reasons why he did not employ more U.S.

³⁸⁷ Bliss to W. Watson, June 13, 1900, letterbook, THB Mss, USAMHI.

³⁸⁸ Bliss to Hay, Aug. 5, 1901, THB Mss, USAMHI.

³⁸⁹ Bliss to Shuster, April 15, 1902, letterbook, 403, and Bliss to Col. Clarence Edwards, Sept. 13, 1900, in 1900-1902 letterbook, THB Mss, USAMHI.

citizens. First, the Military Government's policy was to employ as many Cubans as possible in order to prepare the country for self-government.³⁹⁰ Second, despite Bliss's prejudiced remarks about Cubans, he believed Americans would succumb to the same pressures and provide ammunition for critics of the occupation government. The same community feeling that protected Cubans would work to detect Americans.³⁹¹ Finally, he recognized that most U.S. citizens who sought positions in Cuba hoped to make "more money than they can make at home." Facing great opportunities, knowing that as political appointees their jobs could disappear at any time and would definitely end with the United States departure from Cuba, and serving in another country, they would find no reward for integrity and no permanent penalty for dishonesty.³⁹²

The everyday work of the Customs Service included many unexpected matters. Once the wife of one of Bliss's American employees wrote to him that her husband was not sending home any money. When Bliss ordered the man to send her \$75 a month, the employee protested he could not send that much from his \$125 monthly salary; Bliss settled for \$40. In another case, the Service cleared the remains of an American to be sent home. It had to investigate deaths or suicides on ships coming to Cuba. Customs Service employees also had responsibilities for immigration controls. On one occasion, Bliss appealed for instructions when his

³⁹⁰ Copy of THB's endorsement on a document returned to the Adjutant General of the Cuban Division, March 25, 1899, THB Mss, USAMHI.

³⁹¹ Bliss to Edwards, *ibid.*

³⁹² Bliss to Adj. Gen. of Cuban Division, Dec. 24, 1900, THB Mss, USAMHI. Brooke shared the same perception; see Brooke to Colonel Mason, March 23, 1899, Brooke Mss, HSP.

employees detained three women arriving from Spain. He was confident “the two younger ones accompany the third, who is a notorious keeper of a house of prostitution in this city,” planning to enter “a life of prostitution.” They had appealed to the Spanish consul-general to help them gain entrance to the island, but Bliss wanted to send them back to Spain. Unfortunately the records do not contain the official response.³⁹³

Another issue for Bliss grew from the United States’ racist immigration laws. Chinese could not enter the United States as immigrants, and there were reports that smugglers were using Cuba as a staging point for Chinese on the way to the United States. Assistant Secretary Meiklejohn ordered Bliss to investigate. He found that some steamers entering Cuba had “discrepancies in manifests of Chinese persons brought” to Havana, and he ordered his collectors to check carefully for illegal immigrants. Of course, as soon as he detained Chinese trying to enter Cuba, there were protests from the Chinese Consul General in Havana that the American policy had “greatly disquieted the numerous Chinese colony” in parts of Cuba. Eventually, Bliss required monthly reports from every port on the number of Chinese leaving Cuba for China via the United States, and he reminded the officers working for him that only specifically exempted types of Chinese could travel through the United

³⁹³ See file no. 15807 in Box 55; file no. 18152, Box 57; files nos. 18114 and 16682 in Box 56, GC files, NARA. The prostitution case is in Bliss to the Adj. Gen. of Cuba, Aug. 3, 1900, “Letters to the Adjutant General of Cuba from June 1 to Dec. 31, 1900,” THB Mss, USAMHI. The everyday business of the Customs Service can be found in a bound group, “Miscellaneous letters and endorsements, December 1901,” THB Mss, USAMHI.

States. They required special papers, while Chinese laborers were excluded in all cases.³⁹⁴

In spite of Bliss's prejudice against some Cubans, he established close relations and even friendships with a few. Many of the export-import merchants were of Spanish ancestry or birth, and they formed a distinct upper class of white or very light-complexioned Cubans. Bliss and many of the other American officers found it easy to get along with them. One of these contacts with whom Bliss developed a very close friendship was Louis Placé, an American citizen and a leading merchant in Havana. In a similar fashion, Bliss and several other officers on the staff of Major General Leonard Wood, who succeeded Brooke as Military Governor in December 1899, became friendly with the new Spanish consul-general. As a result, an odd problem could finally be solved.

It seems that in the naval battle of Santiago, Admiral [or Captain] Fernando Villamil Fernandez-Cueto, commanding the Spanish destroyers, suffered serious wounds. His sailors loved him and wanted him to have a chance to survive. They put him in a boat, rowed him ashore, and to prevent his falling into the hands of the Cuban guerrillas, left him in a cave. Eventually this story came to the attention of Wood when he was in command of the Santiago area. He sent troops to check and they found the body. It was placed in a casket until arrangements could be completed for its shipment to Spain.

³⁹⁴ See Chaffee to Bliss, Jan. 27, 1899; Consul General Chang Yin Tung to Bliss, June 6, 1899; Meiklejohn to Bliss, June 6, 1899; Collector at Cardenas to Bliss, June 17, 1899; Bliss to employees, Dec. 17, 1900; and L. J. Cage to Sec. War, Aug. 7, 1900, with Bliss endorsement, Aug. 16, 1900; all in bound file "Special Cases," THB Mss, USAMHI.

The Spanish government, however, had told its people that Admiral Villamil had gone down with his ship, as honor demanded, and the people took pride in his heroism despite their country's defeat. The Spanish government was not interested in the return of the body. Since the body in its casket was officially part of the U.S. Army's property, as officers in charge of it moved to new assignments they duly recorded it in their property inventories: "One Spanish Admiral, Dead." When Bliss established good relations with the new Spanish consul-general, they were able to persuade the Spanish government to accept the casket. This story, as told by Frank C. McCoy, one of Wood's aides-de-camp, sounded implausible, but the transfer of the remains and at least some of Bliss's role in the events receive confirmation from his correspondence files.³⁹⁵

While Bliss tried to reduce the corruption in the Cuban Customs Service, another drama transpired within the Military Government. The ambitious Leonard Wood ousted Brooke as Governor and Commanding General of the Division and secured those posts for himself.³⁹⁶ From the beginning of Brooke's tenure, Wood had

³⁹⁵ Bliss to Messrs. Sobrinos de Herrera, Oct. 1901, GC, Box 58, item no. 18000. According to David F. Trask, *The War with Spain*, 258, Villaamil (a slightly different spelling) was a captain but he did command the destroyer squadron. Bliss's letter refers to Admiral Villamil, which is the reason to use that grade and spelling. The Spanish-American War Centennial Website, created by military history enthusiasts, includes a biographical sketch of Villaamil by Lino Lopex-Cotarelo, and it states that Villaamil went down with his ship. The URL is <http://www.spanamwar.com/Vilamil.htm>, accessed April 9, 2005. Another website, http://24.1911encyclopedia.org/S/SP/SPANISH_AMERICAN_WAR_OF_1898.htm, also states that "Villamil . . . went down with his ship . . .," but that account seems to be based on a 1911 encyclopedia's information. In any case, the Bliss correspondence makes it clear that the remains of the Captain who had commanded the Spanish destroyers at the battle of Santiago were returned to the Spanish government, so clearly he did not go down with his ship.

³⁹⁶ Jack C. Lane, *Armed Progressive: General Leonard Wood* (San Rafael, Ca. and London: Presidio Press, 1978), ch. 6, discusses Wood's conflicts with Brooke and his eventual appointment to replace Brooke. Other biographies of Wood are Hermann Hagedorn, *Leonard Wood: A Biography*, 2 vols (New York: Kraus Reprint Co., originally , 1969), and Jack McCallum, *Leonard Wood: Rough*

sought to publicize his own achievements and undermine Brooke. Wood used his close ties to the press, and his close friendship with Theodore Roosevelt helped, especially when Roosevelt became the Republican vice-presidential nominee. Probably Brooke was the wrong man for the job. Although he worried constantly about how the President and Secretary of War viewed him, his method of governing Cuba was to move slowly and cautiously. The government in Washington could not wait.

Wood's approach was the complete opposite. With energy and enthusiasm, he "launched a comprehensive reconstruction program throughout the island."³⁹⁷ The new governor targeted the Cuban judiciary and legal systems, public education, public works, public health and sanitation, and charitable institutions. He had two purposes; one was the improvement of the life and health of the Cubans, but the second was "to prepare Cuba for closer ties with the United States."³⁹⁸ Wood was an annexationist, but the Teller Resolution made annexation impossible. His goal was to Americanize Cuban life and make the improvements so obvious that the Cubans would either request annexation, or at the least accept close political and economic cooperation.³⁹⁹

Almost immediately, Wood's new administration encountered embarrassments. Cuban heroes of the revolution whom he had hoped to include in

Rider, Surgeon, Architect of American Imperialism (New York and London: New York University Press, 2006).

³⁹⁷ Lane, *Armed Progressive*, ch. 7, "Military Governor of Cuba: Reform," 86-101.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 99.

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, ch. 8, "Military Governor of Cuba: Shaping the New Empire," 102-113.

his government declined the opportunity. There were problems with contracts for municipal construction in Havana. A former volunteer aide of Wood's, James E. Runcie, published an article on "American Misgovernment in Cuba" in the *North American Review*. Written before Wood's appointment, the article criticized Brooke's work and also the McKinley administration, and readers assumed that the opinions were Wood's. The new military governor had no choice but to cut his ties to Runcie, who soon became a bitter enemy. Finally, and most difficult of all, a financial scandal broke in the Cuban postal service. Anti-imperialists quickly pointed out that American claims to be teaching the Cubans "civilized government" had no merit in the face of charges of embezzlement by Americans working in the administration of Cuba.⁴⁰⁰

Wood's ambitious reform program needed the sound financing that only the Cuban tariff could provide. Once again, the efficiency of Bliss's administration earned him the confidence of his superior. The most thorough scholarly study of the Cuban economy under Wood's administration comments that, "Disinterested administration was the Military Government's most valuable gift to Cuba."⁴⁰¹ The Customs Service was the best example of this gift, because it had become so efficient and honest that the lower tariff rates brought in more money, reliable revenue the Military Government sorely needed.⁴⁰²

⁴⁰⁰ Healy, *United States in Cuba*, 135-142, discusses these problems in more detail, along with the political implications in Washington, D.C.

⁴⁰¹ James H. Hitchman, *Leonard Wood and Cuban Independence, 1898-1902* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971), 25.

⁴⁰² McCallum, *Leonard Wood*, 173-174.

It was easy for Bliss to join the social circle around General Wood. The Chief of Staff was his old friend and classmate Hugh L. Scott, now a colonel. Scott's years of frontier service and his knowledge of several Indian nations' cultures provided a wealth of stories for his messmates. Another one in the group was the young Lieutenant Frank R. McCoy, aide-de-camp to Wood. He developed such a respect for Tasker's knowledge and opinions that later in his own career, he consulted Bliss on many aspects of international politics.⁴⁰³

Bliss appreciated the praise he earned for his work in Cuba, and he hoped his good work would lead to his promotion. One of the most persistent problems of the post-Civil War army was the promotion logjam created by the many Civil War officers who remained in the service. Earlier in his career, Bliss had transferred to the Commissary Department to gain a promotion to captain.⁴⁰⁴ The demands of the new American empire led to the expansion of the Regular Army, which in turn created new opportunities for promotion.⁴⁰⁵ The death of William Ludlow created a vacancy for a brigadier general, and Bliss knew that the new President, Theodore Roosevelt, was open to promoting younger, more vigorous junior officers and passing over more senior officers. He had seen that process in the case of Leonard Wood, who had been a permanent captain and surgeon in the Regular Army. Wood's political connections

⁴⁰³ Palmer, *Bliss, Peacemaker*, 71-73, including citing a letter from McCoy to Palmer,

⁴⁰⁴ See the discussion in the previous chapter.

⁴⁰⁵ There are historians who argue that the officers of the armed forces supported imperialism primarily as a means of personal advancement and promotion; see Peter Karsten, "Armed Progressives," in Peter Karsten, ed., *The Military in America: From the Colonial Era to the Present* (New York: The Free Press, paperback ed.), 229-71. Karsten discusses promotions on 246-251, making the connection to imperialism on 254-60. For a critique of his argument, see James L. Abrahamson, *America Arms for a New Century: The Making of a Great Military Power* (New York: The Free Press, 1981), 48-60.

and flair for publicity gained him promotion to brigadier general in the Regulars, passing over 509 more senior officers.⁴⁰⁶ With Wood's support, Bliss set about mustering political support for his own candidacy.

Although most officers complained about favoritism and political influence on promotions, if possible they used this method in the struggle for advancement.

Among Bliss's own family, his wife's family, and his previous superiors, he found many supporters with influence. For instance, Ward R. Bliss, a relative, was a Philadelphia lawyer acquainted with the boss of Philadelphia politics, Senator Boies Penrose. A distant relative, Cornelius Bliss, was a national leader of the Republican Party. A friend and neighbor of his wife's family was Robert W. Smith, the treasurer of the Pennsylvania Railroad, who was well-connected in Washington. Among the former superiors to whom Bliss appealed for support were former Secretary of War Lamont, former Minister to Spain Woodford, former Commanding General of the Army John M. Schofield, and his commander in the Puerto Rico campaign, James H. Wilson.

Schofield replied with a frank letter offering to help, but with some reminders. While the retired general promised to write to both the President and the Secretary of War, and he believed that Bliss had "claims to promotion far beyond those of any other officer who has not already received it," Bliss needed to remember that

⁴⁰⁶ For a discussion of Wood's promotion, and the resentment that it caused in the Army, see Lane, *Armed Progressive*, 114-116, and Ronald J. Barr, *The Progressive Army: U.S. Army Command and Administration, 1870-1914* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 86. Lane gives the figure of 509 officers, noting that without this promotion into the Regulars, the end of the wartime Volunteer service would have meant Wood's reverting to his permanent rank of captain in the medical service.

Schofield's "influence with the present administration [had] never been very considerable." Schofield added that while he would support Bliss, he would give equal support to Joseph Sanger's application. Sanger was another former aide-de-camp, but he had already been rewarded with promotion to brigadier general in the U.S. Volunteers.⁴⁰⁷

James H. Wilson proved a more influential supporter. Wilson was both a wealthy railway executive and an important figure in national Republican politics. He wrote to Secretary of War Elihu Root, sending a copy of the letter to Bliss. He mentioned the services Bliss had performed on Wilson's staff during the War of 1898. Wilson reminded Root that Bliss, by his modest and able fulfillment of the duties of the Collector, "has won your very highest respect and admiration." He asserted, "There are many able officers in our service, but I know of no one who brings higher character or greater intellectual resources to the performance of his duties." Wilson added a sentiment that was precisely the thinking that annoyed so many line officers when they were passed over for promotion. He wrote that "Almost any good officer can command a regiment, or a brigade or even a division . . . , but it takes men of the very highest quality to discharge the duties of civil office with the success . . . of Colonel Bliss as [C]ollector . . . of Cuba."⁴⁰⁸ Not quite two weeks later, Wilson wrote Bliss again, saying that he had met with Cornelius Bliss and urged on him the merits of Tasker's application. The Republican leader had responded

⁴⁰⁷ Schofield to THB, Sept. 1, 1901, Bliss Mss, USAMHI. Bliss was a colonel in the Volunteer service.

⁴⁰⁸ Wilson to THB, Aug. 31, 1901, Bliss Mss, USAMHI.

positively, saying that Bliss had long since earned the promotion.⁴⁰⁹ In that interval, the President had been shot, and this event claimed the attention of the national leadership in Washington, D.C. Wilson urged Bliss not to grow impatient if he did not hear more from Secretary Root. Four days later, after McKinley's death, Wilson wrote again to recommend patience, adding that his "personal relations with [the new President, Theodore] Roosevelt [were] such that [he should] not hesitate to ask him to promote you."⁴¹⁰

When Root did find time to reply to Wilson's letter, he spoke of "the importance of having [Bliss] in a position where his very unusual qualities [could] be employed in important duties . . . , and I hope to be able to give effect to these views before I retire from office." He promised to raise the matter with the President as soon as possible. Bliss had written as well to the former Adjutant General of the Army, Henry C. Corbin, who knew Bliss from their years together in Washington. Corbin replied cordially that he had already mentioned Bliss's "special fitness" to Root, and after receiving Bliss's letter had written him again. He promised to "help . . . all I can."⁴¹¹

On October 5, Bliss wrote to Wilson once more, this time betraying a shade of embarrassment. In his original letter, he had written that it was "necessary to use influence to secure recognition of services in the Army." In this second note, he explained that there certainly were cases of promotions coming to men as the result of

⁴⁰⁹ Wilson to THB, Sept. 12, 1901, Bliss Mss, USAMHI.

⁴¹⁰ Wilson to THB, Sept. 16, 1901, Bliss Mss, USAMHI.

⁴¹¹ Corbin to THB, Oct. 12, 1902, Bliss Mss, USAMHI.

exceptional services. But because “appointments to the grade of General Officer are made at the pleasure of the President and the Senate,” usually an aspiring officer had to work to be sure the merits of his case were known. In any case, Bliss was relying primarily on support from his “former commanders,” and the use of such influence was “perfectly proper.”⁴¹²

In early November, Wilson wrote again, having met with Root and Roosevelt. The Secretary was “very earnest” in his support of Bliss, while the President said he wanted to appoint “the best man” and “asked . . . if [Wilson] was sure [Bliss] was that man. [Wilson] answered yes emphatically.”⁴¹³ The result of all these efforts was another letter from Wilson in early December, reporting that Secretary of War Root had told him that although he could not promote Bliss to the next one or two vacancies, he could make him the third appointment. Even though Leonard Wood was “backing [Bliss] strongly,” Wood’s friend Theodore Roosevelt “leans strongly to the men who have been on the fighting line.”⁴¹⁴ While this comment must have rankled Bliss, with his lack of combat experience, he was elated that his promotion seemed imminent. On July 14, 1902, Assistant Adjutant General William H. Carter, one of Root’s closest advisers, became a brigadier general; as promised, Bliss received his star immediately thereafter, on July 17.⁴¹⁵

President Roosevelt was not alone in his attitude. Many Americans and many army officers thought that promotions, especially to the grade of brigadier general,

⁴¹² THB to Wilson, Oct. 5, 1901, Bliss Mss, USAMHI.

⁴¹³ Wilson to THB, Nov. 7, 1901, Bliss Mss, USAMHI.

⁴¹⁴ Wilson to THB, Dec. 3, 1901, Bliss Mss, USAMHI.

⁴¹⁵ Barr, *Progressive Army*, 108; Bliss ACP file, RG 165, NARA.

should go to officers who had “been on the fighting line.” Bliss was one of the few men to receive this coveted promotion with almost no combat service whatsoever. His star represented an acknowledgement by the president and the Senate that efficient colonial administration had become as important a part of the army’s work as combat.

Most Cubans were understandably anxious to end the Military Government and run their own country themselves. The United States had promised to respect Cuban independence, and the pressure grew to honor that pledge. Theodore Roosevelt’s government prepared to withdraw American troops, with Wood beginning the process in Cuba through calling for a constitutional convention. He had already taken steps to strengthen local government structures and held elections; once a constitution was in place, there would be little reason for the United States to continue its occupation.⁴¹⁶

The task of reconstruction in Cuba would have been immense even without this extra pressure, and if the Military Government was to accomplish its goals quickly while leaving behind a stable government, then the Cuban economy had to generate enough revenue to make it all possible. For most American officers and for many Cubans, that meant that trade with the United States had to increase. Before the revolution and the war, according to one scholar, trade with Cuba made up 25% of all United States trade.⁴¹⁷ The sharp increase in poverty caused by a reduction of sugar

⁴¹⁶ Pérez, *Cuba and the United States*, ch. 4, sections xi and xii, and Healy, *United States in Cuba*, ch. 12.

⁴¹⁷ Mazarr, *Semper Fidel*, 91.

exports to the United States had been one of the major causes of the 1895 rebellion against Spain. Somehow Cuba needed to regain that market or find another. Cuba had two primary products to sell: sugar and tobacco. The sugar plantations had suffered severely during the revolution and war because the rebels targeted the industry in an effort to make conditions intolerable. Under the Military Government, recovery had been slow. The American authorities tried to promote rebuilding, but the continuing lack of a guaranteed market was a hindrance.

While most American military officers supported a United States - Cuban trade agreement as the best means to bring prosperity to the island, there were variations on this theme. For Leonard Wood, the goal was prosperity for the Cubans and increasingly close ties between the two countries, leading ultimately to annexation. Wood believed that the Cubans would welcome, indeed request such an outcome, once they saw their country flourishing under United States tutelage.⁴¹⁸ James H. Wilson, who served as one of the provincial governors during the first years of the occupation, shared Wood's goal with slight differences in his preferred methods. Wilson wanted the United States to establish a Cuban government, withdraw from the island, but maintain the closest possible economic ties with Cuba, preferably forming a customs union. He said these steps would allow the United States "indirectly [to] accomplish what we are forbidden by law [the Teller

⁴¹⁸ See Frank Steinhart to Wood, June 21, 1902, Box 206, Wood Mss, Library of Congress (hereinafter cited as Wood Mss, LC) and Leonard Wood, "The Need for Reciprocity with Cuba," *The Independent*, LIII, No. 2767, Dec. 12, 1901, 2927-2929.

Amendment] to accomplish directly."⁴¹⁹ Most of the leading Cuban merchants agreed with them and would welcome either close cooperation or annexation.

Whatever the ultimate goal, the owners of sugar plantations knew simply that the fastest way to recovering their wealth was a growing trade with the United States. There were many advocates of annexation in the United States, but there was also a strong anti-imperialist movement.⁴²⁰ These undercurrents made the issue of Cuban - United States trade politically volatile.

For Tasker Bliss, there was no way of avoiding involvement, but his role took on new importance when the Military Government began the process of revising the Cuban tariffs on a systematic basis.⁴²¹ Bliss became the president of the Tariff Revision Commission, which included two other Americans and two Cuban members, as well as a secretary. The goal was to review the entire tariff structure to develop a new one that would be more rational and systematic. Bliss confided to Colonel Clarence H. Edwards, Chief of the War Department's Bureau of Insular Affairs, that

General Wood addressed me a letter to be presented to The commission on its organization, laying down two conditions to be kept in view in the revision of the tariff. The first one was that the tariff must produce a minimum of Fifteen Millions of Dollars per annum from Customs duties. The second one was that subject to the first condition,

⁴¹⁹ Wilson to Brooke, June 28, 1899, Brooke Mss, HS

⁴²⁰ The best study of the thinking of the anti-imperialists is Robert L. Beisner, *Twelve Against Empire: The Anti-Imperialists, 1898-1900* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1968).

⁴²¹ A lengthy letter that demonstrates Bliss's understanding of some of the economic problems involved with the production and marketing of sugar is THB to James H. Wilson, February 28, 1902, Wilson Mss, Box 4, LC.

the tariff was to be revised with special reference to the interests of Cuba.⁴²²

Bliss doubted that a commission doing its work in Havana, and including several Cuban members, could accomplish such a task. In the same letter, he told Edwards that “If it is to be made thoroughly in the interests of Cuba, I believe it can be more certainly done by a Commission of disinterested Americans sitting in Washington and listening to every argument addressed to it, than can be done by any Commission sitting in Havana, and subject to the tremendous influences [there].” In the end, it was through following these instincts that Bliss steered through this political and economic tangle and endeared himself to many Cubans.

As Bliss expected, the politics began at once. He had urged Wood to appoint as secretary Laureano Rodriguez, a Spanish merchant in Havana. As soon as the membership of the commission was published, Rodriguez resigned. Bliss’s friend Placé, one of the American members of the commission, joined Bliss in seeking to dissuade Rodriguez. As Bliss recounted:

[We] told him that the United States had done what the Spaniards had never done since there was a Customs Service in the Island; that the existing Government had ordered that a tariff should be made in Cuba, a thing heretofore unheard of; that the interests of the Island should be represented on the Commission; that these interests themselves had for a long time been clamoring that the new tariff should be made here, and that they should have a voice in the making of it .

Bliss believed that the Spanish merchants had pressured Rodriguez to resign, hoping that he might then be appointed as a member of the commission, giving them a

⁴²² Bliss to Edwards, April 2, 1901, THB Mss, USAMHI. See also cables, Wood to Edwards, Feb. 21 and March 6, 1901, and letter Wood to Root, March 11, 1901, all in Box 170, Root Mss, LC.

greater voice in the outcome.⁴²³ He found these interest group tactics annoying, since he believed there was one proper approach that disinterested experts could find.

Making matters worse, Bliss experienced difficulty finding a replacement for Rodriguez. When he did, the choice was a revealing one. After three weeks, he wrote again to Edwards that Rafael Montoro had taken the position. Montoro was a well-known conservative, a former leader of the Autonomist Party of the 1890's. Naturally a man of his views was "unpopular with the radical element in Cuba," Bliss told Edwards, but his appointment "has given the greatest satisfaction to all the solid interests in Cuba." As usual, officers of the U.S. Army, including Bliss, defined "solid" as conservative, pro-business and pro-United States. Nevertheless, everyone, "including the radicals," recognized Montoro as one of the "best equipped men by study, experience and general habits of thought, for the special work required of a Tariff Commission," and "his appointment has been approved even by the most radical element."⁴²⁴ Bliss knew the commission's work was highly technical; it required someone with substantial business experience. Such a person was likely to meet the American definition of "solid."

One example of the technical issues the Tariff Revision Commission addressed was Bliss's preference for specific tariffs rather than *ad valorem* duties. His experience battling the culture of corruption at the Customs House made Bliss shy of *ad valorem* rates, which gave much greater discretion to the inspectors and appraisers. His views prevailed on the commission, which was ready "to get rid of *ad*

⁴²³ Bliss to Edwards, April 2, 1901, THB Mss, USAMHI.

⁴²⁴ *Ibid.*, April 23, 1901.

valorem duties, if this could be done judiciously and justly.” As an example he cited the [William Howard] Taft Commission’s recommendation for a Philippine tariff that was entirely specific.⁴²⁵ By April 23, Bliss reported to Edwards that the continuation of a mixed tariff was likely, but with “the tendency being . . . to reduce the *ad valorem* feature to the minimum.”⁴²⁶ Only someone with a thorough knowledge of the intricacies of trade and tariffs would have any idea when specific duties were more judicious than *ad valorem* duties, and people with such expertise were most likely to be found among the Havana commercial elite, a group with close ties to the United States.

In these letters to Edwards about the tariff revision, Bliss demonstrated a thorough knowledge of the Cuban economy. Edwards told him of the resistance in Congress to giving Cuba any sort of tariff preferences, and he further reported that many members of Congress believed that Cuba was hostile to American trade. Bliss replied to Edwards with a suggestion:

You ought to impress upon the members of Congress that Cubans are not engaged in trade. At this moment I recall only one importing house of the slightest consequence in Havana which is Cuban. The entire trade of the Island . . . is in the hands, first, of Spanish born people, and second, other foreigners,-- Germans, English, French, and, to a most insignificant extent, Americans.

The majority of native Cuban interests, Bliss said, were in sugar plantations, which at the moment were generally “mortgaged to the hilt.” Their best and perhaps only “hope of recuperation and revival of some part of their former prosperity lies in the

⁴²⁵ Ibid., April 2, 1901.

⁴²⁶ Ibid., April 23, 1901.

closest possible trade relations with the United States.”⁴²⁷ Bliss should have been stating the obvious, given the events of the 1890’s, but somehow the members of the U.S. Congress did not share his understanding.

Bliss was not speaking of perpetuating a colonial economic relationship; he was recognizing the international economic realities of Cuba’s situation. He told Edwards, “The markets of Europe are practically closed against the products of Cuba. Her sugar cannot go there; shortly after the War Spain put a very high duty upon Cuban tobacco; England is now talking of doing the same.” With so many other markets closed to Cuban products, the nearby United States would seem to be a logical outlet, but even there, “the [tariff] wall is built so high that Cuba is barely able to get over it.” What Bliss disliked most was precisely the American effort to maintain Cuba’s position as a supplier of raw materials and a market for manufactured goods. As he saw it, the United States “want[s] Cuba to raise tobacco in order that they may manufacture it. [The United States makes] it as easy as possible for leaf tobacco to get [in], . . .and as difficult as possible for manufactured cigars and cigarettes to do so. It is the same with sugar.” Bliss described this state of affairs as “pitiful and degrading.” The “great manufacturers, planters, exporters and producers” of the United States were “howling like a pack of wolves” about the Cuban tariff but were unwilling to grant concessions for Cuban products entering the United States. His anger made his language vivid as he pictured the American interests “demanding the last drop of [Cuba’s] blood and not even offering her an

⁴²⁷ Ibid.

opiate to deaden her suffering.”⁴²⁸ Clearly Bliss was angry about the effort to maintain Cuba’s colonial economic relationship with the United States, and to the extent he could change that relationship through the work of the Tariff Revision Commission, he would try.

Why had Bliss become such a strong defender of Cuba’s economic interests? Part of the reason was surely his sense of duty. He was representing the Military Government of Cuba, and that position meant he should work for the Cubans. Another factor was his close relationship with many merchants in Havana. As he had told Edwards, nearly all of the import-export trade was in the hands of Europeans. As an American, Bliss thought that the United States was in an excellent position to become the dominant trading partner for Cuba, and if it did, then Americans would replace the Europeans. The result would boost the American economy. Finally, since Bliss enjoyed good relations with his Cuban employees, he knew they were suspicious of American motives. He believed that the United States and Cuba would both benefit from a trade agreement, but unlike Wood and Wilson, Bliss understood Cubans’ attitudes well enough to know they would resist annexation.

The commission could revise the Cuban tariff, but it could do nothing about the duties on goods entering the United States. That was up to the Congress and the President. A variety of officers serving in the occupation government spoke up about the need for tariff concessions to help the Cubans. James Wilson had written about it as early as June 1899. Wood’s first annual report raised the issue again, as did

⁴²⁸ Ibid.

Secretary of War Root in his annual report for 1901.⁴²⁹ In the summer of 1901, a delegation of prominent Cubans visited Washington and gave President Theodore Roosevelt a petition from the “united business interests of Cuba” requesting tariff concessions.⁴³⁰ Roosevelt supported the idea in his annual messages of 1901 and 1902. He told the Congress:

Cuba lies at our doors, and whatever affects her for good or ill affects us also. . . . Thus in a sense Cuba has become a part of our international political system [through the Platt Amendment]. This makes it necessary that in return she should be given some of the benefits of becoming part of our economic system. . . . I urge the adoption of reciprocity with Cuba, not only because it is eminently for our own interests to control the Cuban market and by every means to foster our supremacy in the tropical lands and waters south of us, but also because we should make all our sister nations of the American Continent feel that . . . we desire to show ourselves disinterestedly and effectively their friend.⁴³¹

This was an impressive array of support from the executive branch of government, but the decision lay with the Congress.

These recommendations led to hearings in the House Ways and Means Committee that began on January 15, 1902. Fifty-four people testified, sixteen in favor of reciprocity (including Bliss and Wood) and thirty-eight opposed. Support came from exporters and importers, the National Sugar Refining Company, and Americans with plantations in Cuba. The opposition consisted primarily of beet sugar planters and processors. As Root analyzed the opponents’ political strategy: “They are endeavoring to create the impression, and with some success, that the sugar

⁴²⁹ Smith, *United States and Cuba: Business and Diplomacy*, 22-23.

⁴³⁰ *Ibid.*, 23, and Guggenheim, *United States and Cuba*, 103.

⁴³¹ *FRUS: 1902*, xx.

trust controls the output of Cuba There are indications that this idea closes many minds to the arguments we have been using in favor of fair and generous treatment to the Cubans.”⁴³² The proposed bill eventually passed the House with amendments designed to stir up American opposition, but it died in the Senate Finance Committee when Congress adjourned on July 1, 1902.⁴³³

At that point, President Roosevelt once more turned to Bliss. The Military Government had ended as of May 20, 1902. According to David Healy, Secretary of State John Hay proposed a treaty to the Cubans in the summer of 1902 with virtually the same terms as the original reciprocity bill. Only a handful of United States officers remained in Cuba to settle minor details. Under President Tomas Estrada Palma, the newly independent government of Cuba submitted a counterproposal on October 28. At that point, Roosevelt sent Bliss to Cuba to negotiate the final agreement.⁴³⁴ As a treaty instead of a tax bill, reciprocity stood a better chance of passage because it would go first to the Senate, where the specific American interest groups would have less influence and longer-range considerations would be more important. It would go through the Foreign Relations rather than the Finance Committee, where it would meet a more favorable reception.⁴³⁵

⁴³² Root to Wood, Jan. 10, 1902, Box 169, Root Mss, LC.

⁴³³ Guggenheim, *United States and Cuba*, 103-07, provides a detailed account of the congressional battle over this bill, but even better is Healy, *United States in Cuba*, 195-202. Smith, *United States and Cuba: Business and Diplomacy*, covers these events on 22-24.

⁴³⁴ Guggenheim, *United States and Cuba*, 107-109, and Healy, *United States in Cuba*, 202-206.

⁴³⁵ From a letter, Chairman, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations to Bliss, Dec. 19, 1902, THB Mss, USAMHI, it appears this judgment was correct.

When Bliss arrived in Cuba on November 19, 1902, he discovered to his surprise that the Cubans were well-prepared for the negotiations, having both a negotiating team and an advisory committee for the negotiators. U.S. Minister Herbert G. Squiers, however, had never received a copy of the American proposals. Hence he had been unable to do any preliminary work in support of a treaty. Once Bliss arrived, Squiers “threw himself into the matter heart and soul,” but his inability to speak out on the subject had allowed opponents of reciprocity, both Cuban and American, to spread rumors “that would seriously impede successful . . . negotiations.”⁴³⁶ Bliss met with Cuban Secretary of State Carlos de Zaldo and President Estrada Palma that very afternoon to present his commission. Bliss found that the “feeling of popular discontent and irritation” about the proposed treaty had “been sedulously cultivated by [opposition] newspapers and politicians.” As a result, the Cuban government was asking for many changes and in general desired to move the negotiations slowly. Bliss promised to “make every effort to push the matter to a conclusion.”⁴³⁷

When the negotiations began, Bliss found the Cubans very cautious. They knew their tariffs had to provide sufficient revenue for their government, and they desired to retain substantial freedom of action. Bliss found he could offer assurances.

I was very careful to impress upon . . . the Cuban commissioners the fact that the United States did not propose to interfere with their domestic tariff. They could make it what they pleased, as long as the United States received the differential agreed upon. It was absolutely necessary to take this attitude, because the

⁴³⁶ Bliss to Sec. of War, Nov. 12, 1902, THB Mss, USAMHI.

⁴³⁷ Bliss to Sec. of State [John Hay], Nov. 22, 1902, THB Mss, USAMHI.

Cuban commissioners and all of the people behind them were very suspicious that the United States wished to interfere in their domestic concerns, and in the sensitive state of mind they were then in such a belief would have been fatal to the successful negotiation of any treaty whatever.⁴³⁸

Surely Bliss was not being intentionally ironic, but under American pressure a year earlier the Cubans accepted the Platt Amendment as part of their constitution. Concerns about United States interference in their domestic affairs were understandable, and Bliss needed to offer them these strong assurances.

In the end, Bliss argued successfully that this was “a fair reciprocity agreement [that gave] each country . . . something that it did not have before and which it cannot get without the treaty.” In this case, Cuba would get a better price for its sugar in the United States, while the United States received a trade advantage in Cuba.⁴³⁹ After Bliss agreed to several minor concessions, the treaty went to the Cuban Cabinet.

On December 8, the Cabinet met all day to discuss the draft treaty, first among themselves and then with a committee of Havana businessmen. The government found itself in the middle between two strong opinions. On one side were the business elite of the island. Predominantly of Spanish ancestry or birth, they “represent[ed] practically the commerce of the island.” It was crucial that this group “completely re-establish [its] confidence” in the new government’s support of

⁴³⁸ Bliss to Walter Fletcher Smith [an import-export merchant in New York City], Jan. 12, 1903, THB Mss, USAMHI.

⁴³⁹ Bliss to Henry Fletcher, Secretary of the U.S. Legation, Havana, Jan. 23, 1903, THB Mss, USAMHI.

conditions that would encourage business.⁴⁴⁰ For these elements, the treaty “could be accepted without delay.” The Cabinet hesitated only because it wanted to give the impression it was taking a determined stance with the United States, a means to appease those people on the other side of the issue. A strong stand was “necessary to placate the . . . spirit of suspicion toward the United States that has been sedulously instilled into the mass of people during recent months.” After further negotiations, Bliss agreed that the treaty should have an escape clause; if Cuba found it gave excessive concessions to the United States, the countries would reopen negotiations.⁴⁴¹ With this and other additions, the draft agreement was signed just before 11 pm. on December 11, 1902.⁴⁴² Cuban sugar would receive a 20 percent preference entering the United States; a variety of American manufactured goods would receive a somewhat larger preference entering Cuba.⁴⁴³

The opposition to such concessions had not lessened, and the treaty was almost as controversial as the reciprocity bill had been. The Senate adjourned on March 4, 1903, without having acted on it. President Roosevelt decided to force the issue. He called an immediate special session of Congress to consider the Cuban treaty along with a proposed isthmian canal treaty with Colombia. The Senate eventually recommended ratification of the Cuban treaty, provided both houses of Congress approved the necessary tax changes. It then adjourned for the summer.

⁴⁴⁰ Wood to Root, June 16, 1901, Box 169, Root Mss, LC.

⁴⁴¹ Bliss to Sec. of State, Dec. 9, 1902, THB Mss, USAMHI.

⁴⁴² Bliss cable to Sec. of State, Dec. 11, 1902, THB Mss, USAMHI.

⁴⁴³ Guggenheim, *United States and Cuba*, 107-108, gives details about the treaty conditions; Healy, *United States in Cuba*, 203, discusses the treaty terms more briefly but with more attention to Cuban objections.

When Congress reconvened on November 9, 1903, members of Congress noted that economic conditions had changed in several important ways. First, the Cubans had more bargaining power because several European governments had dropped their subsidies of beet sugar production. With world production likely to decline, sugar producers could expect better prices, making the American market less important to Cuba. Second, American trade in Cuba was not growing as fast as many U.S. political leaders had expected, and a tariff advantage against European goods would help. Finally, the American Beet Sugar Association had suddenly dropped its opposition, for reasons that eventually leaked out. The American Sugar Refining Company, the “sugar trust,” invested enough in the sugar beet industry to divide its political influence. In December both houses finally voted for reciprocity, and the battle was over.⁴⁴⁴

While it appears that Cuba did enjoy a period of prosperity in the immediate aftermath of the United States occupation and the passage of the reciprocity treaty, the promised political stability did not follow. Instead, the United States intervened again in 1906 for another three-year period. From the perspective of today, it seems clear that the Platt Amendment crippled Cuban politics, with some island factions always ready to take a reckless course hoping it would bring American intervention. Thus it is hard to evaluate the work of the Military Government of Cuba and the reciprocity treaty in particular.

⁴⁴⁴ Healy, *United States in Cuba*, 202-206.

Unquestionably Bliss was part of an effort to tie the Cuban economy to the United States, but his correspondence shows that he believed Cuba's interests would be served in the relationship. Scholars sympathetic to dependency theory, such as Louis A. Pèrez, Jr., argue that the United States occupation, the Platt Amendment, and the Reciprocity Treaty represent "the central elements of U.S. objectives through the course of the nineteenth century." The local elites, this argument goes, became political surrogates for the United States because "their social salvation was a function of and dependent on U.S. hegemony."⁴⁴⁵ This approach gives Cuba a centrality in United States foreign policy that seems altogether unrealistic; it also posits a unity of thinking among American political leaders that simply did not exist. Concentrating on the executive branch, dependency-theory historians portray the American government as a unitary actor, but many of the political and business leaders of the United States opposed the economic concessions that would tie the two economies together. They did not see a necessity or even an important advantage in closer United States - Cuban economic ties. Those policy makers who did see advantages believed that closer economic relations would benefit *both* countries, as their correspondence *with each other* demonstrates. A close examination of United States policy from 1899 to 1902 reveals that these two opposite views created much confusion, constant disagreement, and bitter political conflict throughout the first occupation.

⁴⁴⁵ Pèrez, *Cuba and the United States*, 109, 102.

For Tasker Bliss, the goal was the prosperity of Cuba, something that he saw intertwined with American prosperity. He believed the 1902 treaty provided mutual advantages.

She [Cuba] thinks she will get a better price if we knock off some of our customs dues. I doubt it, but that is the only thing we can do to help her, and therefore it is proposed to reduce our tariff in her favor.

[T]he United States do not care (within certain limits) what they have to pay to get their cotton into the Cuban market, so long as . . . other countries have to pay more. If we once get the market we can take care of ourselves. So the United States gives Cuba a rebate of perhaps three dollars for every one that Cuba gives us. But Cuba's rebate to us gives us an inlet into the trade, and if we once get our elbow into the crack of the door it is our own fault if we do not get our whole body through in due time.⁴⁴⁶

This is a description of a deal made for mutual advantage, not of a plot to maintain the subordinate status of one party.

Writing to his close friend Louis Placé in 1904, Bliss maintained that the future held great promise for Cuba. While negotiating the Reciprocity Treaty, Bliss and Placé had spoken frequently about the results it would produce. To Bliss,

What Cuba secured was certain, even though small in amount; while what the United States secured was doubtful and could only be determined by experience. . . . I felt sure that if the Treaty proved to be a good thing for Cuba she would . . . make the Treaty a lasting one and that would even increase the benefits which she might receive under it.

It is perfectly evident that the Treaty has been a good Thing for Cuba. . . . [I]t inspired *confidence* [among businessmen and investors] which was the only thing that Cuba needed.⁴⁴⁷

⁴⁴⁶ Bliss to Fletcher, Jan. 23, 1902, THB Mss, USAMHI.

⁴⁴⁷ Bliss to Placé, Sept. 27, 1904, THB Mss, USAMHI.

For a small, poor country ninety miles from a large, wealthy one, perhaps that was the best hope. Bliss thought it was. He believed that “a little lowering of the tariff walls of” the United States would accomplish wonders for Cuba, precisely because of its close relationship with the United States. “Were that to be done, ten years from now the Island of Cuba would be the richest and happiest territory of equal size on the face of the earth.”⁴⁴⁸ That has not happened, of course, and as the United States and Cuba continue along the path of mutual hostility, to borrow David Healy’s phrase, the search for a policy continues.

⁴⁴⁸ Bliss to Col. Clarence Edwards, April 23, 1901, THB Mss, USAMHI.

CHAPTER 5

REFORMING THE WAR DEPARTMENT

Tasker Bliss was sorry to leave Havana. He had enjoyed his work there, formed many friendships, and appreciated the climate. Good cigars were plentiful. Moving to Washington held no appeal for him at all. In the middle of his subsequent three years at the War Department, he wrote wistfully to Joseph Howard, Jr., a cousin, “So far as climate is concerned Cuba is the only place that I know of fit to live in. There is no reason why anyone should get sick there or die of anything except extreme old age. The climate we have here in the winter is the very abomination of the Lord.”⁴⁴⁹ Washington’s summers were no better. When Major William Birkheimer, an old friend, was assigned to the General Staff, Bliss wrote to him that

If you had to be taken sick I think that it is lucky for you that it came while you are in San Francisco and not in Washington. We have been having some pleasant and much disagreeable weather, accompanied by the old-fashioned heat which makes life here for the next three months very disagreeable. It is a bad place at this time of year to convalesce in.⁴⁵⁰

⁴⁴⁹ THB to Joseph Howard, Jr., March 31, 1904, vol. 39, THB Mss, LC. Bliss may have been more accurate than he realized; see *The Economist* of October 21, 2006 (vol. 381, no. 8500), which has an obituary on page 97 for Benito Martínez Abrogán, a Cuban who died October 11, 2006, at around age 120.

⁴⁵⁰ THB to Birkheimer, May 31, 1904, vol. 39, THB Mss, LC.

Having earlier lived and worked in Washington for nearly ten years, Bliss knew the climate there all too well.

Like it or not, for the next three years and more, Bliss would remain in Washington, D. C. In fact, he was entering one of the most important phases of his career. As he took his seat on the War College Board, Bliss stepped into the middle of a political and bureaucratic struggle that had been ongoing for three years. During his time in Washington he would contribute to the reforms sweeping the Army and the War Department that had already been launched by Secretary of War Elihu Root. Although Bliss did not fully appreciate it at the time, his work from 1902 to 1905 was in many ways the most significant thus far in his career.

With Bliss as an important and productive member, the War College Board undertook to reform the Army's administration and procedures, especially in the field of officer education. When the Army General Staff came into being in 1903, Bliss was one of its members. As the founding president of the Army War College, he developed its curriculum and pedagogy and made it a working adjunct of the General Staff. For all his dislike of Washington, Bliss's work during this period shaped the organization and the thinking of the Army that would garrison the American empire and fight the Great War. The institutions he helped create would train many of the officers who would lead the Army to victory in two world wars.

It was not just the weather that made Bliss loathe living in the District of Columbia. The antics of Congress left him unamused. Viewed from a distance, congressional behavior might seem harmless, but when, as in the case of Leonard Wood's

confirmation hearings as a major general, Bliss's own good name was besmirched, he became incensed. Wood's rapid rise from captain and physician in the medical corps to brigadier general in the line made him many enemies, as did his ambition. As Archie Butt, President William H. Taft's military aide-de-camp, once observed, "Wood is never at heart's ease as long as he beholds one, not greater, but as great as himself. This is his weakness."⁴⁵¹

To his enemies, Wood's elevation to brigadier owed more to his political connection to Theodore Roosevelt and to his talent for self-promotion than to any special abilities he possessed. When Roosevelt nominated him for promotion to major general, Wood's enemies pounced; according to Jack Lane, Wood's most recent biographer, the nomination "set off one of the most explosive debates of Roosevelt's administration."⁴⁵² With Wood serving in the distant Philippine Islands, it was even easier to attack his record. Democrats saw an opportunity to embarrass the administration, charging political favoritism, and some anti-Roosevelt Republicans saw a chance to strike at the president.⁴⁵³ Generals John R. Brooke and James H. Wilson sought revenge for Wood's rising over them in Cuba.⁴⁵⁴ Thus the nomination stalled for three months. While these critics charged that Wood lacked military credentials, the irony of the situation was that

⁴⁵¹ Archibald W. Butt, *Taft and Roosevelt: The Intimate Letters of Archie Butt, Military Aide* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc., 1930), 2: 781.

⁴⁵² Jack C. Lane, *Armed Progressive: General Leonard Wood* (San Rafael, Cal. and London: Presidio Press, 1978), 125.

⁴⁵³ *New York Times*, March 10, 1904, p. 5, *ProQuest Historical Newspapers*.

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, Dec. 1, 1903, p. 1, for Brooke's testimony, and Dec. 9, 1903, p. 2, for Wilson's. Additional information on Brooke's charges is in the *Washington Post*, Dec. 8, 1903, p. 4, *ProQuest Historical Newspapers*.

his nomination as a major general came in order of seniority. It was Wood's earlier nomination as a brigadier general in the regulars that had come earlier than usual.

Since Bliss had served under Wood for nearly three years in Cuba and earned his own star as a reward for that service, the Army and the public regarded him as a "Wood man." Sensitive to the politics of the situation, Bliss supported Wood's nomination indirectly. When the Senate Military Affairs Committee called Bliss to testify, the point at issue was whether, under orders from Wood, Bliss had passed into Cuba a silver tea service that the Jai Alai Company sent Wood as a gift, with the implication that the gift would gain favorable treatment for the company.⁴⁵⁵ Called to testify before the Senate committee, Bliss told the members that he had "passed the package free of duty without any suggestion from anyone whatsoever, because I believed then and still believed that it was strictly in accordance with the law and a perfectly proper thing to do." Moreover, Bliss added, in his entire Cuban service, he "had neither known nor heard from any reputable person of anything . . . done by [Wood] that was not consistent with the character of an honorable man and a man of integrity."⁴⁵⁶

Bliss knew before he appeared that Wood's enemies were giving the newspapers false accounts of the secret testimony, so he was not surprised when the papers published versions of his statements that were the exact opposite of what he had said.⁴⁵⁷ Bliss knew that he owed his brigadier general's star to Wood's enthusiastic support, and at this time,

⁴⁵⁵ *New York Times*, Nov. 22, 1903, p. 2, *ProQuest Historical Newspapers*.

⁴⁵⁶ THB to Wood, March 24, 1904, vol. 39, THB Mss, LC.

⁴⁵⁷ For an example of the inaccurate newspaper coverage, see the *Philadelphia Public Ledger* of Dec. 10, 1903, which reported that Bliss "strongly opposed" admitting the silver set but allowed it when he received "mandatory instructions" from General Wood.

Bliss admired Wood as a strong leader and an effective colonial administrator. Later he would come to see Wood as a man too ambitious to serve under anyone else, but Wood had not yet become that person. Bliss demonstrated his political savvy in the way he responded. He did not write to support Wood's nomination. Instead, he wrote to Secretary Root, complaining that false accounts of his testimony had appeared in the press. As a result, Bliss argued, officers who knew the truth of the matter might read the press accounts and think that Bliss had lied.⁴⁵⁸ While Bliss claimed that he wrote to defend his own reputation for integrity, he had to know that his letter would be useful to supporters of Wood's nomination. In fact, Secretary Root used the letter, along with one of his own, as part of his own testimony in favor of Wood's nomination.⁴⁵⁹

The entire affair left Bliss with something more than the usual contempt of the soldier for the politician and deeply distressed about the extent that politics pervaded military service.⁴⁶⁰ Writing to a fellow officer, Bliss expressed incredulity over the phenomenon.

As you say, it seems incredible that sixteen Senators should be found to take the view they did in the case of General Wood. As a matter of fact, it was not quite so bad because, although the papers gave the name of Senator [Francis] Newlands as one of the sixteen voting against him, he voted in favor of confirmation. Of the fifteen who voted against General Wood, I do not think

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid. Bliss sent a copy of his letter to Mrs. Wood, who responded she was "most glad" that "Leonard was in such good hands as yours yesterday." Mrs. Wood to THB, Nov. 25, 1903, vol. 36, THB Mss, LC. See also THB to Louis V. Placé, April 15, 1904, vol. 39, THB Mss, LC. Wood's response came from Zamboanga, dated May 7, 1904, "Notes Received, '03-'05," THB Mss, USAMHI.

⁴⁵⁹ *New York Times*, Dec. 15, 1903, p. 1, *ProQuest Historical Newspapers*. See also Root to Senator Redfield Proctor, December 12, 1903, box 177, part 1, #277, Root Mss, LC.

⁴⁶⁰ Bliss did receive a kind response from Senator Joseph B. Foraker, complimenting Bliss as a "frank, outspoken, truthful man, who has the moral courage to speak up without halting or hesitating on account of possible consequences." Foraker to THB, March 21, 1904, "Notes Received, '03-'05," THB Mss, USAMHI.

that more than two had any personal feeling in the matter. The others took the case up at the outset in the hope that it would develop a campaign issue. But that makes the matter seem even more incredible, since it is hard to believe that United States Senators would be willing to heartlessly sacrifice the honor and reputation of a public officer merely for political effect.⁴⁶¹

With this attitude, Bliss would naturally find life in the capital city hard to enjoy.

Despite such frustrations, Bliss found certain compensations by living in Washington. He located an adequate townhouse at 2019 Kalorama Road, just off Connecticut Avenue in an attractive northwest neighborhood, for the reasonable rent, by upper-middle class standards, of \$100 a month. He enjoyed good relations with his landlady, Agatha Chandler, who entrusted the care of her house to Bliss's judgment. He joined the Metropolitan Club, on H Street just around the corner from his office on Jackson Place Northwest. After he became president of the War College, he enjoyed the luxury of a telephone in his townhouse at War Department expense. As it turned out, friends from his time in Cuba kept him well supplied with cigars.⁴⁶² Most important, having a good house meant his family was able to join him; it was always important to him to have them with him.⁴⁶³

Eleanora and Goring moved to Washington, but daughter Eleanor remained on Philadelphia's Main Line. She was now a student at Bryn Mawr College. Frederick

⁴⁶¹ THB to Captain Edwin St. John Greble, March 28, 1904, vol. 39, THB Mss, LC.

⁴⁶² Frank Steinhart, the U. S. Consul General in Havana, sent Bliss a box of cigars as a New Year's gift in January 1904. Captain T. E. DeWitt Veeder, U. S. Navy, commanding the U. S. S. Hartford, offered to provide Bliss with more, but Bliss declined the offer, adding "I am better off for cigars than money at this moment." THB to Steinhart and THB to Veeder, both January 6, 1904, vol. 37, THB Mss, LC.

⁴⁶³ These details are drawn from various letters in vols. 36 and 37, THB Mss, LC. For relations with his landlady, see Chandler to THB, Nov. 14 and early Dec., 1903. For the phone, Chesapeake and Potomac Telephone to Robert Shaw Oliver, Acting Secretary of War, Oct. 21, 1903.

Palmer noted that Eleanor's study of geology presented Tasker with a new intellectual challenge.

It behooved father to study geology himself in order to hold up his end and retain her companionship of which he was so fond. He studied her chosen subject to such purpose that he was a trial to her knowledge at times. Together they would take long walks in which he might be silent for an hour, and then he would break into talk When she received her doctorate he concluded, with the [characteristic] smiling twitch of the lip, that he had crammed enough to show her that he was not entirely ignorant of the rocks under foot of man as well as his history.⁴⁶⁴

Along with the study of geology, Eleanor took in the feminist spirit of Bryn Mawr College. The geology department had been founded by Miss Florence Bascom, the first woman to receive the Ph.D. from the Johns Hopkins University, and the first woman employed by the

United States Geological Survey as a geologist.⁴⁶⁵ Eleanor's decision to pursue the Ph.D. was highly unusual at a time when few men or women even went to college.⁴⁶⁶

In spite of these attractions, Bliss did not soon change his mind about life in Washington; he did "not want to stay here any longer than I actually have to." He knew the Moro Province of the Philippines was in his future, and he was eager for the assignment. After only six months in Washington, he wrote impatiently to James H.

⁴⁶⁴ Bliss, *Peacemaker*, 81, from a letter, Mrs. Adolph Knopf [THB's daughter] to Frederick Palmer.

⁴⁶⁵ This information about Florence Bascom comes from two websites, <http://www.brynmawr.edu/alumnae/bulletin/geolog.htm> and <http://www.brynmawr.edu/geology/General%20Information.htm>, both accessed on August 22, 2006.

⁴⁶⁶ According to Francine Blau and Ronald G. Ehrenberg, eds., *Gender and Family Issues in the Workplace* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation Publications, 1997), 21, only about 3.4% of women (and 5% of men) in 1910 graduated from college, but most of the women had attended teachers colleges.

Wilson, “I had hoped to go to the Philippines this spring. The A[djutant] G[eneral] tells me that I will have the next assignment after those which have just been made. That ought to come sometime in the summer. . . .”⁴⁶⁷ His work in Washington was interesting and important and it allowed him to utilize his intellectual skills, but an assignment to the Philippines would be an opportunity to explore a new part of the world. More important, in 1903 the Moro Province was the front lines of the Army, the place where an ambitious officer seeking combat experience wanted to serve. Bliss still smarted from the criticism that he was an armchair general. He knew that he had almost no combat experience and little service with troops; a command in the Philippines would remedy both problems.

The War College Board on which Bliss served in the meanwhile was an interim step toward the creation of an Army General Staff. Secretary Root made no secret of his intentions, but his project was extremely controversial. Bliss arrived in the middle of an ongoing battle over Root’s proposals, and an account of what Root had proposed and accomplished will place Bliss’s work in its proper context.

Root had come to his position without any knowledge, experience or background in military policy. In a famous exchange, a representative of President William McKinley spoke to Root on the telephone, asking him to accept the post. Root replied

Thank the President for me, but say that it is quite absurd, I know nothing about war, I know nothing about the army.” [Root] was told to hold the wire, and in a moment there came back the reply, “President McKinley directs me to say that he is not looking for anyone who knows anything about the army; he has

⁴⁶⁷ THB to William Birkheimer, Jan. 6, 1904, vol. 37, THB Mss; THB to James H. Wilson, Feb. 16, 1903, Box 4, Wilson Mss, both in the LC.

got to have a lawyer to direct the government of these Spanish islands, and you are the lawyer he wants.⁴⁶⁸

While McKinley had not intended to bring in a reformer, Root soon discovered the need for changes in the War Department's methods. His efforts to modernize the department's structures provoked a series of mighty political battles.⁴⁶⁹

The critical issue that led to a new secretary of war had been failures during the mobilization for war against Spain in 1898. Along with the administrative mess of the mobilization, the secretary, Russell A. Alger, feuded bitterly with the Commanding General of the Army, Nelson A. Miles. As a result of this conflict, the strategic and administrative burdens of the war devolved onto President McKinley and Adjutant General Henry C. Corbin.⁴⁷⁰ These two, distrusting both Alger and Miles, left them with

⁴⁶⁸ The standard biography of Root is Philip C. Jessup, *Elihu Root* (2 vols., New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1938); this account is in I, 215. Also insightful is Richard Leopold, *Elihu Root and the Conservative Tradition* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1954). There is an excellent brief account of Root's legal career before he joined McKinley's cabinet in Warren Zimmerman, *The First Great Triumph: How Five Americans Made Their Country a World Power* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002).

⁴⁶⁹ There is a large literature on the Root reforms of the Army and the War Department. Standard accounts include James E. Hewes, Jr., *From Root to McNamara: Army Organization and Administration, 1900-1963* (Washington, D. C.: Center of Military History, 1975); Paul Y. Hammond, *Organizing for Defense: The American Military Establishment in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), 10-25; Leonard D. White, *The Republican Era: 1869-1901: A Study in Administrative History* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1958), 140-153; Peter Karsten, "Armed Progressives: The Military Reorganizes for the American Century," in Peter Karsten, ed., *The Military in America: From the Colonial Era to the Present* (New York: Free Press, Inc., 1980, 229-271; and Russell F. Weigley, "The Elihu Root Reforms and the Progressive Era," in William Geffen, ed., *Command and Commanders in Modern Warfare: The Proceedings of the Second Military History Symposium, U. S. Air Force Academy, 1968* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1971), 11-27. Additional important works will be cited later in this chapter.

⁴⁷⁰ For more on Corbin's role in managing the war, see Rep. Ariosto A. Wiley to Corbin, March 24, 1906, Box 1A, Corbin Mss, LC. There is a great deal of information about Corbin's role, including letters and some newspaper clippings, in Boxes 1 and 1A, Corbin Mss, LC. Scholarly accounts of the conflicts in the administration include David F. Trask, *The War with Spain in 1898* The Macmillan Wars of the United States, Louis Morton, General Editor (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc.), 168-170; Robert Wooster, *Nelson A. Miles and the Twilight of the Frontier Army* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 214-221, and Graham A. Cosmas, *An Army for Empire: The United States Army in the Spanish-American War* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1971), 141-147.

titular responsibility but isolated them from the real decision-making. The president refused to allow Miles to command the Cuban expedition; instead, he sidetracked the general by giving him command of the expedition to Puerto Rico. Alger clung grimly to his office but was left with no real power in the administration. As Root immediately recognized, to wage war while excluding from policy-making both the commanding general and the secretary of war was clearly not a system that should continue.

At least one scholar of that war believes that after an initial period of adjustment, the supply bureaus in the War Department functioned well.⁴⁷¹ But most historians believe that “important internal weaknesses” in the War Department and the Army were major factors in the “serious difficulties” with the mobilization in 1898.⁴⁷² Because the Army “suffered from unsound structure and cumbersome administration,” some officers, such as Surgeon General George M. Sternberg, saw their reputations and careers ruined.⁴⁷³ David Trask adds that the chaotic concentration at Tampa, Florida, the haphazard loading of the transports at Port Tampa, and the disorganized landing at Daiquiri in Cuba, all “left a deep impression on those who took part.”⁴⁷⁴

More important than historians’ conclusions today, Secretary Root clearly believed that there were major problems in the War Department and that they remained unsolved after the war. In 1902, he told the House Committee on Military Affairs “that if we should go to war tomorrow you would find the same kind of confusion which existed at

⁴⁷¹ See Graham A. Cosmas, “Securing the Fruits of Victory: The U. S. Army Occupies Cuba, 1898-1899” *Military Affairs*, XXXVIII, No. 3 (October 1974), 90.

⁴⁷² See Trask, *War with Spain*, 154, 159, and Wooster, *Nelson A. Miles*, 221-225.

⁴⁷³ Trask, *War with Spain*, 160-161.

⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 185.

Tampa, and if you do not learn to act upon the lesson . . . whenever we go to war the same kind of confusion will exist.”⁴⁷⁵ Root recognized that some of the supply and administrative departments had performed well, but he testified that many had not, and the situation was no better in 1902 than in 1898. Root told the Senate “that I believe that with the organization as it was at the outbreak of the war with Spain *and is now* [emphasis added], the outbreak of war would irretrievably ruin any man who was Secretary of War.”⁴⁷⁶

Graham Cosmas argues that the staff bureaus dealt with their tasks and solved their problems with reasonable efficiency by the standards of the time. If the bureaus in fact performed their tasks well, Cosmas concludes, then Root's reforms must have been based on his personal "general theories that antedated and were independent of the experiences of the Spanish war" rather than being the "results of any lessons taught by [the war] itself."⁴⁷⁷ By 1899, he believes, the War Department functioned well and lacked only a strong executive who would lead it, taking the reins from President McKinley and Adjutant General Corbin.

What Cosmas fails to recognize is that the feud between Secretary Alger and Commanding General Miles, which led McKinley and Corbin to take control, was not an exceptional case. It was all too typical of the administrative expedients made necessary by the faulty structure of the War Department and the Army high command.⁴⁷⁸ Similar

⁴⁷⁵ Testimony of December 13, 1902, reproduced in *National Defense Act: Historical Data Relating to Present Law*, Hearings before the House Committee on Military Affairs, 69th Congress, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1927), 116.

⁴⁷⁶ Testimony of March 12, 1902, Senate Committee on Military Affairs, *Ibid.*, 17.

⁴⁷⁷ Graham Cosmas, "Securing the Fruits of Victory," 90.

⁴⁷⁸ For another example of a flawed structure that did produce victory, one need only think of the group running the Union war effort in 1864-1865. President Abraham Lincoln, Secretary of War Edwin

quarrels had led Brevet Lieutenant General Winfield Scott and General William T. Sherman to move the Headquarters of the Army out of Washington as a means to escape meddlesome secretaries of war. Viewed from the other side of the conflict, strong executive leadership was unlikely because of the bureaus' independence and the secretaries' usual lack of expertise. Before Root, few secretaries of war had risen much above mediocrity: John C. Calhoun, Jefferson Davis, and Edwin M. Stanton.⁴⁷⁹ The difficulties were more deeply-rooted than just a search for an able executive to head the Department of War.

The fundamental problem was the confused command structure of the department, which had become a jumble of bureaucratic fiefdoms. As a whole, the bureaus dominated the department; even when they clashed among themselves over jurisdictional matters, they would unite to dominate the secretary of war. The civilian secretary functioned without any personal advisers, assistants, or staff, so he could not compete with the expertise of officers who had literally spent their entire careers in one or another bureau. Philip L. Semsch summarized the philosophical issue neatly by presenting three contrasting methods of dealing with this type of situation:

The German system had been developed with the staff as a basic career pattern for officers while the French considered line duty as basic. Thus the Germans sent staff officers to field units to enable them to acquire troop experience while

McM. Stanton, Major Generals Henry W. Halleck and George G. Meade, and Lt. General Ulysses S. Grant were able to work together effectively and win the war, but there was never any clear division of authority among them.

⁴⁷⁹ Russell F. Weigley, *History of the United States Army* (enlarged edition, Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1984), 333. See also the classic work on American civil-military relations, Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957), esp. ch. 7, "The Structural Constant: The Conservative Constitution versus Civilian Control."

the French detailed line officers to duty tours with the staff. The American Army of the period rarely sent line officers to staff, or staff to line, under any circumstances.⁴⁸⁰

The result, of course, was that neither line nor staff understood the other's problems, since the officers lived and worked in separate worlds.

The Washington representative of the line of the Army was the commanding general. Some occupants of this position had actually tried to exercise command, and the result had been a series of tri-cornered power struggles. As the secretary and the commanding general quarreled over their respective powers, the bureaus dominated them both. Root understood these aspects of the problem and explained them to the Senate Committee on Military Affairs in exactly those terms.

[The Secretary of War] can assert [his] authority. I do not think there has been any just ground for criticism that the authority has not been asserted; but the assertion of authority which prevents some officer from interfering with the authority of the Secretary of War is an entirely different thing from having the machinery through which the Secretary of War can get things done, and the result of asserting authority and preventing the officer at the head of the Army from interfering does not give the Secretary the means to give effect to his orders and to carry out his policy. What we want is an organization which will make it possible for the President and the Secretary of War to have their general directions carried out, and carried out loyally and in good faith.⁴⁸¹

⁴⁸⁰ Philip L. Semsch, "Elihu Root and the General Staff," *Military Affairs*, Vol. XXVII, No. 1 (Spring 1963), 16-27. This comment is on page 18.

⁴⁸¹ Testimony of December 17, 1902, *National Defense Data*, 134-35.

As long as the commanding general and the secretary of war battled each other over the limits of power of their offices, there would be no one to give effective supervision to the work of the supply departments.

As Otto Nelson pointed out years ago, a combination of bureaucratic politics and the constant need for economy in the post-Civil War administration of the War Department fostered two contradictory trends. On the one hand, within each of the individual bureaus the need for financial accountability resulted in centralized control by Washington headquarters of all activities in the field. On the other hand, within the War Department's Washington headquarters the bureaus became more and more independent of all control.⁴⁸² It was a system that kept the Army inexpensive and out of the way in peacetime, but as the events of 1898 demonstrated, the bill came due in wartime. As Root put it, "the waste of money that is involved in having all the different branches of effort under the War Department go on, each by itself, without any coordinating force except the single civilian Secretary of War, is enormous."⁴⁸³

When Root took office, he was acutely aware of his lack of military knowledge or experience. In an effort to educate himself in military affairs, he sought advice and counsel wherever he could find it. Fortunately, his close associates included two wise and able officers in the Adjutant General's Department: Corbin, and one of Corbin's assistants, Lieutenant Colonel (Brevet Brigadier General) William H. Carter. These officers introduced Root to the basic literature about army organization, stressing the need

⁴⁸² Nelson's book *National Security and the General Staff* (Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1946), remains one of the best studies of the early years of the General Staff; this particular discussion is on page 43.

⁴⁸³ House testimony, December 13, 1902, *National Defense Data*, 116.

to create an American version of the German General Staff. In particular, they introduced him to the writings of Brevet Major General Emory Upton, to Brigadier General Theodore C. Schwan's analysis of the German Army, and to Spenser Wilkinson's book on the German General Staff.⁴⁸⁴ Root read these studies enthusiastically, but he did not accept them uncritically. His own experience in law and corporate administration combined with his new military knowledge to produce the Root reforms.

According to Carter, another important influence on Root was his early experience asking for policy guidance through the existing administrative system in the War Department. In an article published during the struggle over the General Staff, Carter wrote that early in Root's tenure as secretary, he became convinced that the bureaus had failed during the war with Spain. As a starting point for the reorganization he had come to believe was necessary, Root "invited" all of the "senior officers of the army, including all the chiefs of [the] staff and supply departments," to submit their views on army reorganization. As he read through their responses, Root realized that "all efforts to combine [the] recommendations into a practical measure were fruitless. [They] were all in the direction of increase, but bore no relation to each other." This experience taught Root the "necessity for a general staff whose permanent functions are to consider the well-being of the service as a whole."⁴⁸⁵

⁴⁸⁴ Upton's writings include *The Armies of Asia and Europe* (New York: D. Appleton, 1878) and *The Military Policy of the United States*, which Root read in manuscript form and had published by the Government Printing Office (Washington, D. C.: 1904). Schwan's book is *Report on the Organization of the German Army* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894); and Wilkinson's work is *The Brain of an Army: A Popular Account of the German General Staff* (London and New York: Macmillan, 1890).

⁴⁸⁵ William H. Carter, "Reorganization of the Army," *United Service* (1902), 114.

Root faced many challenges as he entered his new office. He needed to maintain the military governments in Cuba, the Philippines and Puerto Rico. In the Philippines, nevertheless, the situation continued to deteriorate. Soon the Army was deeply involved in a difficult guerrilla war that brought many new scandals and accusations of war crimes. The Congress had enlarged the Army, but that legislation had to be renewed or the authorization would expire. Root believed that the need for officers for a new, permanently enlarged force was acute. He wrote to Leonard Wood in Cuba, “We are going to need every available man here [in the United States] to organize our new forces when the army bill passes, if it ever does.” He urged Wood to find civilians to fill positions in the Military Government of Cuba because even if only one or two more officers would be available, it would help ease the shortage.⁴⁸⁶ By implication, the enlargement of the Army’s school system would also have to wait for the availability of more officers. The Boxer Rebellion in China required an American contribution to the relief expedition, and troops soon left the Philippines for China, commanded by Major General Adna R. Chaffee.⁴⁸⁷ Under the tutelage of Carter, Root had many ideas for improved administration, but most of them had to be suspended until these immediate crises subsided and the election of 1900 took place.⁴⁸⁸

⁴⁸⁶ Root to Wood, January 19, 1901, Box 170, Root Mss, LC.

⁴⁸⁷ Standard works on the Boxer Rebellion are Robert Bickers and R. G. Tiedemann, *The Boxers, China, and the World* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007) and Joseph W. Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988). Still valuable is Chester C. Tan, *The Boxer Catastrophe* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1955). For some of the operations of the American detachment, see Edward G. Longacre, *From Union Stars to Top Hat: A Biography of the Extraordinary General James Harrison Wilson* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Stackpole Books, 1972), 275-282.

⁴⁸⁸ Ronald J. Barr, *The Progressive Army: U.S. Army Command and Administration, 1870-1914* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, Inc., 1998; London and Houndmills: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1998), 63-70, stresses the importance of the presidential election of 1900 in the timing of Root’s decisions, while

Root soon realized that within the Army his proposals for change would meet with strong resistance, another reason to move cautiously. In his first report as secretary, Root discussed the need for what he called an Army War College. It is important to understand what Root presented at the beginning of these reforms. Root suggested

that an army war college should be established, which shall be composed of the heads of the staff departments, properly so called, and a number of the ablest and most competent officers . . . these officers to be detailed for service . . . for limited periods, so that while the college shall be continuous in records, character, and performance, it shall continually and gradually change its personal elements. It should be the duty of this body of officers to direct the instruction and intellectual exercises of the Army, to acquire the information, devise the plans, and study the subjects above indicated, and to advise the Commander-in-Chief upon all questions of plans, armament, transportation, mobilization and military preparation and movement⁴⁸⁹

This was an unusual type of college that Root proposed. Most of the tasks he listed for it pertained not to education but to the duties performed in other countries by a general staff. Root explained that the war college, as he conceived of it, might not be a place of instruction at all. Rather, the faculty would be the managing directors of the army's school system.

This college should have combined with it . . . the present division of military information of the Adjutant General's Office It should not supercede [sic], but should incorporate, continue, and bring under the same general management the present service schools, supplementing where it is necessary their courses, which now, so far as instruction is concerned,

Harry P. Ball, *Of Responsible Command: A History of the Army War College* (Carlisle Barracks, Pa.: The Alumni Association of the United States Army War College, 1984), 65, stresses that McKinley and Root did not want to push controversial legislation until after the congressional elections.

⁴⁸⁹ Root's reports are collected as *Five years of the War Department following the War with Spain, 1899-1903, as Shown in the Annual Reports of the Secretary of War* (Washington, D.C.: The War Department: distributed by the Government Printing Office, 1904); this quotation is from 62-63.

largely cover the ground. Its instruction would, at the outset and perhaps permanently, be given through these schools, but it should give unity, influence, authority, and effectiveness in military affairs to the work and the thought developed in them, aside from mere instruction.⁴⁹⁰

Root apparently believed that the institutions at Fort Leavenworth and elsewhere were doing the necessary teaching; he wanted a body that would coordinate all of the army's schools to make sure that all of the instruction fit into one coherent program. While oversight of officer education would be one of its most important functions, Root wanted this war college available to study virtually any issue involving the Army.

Root followed up his 1899 report by appointing a board of three, eventually four officers to investigate, study, and report on the issue of a war college.⁴⁹¹ The members of the board were Brigadier General William Ludlow, Colonel Henry C. Hasbrouck, and as recorder, Lieutenant Colonel Carter, Root's mentor on these issues. Ludlow, a Civil War veteran who had also served in Cuba in both combat and administrative positions, was known for his incorruptibility. Hasbrouck was a West Point graduate who had taught at the Military Academy; he also served as Commandant of Cadets before going on to the Artillery School at Fort Monroe.⁴⁹² The Board later expanded to four members with the addition of Lieutenant Colonel Joseph P. Sanger.⁴⁹³ He had served as an aide to Major General John M. Schofield and had absorbed Schofield's ideas about the faulty organization of the War Department, ideas similar to Bliss's thinking.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid., 63.

⁴⁹¹ S.O. No 42, A.G.O., February 19, 1900.

⁴⁹² Barr, *Progressive Army*, 61-62.

⁴⁹³ S.O. No. 145, A.G.O., June 21, 1900.

Root's assignment for what became known as the Ludlow Board was to study the possible organization and work of a war college. In his instructions Root presented the idea somewhat differently than he had in his annual report, beginning with the possibility that the war college would "consider and report upon all questions affecting the welfare and efficiency of the Army."⁴⁹⁴ As Harry Ball comments in his history of the Army War College, "a broader area of interest could hardly have been prescribed."⁴⁹⁵ Other duties of the war college included in these instructions were "to supervise and direct the conduct and methods of the several service schools." so that the graduates of those service schools would "have the opportunity of acquiring still further professional usefulness and accomplishments." The Ludlow Board was also "to furnish means for advance and special instruction, to devise means for the harmonious and effective cooperation of all the military forces of the United States [and for] the organization of an enlisted reserve . . . in readiness for mobilization, [and] to devise means for full cooperation of the military and naval forces in time of war." To help with these tasks, the war college would have combined with it the Division of Military Information of the Adjutant General's Office.⁴⁹⁶

Root was still thinking of the war college as including with its educational mission a large dose of general staff functions, but the two official histories of the war college disagree on that point. While George S. Pappas concluded that to judge from these

⁴⁹⁴ The summary of the Ludlow Board's instructions comes from Adjutant General Corbin to Ludlow, Letter of Instructions, Feb. 20, 1900, in M. Bartow Mercer, "The Army War College: Memoranda Pertaining to the Establishment and Operation of the Army War College," Compiled and Arranged by M. Bartow Mercer under the direction of Brigadier General William W. Wotherspoon, President, Army War College, 1907, 3-4. This is an unpublished early official history. Although the date given is 1907, it must have been completed later since it includes references and materials from 1909.

⁴⁹⁵ Ball, *Responsible Command*, 62.

⁴⁹⁶ Mercer, "Memoranda," 3-4.

instructions, Root's "initial concept primarily concerned the function of the War College as a general staff rather than an educational institution," Harry P. Ball concludes that "there was no indication . . . that the war college should serve as a supervising staff in any field other than officer education."⁴⁹⁷ Since Root remained as secretary and oversaw the Board's work which primarily focused on officer education, Ball's conclusion is the more accurate.

Carter's work for this Board focused on the existing Army schools and on possible ways to organize a general staff.⁴⁹⁸ Ludlow traveled to Britain and Germany to study their military systems, Sanger went to Switzerland to see its reserve forces. When they returned, the Ludlow Board met again and produced a memorandum to Root arguing that he had the executive authority to establish a war college. That institution would "coordinate and provide a unified army education system and provide advanced learning for selected officers."⁴⁹⁹ The Ludlow Board, and Ludlow himself in a personal meeting and a separate, broader report, told Root that a war college would not be a substitute for a general staff and urged legislation to create the latter.⁵⁰⁰

With the president still holding back such legislation, Root found other means to accomplish at least his short-term goal. Congress had appropriated funds for a war college, and Root called Ludlow's group the War College Board. But Root had not yet

⁴⁹⁷ George S. Pappas, *Prudens Futuri: The U.S. Army War College, 1901-1967* (Carlisle Barracks, Pa.: Alumni Association of the U.S. Army War College, 1967), 16; Ball, *Responsible Command*, 62.

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 16-17.

⁴⁹⁹ Barr, *Progressive Army*, 67.

⁵⁰⁰ A controversy developed later over whether the argument for a separate general staff originated with Ludlow or with Carter. Machoian, *Carter*, 117-118, discusses Carter's role but comments that it is "very likely" that "the entire board shared [that] conviction." He discusses the Ludlow-Carter controversy in 122-124.

created such an institution. Now he did—sort of. The Army War College Board came into existence by general orders in 1901, but it would not meet for a further seven months.⁵⁰¹

In this maneuver Root showed his reliance on Carter. The two had spent many afternoons together on horseback rides, and Carter “became an expert resource to the secretary”⁵⁰² The assistant adjutant general had written the draft of the order as a memorandum, and Root used it almost without change.⁵⁰³ Carter’s biographer, Ronald G. Machoian, rightly devotes considerable discussion to this general order, since it became the foundational statement of the Army’s school system until after the First World War, and thus its importance cannot be overemphasized. To Harry Ball, it represents a “benchmark in the professionalization of the [Army’s] officer corps,” while to Machoian, it “established the army’s education system on a parallel plane with that of contemporary institutions of higher education.”⁵⁰⁴ It did far more than just create the Army War College; in fact, that would not be a functioning school in any sense for more than a year. What Root and Carter set out in this lengthy general order was a comprehensive educational system for officers.

The system began with post or garrison schools which would teach junior officers the basics of regimental duty; as Root expressed it, new officers needed to “be impressed with the importance of the faithful performance of every duty.”⁵⁰⁵ It continued with

⁵⁰¹ Paragraph 7, G.O. No. 155, A.G.O, November 27, 1901.

⁵⁰² Machoian, *Carter*, 120.

⁵⁰³ Pappas, *Prudens Futuri*, 21; Machoian, *Carter*, 133-136.

⁵⁰⁴ Ball, *Responsible Command*, 68; Machoian, *Carter*, 135.

⁵⁰⁵ A circular, “To the Officers of the Army,” July 22, 1902; a copy is in the Root Mss, v. 182, pt. 2, #337, LC. For more detail about the officers’ post schools, see RG 165, Serial 288, Box 4, AWC files #106-145, NARA.

institutions such as the Artillery School at Fort Monroe, Virginia, which would teach officers the specialized work of their branch of service. The next step would be attendance at the re-named General Service and Staff College at Fort Leavenworth. The capstone of the system was to be the Army War College at Washington Barracks (now Fort Lesley J. McNair) in Washington, D.C. As Root expressed it in a circular published the following July, the way for officers to “qualify themselves for . . . high and independent command” was by “constant intellectual exercise and by systematic study.”⁵⁰⁶

In an address at the 1903 laying of the cornerstone of the Army War College building (now the National War College; the Army War College moved to Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania in 1951, where it remains) in Washington, Root explained his plan. He believed that the War College constituted a logical next step beyond the schools for teaching the specialized skills of the different branches of the Army. While their operation had been suspended during the wars against Spain and in the Philippines, Root believed that the demands of the new American empire meant that an “enlargement of military education [was necessary because of] the enlargement of our army, the . . . greater complexity of military science, the increased proportion of officers who had not the benefit of a West Point education, and the wider range of military problems” that the country now faced. The schools that had appeared one by one to fill specific needs now should become “parts of a general system of military education under the inspection and supervision of a single coordinating and controlling body . . . which should carry their best

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid.

men onward along the lines of research and of thought by which experience and theory combine.” The “controlling and directing body” of that system was to be the War College.⁵⁰⁷

Root’s general order listed only the academic functions of the Board, the primary ones being to establish an “advanced course of study for Army officers” and to “exercise general supervision and inspection” of the entire Army school system. By the time he wrote his Annual Report for 1901, the legislation to create a true general staff, submitted in February 1902, had stalled in Congress. Consequently, Root decided to use the Board as a temporary *de facto* General Staff.⁵⁰⁸ This idea, he noted, was a reversion to the concept set forth in his 1899 report, a mixture of an executive and an educational body. His brief comment was both an explanation of what he intended and a further effort to persuade Congress of the need for the General Staff.

The creation of the War College Board, and the duties which will be imposed upon it, as indicated in my report for 1899, is probably as near an approach to the establishment of a general staff as is practicable under existing law. Consideration of the amount of work which that board ought to do, however, in the field of education alone, leads to the conclusion that it cannot adequately perform all the duties of a general staff, and that the whole subject should be treated by Congress in a broader way.

No one can doubt that the general and field officers of our Army have been too exclusively occupied in details of administration, with inadequate opportunity and provision for the study of great questions, the consideration and formation of plans, and coordination of the various

⁵⁰⁷ “The Army War College: Address at the Laying of the Cornerstone, Washington, D. C., February 21, 1903,” in Robert Bacon and James Brown Scott, eds., *The Military and Colonial Policy of the United States: Addresses and Reports by Elihu Root* (New York: AMS Press, 1970, reprinted from the 1916 edition), 121-126. These comments are from 121-122.

⁵⁰⁸ Machoian, *Carter*, 135-136, argues that Carter had this expedient in mind as he drafted his memorandum that formed the basis of the general order. Ball, *Responsible Command*, 71-74, portrays Root as falling back on the Board as an expedient when the first general staff bill failed of passage.

branches of the service with a view to harmonious action. A body of competent military experts should be charged with these matters of the highest importance, and to that end I strongly urge the establishment by law of a general staff, of which the War College Board shall form a part.⁵⁰⁹

Once again Root intended the War College Board to be a part of the new General Staff. It would be the link between the theoretical studies of the college and the practical problems facing the General Staff.

Although Root issued the orders creating the Army War College Board in November 1901, no officers were detailed to serve on it until the following July. There were to be five officers as permanent members, drawn from the army at large, along with four ex-officio members: the Superintendent of the Military Academy, the commanding officer of the General Service and Staff College, the Chief of Engineers and the Chief of Artillery. The five officers Root chose as the permanent members were Major General Samuel B. M. Young, president, Carter, Bliss, Major Henry A. Greene, and Major William D. Beach.⁵¹⁰ It was through this assignment to the War College Board that Tasker Bliss first became involved in the Root reforms, arriving in Washington, D. C., in the middle of 1902.

Root and Bliss quickly developed a mutual respect. Root wrote later that “Bliss was a great comfort to me.”⁵¹¹ In Root, Bliss found a superior who could combine intellectual attainments with a keen sense of the practical. They shared a national outlook on questions of War Department policy. Even though Root was a staunch Republican, he

⁵⁰⁹ *WDAR*, 1901, 165.

⁵¹⁰ G. O. No. 64, A. G. O., July 1, 1902.

⁵¹¹ Root to Frederick Palmer, quoted in *Bliss, Peacemaker*, 79.

was willing to struggle to keep military policy-making as free as possible from partisan interests. Root's response to Bliss's protests in the Leonard Wood case is one example of this attitude, as is a letter he wrote to Redfield Proctor, then acting chairman of the Senate Military Affairs Committee. A bill was in Congress to create two Puerto Rican regiments; Root felt the legislation was intended more to preserve billets for officers than to fill a legitimate need for troops. He wrote to Proctor that

It is a pernicious idea that the organization of the army and the general policy adopted as the result of deliberate judgment exercised without reference to its effect upon [specific] persons, should be overturned for the sake of taking care of any particular set of individuals. I am therefore much opposed to the bill.⁵¹²

The function of Congress was to represent its constituents, but Root and Bliss each viewed himself as a policy maker for the nation. Sharing these attitudes, they found it easy and congenial to work together to improve the policy-making machinery of the War Department.

Bliss spent the month of June 1902 in Washington working in the Washington office of the Military Government of Cuba,⁵¹³ where the returned officers and employees were clearing up the remaining papers and accounts and writing final reports of the transfer of power in Havana. On July 2, 1902, he began his official assignment to the War College Board, which was supposed to hold its first meeting with all its personnel

⁵¹² Letter of Jan. 23, 1904, Root Mss, LC.

⁵¹³ S.O. No. 128, A.G.O., May 31, 1902.

present on July 28.⁵¹⁴ Secretary Root's impatience caused him to call an early meeting of "such members of the War College Board as are now in [Washington] city, to proceed at once with the consideration of the re-opening of the Fort Leavenworth College."⁵¹⁵ Consideration of officers to be assigned to the new class had to begin at once if enough housing was to be available for them on the Leavenworth post and if officers serving in the Philippines were to have time to return.

This hastily called meeting notwithstanding, the Board did not confer frequently for several more months. General Young, president, joined by Generals Corbin and Wood, went to Germany in the fall to observe the imperial military maneuvers. In November and December Bliss was in Cuba, negotiating the Reciprocity Treaty for the State Department.

Nevertheless, Root used the War College Board for exactly the sort of projects he had listed in his Annual Reports. In October 1902 he asked it to undertake, with the cooperation of the administrative and supply departments, a comprehensive study of the "quantities of arms, ammunition, equipments and supplies of all kinds which it should be the aim of the War Department to provide and keep on hand for use in case of sudden and unexpected hostilities, and also to reach a definite understanding as to the domestic sources from which may be obtained in any emergency a further supply" of these materials.⁵¹⁶ Probably the principal stimulus for this request was the diplomatic situation; the United States faced two potential crises. One was the prospect of Anglo-German

⁵¹⁴ See Memorandum for Order, Root to the Adjutant General, June 27, 1902, vol. 182, pt. 2, 260, Root Mss, LC, and G.O. No. 64, A.G.O., July 1, 1902.

⁵¹⁵ Memorandum for the War College, July 7, 1902, RG 165, S. 288, Box 4, NARA.

⁵¹⁶ Memorandum for the AWCBD, Oct 18, 1902, vol. 182, pt. 2, 395-397, Root Mss, LC.

military intervention in Venezuela to collect debts owed to their nationals.⁵¹⁷ The other was a continuing dispute over the boundary between Alaska and Canada, a dispute that took on new importance with the discovery of gold in the Yukon.⁵¹⁸ Either issue could provoke a war, and Root certainly did not want the War Department to be caught unprepared, especially after his comments about the failed mobilization of 1898.⁵¹⁹

As these disputes continued into 1903, Root, urged on by President Theodore Roosevelt, pressed the Board for information.⁵²⁰ The research Secretary Root required was a monumental task, and he spelled out in detail the information he desired, asking the Board for a full report on the following questions:

(1) What quantities of arms, ammunition, equipments, transportation, engineering, ordnance and signal corps supplies and appliances, and all other supplies and appliances of every kind and description would be requisite to fit out an army and make it ready for the most effective service, assuming, first, an army of 150,000; second, an army of 250,000, the question being answered in each case both with reference to a campaign in a cold, northerly climate and with reference to a campaign in a hot climate.

⁵¹⁷ One indication that the Venezuelan issue influenced Root's order is a later Memorandum for the AWCBD (through the Adjutant General), March 19, 1903, in which Root asked the Board to "examine all the material in the possession of the Military Information Division . . . regarding the resources and strategic points and other facts relevant to military operations in Venezuela, Colombia and other regions bordering upon the Caribbean Sea" and to find ways to increase the information available, vol. 182, pt. 3, 152, Root Mss, LC. For accounts of the Venezuela crisis, see Bradford Perkins, *The Great Rapprochement: England and the United States, 1895-1914* (New York: Atheneum, 1968), 187-192, and Kenneth Bourne, *Britain and the Balance of Power in North America* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), 347-351.

⁵¹⁸ For an account of the boundary dispute and its resolution, see Iestyn Adams, *Brothers Across the Ocean: British Foreign Policy and the Origins of the Anglo-American 'Special Relationship,' 1900-1905* (London and New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 2005), Norman Penlington, *The Alaska Boundary Dispute: A Critical Reappraisal* (Toronto and New York: McGraw Hill Ryerson, 1972), and Perkins, *Great Rapprochement*, 162-173.

⁵¹⁹ Ball, *Responsible Command*, 73-74, emphasizes this potential embarrassment.

⁵²⁰ Roosevelt to Root, March 14, 1903, Box 162, Root Mss, LC; the minutes of the Board's March 24 meeting show that Root passed on the president's order, RG 165, S. 286, p. 123, NARA.

- (2) What is our present supply of each article or class of articles reported as necessary for such an emergency?
- (3) What is the present capacity for the production of such articles?
- (4) What are the domestic sources of supply . . . ?

I wish the same questions answered also specifically as to the fitting out of an expedition of 25,000 men and of an expedition of 50,000 men to proceed beyond the limits of the United States, either north or south, upon either the Atlantic or Pacific.”

As if these tasks were not enough, Root also asked for a report on the storage facilities of the Army, both in terms of the current capacity for storage of every type of supplies and whether they were “properly located” given the “requirements of possible hostilities?”⁵²¹

In his memorandum, Root spelled out some of the reasons he was asking the War College Board for this information, using precisely the reasons he gave to Congress in his testimony on the general staff legislation. He told the War College Board: “At present . . . the Chief of [each supply bureau] determines where [supplies] shall be kept; . . . but it is not the business of those officers to plan campaigns or determine where these things are most likely to be needed, and there is therefore no proper relation between the place where supplies are kept and the place where they will probably be needed.”⁵²²

The Board did not complete its report until the following March, by which time the diplomatic crises were over and Congress had passed the legislation creating the Army General Staff. When it did respond, the Board gave Root a document that, with its six

⁵²¹ Memorandum for the AWCBD, October 18, 1902, Root Mss, LC.

⁵²² Ibid.

appendices, ran to more than three hundred pages.⁵²³ The report demonstrates that the bureau chiefs cooperated and supplied the necessary information. It also reveals their satisfaction. For instance, the Quartermaster General told the War College Board that most clothing items were easily purchased on the open market, but he recalled that in 1898, when the stock on hand of every item had been “inadequate,” the efforts of his department meant that “in a little more than three and one half months nearly all of the . . . troops were equipped.” The Board, by contrast, termed this delay “intolerable.” Both agencies agreed that the ultimate productive capacity of the United States was “practically without limit,” but the Board considered the “immediate capacity” of the manufacturers to be a “matter of great importance.”⁵²⁴

The commissary general reported that his purchasing agents would be able to buy “without delay” enough food to make up the daily ration for an army of almost 1,400,000 men. With the establishment of additional purchasing stations, this amount could be “indefinitely increased.” The situation for medical equipment and supplies was less satisfactory; even for an expedition of 35,000 men, making up what was needed would require six months and more than \$13 million. The Board decided that the medical allowance was ample and “under certain conditions more than ample,” so in all three of these areas, it recommended that the “entire subject of authorized allowances for field service receive the careful consideration of the General Staff at the earliest practicable moment.”⁵²⁵

⁵²³ AWCBD Report on Expeditionary Forces and Their Requirements, March 17, 1903, RG 165, Series 289, 1 volume, NARA.

⁵²⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁵²⁵ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

A more difficult question was the strategic location of the supplies for such expeditions. As Root suspected, because each supply department stored its materials in locations convenient for its own operations, there was no coordination of sites. The War College Board did not identify an easy remedy. It did conclude that the facilities for the smaller expeditions should be the same as for the larger ones, but precisely where those sites might be was a “most profound problem.” Once again, it left the solution to its successor organization, since such a study would require “all the resources of the General Staff. Under existing law it is one of the first as it is one of the most important questions assigned to that corps.”⁵²⁶ In spite of these evasions, Root must have felt that so far his new system was working reasonably well.

An indication of Root’s satisfaction with the work of the War College Board was that as soon as it completed the one report, he asked for another. On March 20 he sent the Board another request, this time asking it to study all of the “military posts, barracks and quarters” needed for the distribution of troops across the United States. The Board responded with a report of twelve pages plus another set of appendices.⁵²⁷ It noted that “a multitude of minor questions” had come to it as it considered this topic, leading to the conclusion that such a study of “the stations of troops and projects for quartering them” should be continuous. Only in that way could each year’s appropriations be used to “best advantage,” because too many existing posts were the products of either some “urgent

⁵²⁶ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁵²⁷ The report Root requested is “Report of the War College Board on Posts Scheme,” found in its Proceedings, RG 165, S. 286, 165-176 (and appendices 177-199), NARA.

necessity” in the past or of “local influences”—meaning congressional pressure to maintain posts for the sake of local economies.⁵²⁸

The War College Board considered the issue especially important to the Coast Artillery, because the work of the Endicott Board nearly twenty years earlier had been rendered obsolete by the technological progress of guns and gunnery. Only the most important ports should be protected by long-range guns. For detailed decisions about coast defenses, the War College Board deferred to the Board of Engineers.⁵²⁹ Another problem the report discussed was the need for barracks and quarters for units returning from the Philippines. Once again trying to anticipate future needs, the Board recommended that a few of the largest military reservations be preserved intact (Forts Assiniboine and Keogh in Montana) or even enlarged (Fort Sill, Oklahoma), because there were few locations available where such “large bodies of land can be obtained without great expense.”⁵³⁰

Along with many specific recommendations for the size and composition of garrisons, the Board included its recommendation that four of the larger posts should be “garrisoned with troops of all arms”: Fort Sheridan, Illinois; Fort Snelling, Minnesota; Fort Sam Houston, Texas; and a new fort to be built near Buffalo, New York. In 1903, these were logical locations for garrisons that would be ready to take the field, since the most likely areas for operations appeared to be in Mexico and Latin America generally or along the Canadian frontier. The Board added that such garrisons would serve an added

⁵²⁸ Ibid., 166, 168.

⁵²⁹ Ibid., 165-66.

⁵³⁰ Ibid., 175.

purpose as “good schools of instruction for officers of all arms.”⁵³¹ While the Board recommended these combined-arms posts, it also spoke for the line of the Army when it recommended that there should never be a post in any geographic department that would be “controlled” by a bureau chief or his representative and “not under the command of the Department Commander.”⁵³² In this report, as in its predecessor, Secretary Root could see his new institution functioning as he had hoped, considering these policy questions from the point of view of the entire Army and the War Department.

The education and training of officers remained one of the most important of Root’s reform efforts. With the expansion of the Army to meet the needs of the new American empire, many junior officers had been appointed from civilian life. Of course, these men had a lot to learn, both about their regimental duties and about life in the Army. Furthermore, Root was determined to reorganize the Army’s post-graduate schools to create a more systematic progression for young officers. One of the major steps in this process had been taken while Bliss was still in Cuba. The publication of General Order Number 155 in 1901 set out the structure of the Army schools system. Under the influence of the War College Board, the adjutant general’s office produced modifications in September 1902 and July 1903, elaborating on the examinations required of officers taking the course in the officers’ schools at posts.⁵³³ The former established the curriculum of the post schools, while the latter dealt with officers who missed some part of the required examinations because of illness. In the latter case, no officer would be

⁵³¹ Ibid.

⁵³² Ibid., 169.

⁵³³ See General Orders, No. 102, September 22, 1902, and General Orders, No. 113, July 31, 1903.

listed as “deficient” in the subject he had missed. Instead, his record would note that he had not completed the course and the subject on which he had not been examined. There was tremendous urgency surrounding the issue of training junior officers because of the large number of officers appointed from civilian life, many of them with no military training at all. According to a study Root requested, “of 1818 officers of the line of the Army appointed since the beginning of the war with Spain, only 276 were West Point graduates. The remaining 1542 [had] had no systematic military training.”⁵³⁴

Because of that great need, a more important general order that the Army War College Board produced also involved the education of officers.⁵³⁵ The topic was the military training offered at educational institutions, or as the relevant legislation put it, “any established military institute, seminary or academy, college or university” with more than one hundred fifty male students. Such places could request that an army or navy officer be detailed to the school in order to provide military training. For Tasker Bliss, this general order had special importance for two reasons. One was that these problems were to be his particular domain over the next three years. The other was that Root considered it vital to “bring the outside military schools . . . into [the] general system of education [of all officers].”⁵³⁶

⁵³⁴ Root to Charles Eliot, President of Harvard University, May 16, 1903, vol. 176, pt. 3, Root Mss, LC.

⁵³⁵ General Orders No. 94, A. G. O., Washington, D. C., August 9, 1902. All of the quotations in the paragraph come from this general order.

⁵³⁶ Root to Grenville M. Dodge, Nov. 6, 1902, Vol. 176, pt. 1, Root Mss, LC. In a subsequent letter to Dodge, Root commented that the work of Norwich University, the Virginia Military Institute, and similar institutions deserved “formal, official recognition of their merits.” July 2, 1903, vol. 176, pt. 3, #341, Root Mss, LC.

Bliss was the most appropriate Board member for this work. His father and father-in-law were both academics. Bliss himself had enjoyed his two assignments as a teacher, had a continuing interest in academic issues and debates, and had earned a reputation as a scholar. Along with his academic interests and experiences, Bliss brought the professional officer's desire for rigorous military training. After one of his inspection trips, he wrote to the president of the Pennsylvania Military College in Chester (P.M.C., now Widener University) that he had found "nothing to criticize and everything to praise." This college maintained high standards of training for "civil professions" but combined them with the "one thing [necessary] for success either in military or civil life – *discipline.*" Bliss believed P.M.C. would "thoroughly saturate the young man's mind" with "self-control and obedience." These habits should be "thoroughly ingrained in a young man's character" because they were "of more importance for success . . . than anything else."⁵³⁷ Secretary Root had described this "preliminary training" of a potential "body of [officers of] volunteers" as "one of the things I have most at heart."⁵³⁸ The Board had found the best man for this task of combining military training with civilian education.

Root told Bliss that what he wanted was to systematize the military instruction in institutions of higher education across the country to put their "instruction upon a more satisfactory basis." He desired "certain uniform rules" for all of the military colleges. Aware of the issues of academic freedom in a collegiate setting, Root recognized that such regulations must not "infringe upon the charters of the various military institutions."

⁵³⁷ THB to Charles E. Hyatt, June 16, 1903, vol. 36, Bliss Mss, LC.

⁵³⁸ Root to George W. Wingate, a New York City lawyer, January 11, 1901, Box 14, Root Mss, LC.

Those places doing good work needed “as much encouragement as possible,” while the others needed to come “up to a standard” that would justify further assistance from the War Department.⁵³⁹ This system was an early example of what has since become commonplace, with the federal government offering conditional assistance; if an institution meets the federal guidelines, then it receives federal help. Root displayed the Progressive era’s desire for orderly and systematic methods.

The task of writing the new regulations fell to Bliss as a committee of one.⁵⁴⁰ The 1902 general order he produced specified the process for the selection of officers to be detailed and the curriculum to be taught. It divided the institutions into three classes. The second class consisted of the agricultural schools created under the Morrill Land Grant College Act of 1862; the law required them to offer military tactics as part of their curricula. The third class included military schools or colleges, “those whose organization is essentially military and [within which] the acquisition of a high degree of military drill and discipline” was a primary objective. All the other schools to which officers, “active or retired,” could be detailed made up the first class. The curriculum for each class differed significantly both in terms of the required amount of instructional time and the necessary subjects to be taught.

The records of the War College Board teem with evidence of Bliss’s interaction with colleges and universities. By the first months of 1903, after passage of the General Staff Bill, the Board was meeting at least weekly. Most of the work with civilian

⁵³⁹ Memorandum, Root to the War College Board, July 7, 1902, RG 165, S. 288, Box 1, #6, NARA.

⁵⁴⁰ Memorandum, THB to W. D. Beach, Secretary of the AWCBD, January 6, 1902, RG 165, S. 288, Box 4, #74-91, NARA.

institutions of higher learning the Board gave to a committee, and usually Bliss was the sole member. In a meeting on February 10, 1903, the Board made him a “standing committee” to consider ways to modify the general orders that regulated these programs.⁵⁴¹

The issues, reports, and requests that flowed to Washington from the various schools brought all sorts of questions to the Board and to Bliss. At Nevada State University, the president wanted to use the military instructor as a teacher in the preparatory program, but the Board replied that to do so would be a violation of the orders regulating the program.⁵⁴² The president of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology wrote to Root, asking for relief from the requirement of a specific amount of class time for the military course.⁵⁴³ The War College Board agreed that there was so much technical instruction in the M.I.T. curriculum that the program there should be considered in compliance with the requirements of the general order.⁵⁴⁴ An unusual situation arose at the University of Alabama, where an inspector reported that the military program was so unpopular with the students that the state legislature had abolished drills. As a result, there was no longer any reason to store government military equipment at the university.⁵⁴⁵ Even Charles Eliot, president of Harvard University, expressed interest in the military program, asking Root for the detail of an officer from the active list. The

⁵⁴¹ AWCBD Proceedings, February 10, 1903, RG 165, S. 286, p. 53, NARA. Bliss was absent on official business and learned of this decision in a letter the next day, W. D. Beach to THB, Bliss Mss, USAMHI.

⁵⁴² Ibid.

⁵⁴³ Henry S. Pritchett to Root, February 14, 1903, vol. 176, pt. 2, Root Mss, LC.

⁵⁴⁴ AWC Bd Proceedings, February 24, 1903, Number 232, RG 165, S. 286, p. 62; SBM Young endorsement, February 27, 1903, vol. 176, pt. 2, Root Mss, LC.

⁵⁴⁵ AWCBD Proceedings, June 9, 1903, RG 165, S. 286, pp. 223, 250, NARA.

secretary replied that, because of the great demand for officers, he would have to find a retired officer who would fill the position.⁵⁴⁶ Further letters from Eliot led the secretary to ask the Board to send more than a standard reply; to Bliss fell the task of writing a lengthy report giving Eliot the reasons why a retired officer would have to suffice.⁵⁴⁷

Another of the tasks the Board took up was to work with the state militias, better known as the National Guard. Secretary Root demonstrated his interest in an improved Guard and in a new relationship between the national government and the state militias.⁵⁴⁸ In his report for 1901, Root called for “throwing open” the Army’s various post-graduate schools to the officers of the National Guard. His hope was to create a large group of young men “competent to perform the duties of volunteer officers in the staff and supply departments,” ready to serve at the beginning of any war. Having trained men ready for service would eliminate the “confusion, waste, delay, and suffering” that had always been part of American mobilizations of the past.⁵⁴⁹ Root managed to persuade the Congress to include funds in the appropriation bill for 1904, covering the costs for the militia and volunteer officers to attend the service schools.

It became Bliss’s responsibility to report on what the Army needed to do to prepare for their attendance. He concluded that since this program was a “new project,” there was “no available means” to predict how many officers would take advantage of it.

⁵⁴⁶ Root to Eliot, February 19, 1903, vol. 176, pt. 2, Root Mss, LC.

⁵⁴⁷ Root to Eliot, March 17, 1903, Root Mss, vol. 176, pt. 2, LC; THB to Root, April 9, 1903, AWC Bd #374 filed with #332, RG 165, S. 288, Box 4, file “AWC 227-242,” NARA.

⁵⁴⁸ Weigley, “Root Reforms,” in Geffen, *Command and Commanders*, 28-34; Jerry Cooper, *The Rise of the National Guard: The Evolution of the American Militia, 1865-1920* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 108-112.

⁵⁴⁹ *Five Years*, 1901, 163.

Because the capacity of the service schools was limited, the War Department had to make clear to the governors that not everyone nominated would be able to attend. Furthermore, the department had to make its own decisions assigning serving officers to the schools as early as possible, in order to know the number of vacancies in each program. In his report, Bliss suggested that the number of militia officers from any state or territory that would be allowed to attend should be based on the aggregate strength of its National Guard. Finally, Bliss stressed the importance of treating militia officers with the “respect, courtesy and obedience due to their rank.” Such sensitivity was typical of Bliss and made him the right officer to prepare such a program.⁵⁵⁰

With the passage of the General Staff Act, further questions arose that the War College Board had to answer. Those concerned which officers would be detailed to serve on the General Staff, who would make the selection, and what would be the criteria for selection. All three questions had to be settled within the War Department. Soon after passage of the bill, Secretary Root began that process with a memorandum to the War College Board. He asked for a “recommendation as to the rules to be prescribed by the President for the selection of the first General Staff and as to the methods to be pursued in securing a plan of organization for the General Staff.”⁵⁵¹

Responding to Root’s request, the first topic in the Board’s report was the method for detailing officers to serve in the new organization. Not surprisingly, the Board

⁵⁵⁰ Memorandum Report, First Division, Provisional General Staff, July 14, 1903, RG 165, S. 2, Box 1, #37, NARA.

⁵⁵¹ Memorandum, Root to the AWCBD, July 7, 1902, RG 165, S. 288, Box 4, #147-151; a copy of the memorandum is contained in Report of the AWCBD, March 9, 1903, same RG and S, Box 6, AWC 521, pp. 82-95, NARA.

believed the officers assigned should be selected “with great care” and be the “most competent officers” in the Army. To make such a selection, the Board suggested creating a selection board which should be “sworn to perform this duty impartially.” Both line and staff officers should be eligible, but line officers should outnumber staff by thirty to twelve. The selections should be made in time for any officers currently serving in the Philippines to return to Washington, where all of the officers should assemble. Any officer joining the General Staff from the staff corps or departments should be considered as completely detached from that organization, a provision the Board no doubt hoped would contribute to reducing the independence of the staff bureaus.⁵⁵² It is noteworthy that the members of the War College Board had not yet grasped the breadth of their own duties, since they recommended creating yet another board to handle the selection process.

Root appointed such a board.⁵⁵³ Along with War College Board members Carter, Young, Bliss, and Greene, he named Major General Chaffee, Major General John C. Bates, and Brigadier General Wallace F. Randolph. As Ronald Machoian observes, “Had politics marred these first assignments, the General Staff’s initial credibility would have been tarnished and its supposed high purpose met with cynical humor.”⁵⁵⁴ At this time, Bliss maintained a regular correspondence with retired General James H. Wilson. As David Healy portrays him, Wilson was an able man who never quite gained the recognition he sought.⁵⁵⁵ Bliss had served on Wilson’s staff in the Puerto Rican

⁵⁵² Ibid.

⁵⁵³ General Orders no. 35, Headquarters of the Army, March 29, 1903; Machoian, *Carter*, 191.

⁵⁵⁴ *Carter*, 191.

⁵⁵⁵ David Healy, *US Expansionism: the Imperialist Urge in the 1890s* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1970), ch. 4, “James Harrison Wilson: A Transitional Expansionist,” 68-95; this comment about Wilson is found on 68.

campaign, and he knew Wilson's work in Cuba as governor of two provinces. Wilson served as second in command of the expedition that went to China in 1900 as part of the international effort to crush the Boxer Rebellion and relieve the besieged diplomats in Beijing. Having been on active duty so recently, Wilson knew the officers of the Army and, typically, had strong opinions about them. When the committee announced which officers would serve on the first General Staff, Bliss and Wilson exchanged several letters that give insight into the selection process.

When Wilson saw the list of officers selected, he wrote to "congratulate you [the committee] upon the general excellence of the officers selected." Bliss responded as a member of the group that met for ten days to make the selections. He wanted Wilson to know how hard the choices had been: "The only way you can understand the difficulty in selecting twelve majors and twenty captains and lieutenants is to take down your army list and scrutinize all the names. You will find that there is a perfect embarrassment of riches. For every name taken there is a score of equally good ones that must be left. . . ."⁵⁵⁶

It was of vital importance to Bliss that all the selected officers were West Point graduates. While Bliss worried that newspapers would criticize this outcome, he wrote Wilson that "not a member of the Board noticed it until the newspapers called attention to it."⁵⁵⁷ These decisions and Bliss's comment about them reveal an important transformation in the life of the service. Many of the leaders of the late-nineteenth-century Army were not graduates of the Military Academy. Some had been enlisted men,

⁵⁵⁶ THB to Wilson, April 10, 1903, Box 4, Wilson Mss, LC.

⁵⁵⁷ THB to Wilson, April 10, 1903, Box 4, Wilson Mss, LC. For newspaper reports, see *The New York Times*, April 9, 1903, p. 5, and *The Washington Post*, same date, p. 4.

such as generals Samuel B. M. Young and Adna R. Chaffee, while others had joined the Army as volunteer officers during the Civil War: Nelson A. Miles, Alfred Terry, and the adjutant general himself, Henry C. Corbin. Additionally, the expansion of the Army to meet the demands of the new American empire meant that many of the junior officers were commissioned from civilian life. The colorful Frederick Funston, for all his adventures ranging from explorations in Alaska to fighting in the Cuban forces before 1898, entered the service as a volunteer, not a West Point graduate. It was certainly possible to see in these appointments an effort by Academy graduates to regain the leadership of the Army. While the General Staff and the War College did serve that purpose to a degree, it was not by conscious design of the officers making the selection. Bliss pointed out the flaw in that suspicion. However proud the graduates on the board had felt at the end of the process, the fact that “four members [of the board] out of the seven were non-graduates, that those four were all general officers, that three of the four were major-generals, [and] that two of those three were the senior major-generals . . . ought to disarm criticism.”⁵⁵⁸

What had happened? The selection process, as Major General Young explained later, assumed that “the Chief of the General Staff should, next to the Commanding General of the Army, be the ablest soldier in it, and . . . the general body of that staff should represent in its personnel, the best professional talent which the commission strength makes available.”⁵⁵⁹

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁹ Memorandum of remarks of Major General S. B. M. Young, U. S. Army, to officers detailed for duty in the First General Staff, RG 165, S. 288, Box 6, NARA.

What factors would establish an officer as among “the best professional talent” in the Army? First, even many officers who were not Academy graduates recognized the need for increased professionalism, and the General Staff was one means to achieve that goal. Second, the men involved in the selection process looked for officers with a reputation for professional attainments. Given the wide range of duties involved in the new empire, that could mean achievements other than a sterling combat record. Finally, the selection committee, when it considered which younger officers best exemplified the professionalism they wished to foster, thought first of the men who were Academy products. They were the model officers who looked promising to their seniors.

Turning to the organization of the General Staff, the War College Board set to work to revise the Army Regulations to conform to the law. Once again the task fell largely to Bliss, as he became the president of the committee that produced the revisions.⁵⁶⁰ Their report recommended that “as much as possible,” the duties of the General Staff Corps should be specified in detail, although they recognized that the “extent to which the Chief of Staff will supervise the . . . various corps and departments comprising the bureaux [sic] of the War Department must be gradually determined” by the Secretary of War.⁵⁶¹ It was a wise forecast that foreshadowed the ultimate battle for supremacy between Chief of Staff Wood and Adjutant General Fred C. Ainsworth in 1911. The experienced line officers on the War College Board understood the viewpoint of the field army and included it in their report to Root. They believed

⁵⁶⁰AWCBd Proceedings, June 9, 1903, RG 165, S. 286, p. 224, NARA.

⁵⁶¹Memorandum, Root to the AWCBd, contained in Report of the AWCBd, March 9, 1903, RG 165, S. 288, Box 6, AWC 521, NARA.

there has been a disposition on the part of troops to minimize, if not to question, the value and utility of orders and regulations . . . that have their origin in Washington, [knowing] their author is not a man who is essentially a soldier Rightly or wrongly, the troops feel that the [Commanding General] is stripped of power; that the Secretary of War is a civilian; that the Adjutant General . . . is out of touch if not out of sympathy with them.⁵⁶²

Under the new system, the Board believed, “the Army should be constantly reminded that no . . . order will be issued which the Chief of Staff regards as prejudicial to its interests,” and the Chief of Staff would come from the line.

Beyond these generalizations, the War College Board believed that the work of the General Staff would have to wait for all the members to assemble. At that time the Chief of Staff and the officers on “duty in his office” would be “able to recommend a systematic distribution of all the business that is to be transacted by the General Staff Corps, under the terms of the Act.”⁵⁶³

One reason the Board left so many issues to be decided by the General Staff may have been the significant overlap in the personnel of the two bodies. By June the same men were meeting as the War College Board and as the Provisional General Staff. To help them distinguish under which authority they were doing which work, the Board decided that the General Council of the Provisional General Staff would meet every morning, and before that meeting the secretaries of the Board and of the General Staff

⁵⁶² Report of the AWC Bd, March 9, 1903, *ibid.*

⁵⁶³ *Ibid.*

would meet to decide which group would do which work.⁵⁶⁴ It was a practical solution to a difficult problem.

In just about a year's work the Army War College Board charted a new direction for the service. While the Root reforms properly bear the secretary's name, and while William H. Carter was the most important of his military advisors, Tasker Bliss played a pivotal role in translating these reforms into actions. In fact, for much of its life the Board let Bliss do most of the work, and for good reasons. Most of the work involved relationships with schools and colleges or with the state militias, and Bliss was the best man for those tasks. Of all the members of the Board, moreover, Bliss had the fewest additional responsibilities. Root had called Bliss to Washington specifically to serve on the Board. The Board met only from July 1902 until August 1903, yet the overall impact of its work was enormous. The Root reforms were changing the daily life of the service. It was a year of great significance in the history of the Army, the organization of the War Department, and the life of Tasker Bliss.

⁵⁶⁴ AWC Bd Proceedings, June 15, 1903, RG 165, S. 286, p. 228, NARA.

CHAPTER 6

ESTABLISHING THE WAR COLLEGE

While Tasker Bliss and the War College Board labored over the Army's educational system, Secretary of War Elihu Root and Assistant Adjutant General William H. Carter continued their efforts to persuade the Congress to pass an act establishing an American general staff. Their first effort having failed, this pair of military reformers tried again with a revised bill. It was introduced in the December 1902 session of Congress, and in preparation, Carter penned a series of articles in popular magazines to bring the case for reform to the public. Carter and Root testified before Congress, reinforcing the earlier testimony of such Civil War heroes as generals John M. Schofield and Wesley M. Merritt. To achieve the greater goal of passing a general staff bill, Root abandoned some of his peripheral reforms. In a compromise that would lead later to a new bureaucratic conflict, Brigadier General Fred C. Ainsworth, chief of the War Department's Record and Pension Office, utilized his influence with Congress to have his office exempted from supervision by the Chief of Staff. Root succeeded with another change that would bear unwholesome fruit. The proposed law created the office of Military Secretary through a merger of the Adjutant General's department and the Record and Pension

Office. This combination meant that Ainsworth would move into the line of succession to head the most important of the bureaus, but at the same time his personal position appeared less important. Root believed that creating the Military Secretary would lessen the importance of the former Adjutant General's Office, but the change turned out to have the opposite effect. With these changes, the revised bill met surprisingly little opposition and passed on February 14, 1903, to take effect on August 15 the same year.⁵⁶⁵ On that date, the position of Chief of Staff replaced the Commanding General of the Army, and the army general staff was born.

In Root's scheme there was a fundamental distinction between the chief of staff and the general staff. The chief of staff was to act for the secretary of war, following up details, coordinating the work of the general staff and the bureaus in order to carry out the policies established by the president and the secretary. As Root explained in a letter to Senator James H. Berry, Democrat of Arkansas, "the purpose of the statute was to enable the president, in the discharge of his duties as Commander in Chief, and the Secretary of War in the performance of . . . duties imposed on him by the Congress, to do the practical work of control through the instrumentality of the Chief of Staff."⁵⁶⁶ The chief of staff would supply the secretary with sufficient military expertise to allow the secretary to challenge the bureaus. The bureaus lived in a world of administrative details; their mastery of detail provided the critical

⁵⁶⁵ Root and Carter's efforts and the revisions to the bill are explained more fully in Ronald G. Machoian, *William Harding Carter and the American Army: A Soldier's Story* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006), 140-158.

⁵⁶⁶ Letter of Feb. 2, 1903, quoted in William H. Carter, "Creation of the American General Staff," 68th Congress, 1st Session, Senate Documents, II, serial 8254), no. 119, 48, cited hereafter as "Creation."

element of their power. The secretary could use the chief of staff to invade that world, to establish his authority when necessary, without sacrificing the secretary's position as a civilian policy maker. "This chief will . . . be able to perform a great deal of the work now falling directly on the Secretary of War," Root continued, "who is compelled to study the minor details of each question before giving his opinion."⁵⁶⁷

Historically, the secretary of war and the commanding general of the army had been at loggerheads.⁵⁶⁸ Hoping to end the rivalry inherent in the two positions, Root explained the importance of the new title in his annual report for 1902:

The change . . . would be of little consequence were it not that titles denote and imply in the officers bearing them the existence of widely different kinds of authority. When an officer is appointed to the position of "Commanding General of the Army" he naturally expects to command, himself, with a high degree of independence.

The title of Chief of Staff, on the other hand, denotes a duty to advise, inform and assist a superior officer who has command, and to represent him, acting in his name and by his authority, in carrying out his policies and securing the execution of his commands. The officer who accepts the position assumes the highest obligation to be perfectly loyal to his commander.⁵⁶⁹

Root believed the reformed structure would make the secretary and the chief of staff natural allies, and together they would be able to enforce their policies throughout the department's structure.

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid., 26.

⁵⁶⁸ For a brief treatment of the organizational problems in the leadership of the War Department and the army, see James E. Hewes, Jr., *From Root to McNamara: Army Organization and Administration, 1900-1963* (Washington, D. C.: Center of Military History, 1975), 3-13.

⁵⁶⁹ United States Department of War, *Five Years of the War Department Following the War with Spain as Shown in the Annual Reports of the Secretary of War, 1899-1903* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904), 297-98.

If the bureaus could be made to work together instead of independently, then the general staff would oversee the rapid implementation of the specifics and the details; it would be an organization whose purpose was oversight. Root considered any major reorganization of the bureau structure unnecessary. He explained this point in a letter to Joseph R. Hawley, the Chairman of the Senate Military Affairs Committee: “With all these bureaus under one chief it will not be possible for one to interfere with another in the matter of supplies, and the Army as a whole will reap the benefits . . . and, at the same time, none of the individual bureaus loses anything of its importance.”⁵⁷⁰ Root’s goal was to have clear lines of authority and responsibility. The old system offended his administrative sense, since “there must always be great difficulty in fixing responsibility when so many bureau chiefs and the lieutenant general commanding are concerned in the business affairs of the army.”⁵⁷¹ The elimination of the commanding general left the bureaus clearly in control of routine matters, while the responsibility for coordinating their activities clearly (at least on paper) rested with the Secretary, advised by the Chief of Staff. In part, Root stressed the retention of the bureaus for political reasons, to appease members of Congress, since the bureaus had always cultivated them as a means to preserve their independence. Equally important, however, was Root’s desire that the bureaus should continue to handle the administrative burdens of the department; he

⁵⁷⁰ This letter of March 3, 1902 is reprinted in Robert Bacon and James Brown Scott, eds., *The Military and Colonial Policy of the United States: Addresses and Reports by Elihu Root* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1916); this quotation is from 401.

⁵⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 404.

acknowledged their expertise but he recognized the need to make them work together in support of established policies.

With the chief of staff overseeing the bureaus' handling of the administrative details, the general staff was supposed to be free to plan and to think. Root and his disciples stressed this point more than any other. Carter explained the basic idea: “The many important matters which require investigation and grave consideration will be cared for by the General Staff, a body of selected and highly trained officers, whose time will not be frittered away with routine affairs and whose opinions, therefore, will be based upon systematic investigation and thought.”⁵⁷² He repeated the same point in his book.⁵⁷³ John McAuley Palmer, one of the first graduates of the War College, served on the General Staff and found that few of its officers knew exactly what was expected of them, but they assumed the general staff would be managing just about everything. Palmer soon recognized his mistake and later wrote that

[t]o us, the new General Staff appeared to be a sort of busybody staff created to butt into the business of every other staff activity. And this is precisely what Secretary Root did not want. He did not want his new General Staff to be a superadministrative agency to do what was already being done. He wanted an entirely new agency to specialize on [sic] defense plans and military policies – things that had never been provided for in the old War Department organization.⁵⁷⁴

⁵⁷² Memorandum, Carter to Root, quoted in Carter, “Creation,” 20.

⁵⁷³ *The American Army*, 217.

⁵⁷⁴ *America in Arms* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941), 125.

In both cases, these men were faithfully echoing Root's ideas; the general staff was to plan and study, it was not an administrative body. Root later wrote to General Fred C. Ainsworth, "I have always thought that one of the dangers to be apprehended in the working out of the General Staff system is the inevitable tendency to overload the Staff with duties of this description. I think constant watchfulness should be exercised to avoid loading the Staff down with matters which are really administrative."⁵⁷⁵

One attempted change in the legislation produced a revealing reaction from Carter. A movement developed in Congress to substitute the word "command" or "control" for "supervision" in the General Staff Act. The War Department opposed the change, for reasons which indicate the faith some of the military reformers placed in words and organization charts. Carter wrote to Root about the need to oppose this change: "The word 'supervision' was adopted because in the military sense it indicates the overseeing of affairs in the interest of superior authority. The word 'command' implies directly the power of the officer holding such command to issue orders. The word 'control' operates practically in the same way."⁵⁷⁶ Such distinctions indicate that Root and Carter were perfectly certain what they wanted in the language in the legislation.

⁵⁷⁵ Root to Ainsworth, May 9, 1904, quoted in Jessup, *Elihu Root*, I, pp. 262-63.

⁵⁷⁶ Memorandum, Carter to Root, December 27, 1902, quoted in Carter, "Creation of the American General Staff," 44.

Root was pleased with the law as it emerged from Congress, and well he might be, since it reflected his ideas and policies almost exactly. The general staff was

to prepare plans for the national defense and for the mobilization of the military forces in time of war; to investigate and report upon all questions affecting the efficiency of the Army and its state of preparation for military operations; to render professional aid and assistance to the Secretary of War and to general officers and other superior commanders, and to act as their agents in informing and coordinating the action of all the different officers who are subject, under the terms of this act, to the supervision of the Chief of Staff.⁵⁷⁷

While the general staff's duties were to research, study and report, the Chief of Staff carried the responsibility to act. Under the direction of the president and the secretary of war, he

shall have supervision of all troops of the line and of the Adjutant-General's, Inspector-General's, Judge-Advocate's, Quartermaster's, Subsistence, Medical, Pay, and Ordnance departments, the Corps of Engineers, and the Signal Corps, and shall perform such other military duties not otherwise assigned by law as may be assigned to him by the President.⁵⁷⁸

This division of missions and responsibility was exactly what Root wanted, and it appeared in the revision of the army regulations that followed from this legislation.⁵⁷⁹ The result was the creation of two distinct roles. The general staff was to study, research and plan; thus the regulations specified that its duties involved

⁵⁷⁷ The General Staff Act is reproduced following the 1903 War Department annual report, in Appendix A, which is included in *Five Years*, 481-3.

⁵⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁹ The revisions to the army regulations are reproduced following the 1903 War Department annual report as Appendix C, which is included in *Five Years*, 483-87.

“investigating and reporting upon all questions affecting the efficiency of the Army and its state of preparation for military operations.”⁵⁸⁰ The Chief of Staff was to be an executive officer.⁵⁸¹

No one studied this issue more thoroughly than John M. Palmer, and he provided the evidence for Root’s intentions. Remembering his service on the original general staff, he later told the Senate that the 1903 act “created . . . two entirely distinct agencies. One was a General Staff charged with the duty of preparing plans for the national defense and for the mobilization of the land forces of the United States. . . . [and] it created a new supervising agency in the person of the Chief of Staff.”⁵⁸² In part, the regulations charged him with the supervision of the work of the General Staff,⁵⁸³ but he was also assigned as an adviser and executive assistant to the Secretary of War and the President. He “reports to” the Secretary and “acts as his military adviser,” but he also “receives from him the directions and orders given in behalf of the President.”⁵⁸⁴ The point of the language in the legislation was to make plain that the chief of staff could not act on his own authority but only as the

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid., 483.

⁵⁸¹ The author made this argument in a seminar paper for the late Professor Russell F. Weigley, and a few months later, in a discussion at the Center of Military History, the late Professor I. B. Holley, Jr., agreed with this interpretation. He suggested there was confirmation of this view in the testimony of General John M. Palmer before the Senate Military Affairs Committee in 1919-1920, and the author thanks him for this guidance. Before his death, Professor Holley published his views in *General John M. Palmer, Citizen Soldiers, and the Army of a Democracy*, Contributions in Military History, No. 28 (Westport, Ct., and London: Greenwood Press, 1982), 430-49. The discussion of the 1903 act and the role of the chief of staff and the general staff is on pp. 441-444.

⁵⁸² Palmer’s 1919 testimony is reproduced in *The National Defense*:

⁵⁸³ Ibid., 486.

⁵⁸⁴ Ibid., 485.

representative of the president and the secretary of war. When he did so, his authority extended to the entire army.

As he contemplated his work, Root realized that many details of the operation of his new system remained to be worked out, but he thought the bureaus would accept the new system since it did not threaten their independence but sought only better coordination of their work.⁵⁸⁵ Root concluded

It will be perceived that we are here providing for civilian control over the military arm, but for civilian control to be exercised through a single military expert of high rank, who is provided with an adequate corps of professional assistants to aid him in the performance of his duties, and who is bound to use all his professional skill and knowledge in giving effect to the purposes and general directions of his civilian superior

In this way it is hoped that the problem of reconciling civilian control with military efficiency which we have been struggling with for so many years will be solved.⁵⁸⁶

The chief of staff or the general staff would intervene only in particular circumstances. Root expected “that most of these [occasions] involve questions which require investigation and collection of data, or they involve several supply and construction departments, and there could not properly be determined by any one such department.”⁵⁸⁷

When the new organization came into existence, Tasker Bliss became a member of the Third Division of the General Staff. Acting in this capacity, he continued to supervise the work of military officers assigned to the training programs

⁵⁸⁵ Carter, “Creation,” 51.

⁵⁸⁶ *Five Years*, 331.

⁵⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 332.

at colleges and universities. Simultaneously he became the President of the Army War College. With his experience at the Naval War College, his reputation for scholarly interests, and his record of professional activity and publications, he was certainly a logical choice to be the founding president of this institution. His year of work on the War College Board only added to these credentials. As new institutions, both the general staff and war college would be defined in part by the officers assigned to them and in part by the work they did in these first years of their existence. Having investigated so many issues as a member of the War College Board, Bliss had gained extensive information on the condition of the army and especially its educational program for officers.

What emerged clearly in Root's thinking was that the war college should be closely integrated with the general staff. The first mention of it in legislation was in the Army Appropriation Act of May 26, 1900, in which Congress allocated \$20,000 for "contingent expenses incident to the establishment of the Army War College," which had as "its object the direction and coordination of the . . . various service schools, . . . opportunities for investigation and study in the Army and Militia of the United States, and the collection and dissemination of military information."⁵⁸⁸ This list of functions was similar to the work of the general staff as described in Root's first reports. Early in 1900, Root appointed a board of officers, chaired by Brigadier General William Ludlow, to investigate the idea of a war college. In the letter

⁵⁸⁸ Quoted in Lt. Col. George P. Ahern, *A Chronicle of the Army War College, 1899-1919* (Washington, D. C., July 24, 1919), 4; this is a typed manuscript and an early official history. A copy is in the library at the USAMHI.

transmitting its report to the Adjutant General, the Ludlow Board urged the creation of a war college, but it went on to recommend the creation of a general staff as well. The two institutions should remain separate, the Ludlow Board believed. “The Board, therefore, while convinced that the War College, if established and . . . sustained, can be made to effect valuable results, specially urges that the necessary legislative provision for a [separate] General Staff . . . be recommended for incorporation in the military service of the United States at the earliest possible time as a permanent feature of the organization of the Army.”⁵⁸⁹

Root created the War College Board in 1901 and used it as a *de facto* general staff, but that experience made it clear to everyone involved that the mass of current work Root referred to that Board made impossible any program of contemplation and study. Yet his desire to have the two groups working closely together can be seen even in their locations. The Army War College Board first convened at 20 Jackson Place NW, on the west side of Lafayette Park, then moved to number 22. The provisional general staff also met there, as did the general staff after it came into official existence. That same address then became the offices of the Third Division of the General Staff, soon known as the War College Division because it was the home of the Army War College until June 1907, when the institution moved to its new building, now the National War College, at Washington Barracks, now Fort Lesley J. McNair.⁵⁹⁰

⁵⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid., 12.

The war college was another new institution, the General Staff Act was silent about it, and so like the others in Secretary Root's reforms, its exact role had to be determined. As the founding president, Bliss shaped its work to fit what he understood as Root's intentions. Bliss wrote two major reports for Root as his thinking about the War College developed. Bliss sent the first one on August 3, 1903, even before the general staff came into existence. His analysis began with the Army school system as announced in General Orders 155 of 1901, listing nine institutions that together constituted a hierarchical structure for military education, beginning with the Military Academy at West Point and building up to the Army War College. All of these institutions other than the war college had been "in actual operation" for a greater or lesser period of time, and as a result, Bliss believed, they had "well developed courses of instruction." Thus the work of the war college should "be determined by a process of exclusion," and it needed to be "beyond and above" the functions of any of the other schools.⁵⁹¹

There were two other factors Bliss regarded as shaping the work of his new school. One was that it should be ready to cooperate with the navy's existing planning institutions, the General Board and the Naval War College. Of course Bliss knew well the work of the latter, which had passed beyond classroom lectures and assigned readings to doing the work of detailed planning as directed by the General

⁵⁹¹ This and subsequent quotations are from a Memorandum, THB to Root, RG 165, Serial 294, Box 1, "AWC – General," NARA. There is a copy in a letterbook covering the period August 1902 – November 1903, in the THB Mss, USAMHI, but it is difficult to read. See also George P. Ahern, ed., *A Chronicle of the Army War College*, a 1919 official history compiled and bound at the War College; there is a copy in the library at USAMHI.

Board. He observed that when the navy worked out possible strategic plans, it had to assume what the army would be doing, since the army had no comparable organization for planning. With the creation of the Army General Staff and the Army War College, close cooperation should shift from the desirable to the possible. Thus the college needed to work closely with the general staff, researching questions and developing reports on issues the staff assigned to it.

The second factor in Bliss's thinking was the success of the German military during the preceding forty years. What made that one army so much more successful than others? Bliss believed it was the professional culture the Germans had created. No officer was ever left to enjoy a stagnant career. As Bliss put it, "no [German] officer is held to be qualified for promotion unless he proves it at the time of getting it." He wanted to establish a similar culture in the American military, an "atmosphere" surrounding each officer that "shall be a never-relaxing stimulus to continued endeavor."

No one was more familiar than Bliss with the curricula at the various service schools, so his statement appeared unassailable that "these schools . . . are intended to go to the limit in the matter of direct theoretical instruction." Thus to have officers assigned to the college do something other than repeat earlier course work, they had go beyond theoretical instruction. These officers "should *learn things by doing things* [emphasis in the original]." Bliss concluded this first report by suggesting that the first group of officers assigned to the Army War College should be the same officers assigned to the Army General Staff. Since the U.S. Army had never before

had a planning agency, the only way officers could learn their duties was to do them. These men would establish a “routine of work and methods” that would be followed in subsequent years, and their work would involve the research, study and reflection that Root desired as well as cooperative planning with the navy that had not previously existed.

Bliss followed this first report with a second one, prepared for the chief of staff and dated January 15, 1904.⁵⁹² He noted that Secretary Root had approved the “inception and development” of the methods for the college’s work. As a result, the officers assembled to create the war college were at work on projects of immediate application. In particular, these officers would become the faculty when a class of students arrived, but the type of work would be different than at most schools. The arriving officers could be assembled and then,

directed to prepare, almost on the spur of the moment, some plan of national defense upon the success of which . . . the fortune . . . of their country depended. The preparation of such a plan involves the consideration of a thousand details which are not, and cannot be, taught in the schools. All the work of judiciously combining these details . . . constitutes an essential part of the art of war . . . which can be learned not from books and professors but only by patient and unostentatious labor in doing these things themselves.

Bliss blamed the lack of such work for the problems of mobilization that had afflicted the country in “every . . . military emergency” it had faced.

Bliss proudly reported that the work of the college provided plans of a sort the country had never before possessed. When the chief of staff or the secretary of war

⁵⁹² This memorandum is also in RG 165, S. 294, Box 1, “AWC – General,” NARA.

sent a problem to the college, its officers worked out a solution after considering all the relevant information, much of it obtained from the general staff officers assigned to regional commands. The college then submitted its report and supporting information to the chief of staff for consideration, and the chief could accept it or return it for revision. “When the work has passed through its final stage, the War Department has in its archives that which it never heretofore has had, i.e., a plan thought out by many minds of what it could best do tomorrow if the emergency . . . should arise.”

That was the work of the college in its first year. As Bliss considered what the college should do in future years, he drew two conclusions in these reports. In the first report, he concluded that the students at the war college should work with the officers assigned to the general staff and “learn by doing.” In the second, he stated that the “scholastic work of the War College will not consist in the study of general principles but in the application of these principles to the details of a specific plan.” Reflecting on Root’s original description of the college, Bliss found support for his own ideas. What he discovered there was that this new institution should be a college in the original Latin sense of the term, a “collegium—that is to say, a body of men associated together by a community of interest and object for doing something rather than to learn how to do it.”⁵⁹³ Newton D. Baker led the War Department through a

⁵⁹³ THB’s report of 1903 to the Secretary of War [Root], quoted in Harry P. Ball, *Of Responsible Command: A History of the U.S. Army War College* (Carlisle Barracks, Pa.: The Alumni Association of the United States Army War College, revised ed., 1994), 85. John Wainwright argues that Bliss took the war college in a direction not at all intended by Secretary of War Root. Wainwright, “Root versus Bliss: The Shaping of the Army War College,” *Parameters* Vol. 4, No.1 (March 1974), 52-65. Bliss’s reports to Root and the chief of staff make it clear not only that Root approved Bliss’s decisions but that Bliss kept Root well informed about what he was doing and why he was doing it. Thus Root

future mobilization with thousands of officers of all grades who had to learn their duties as they performed them. Looking back on Bliss's decision from the vantage point of postwar America, Baker saw the wisdom and the necessity of this method.

It was General Bliss who first determined that this highest of Army educational institutions was not to be a school or college in the sense in which we usually apply those words, but that the word college was used in its original Latin sense, collegium -- a collection of men; the intention being not that some more wise should teach some less wise, but rather that a group of men by contact, consultation and conference evolve the best wisdom of the entire group.⁵⁹⁴

Since there were no officers with any training for or experience in the creation of war plans, it is hard to imagine a better system for these two new institutions.

The projects the first officers undertook in the first two years of the college's existence emphasize filling that practical need for plans that could be needed at any moment. For the United States, located in the western hemisphere and without any alliances, the circumstances that could lead to a war or a military intervention were indefinite. The plans faithfully reflect that situation. They included the initial orders for:

A concentration of the troops of the Philippine Division to prepare for an expedition to an unspecified destination, and using the Philippine Scouts and Constabulary in their absence.

A plan for a possible war with Mexico.

Plans for a possible war with Great Britain, with the United States invading Canada across the Niagara frontier. The plans included

wrote in his 1903 annual report calling special attention to the "thoughtful and able report of [Bliss] upon the relations of the War College to the General Staff and to military education generally." *Five Years*, 336.

⁵⁹⁴ This quotation comes from a lecture by Baker to the Army War College, September 2, 1919, copy in the THB Mss, USAMHI.

attacking in the western provinces to break the Canadian Pacific railway, preventing British troops from travelling west to east across Canada.⁵⁹⁵

These subjects of planning were the most appropriate for the United States Army in the conditions of 1903 to 1905.

While the students and the general staff officers worked together on those and similar projects, the officers assigned to the general staff had additional tasks as the Third Division, General Staff. They continued to supervise the officers teaching and the curricula of the military programs at colleges and universities across the country, and they both set the curriculum and evaluated some of the work of the officers' post schools. They prepared information on foreign armies whenever the chief of staff requested it, and they had general responsibility for the curricula at all of the army's post-graduate schools. Finally, these same officers were to plan and then often officiate at the new field maneuvers, whether they were to be joint army-navy exercises or joint army-National Guard training.⁵⁹⁶

A display of the practical success of this approach took place after Bliss left Washington for the Philippines.⁵⁹⁷ In 1906, bitter political feuds in Cuba led to open

⁵⁹⁵ The list of projects comes from M. Bartow Mercer, *Memoranda Pertaining to the Establishment and Operation of the Army War College*, a typed manuscript that is the earliest (1907) effort at an official history. There is a copy in the library at USAMHI. See also George S. Pappas, Jr., *Prudens Futuri: The U.S. Army War College, 1901-1967* (Carlisle Barracks, Pa.: The Alumni Association of the U.S. Army War College, 1967), 33-40.

⁵⁹⁶ General Orders No. 115, June 27, 1904. For more information about the last of those topics, see Charles D. McKenna, *The Forgotten Reform: Field Maneuvers in the Development of the United States Army, 1902-1920* (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Duke University, 1981).

⁵⁹⁷ This paragraph is a summary of Allan R. Millett, "The General Staff and the Cuban Intervention of 1906," *Military Affairs*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (Autumn 1967), 113-119. For more detail about the intervention, see Millett, *The Politics of Intervention: The Military Occupation of Cuba, 1906-1909* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 1968).

insurrection, and the Cuban government appeared to be losing control with a consequent threat to American lives and property. President Theodore Roosevelt told Secretary of War William H. Taft to have the Third Division of the Army General Staff prepare contingency plans for an intervention under the terms of the Platt Amendment. The general staff had already begun such a study months earlier, developing plans for as many as three expeditionary forces. Their study did not go into possible operations but concentrated instead on the “organization and logistical support” that would be necessary. When these contingency plans went into effect, officers from the general staff served in the headquarters of the expeditionary force and were sent to ports of embarkation where they oversaw the “[reception of] troops, handled railroad and shipping contracts, and briefed the incoming regimental commanders on their mission.” Officers from the general staff served in key positions in the army of occupation, and of the four generals who commanded the occupying troops, one was the Chief of Staff himself, General J. Franklin Bell, and another was Brigadier General Thomas H. Barry, who had been acting Chief of Staff during Bell’s absence. The Secretary of War and the Chief of Staff wrote later that the “conduct of the intervention . . . provided a most effective justification for the General Staff’s existence,” and the influential *Army and Navy Journal* agreed. The favorable contrast with the confusion of the 1898 invasion was clear.

The Secretaries of the Navy and War created another new organization in the summer of 1903. The Joint Army and Navy Board was to be a permanent institution

with the mission of coordinating the plans of the Army and the Navy.⁵⁹⁸ There were eight members, four from the Navy's General Board and four from the Army General Staff. As President of the Army War College and a member of what became known as the Joint Board, Bliss held positions that made him the army's chief planner and the principal advocate for those plans in discussions with the navy. While it would seem logical to expect that the Army War College President should serve on such a board, in fact one of the weaknesses of the Joint Board was that the members were "appointed by name rather than by office." Thus when a vacancy occurred, a replacement had to be named or the position remained unoccupied.

There were several other weaknesses in this organization. It had no staff; the junior member kept the minutes of its meetings. It had "limited functions and little authority in its own right." The only questions it could discuss were those referred to it by one of the services, and it could only recommend action to the two Secretaries. If they did not approve the recommendation, then "the Joint Board's decisions had no force whatsoever."⁵⁹⁹

As a member of the Joint Board, he wrote the army's position paper discussing the most likely war the United States might have to fight in the near future. Bliss continued the professional writing he had undertaken earlier in his career, presenting a paper on land warfare at the annual meeting of the American Academy

⁵⁹⁸ The letter creating the Joint Board is dated July 17, 1903. It was published as Navy Department G.O. No. 136, July 18, and as War Department G.O. No. 107, July 20, 1903. See Louis Morton, "Interservice Co-operation and Political-Military Collaboration," in Harry L. Coles, ed., *Total War and Cold War: Problems in Civilian Control of the Military* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1962), 131-160.

⁵⁹⁹ All of this description is based on Morton, "Political-Military Collaboration," 133.

of Political and Social Science (discussed in the next chapter). Building on the reputation he had worked hard to develop, by 1905, Bliss had become the leading strategic thinker in the U. S. Army.

In 1904, Army Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Adna R. Chaffee asked the Secretary of War to refer a topic to the Joint Board. Chaffee wanted the Joint Board to agree upon a “series of practical problems (taking them in the order of their assumed importance) which involve cooperation of the services, and for the execution of which . . . the two Staffs will be responsible.” He specified that he was not interested in problems to be studied by the students at the two war colleges, but rather he wanted “practical general staff problems, the details of which should be worked out by the permanent personnel of the two War Colleges in cooperation.” The plans would then be approved by the two general staffs and passed on to the Joint Board, and once approved, sent back to the two departments.⁶⁰⁰

In response to Chaffee’s letter, the Joint Board met twice to hear papers by its members on the most likely next war for the United States. In the first meeting, Rear Admiral Henry C. Taylor, President of the Naval War College, presented the Navy’s view. Taylor stated that his analysis began with an “examination of the development of the great nations and a comparison of their conditions and the general international

⁶⁰⁰ Chaffee to The Secretary of War, April 22, 1904, RG 225, Records of the Joint Army and Navy Board, Box 2, file #325, NARA. The context for this meeting is well-described in William R. Braisted’s brilliant monograph *The United States Navy in the Pacific, 1897-1909* (New York: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1958), esp. 169-172. Also see Richard D. Challener, *Admirals, Generals and American Foreign Policy, 1898-1914* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1973), esp. 15-77.

situation at the present time with such conditions and situations in the past.”⁶⁰¹

Taylor reported that the recent naval plans of campaign had had as their basis a possible “attempt by Germany, in coalition with one or more other European powers, to gain permanent foothold upon the South American Continent north of the Amazon—the principal theater of operations being the Caribbean Sea.” The Navy had then considered the growing commercial interests of the United States in Asia, along with United States possession of the Philippines, and the Navy developed plans for a war based on a “coalition of Germany, France and Russia, opposed to an alliance of England, Japan, and the United States,—the principal centers” of that war being the Philippines and the coast of “Northeastern Asia.”

These comments demonstrate that the leaders of the Navy were well aware of the thinking among some of the business and commercial elite of the United States. While how realistic their thinking was is a subject of intense debate, there can be no doubt that many people in the business community thought that East Asia in general and China in particular represented a great potential market for American exports. These business leaders, along with the naval leadership, were equally aware of the intense international competition among the European imperial powers for colonies and for commercial advantage. Admiral George Dewey, in particular, seemed obsessed with the danger posed by Germany, but many other naval flag officers shared his concern to some degree.⁶⁰²

⁶⁰¹ What follows is a summary of Taylor, “Memorandum,” dated May 31, 1904 but with a handwritten note, “Revised draft as read to the Joint Board, June 10, 1904,” RG 225, file #325, NARA.

⁶⁰² The most important work on the subject of American business leaders’ hopes for economic opportunities in China is Thomas McCormick, *China Market* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1967), but

As the Navy viewed the immediate situation in 1904, Taylor reported, the “political, commercial, military, naval and strategic” conditions indicated that the “industrial development of the United States has a close and somewhat dependent connection with the great populations of Eastern Asia.” So important had this connection become to the United States that “we may expect in the future to find the sacredness of the Monroe Doctrine drop to second in the national mind, and our trade relations with Eastern Asia assume first place, and become the primal cause of war.”

The Navy believed that this war “would be of a serious character and would doubtless extend to various fields of operation,” and that the United States should be prepared for “attacks upon our supremacy in the Caribbean and Central and South America.” Nevertheless, the “principal objective, both naval and diplomatic, would be to secure trade rights and commercial equality—if not supremacy—in Eastern Asia.” Since Great Britain was not likely to be an enemy in such a war, plans for war involving Canada or the British islands near the United States should not be the first ones to develop.

see also LaFeber, *New Empire*, cited in the previous chapter. Other important works that discuss this topic include Arthur Dudden, *American Pacific: From the Old China Trade to the Present* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), Ernest R. May and John K. Fairbank, eds., *America's China Trade in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1986), Jerry Israel, *Progressivism and the Open Door: America and China, 1905-1921* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1971), Michael H. Hunt, *The Making of a Special Relationship: The United States and China to 1914* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), Warren I. Cohen, *America's Response to China: An Interpretative History of Sino-American Relations* (New York, London, Sydney, and Toronto: John Wiley & Sons, 1980), and John R. Eperjesi, *The Imperialist Imaginary: Visions of Asia and the Pacific in American Culture* (Hanover, N. H.: Dartmouth College Press, Hanover and London: The University Press of New England, 2005). For an insightful discussion of the various interpretations of the influences on foreign policy, see Frank Ninkovich, *The Wilsonian Century: U. S. Foreign Policy since 1900* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1999), introduction, 1-16. For Dewey's and the General Board's views on the German threat, see Ronald H. Spector, *Admiral of the New Empire: The Life and Career of George Dewey* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1974), 131-136 and 184-188.

Neither did the Navy consider Japan a likely enemy. The plans the Navy recommended, in order of importance, were:

First. Plans based on a hostile coalition of Russia, France and Germany.

- a) For defense of the Philippines.
- c) For seizing an advanced base on the coast of China . . .
- d) Defense of Puerto Rico and Cuba, occupation of Haiti and San Domingo, capture of Martinique. Dominance in Venezuela, Colombia, defense of Panama.

Second. Plans based on Japan, China and Russia as a hostile coalition.

- a) For defense of the Philippines.
- b) For seizing an advanced base on the coast of China . . .
- c) Plans for blockading principal ports of Japan

Third. Plans based on Germany and France as hostile and attacking [the] Monroe Doctrine in South America.

Fourth. Plans based on war with England. . . .

Fifth. Plans for operations against Mexico.

Sixth. Plans for operations against Germany alone in southern South America.

Seventh. Plans for operations against South American republics.

Given world politics in 1904, Taylor's paper presented a remarkable list of situations that makes one wonder to what extent the Navy actually considered the international conditions of the time. To think that Germany and France would become allies was a curious idea, and of course any German move against the western hemisphere would have left the German expeditionary force at the mercy of Britain's Royal Navy. As for American commercial interests in Asia, in spite of the best efforts of the State Department and later the William H. Taft administration, they would in fact remain minimal for many years.

At the same meeting, Bliss presented the army's point of view, although he did not complete a final draft of his paper until a week later.⁶⁰³ Bliss noted that since these deliberations would provide guidance to the two services for their planning, the Board would "have failed in its duty if a little war which occurs tomorrow finds it unprepared although at the same time it has carefully studied the conditions of a great war the probable occurrence of which is in the remoter future." To discern correctly the most likely war, Bliss argued, one should start with the "*probable causes of war* [emphasis in original]." Once these are understood, they would lead the analyst to the likely place and enemies, and even give an idea of the likely operations. Bliss believed that the "most probable causes of wars in which the United States may be involved [were]:

- 1) The necessity of the enforcement of the Monroe Doctrine by the United States;
- 2) Efforts for extension of trade;
- 3) Intervention by the United States . . . in some insular or continental country lying south of us in this hemisphere, for the purpose of maintaining an orderly government therein."

In fact, he argued, these would all be essentially the same cause, enforcement of the Monroe Doctrine, because he did not "think that when the United States comes to fight it will be for the declared purpose of an extension of trade, although that may be the real cause of war and its real object, concealed under an appeal to the Monroe Doctrine."

⁶⁰³ Bliss to Admiral George Dewey, June 17, 1904, transmitting a copy of his completed "letter" dated June 10, 1904, both in *ibid.* What follows is a summary of the letter/report.

According to Bliss, the United States was fortunate in its policy situation, because it had only one foreign policy that was “clearly defined, acknowledged whether approved or not by foreign powers, approved at home by all classes and political parties,” and that was the Monroe Doctrine. He stated that the War of 1898 had grown out of this policy but of course had created a new situation that probably would challenge it. Bliss recognized that the involvement of the United States in Asia was unprecedented in U. S. history.

There is no doubt that this [Asian involvement] will result in due time in the formulation of a second line of foreign policy, and we shall then have one policy based on contact with and another based on isolation from the rest of the world. We may yet find ourselves fighting for our Monroe Doctrine on one side of the world and against somebody else’s Monroe Doctrine on the other side of the world. However, that time has not yet come.

Bliss had a realistic, clear and balanced understanding of the world of foreign policies; not many Americans recognized that other countries might have their own equivalent to the Monroe Doctrine. Even fewer would have agreed that other countries would consider their defense of their own policies right and just, just as the United States considered its own. This was a perfect statement of U.S. foreign policy from a realist's viewpoint.

In the same way, the Philippine Islands might eventually become a reason for the United States to become involved in a trade war in Asia, but Bliss, again speaking as a realist, assessed them as more likely to be a “vulnerable object of the enemy’s

attack rather than a base for aggressive movements” by the United States.⁶⁰⁴ The Philippines were likely to be involved in a likely American war simply because they were such a tempting target. In the same way, only if the United States fought Britain “would we have any chance of reimbursing ourselves by more desirable property nearer home” for any losses in the Pacific. Since the British were equally aware of this situation, “this fact alone makes England the least probable of any of our possible enemies.”

Taking the defense of the Monroe Doctrine as the probable cause of a war, Bliss then asked what sort of war would be likely to arise from this cause. He believed the most likely event would see the United States “forced to intervene in the domestic affairs of an independent state lying south of us for the purpose of establishing and maintaining an orderly government therein.” The United States was obligated by law to do so in Cuba, but he considered Santo Domingo and Mexico to be other likely cases. In the case of the Dominican Republic, such a situation seemed to be developing at that moment because of its inability to repay its debts. In the case of Mexico, the removal of “one man alone [President Porfirio Diaz]” would probably lead to threats to the capital invested there by several of “the great nations of the world.” In such a case, there would very likely be a “local war with the state in whose affairs we intervene,” a country that would be unable to carry the war to the United States.

⁶⁰⁴ For an excellent account of the U. S. policy conflicts that left the Philippines vulnerable and a hostage to other powers, see William R. Braisted, *The United States Navy in the Pacific, 1909-1922* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971).

There was also the possibility that American intervention would provoke a response from a European or Asian country or coalition of countries. Bliss considered an attack from any European country to be a “remote” possibility, because of the “divergence of European interests.” The only situation that would threaten the United States would be if an internal upheaval so threatened the trade, investments, and nationals of a European country that it would demand they be protected, and the United States then failed to act.

Bliss subscribed to a theory of preventive intervention, arguing that “The principal thing to be noted in this connection is,--and it would be well for our people to thoroughly appreciate it,--that the more certain, promptly and effectually we intervene in such cases the less likely it is that this local war of intervention . . . will ramify [sic] into a war with a European power.” Because the Europeans would have such difficulty acting in concert, “Europe as a whole would doubtless prefer to see the United States play the part of policeman in South America provided conditions for trade were left equal for all.”

Bliss considered two other possibilities worth studying. One was that a coalition of European powers would seek the consent of the United States for an intervention in South America, presumably a demonstration but one that ended with the possibility of war between the United States and the intervening powers. Clearly Bliss was thinking of the recent Anglo-German intervention in Venezuela as he wrote. He also recognized the possibility that the Panama Canal would become a

tempting target, or that a nation would attack the Philippines as the most vulnerable American possession even though the war had other causes.

Bliss concluded with his recommendation of the situations that the services should plan for.

I, therefore, suggest as a progressive study to be jointly undertaken by the two General Staffs, a problem under the following assumptions:

- 1) That the United States intervenes in some South American country . . . ,
 - a) to assist that country in ousting an assumed foreign power,
 - b) against the two as allies;
- 2) That the theater of war includes the Caribbean Sea and the Philippine Archipelago;
- 3) After the foregoing studies are completed assume a coalition of two European powers, excluding England;
- 4) For the purpose of completing a study of the Canadian frontier, assume England as an intervening power under assumption
 - a) alone,
 - b) in coalition;
- 5) Assume intervention by the United States in Mexico, with other foreign complication.

In the international setting of 1904, these scenarios seem much more realistic than the Navy's thinking. In particular, Bliss recognized that Europe was too divided to act in concert against the United States, and he realized that the dictatorship of Porfirio Diaz in Mexico could not go on much longer. Finally, considering that President Theodore Roosevelt had just announced what has become known as the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine in an open letter of May 20, 1904, the

need to include a preventive intervention in the two services' planning would seem to have been obvious.⁶⁰⁵

Bliss's logical presentation carried the day. Two weeks later, Admiral of the Fleet George Dewey, president of the Joint Board, wrote to the Secretaries of War and the Navy that the Joint Board recommended the following studies:

1. That the United States finds itself obliged, for any assumed cause growing out of the Monroe Doctrine, to intervene in the affairs of an independent country in the West Indies or on the mainland of Central or South America; and that this intervention is carried out under the following successive conditions:
 - a) To restore order, without complications with any other foreign power;
 - b) For the purpose of aiding the country in which intervention takes place against another foreign power not of this hemisphere;
 - c) Against the country in which intervention takes place, assisted by a foreign power not of this hemisphere;
2. Under the foregoing conditions the problems involve a compete study—
 - a) Of the Caribbean Sea as a theater of war;
 - b) Of the Philippine Archipelago as a theater of war

The Acting Secretary of War, Robert Shaw Oliver, approved this recommendation on June 28, 1904, and the next day Dewey informed Army Chief of Staff Chaffee that the Secretary of the Navy, William H. Moody, had also approved.⁶⁰⁶

His early contributions to the professional journal of the military had established Bliss as a leading student of military history in the Army. With this

⁶⁰⁵ Nathan Miller, *Theodore Roosevelt: A Life* (New York: William Morrow, Quill paperback, 1992), 393-5, and see also Cyrus Veser, *A World Safe for Capitalism: Dollar Diplomacy and America's Rise to Global Power* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

⁶⁰⁶ Dewey to the Secretaries of War and the Navy, June 24, 1904, with endorsements June 28 and June 29, RG 225, Box 2, file #325, NARA.

reputation, combined with his experience at the Naval War College and his knowledge of American higher education in general, he was a logical choice to be the President of the Army War College. In that position, he became the Army's spokesman as the United States made its first attempt to coordinate strategic planning between the armed forces. In that role, Bliss served his country well. It is clear from his writings in 1904 and 1905 that he remained a keen student of warfare and followed world events closely. He argued persuasively for a realistic appraisal of likely military actions by the United States, effectively countering the Navy's economic determinism and Admiral Dewey's obsession with Germany.

As Tasker Bliss impatiently prepared to leave Washington, D. C. for command of troops in the field, he could look back on three years filled with important work that changed the army forever. While the country hesitated as it faced the issues and problems of world power and imperial government, he had labored to create institutions that provided the means to deal with some of those issues on a scale few even considered possible in 1905. Other officers would have to overcome the problems, but Bliss had helped to put in place the structure that would allow them to succeed.

CHAPTER 7

THINKING AS A PROFESSIONAL

For several decades, historians have generally agreed that the transformation of American society in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries involved, among other aspects, new ways of organizing knowledge along with the growing importance of the professions, many of which were new or newly organized.⁶⁰⁷ For a member, entering a profession involved, among other things, mastering “an esoteric but useful body of systematic knowledge . . . [completing] theoretical training [and a] practice or apprenticeship, and . . . an ethic of service which taught that dedication to a client’s interest took precedence over personal profit.”⁶⁰⁸ Thus military officers followed the code of the professional as they sought to demonstrate their special knowledge along with the fundamental ideas behind the military service.

One of the most important aspects of the developing professionalism of the American army and navy in the late-nineteenth century was the publication of

⁶⁰⁷ There is an enormous literature on these topics. Along with Bledstein, *Culture of Professionalism*, cited in chapter 3, above, the works that have had the greatest influence on this chapter include Alexandra Oleson and John Voss, editors, *The Organization of Knowledge in Modern America, 1860-1920* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), Samuel P. Hays, “The New Organizational Society” in *American Political History as Social Analysis* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1980), 244-263, Charles E. Rosenberg, *No Other Gods: On Science and American Social Thought* (Baltimore : Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997) and David A. Hollinger, *Morris R. Cohen and the Scientific Ideal* (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1975).

⁶⁰⁸ Bledstein, *Culture of Professionalism*, 86-87.

professional journals. As Todd R. Brereton comments in his biography of Arthur Wagner, writing for a refereed publication is a fundamental activity in any of the modern professions.⁶⁰⁹ In the 1890s, Tasker Bliss published the article on the siege of Plevna, discussed above, and he also contributed several reviews in the new *Journal of the Military Service Institution of the United States*. As the President of the Army War College, he presented a paper on land warfare at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, and as a member of the new Joint Army and Navy Board, he wrote the Army's position paper discussing the most likely war for the United States to have to fight in the near future. By 1905, building on a reputation he had worked hard to develop, Bliss had become the leading strategic thinker in the U. S. Army.

In later years Bliss would become an ardent disciple of Woodrow Wilson, supporting United States membership in the League of Nations. In the years just before and after the turn of the century, Bliss's ideas were more nearly typical of Army officers in general. Still there were differences, in part because of his classical education and wide-ranging reading. By considering his military thinking in this period to find to what degree it can be considered representative of U. S. Army officers in general, the originality of his later thinking will be more evident.

The presentation and article on the siege of Plevna required a great deal of preparation. As aide-de-camp to Commanding General John M. Schofield, and then as an assistant to the Secretary of War, Bliss did not have time available to prepare

⁶⁰⁹ Todd R. Brereton, *Educating the U. S. Army: Arthur L. Wagner and Reform, 1875-1905* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 56-60.

another in-depth study. If he wrote about current issues or problems facing the army, readers would probably assume his article reflected Schofield's thinking. Bliss found a better outlet for his military thinking by contributing book reviews to the new professional journal of the military. In the 1890s he contributed four reviews, two of them of considerable length.

The first of these reviews was of a biography of General Nathanael Greene, published in the *Great Commanders* series.⁶¹⁰ Bliss used an opening device that now, more than a century later, seems quaint. He remarked that for those who eschew realism and love ancient legends and traditions, the history of the United States might be too brief; being so close in time, the events even of the Revolution lacked interest. "The heroes of our earliest struggles were the contemporaries of our grandfathers, or . . . our great-grandfathers. They have left us . . . the fullest account of their actions." With so much information available it was impossible to develop the sort of myths and legends that had sustained the Greek city-states and the Roman Empire. Bliss noted the rivalries and jealousies that were all too familiar to historians of the War for Independence, as well as the indifference or opposition of significant portions of the population. As a result, "[I]t would almost seem that the American people had liberty forced upon them in spite of themselves."⁶¹¹ Nevertheless, Bliss wrote, it was well to know the whole truth, since the darkness of the many served to highlight the devotion of those few who led the way to independence.

⁶¹⁰ Frances Vinton Greene, *Great Commanders: General Greene* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1893). The review is in the *Journal of the Military Service Institution of the United States* [cited hereafter as *JMSI*] XIV (1893), 1321-1324.

⁶¹¹ "General Greene," 1321.

Among this group, “no figure, save only one, is nobler than” Nathanael Greene. Since this was a military biography, the author did not give much space to Greene’s life before the Revolution, but in his review Bliss managed to squeeze in one statement praising the Baptists and another one critical of the Quakers. He noted that the author of the biography did not think that Roger Williams, founder of Rhode Island, Nathanael Greene’s home state, ever received the credit he deserved for his contributions to civil and religious liberty. Bliss noted that among “the great religious denomination of the Baptists” – Bliss’s own, of course – “the name of Roger Williams is revered as few mortal names are.” Bliss moved on to Greene’s own upbringing in the Religious Society of Friends. Greene’s voracious appetite for books meant that he quickly “mastered all the meager literature tolerated in that body of enthusiasts.” Bliss observed that Greene’s wide reading indicated that he enjoyed that “peculiar quality of mind” that allowed him to prepare himself “in the solitude of [his] library to occupy the most exalted positions in war.” Such men “prepare themselves to be successful generals when no amount of book study will make a successful chief of battalion.” Ironically, Bliss was stating a view that was virtually a gospel truth to the officers who opposed the professionalization of the armed forces in general and the Root reforms in particular, and he was stating this view, in another irony, in a new professional journal.

Greene distinguished himself first as Washington’s Quartermaster General. Bliss noted that along with the appointment of Baron Friedrich Wilhelm August von Steuben as inspector general, it was Greene’s appointment that began to set the

Continental Army's administration in order, at least enough to win the war.

Important as that service was, nevertheless, it is the "Southern campaign of 1781-1783 upon which General Greene's reputation as an independent commander must chiefly rest." In that virtually independent command, Greene's leadership was "masterly," even as he demonstrated his "unswerving devotion to duty" and "undying loyalty to his chief and to the cause."

In the May number that same year, Bliss published a lengthy review of another study of a great military leader, but from the *Great Captains* series.⁶¹² This one was a military biography of Julius Caesar.⁶¹³ Writing about Roman history gave Bliss an opportunity to display his classical education. Bliss declared that for Americans, "the citizens of the new Great Republic," Roman history was "the most instructive of all recorded history in the world."⁶¹⁴ Caesar's life shows us a developing personality and a wide range of abilities, from a "lounging" youth to a "dilettante priest," followed by the orator and the "shrewd [but] courageous politician" and the general," the "far-seeing statesman" and finally the "reformer." Bliss likened Caesar to a historical diamond "whose many facets reflect" the light with "equal brilliancy from whatever point it be viewed."⁶¹⁵ Thus Bliss considered it unfortunate though necessary, given the limitations of the series, that this biography focused narrowly on Caesar's military campaigns. Like so many of the great generals

⁶¹² "Caesar," in the *JMSI*, XIV (May, 1893), 662-678.

⁶¹³ Theodore A. Dodge, *Great Captains—Caesar: A History of the Art of War among the Romans down to the end of the Roman Empire, with a detailed account of the campaigns of Gaius Julius Caesar* (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1892).

⁶¹⁴ "Caesar," 662.

⁶¹⁵ All these quotations are from *ibid.*

of antiquity, Bliss wrote, Caesar “united within [himself] all or many of the functions of the State, yet [most striking] is the absolute equilibrium of his mental constitution.”⁶¹⁶ Even more important for a biography, Bliss argued, Caesar “directly and indirectly exerted an influence . . . extending to our own time, affecting our language, our laws and our religion.” Yet in this volume Caesar’s life had to “fit the same space as [the lives of] Alexander and Hannibal whose brilliant achievements have left no more trace than a blazing meteor”⁶¹⁷ It was a sign of the breadth and maturity of Bliss’s developing military thought that he recognized the work of two such famous generals had been so limited in establishing their impact on world history.

Bliss reminded his readers that it is too easy to evaluate any general without bearing in mind the actual range of difficulties he had to confront. That was especially the case with Caesar, because he had determined enemies in Rome who were always ready to seize upon any defeat in order to discredit him. For Caesar, “a single defeat meant irretrievable ruin. Whether we regard him as a man [with] motives of the purest patriotism or of the most transparent ambition, all his hopes were involved in the chance of each successive battle.”⁶¹⁸

Since Dodge’s work included a history of the development of the Roman army before Caesar’s time, Bliss included in his review a long discussion of Roman military organization. Bliss disagreed with Dodge, who argued that the new legion of

⁶¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 663, 664.

⁶¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 664-665.

⁶¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 664.

professional soldiers no longer reflected “Roman courage, honesty and patriotism” but showed instead the loss of the “old Roman patriotism, discipline and staunchness.” In terms that echoed the Uptonian views of the regular Army of the time, Bliss saw in this changed legion not just a better tactical organization but the “principle” that led George Washington “to cry out in despair for a force of ‘regulars’ to replace the militia,” and the same principle that “leads every thoughtful soldier in our own day to advocate the maintenance of a reasonable force of professional soldiers, ‘mercenaries’ if you please ”⁶¹⁹

Bliss critiqued Dodge’s argument and presented his own at length. He began by denying that there was necessarily any connection between social and political structures and military structures. In particular, Bliss believed there was no relationship between the decline of the one and the decay of the other. For instance,

Rome, in the days of her purest virtue suffered the most appalling defeats; she was rotten with corruption during the period of her greatest military triumphs. This tendency of the critics has given us many interesting moral and philosophical reflections, but much false history.⁶²⁰

This is an insight that still serves as a useful reminder to professional historians.

Dodge opened the subject of the organization of the Roman army, and Bliss went on to discuss that topic for almost three pages. He explained the army that tradition assigned to king Servius Tullius, and the changes that Gaius Marius brought to that organization. Bliss believed that the older system of annual recruitment based on property qualifications was “distinctively a bad one and every change affected by

⁶¹⁹ Ibid., 666.

⁶²⁰ Ibid.

Marius was a noteworthy reform.” In particular, Bliss praised the shift to long-term enlistments as well as the abandonment of the maniple for the cohort, which provided a “formation dense enough to stop the enemy” who were now barbarian invaders, not a master of maneuver such as Hannibal.⁶²¹ Whatever the case in Roman history, Bliss interpreted the new system as Uptonian.

The changes in the military institutions of Rome were those which mark the transition from a militia system to a regular standing army. War had now become the trade of a separate class of society. The Roman influence and power could no longer be maintained by annual levies composed of men to whom the making of a campaign was an abnormal incident of their lives. The new political condition had come about . . . precisely during that time the Romans discarded the militia for a permanent system.⁶²²

For officers in the United States Army in the 1890’s, the superiority of long-service regulars to any form of citizen-soldier had become an article of faith.

Bliss likened the Roman situation to the demands of the new American empire. When a country combined the geographical fact of widely scattered possessions that it sought to defend with the political desire for the maximum individual liberty, Bliss argued, then it must choose either a large army raised by conscription or a large army of long-term professional soldiers. He declined to debate

⁶²¹ Ibid., 667-668. After a disastrous defeat in the Battle of the Caudine Forks in 321 B.C.E., the Romans had shifted from the use of the phalanx, a mass formation of pikemen, to the legion made up of maniples, each one of which was a small formation of men. The maniple allowed the Romans to maneuver their troops quickly and effectively, but it did not have staying power. Eventually the Romans changed their organization, moving to a legion of approximately 5000 men in ten cohorts of 480 men each. See Graham Webster, *The Roman Imperial Army of the First and Second Centuries A. D.* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1969), 21-24 and 114-118, and Michael Grant, *History of Rome* (New York: Charles Scribners’ Sons, 1978), 62-65.

⁶²² Ibid., 660.

the merits of these two systems, but “either of them is better than the militia system Rome abandoned.”⁶²³ Clearly Bliss would have preferred for the United States also to abandon the militia system.

This subject gave Bliss the chance to include several discussions of Latin terminology. When Dodge commented that Caesar once referred to his soldiers as “Quirites,” using it as a term of contempt because they were not citizens, Bliss disagreed. He wrote that Caesar used that term precisely because they were citizens.

The name Quirites was the official name of the Sabines and after the union of the latter with the Romans in one commonwealth it was joined with that of Romani, the technical designation of the nation becoming “Populus Romanus Quiretium.” But the term Quirites was employed by the Romans when they spoke of themselves in their civil capacity, while they used the name Romani to denote their political and military capacity.

Caesar quelled the mutiny by allowing the soldiers to return to their civil status, making them citizens once again but no longer soldiers. When Dodge questioned whether the wall that Caesar had his troops construct to prevent the free movement of the Helvetii was in fact a continuous one, Bliss responded with an analysis of Latin grammar. He wrote that Caesar’s choice of verbs indicated “unbroken continuity,” with a first derivative meaning of “to prolong or to continue.” Thus the wall probably was one continuous construction eighteen miles long. In yet another case, Dodge relied on several other historians and stated that the Gauls wrote in Greek letters. Bliss responded that in fact, Caesar testified that he wrote in Greek letters specifically in order to have his letter be unintelligible to the Gauls if they intercepted it. In this

⁶²³ Ibid., 669-670.

case, the key point is that the Latin “literae” meant “language” as well as “letters.” In all of these cases, whether Bliss was right or wrong in his interpretation is not important; he was demonstrating to his fellow officers the extent of his knowledge of the Latin language as well as Roman history.⁶²⁴ To some extent he flaunted his knowledge, but as a favorite of the Commanding General, he was also providing a role model for his fellow officers.

While these explanations of possible translations were important in the context of the book, such a discussion must have left many critics of the new professionalism shaking their heads, wondering what sort of army officer discussed Latin vocabulary. Bliss’s book review would have confirmed all of their worst fears. For many officers who were products of the “Old Army,” the model military officer was a regimental officer and a combat leader. These were the sort of officers who objected to proposed bills in Congress that would have changed the system of promotion to require examinations, or who spoke of an order to establish a lyceum on the post and in it discuss “fire discipline,” complained that Washington was prescribing fire-fighting drills.⁶²⁵

In this review as well as the previous one, Bliss was able to include his belief that there is such a thing as military genius, and it has little if anything to do with knowledge gained from books. Dodge had commented regretfully that we know little about what, if anything, Caesar read on the art of war before his Gallic campaigns.

⁶²⁴ The first discussion is *ibid.*, 669, the second on 672, and the third on 671.

⁶²⁵ There is a discussion of military education and the growth of professionalism in Edward M. Coffman, *The Old Army: A Portrait of the American Army in Peacetime, 1784-1898* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, paperback edition 1988), 273-277.

Bliss observed that “The great generals of the world seem to have owed very little to previous military training.” In Caesar’s case, many years of political activity put him in command of an army, and the moment he assumed command, “his transcendent military genius blazes out with the suddenness of a newly created star.” Repeating the comment he made in his review of the biography of Nathanael Greene, Bliss went on to say that first-rate subordinates need to learn their techniques by “long training,” but “the great masters . . . cannot have their skills accounted for as the result of previous experience.” Bliss believed that strategy, “the distinctive art of the general,” was not learned by experience or by studying the experience of others; rather, the great strategists simply enjoyed a native ability “men are generally content to call genius.”⁶²⁶

It is worth noting that Bliss concluded this review with a page of praise for the Roman Empire. Caesar’s conquests, bloody as they may have been, turned Gaul into a “rich and contented province,” one that under Roman rule made “greater progress in all the arts that refine and civilize” than it had made in hundreds of years of independence. All of this progress was only possible because of Caesar’s military successes, which “accomplish[ed] the most important results ever achieved by one man” in all of world history. As a result of his work, “modern Gaul” [i.e., France] had “ripened into well-nigh the fairest civilization of this nineteenth century world.”⁶²⁷ This love for both the Romans and the French would continue to shape Bliss’s thinking until his death.

⁶²⁶ Ibid., 670-671.

⁶²⁷ Ibid., 678.

His other two reviews may be treated more briefly. In the Appleton and Company series on *Great Commanders*, one of the volumes was an abridgement of James Parton's biography of Andrew Jackson.⁶²⁸ In this case, Bliss displayed both his knowledge of historiography and his dislike of Jackson. He noted that this was not a new work but simply a revision of Parton's three-volume biography published more than twenty years earlier. It therefore has the "same merits and defects" as that earlier work, presenting Jackson's flaws but in a completely uncritical manner. Most important, Bliss could not accept Jackson as a great commander because his entire period of field command was less than two full years. In that time he "indicated the possession of many of the indispensable qualities of a commanding general," but the time was simply too brief to allow for a fair evaluation.⁶²⁹

Considering the brief account of Jackson's life before his period of military command, Bliss observed that he "exhibited few traits to imitate or admire." Jackson was "an uneducated youth and illiterate man" generally given to "whiskey, gambling . . . , racing horses, fighting cocks . . . accepting or proving duels [and developing] profanity as a fine art." He entered into his first marriage with "thoughtless haste," which he later had cause to regret. He wrote "some astonishingly illiterate" letters which Parton included in this volume. When elected to Congress, Jackson joined in an attempted rebuff to Washington that "has been justly characterized by another . . .

⁶²⁸ James Parton, *Great Commanders: General Jackson* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1893); Bliss's review is in the *JMSI*, XIV (1893), 889-892.

⁶²⁹ *JMSI*, 889.

biographer . . . as the most factious and malicious [act] which the opposition . . . had ever perpetrated.”⁶³⁰

Turning to Jackson’s military campaigns, Bliss acknowledged that Jackson deserved great credit for pulling together his army to defeat the Creek Indians. Following this success and his promotion to major general in the regular Army, he defeated a British attack on Mobile Point and then drove the British out of Pensacola. These victories cleared his way to move to New Orleans, where of course he won a tremendous victory over the British two weeks after the War of 1812 had ended. Bliss commented that “were there anything to show that these operations formed part of a general plan, with the battle of New Orleans as the culmination, it would indeed demonstrate the genius of a born general. But there is nothing to show this.”⁶³¹ Instead, for his conclusion Bliss fell back on a dubious cliché, that for all his impulsive and vindictive behavior, Jackson always acted from “that intense and burning love of country which eventually brings absolution for all political sin.”⁶³²

The last of his reviews was of another volume in the *Great Captains* series, in this case a biography of Sweden’s King Gustavus II Adolphus.⁶³³ In this substantial essay Bliss displayed some of his finest qualities as a strategic analyst. While he managed to present his own historical interpretation of Gustavus Adolphus’ policies in the Thirty Years War, first and foremost, he recognized that war is not an end in

⁶³⁰ Ibid., 890.

⁶³¹ Ibid., 891.

⁶³² Ibid., 892.

⁶³³ *Great Captains—Gustavus Adolphus* (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1895); Bliss’s review is in *JMSI*, XVIII (May, 1896), 695-709.

itself but is only one among the policy maker's tools. War should only be studied in relation to national policy, not as an exercise for its own sake. To make his point, Bliss discussed the analogy "which likens war to the game of chess." Without doubt, he wrote, this is a false analogy. It is true that in war, as in chess,

bishops are sometimes sacrificed to save a knight, the knights to save a rook. But in chess the bishops are sacrificed to win the game; in war the sacrifice of the bishops sometimes is the game. In the summer of 1630, Wallenstein threw away knights, bishops, pawns, and allowed checkmate to his king. Yet Wallenstein was a great general. Checkmate to his king was his game. Statesmanship, not war, is a game of chess, for war itself is only one of the pieces in the game.

Bliss was stating as clearly as he could in this review that war was the tool of government policy, not an end in itself.⁶³⁴

Bliss also demonstrated his qualities as an historian; he recognized that writing campaign histories required the scholar to work with what the generals knew at the time, rather than with the benefit of hindsight. The specific event that Bliss discussed to make this point was the storming and sack of Magdeburg in 1631, an event that horrified Europe. Gustavus could have marched on Vienna but did not, turning instead toward the relief of besieged Magdeburg. Some writers had explained this decision by arguing that Gustavus wanted to secure a base for his campaign in Germany, but Bliss disagreed.

. . . [T]here is no evidence, prior to the fact, that he contemplated the campaign which only became possible after Breitenfeld.

⁶³⁴ *JMSI*, 699. One wonders if this comment indicates that Bliss had read and understood the work of the Prussian theorist Karl von Clausewitz, but there is no indication in his papers that he had or had not.

Finally, it has been said that he felt his paramount duty then to be the relief of Magdeburg Here is another instance of the reflex mental action so often met with in historical writing. We all know the awful fate which befell that splendid city. And we are apt to think that Gustavus knew that such would be its fate unless he prevented it. Yet nothing is more certain than that neither he nor any man in Europe anticipated such an event if the city should fall. Villages were burned by the hundreds [in the Thirty Years War] but great and wealthy cities with strong fortifications were captured to hold.

Bliss argued instead that no one expected the sack of the city in such an outrageous fashion, not Gustavus, not the garrison commander Dietrich von Falkenberg, and not the Imperial commander, Johann Tzerclaes, Count von Tilly. If not, then Gustavus could not have undertaken any operation in an effort to prevent it.⁶³⁵

This review revealed that Bliss was familiar with the military and diplomatic history of the Thirty Years War. He argued his points in great detail and offered mild criticism of the author, Dodge, for misunderstanding the history of the period. Bliss put forward the idea that the Swedish king was fighting not just for the Protestant cause in a general way, but for the creation of a Swedish empire centered on the Baltic Sea. In making his case, Bliss summoned as evidence many aspects of European and even world history. He argued that Gustavus intervened when he did because at that time he had completed his campaigns against Russia and Poland, which gave him control of the eastern shore of the Baltic. Intervention in Germany gave him a base on its south shore. On the one hand, “the establishment of such an

⁶³⁵ Ibid., 706-707.

empire could not have been in the king's mind when he landed in Germany," because this "magnificent vista" only appeared after the battle of Breitenfeld.⁶³⁶ On the other hand, Bliss wrote, the only way to achieve a "fair study of his military career" was to understand "his political object;" only if his military efforts fit with his political plans could Gustavus be considered one of the great captains.

Again Bliss discussed the need to understand history as it was happening rather than by looking backward. "We start out with the undisputed assumption" that the king was a great man, but then we apply "to a great man of the seventeenth century the attributes that we assign to a great man in the nineteenth."⁶³⁷ Thus Bliss argued that Gustavus was not trying to create a German empire of the sort that Bismarck created in 1871. Rather he began with the need to defend the Scandinavian Protestant states and the Baltic against Imperial expansion. If scholars take that as the starting point, then "all the measures which he took . . . were admirably calculated for his object." It may have been a vain dream, but "he believed he could secure it and maintain it and his measures were well taken for that end."⁶³⁸ Such an empire would have

meant the absolute control of the rapidly growing commerce which, since the discovery of the Cape of Good Hope, had become almost entirely ocean-borne. The ports of the Baltic were becoming the entrepots of Central Europe. The control of that sea meant the power to tax this commerce, to open it to friends, to close it to enemies. . . . If Gustavus succeeded he would control not only the incoming but the outgoing trade east of Hamburg. . . .

⁶³⁶ Ibid., 704.

⁶³⁷ Ibid.

⁶³⁸ Ibid., 704-705.

His Scandinavian empire need only sit still and have the wealth of Germany, Poland and Russia fall into her lap.⁶³⁹

This argument remains one taken seriously by modern scholars,⁶⁴⁰ but for this study it is most important as an indication of the way Bliss approached military history. He believed one could only understand the military operations by starting with the political strategies of each side. One also wonders, reading about the importance of sea-borne commerce in the construction of an empire, whether Bliss was reflecting the influence of his former colleague Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan.

Bliss thought that the primacy of politics explained most of Gustavus's behavior in the Thirty Years War. For instance, when he insisted on maintaining a dispersed Swedish force, even as he gathered up troops to march to what became the battle of Lutzen, the best explanation was political. His "hesitating, aimless movements" have otherwise "puzzled the military historians" What the reader should remember, Bliss stated, was that there had already been proposals for a general peace, and Gustavus was ready to open negotiations with his opponent, General Albrecht Wenzel Eusebius von Wallenstein, the ablest commander of the Imperial forces. "He even hoped for a Diet of the Empire in which the voice of Sweden might be heard. But in that event his credit and influence would be in direct proportion to the territory he held." With that possibility in mind, the king had to fight in a way that left him always ready for a peace settlement. "In those days peace

⁶³⁹ Ibid., 705.

⁶⁴⁰ See for instance Robert R. Palmer and Joel Colton, *A History of the Modern World*, Seventh Edition (New York, St. Louis, London, Singapore, et al.: McGraw Hill, Inc., 1992), 144.

was made at strange times and in strange ways. At any moment the alliances upon which he depended might be dissolved. Had he yielded what he held, in order to inflict a crushing blow upon his enemy . . . , he might have been forced to treat before that blow could have been delivered. . . .”⁶⁴¹

In any event, once he had resolved upon a battle, he could make use of the advantages of his army in superior mobility and firepower. It was his skillful use of those advantages in battle, along with his personal courage and leadership, that gave him his lasting reputation. Once the “battle rage came upon him . . . [h]e moved north with a speed almost unheard of in those days.” In the end, he only “sealed his fame with his blood,” but had he survived to achieve his goal, the battle of Lutzen might have become the “last [stone] in the foundation of the Scandinavian Empire” rather than the “first stone in the foundation of the German Empire.”⁶⁴² No one reading this series of reviews could have doubted Bliss’s knowledge and grasp of military history and national strategy. This reputation must have counted significantly when Secretary of War Elihu Root considered which officer would be a suitable president for the new Army War College.

It was as a result of his holding that position that Bliss presented his next major paper. In 1905 the American Academy of Political and Social Science, one of the nation’s oldest and most prestigious scholarly organizations, included a session at its annual meeting on the topic of “Factors of Efficiency in Modern Warfare.” In the session there were five papers, and the presenters were all senior officers of the Army

⁶⁴¹ Ibid., 709.

⁶⁴² Ibid.

or the Navy. Rear-Admiral Frederick Rodgers read a paper on “The Extent to Which the Navy of the United States Should be Increased,” Retired Rear-Admiral George W. Melville presented a paper on “The Important Elements in Naval Conflicts,” Captain William H. Beehler contributed a paper on “The Needs of the Navy,” and Bliss’s War College colleague Lieutenant Colonel William W. Wotherspoon spoke on “The Training of the Efficient Soldier.” The longest paper in the session was Bliss’s own, “The Important Elements in Modern Land Conflicts.”⁶⁴³

Bliss began his paper with his own estimate of why the Academy had placed this session on the program of its annual meeting. He was certain that the reason for their interest was

those tremendous events . . . still occurring in the Far East [the Russo-Japanese War] . . . and . . . the knowledge that these events are not the incidents of a mere dynastic quarrel . . . [but] it is, possibly at least, one of those collisions which at epoch-making periods occur between different forms of civilization . . . [to] every act of which, for the first time in the history of the world, the whole race is a spectator.”⁶⁴⁴

No doubt there was as well “an especially sad interest in the demonstration now being made . . . that war is still possible and that . . . the dominance of this or that form of civilization over parts of the human race . . . may be determined through this horrible agency” Because there had been so much hope that modern weaponry had made war so destructive and terrible that no country would indulge in it again, Bliss considered it important to make a “hasty investigation” of the “curious phenomenon

⁶⁴³ All of these papers were published in *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, XXVI (Sept. 1905), 97-169. Bliss’s paper, cited hereafter as “Land Conflicts,” is on 99-120.

⁶⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 101-102.

that modern agencies of destruction render more rather than less possible conflicts of bodies of men armed with them.” Through such an investigation, he argued, the scholar would find that the important elements of land conflicts “remain just what they were before.”⁶⁴⁵

Bliss discussed at length the famous work by the Polish banker Ivan S. Bloch, whom he referred to as “Professor Bloch.” This six-volume book, in its American edition, was entitled *The Future of War*, but in its British version was entitled *Is War Now Impossible?*⁶⁴⁶ One of the comments often found in military histories of the turn-of-the-century era and the First World War is the question of why Bloch’s arguments and predictions went unheeded. Thus it is especially important to follow Bliss’s discussion of Bloch’s work, since Bliss provides some of the reasons. For instance, one of the predictions Bloch made was that “From the direction of Japan there can be no serious danger,” and in particular, Japan “can not threaten” Russia. Bloch wrote that “It is inconceivable that [Japan] would enter upon a war with Russia” even if Japan enjoyed a clear naval superiority. As Bliss responded, this “inconceivable” war had, in 1905, been underway for more than a year.⁶⁴⁷ According to Bernard Brodie, Bloch “did not quite [come to terms] with what is possible and what is impossible”⁶⁴⁸ He wrote of modern weaponry’s making war impossible,

⁶⁴⁵ Ibid., 102-103.

⁶⁴⁶ The American edition was published in New York by Doubleday and McClure in 1899; the British edition in the same year by Grant Richards of London. This information comes from Bernard Brodie, *War and Politics* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc.; London: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1973), 416n. Brodie discusses Bloch’s work on 416-419.

⁶⁴⁷ Bloch is quoted and Bliss responds in “Land Conflicts,” 103.

⁶⁴⁸ Brodie, *War and Politics*, 419.

but in his preface and in an opening conversation published with the two English-language editions of his book, he spoke of the possibility of war and the terrible consequences of its violence.⁶⁴⁹

Bliss took issue with Bloch's conclusion that war had become impossible. This conclusion, Bliss said, "results from an exhaustive study of the resisting force, the morale, to be expected in an army of men of any Occidental nation." According to Bloch, as men saw their comrades killed and wounded, they would give up the struggle. The "assumable limit" that men could endure had already been reached and surpassed, based on two assumptions. First, Bloch assumed the increase in the power of modern weapons, and second, he believed there had been "an actual decrease in the moral resisting power of men of western races." Bliss believed that "the first of these . . . assumptions is . . . without foundation in fact. That the second may be true is conceivable; but if true it is full of omen . . ."⁶⁵⁰

Bliss believed that "there have always been two radically different forms of mentality or spiritual force . . . that have steadily impelled forward at least two radically different forms of civilization." History, he argued, should be understood as two processes. One was the struggle within each of these civilizations as they developed, the other was the "tremendous struggles which mark the collisions of the systems themselves." For the military conflicts that were part of these collisions, the most important fact was that "all the material advantages" of the one civilization could be "readily communicated to and absorbed by the other without producing any

⁶⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 417-418.

⁶⁵⁰ "Land Conflicts," 104.

necessary effect upon the peculiar modes of thought out of which this other grew.”

Thus in India one could ride in a railway car pulled by a locomotive, but one’s fellow passengers would still be on their way to “worship an idol in a temple of Delhi.”

Bliss explained further:

At this moment the products of every western science, art and manufacture are being employed to make successful the advance of armies of Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism. Of those who cherish the hope that western civilization may so reduce the morale of its adherents that, combined with the anticipatory terrors produced by modern agencies of destruction, they will refuse to engage in any war at all, I ask whether that hope can be very consoling so long as these same agencies of destruction are in the hands of hundreds of millions of men whose morale has not thus been reduced, and to whom the idea of death and physical suffering in advancing another antagonistic civilization is as the breath of their nostrils?⁶⁵¹

Once again Bliss had staked out his position as a believer in the inherent superiority of American and European civilization, an attitude that was typical of the officers of the armed forces of the United States at that time.

Bliss went on to argue that the Bloch was also mistaken because he had failed to notice an important fact about warfare: that “under average conditions, the amount of loss that any body of men need suffer, depends entirely on themselves.” That is, one side or the other could “lie down or run away or surrender.” Bloch had pictured “a modern battle as made up of an enormous number of duels, each between two men face to face and armed with perfect weapons,” which was why he believed it would lead to “mutual annihilation along the entire line of battle.” Bliss believed that it had

⁶⁵¹ Ibid., 104-105.

been many centuries since battles fit the image Bloch created. In fact, Bliss claimed, “the percentage of casualties in battle, other things being reasonably equal, decreases in proportion to the perfection--length of range, accuracy and inherent destructive character—of the military weapons employed.”⁶⁵² Bliss presented data to support his thesis, listing the percentage of casualties in representative battles from the beginning of the Seven Years War (1756-1763) to the battle of Mukden in the Russo-Japanese War then in progress. In the published version of the paper there are four pages of tables in which he listed the battle, the size of forces engaged, the percentage of loss each suffered, the duration of the battle, and the percentage of loss per hour.⁶⁵³ He noted that the percentage of loss and the percentage of loss per hour had been in steady decline, even though the number of combatants engaged had grown steadily and the duration of battles increased.

Bliss drew several conclusions from these data. First, he believed that the principal reason for the declining rate of loss was the disappearance of the individual duel from the battlefield. In the ancient world, swordsmen fought swordsmen in such encounters. By the time the men on one side realized they were losing, it was probably impossible to extricate themselves from the situation, and so they were slaughtered. The range and accuracy of modern weapons had eliminated the individual duel from the battlefield. Furthermore, on an ancient battlefield the deadly clash of soldiers extended all along the line; in a modern battle, some parts of the army may simply hold fast while one section makes an attack or defense.

⁶⁵² *Ibid.*, 105-106.

⁶⁵³ *Ibid.*, 107-110.

Bliss's second argument relied on a dubious analogy that an army in battle is like a machine doing work; most of the energy is concentrated in a specific area. Thus as armies increased in size, in their battles there still tended to be only a few, perhaps only one, critical point. At that place the losses to one side or the other might be catastrophic, but given the total force involved they did not seem so great. For instance, at Gettysburg, during the American Civil War, some units suffered 90 percent casualties, but the overall percentage was much lower. In spite of the losses suffered there, the battle was not decisive because there were so many other places where the Confederacy's hopes could turn. The depression of defeat at Gettysburg might be countered by the sense of hope from victory at Chickamauga. The same principle held true for nations in wars that spanned enormous territories; when in the Russo-Japanese War, Russian morale suffered because of the defeat at Mukden, Russian hopes then shifted to the voyage of their fleet. This geographic dispersion of the modern war effort balanced the increased energy produced in the struggles between larger armies.

The third factor that was reducing the impact of the declining percentage of casualties in modern war was the improved care of the wounded, which led to higher rates of survival for these unfortunates. The "old small-arm projectile made great ragged wounds . . .," while the "modern bullet . . . give[s] the minimum shock and no small proportion of wounded men receive and need no other dressing of their wounds than that applied by themselves or their comrades on the firing line."

Bliss's fourth factor leading to a smaller percentage of loss was the dispersal of forces on the battlefield that modern weapons made possible and necessary. In the space that in the Seven Years War would have found 10,000 men deployed, "we now sometimes find only 500." The fifth reason he gave was that in the "really decisive battles of past wars," much of the loss to the losing side occurred "after the defeat became evident." Since these battles took place at close range, the losing infantry, when they saw that their defeat was unavoidable, could not escape. "The retreating infantry were hurried into a state of more or less complete disorganization." In the battles in Manchuria, the reserve forces were so far away from the front lines that they could not reach a point of breakthrough in time to take advantage of the situation, and the losing side was able to begin "a fairly orderly retreat." Finally, Bliss argued that much of the loss in the most recent wars had been due to "a lack of appreciation" of the "power of the weapons" on the part of both the soldiers and the commanders. In other words, "much of the loss was preventable," and in future wars these lessons would have been learned. Of course in this estimate of human capability, Bliss was sadly mistaken.⁶⁵⁴

This paper is especially worthy of study because in it one can see an intelligent observer struggling to learn the lessons from contemporary developments. It should be clear from this summary that Bliss made several correct observations and mixed in several incorrect expectations. It is certainly evident that he did not fit the stereotype of a conservative general refusing to recognize reality. It is more accurate

⁶⁵⁴ The discussion of these factors is in *ibid.*, 115-120.

to observe that he was a professional student of war who was trying to make sense of a complex and ambiguous picture. In the end, he did state his plea for peace, but a peace not achieved because weapons would prove too terrible to use. Rather he believed peace would come “when each civilization has absorbed all that there is of essentially good and noble in the other,” and then it would be a peace born not out of fear “but of love.”⁶⁵⁵

The final paper to consider in this group is one that Bliss wrote in line of duty. He was a member of the newly-created Joint Army and Navy Board, an organization which the Secretaries of the Navy and War created in the summer of 1903.⁶⁵⁶ This Board was to be a permanent institution to coordinate the war plans of the Army’s General Staff and the Navy’s General Board. There were eight members, four from the General Board of the Navy and four from the General Staff of the Army. While it would seem logical to expect that the President of the Army War College should serve on such a board, in fact one of the weaknesses of the Joint Board was that the members were “appointed by name rather than by office.” Thus when a vacancy occurred, a replacement had to be named or the position remained vacant.

There were several other weaknesses in this organization. It had no staff; the minutes of its meetings were kept by the junior member. It had “limited functions and little authority in its own right.” The only questions it could discuss were those

⁶⁵⁵ Ibid., 120.

⁶⁵⁶ The letter creating the Joint Board is dated July 17, 1903. It was published as Navy Department G.O. No. 136, July 18, and as War Department G.O. No. 107, July 20, 1903. See Louis Morton, “Interservice Co-operation and Political-Military Collaboration,” in Harry L. Coles, ed., *Total War and Cold War: Problems in Civilian Control of the Military* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1962), 131-160.

referred to it by one of the services, and it could only recommend action to the two Secretaries. If they did not approve the recommendation, then “the Joint Board’s decisions had no force whatsoever.”⁶⁵⁷

The next year, Army Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Adna R. Chaffee asked the Secretary of War to refer a topic to the Joint Board. Chaffee wanted the Joint Board to agree upon a “series of practical problems (taking them in the order of their assumed importance) which involve cooperation of the services, and for the execution of which . . . the two Staffs will be responsible.” He specified that he was not interested in problems to be studied by the students at the two war colleges, but rather he wanted “practical general staff problems, the details of which should be worked out by the permanent personnel of the two War Colleges in cooperation” The plans would then be approved by the two general staffs and passed on to the Joint Board, and once approved, sent back to the two departments.⁶⁵⁸

In response to Chaffee’s letter, the Joint Board met twice to hear papers by its members on the most likely war the United States would face next. In the first meeting, Rear Admiral Henry C. Taylor, President of the Naval War College, presented the Navy’s view. Taylor stated that his analysis began with an “examination of the development of the great nations and a comparison of their

⁶⁵⁷ All of this description is based on Morton, “Political-Military Collaboration,” 133.

⁶⁵⁸ Chaffee to The Secretary of War, April 22, 1904, RG 225, Records of the Joint Army and Navy Board, Box 2, file #325, NARA. The context for this meeting is well-described in William R. Braisted’s brilliant monograph *The United States Navy in the Pacific, 1897-1909* (New York: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1958), esp. 169-172. Also see Richard D. Challener, *Admirals, Generals and American Foreign Policy, 1898-1914* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1973), esp. 15-77.

conditions and the general international situation at the present time with such conditions and situations in the past.”⁶⁵⁹ Taylor reported that the recent naval plans of campaign had had as their basis an “attempt by Germany, in coalition with one or more other European powers, to gain permanent foothold upon the South American Continent north of the Amazon—the principal theater of operations being the Caribbean Sea.” The Navy had then considered the growing commercial interests of the United States in Asia, along with United States possession of the Philippines, and the Navy developed plans for a war based on a “coalition of Germany, France and Russia, opposed to an alliance of England, Japan, and the United States,—the principal centers” of that war being the Philippines and the coast of “Northeastern Asia.”

These comments demonstrate that the leaders of the Navy at that time were well aware of the thinking among some of the business and commercial elite of the United States. While how realistic the thinking was is a subject of intense debate, there can be no doubt that many people in the business community thought that East Asia in general and China in particular represented a great potential market for American exports. These business leaders, along with the naval leadership, were equally aware of the intense international competition among the European imperial powers for colonies and for commercial advantage. Admiral George Dewey, in particular, seemed obsessed with the danger posed by Germany, but many other naval flag officers shared his concern to some degree.⁶⁶⁰

⁶⁵⁹ What follows is a summary of Taylor, “Memorandum,” dated May 31, 1904 but with a handwritten note, “Revised draft as read to the Joint Board, June 10, 1904,” RG 225, file #325, NARA.

⁶⁶⁰ The most important work on the subject of American business leaders’ hopes for economic opportunities in China is Thomas McCormick, *China Market* (Chicago: Quadrangle

As the Navy viewed the immediate situation in 1904, Taylor reported, the “political, commercial, military, naval and strategic” conditions indicated that the “industrial development of the United States has a close and somewhat dependent connection with the great populations of Eastern Asia.” So important had this connection become to the United States that “we may expect in the future to find the sacredness of the Monroe Doctrine drop to second in the national mind, and our trade relations with Eastern Asia assume first place, and become the primal cause of war.”

The Navy believed that this war “would be of a serious character and would doubtless extend to various fields of operation,” and that the United States should be prepared for “attacks upon our supremacy in the Caribbean and Central and South America.” Nevertheless, the “principal objective, both naval and diplomatic, would be to secure trade rights and commercial equality—if not supremacy—in Eastern Asia.” Since Great Britain was not likely to be an enemy in such a war, plans for war involving Canada or the British islands near the United States should not be the first

Books, 1967), but see also LaFeber, *New Empire*, cited in the previous chapter. Other important works that discuss this topic include Dudden, Arthur, *American Pacific: From the Old China Trade to the Present* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), Marilyn B. Young, *The Rhetoric of Empire: American China Policy, 1895-1901* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), Ernest R. May and John K. Fairbank, eds., *America's China Trade in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1986), Jerry Israel, *Progressivism and the Open Door: America and China, 1905-1921* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1971), Michael H. Hunt, *The Making of a Special Relationship: The United States and China to 1914* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), Warren I. Cohen, *America's Response to China: an Interpretative History of Sino-American Relations* (New York, London, Sydney, and Toronto: John Wiley & Sons, 1980), and John R. Eperjesi, *The Imperialist Imaginary: Visions of Asia and the Pacific in American Culture* (Hanover, N. H.: Dartmouth College Press, Hanover and London: The University Press of New England, 2005). For an insightful discussion of the various interpretations of the influences on foreign policy, see Frank Ninkovich, *The Wilsonian Century: U. S. Foreign Policy since 1900* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1999), introduction, 1-16. For Dewey's and the General Board's views on the German threat, see Ronald H. Spector, *Admiral of the New Empire: The Life and Career of George Dewey* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1974), 131-136 and 184-188.

to develop. Neither did the Navy consider Japan a likely enemy. The plans the Navy recommended, in order of importance, were:

First. Plans based on a hostile coalition of Russia, France and Germany.

- a) For defense of the Philippines.
- b) For attacking Kiao-chau and Tong-king.
- c) For seizing an advanced base on the coast of China
Hold Hawaii and Kiska.
- d) Defense of Puerto Rico and Cuba, occupation of Haiti and San Domingo, capture of Martinique. Dominance in Venezuela, Colombia, defense of Panama.
- e) Protection of our own coast.

Second. Plans based on Japan, China and Russia as a hostile coalition.

- a) For defense of the Philippines.
- b) For seizing an advanced base on the coast of China
Hold Hawaii and Kiska.
- c) Plans for blockading principal ports of Japan

Third. Plans based on Germany and France as hostile and attacking [the] Monroe Doctrine in South America.

- a) For meeting their attack upon [the] Caribbean and South America.
- b) For defending the Panama Canal.
- c) For occupying, or at least defending, Haiti and San Domingo.
- d) For attacking Kiao-chau and Tong-king by the Asiatic Fleet, Marines and troops from the Philippines.

Fourth. Plans based on war with England. . . .

Fifth. Plans for operations against Mexico.

Sixth. Plans for operations against Germany alone in southern South America.

Seventh. Plans for operations against South American republics.

In 1904, it was understandable that Japan and Mexico did not appear to be likely enemies, but otherwise Taylor's paper presented a remarkable list of situations that must make one wonder to what extent the Navy had actually considered the international conditions of the time. To think that Germany and France would become allies was a curious idea, and of course any German move against the

Western Hemisphere would have left the German expeditionary force at the mercy of the Royal Navy. As for American commercial interests in Asia, in spite of the best efforts of the State Department and later the William H. Taft administration, they would in fact remain minimal for many years.

At the same meeting, Bliss presented the Army's point of view, although he did not complete a final draft of his paper until a week later.⁶⁶¹ Bliss noted that since these deliberations would provide guidance to the two services for their planning, the Board would "have failed in its duty if a little war which occurs tomorrow finds it unprepared although at the same time it has carefully studied the conditions of a great war the probable occurrence of which is in the remoter future." To discern correctly the most likely war, Bliss argued, one should start with the "probable causes of war [emphasis in original]." Once these are understood, they would lead the analyst to the likely place and enemies, and even give an idea of the likely operations. Bliss believed that the "most probable causes of wars in which the United States may be involved [were]:

- 1) The necessity of the enforcement of the Monroe Doctrine by the United States;
- 2) Efforts for extension of trade;
- 3) Intervention by the United States . . . in some insular or continental country lying south of us on this hemisphere, for the purpose of maintaining an orderly government therein."

In fact, he argued, these would all be essentially the same cause, enforcement of the Monroe Doctrine, because he did not "think that when the United States comes to

⁶⁶¹ Bliss to Admiral George Dewey, June 17, 1904, transmitting a copy of his completed "letter" dated June 10, 1904, both in ibid. What follows is a summary of the letter/report.

fight it will be for the declared purpose of an extension of trade, although that may be the real cause of war and its real object, concealed under an appeal to the Monroe Doctrine.”

According to Bliss, the United States was fortunate in its policy situation, because it had only one foreign policy that was “clearly defined, acknowledged whether approved or not by foreign powers, approved at home by all classes and political parties,” and that was the Monroe Doctrine. He stated that the War of 1898 had grown out of this policy but of course had created a new situation that probably would challenge it. Bliss recognized that the involvement of the United States in Asia was unprecedented in U. S. history.

There is no doubt that this will result in due time in the formulation of a second line of foreign policy, and we shall then have one policy based on contact with and another based on isolation from the rest of the world. We may yet find ourselves fighting for our Monroe Doctrine on one side of the world and against somebody else’s Monroe Doctrine on the other side of the world. However, that time has not yet come.

Bliss had a clear and balanced understanding of the world of foreign policies; not many Americans recognized that other countries might have their own equivalent to the Monroe Doctrine. Other countries would defend their own policies as right and just, just as the United States did. This was a perfect realist statement of U. S. foreign policy.

In the same way, the Philippine Islands might eventually become a reason for the United States to become involved in a trade war in Asia, but Bliss, again speaking

as a realist, assessed them as more likely to be a “vulnerable object of the enemy’s attack rather than a base for aggressive movements” by the United States.⁶⁶² The Philippines were likely to be involved in the most likely American war simply because they were such a tempting target. In the same way, only if the United States fought Britain “would we have any chance of reimbursing ourselves by more desirable property nearer home” for any losses in the Pacific. Since the British were equally aware of this situation, “this fact alone makes England the least probable of any of our possible enemies.”

Taking the defense of the Monroe Doctrine as the probable cause of a war, Bliss then asked what sort of war would be likely to arise from this cause. He believed the most likely event would see the United States “forced to intervene in the domestic affairs of an independent state lying south of us for the purpose of establishing and maintaining an orderly government therein.” The United States was obligated by law to do so in Cuba, but he considered Santo Domingo and Mexico to be other likely cases. In the case of the Dominican Republic, such a situation seemed to be developing at that moment because of its inability to repay its debts. In the case of Mexico, the removal of “one man alone [President Porfirio Diaz]” would probably lead to threats to the capital invested there by several of “the great nations of the world.” In such a case, there would very likely be a “local war with the state in

⁶⁶² For an excellent account of the U. S. policy conflicts that left the Philippines vulnerable and a hostage to other powers, see William R. Braisted, *The United States Navy in the Pacific, 1909-1922* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971).

whose affairs we intervene,” a country that would be unable to carry the war to the United States.

There was also the possibility that American intervention would provoke a response from a European or Asian country or coalition of countries. Bliss considered an attack from any European country to be a “remote” possibility, because of the “divergence of European interests.” The only situation that would threaten the United States would be if an internal upheaval so threatened the trade, investments, and nationals of a European country that it would demand they be protected, and the United States then failed to act.

Bliss subscribed to a theory of preventive intervention, arguing that “The principal thing to be noted in this connection is,--and it would be well for our people to thoroughly appreciate it,--that the more certain, promptly and effectually we intervene in such cases the less likely it is that this local war of intervention . . . will ramify [sic] into a war with a European power.” Because the Europeans would have such difficulty acting in concert, “Europe as a whole would doubtless prefer to see the United States play the part of policeman in South America provided conditions for trade were left equal for all.”

Bliss considered two other possibilities to be worth studying. One was that a coalition of European powers would seek the consent of the United States for an intervention in South America, presumably a demonstration, but one that ended with the possibility of war between the United States and the intervening powers. Clearly Bliss was thinking of the recent Anglo-German intervention in Venezuela as he

wrote. He also recognized the possibility that the Panama Canal would become a tempting target, or that a nation would attack the Philippines as the most vulnerable American possession even though the war had other causes.

Bliss concluded with his recommendation of the situations that the services should plan for.

I, therefore, suggest as a progressive study to be jointly undertaken by the two General Staffs, a problem under the following assumptions:

- 1) That the United States intervenes in some South American country . . . ,
 - a) to assist that country in ousting an assumed foreign power,
 - b) against the two as allies;
- 2) That the theater of war includes the Caribbean Sea and the Philippine Archipelago;
- 3) After the foregoing studies are completed assume a coalition of two European powers, excluding England;
- 4) For the purpose of completing a study of the Canadian frontier, assume England as an intervening power under assumption
 - a) alone,
 - b) in coalition;
- 5) Assume intervention by the United States in Mexico, with other foreign complication.

These scenarios seem much more realistic than the Navy's thinking in the international setting of 1904. In particular, Bliss recognized that Europe was too divided to act in concert against the United States, and he realized that the dictatorship of Porfirio Diaz in Mexico could not go on much longer. Finally, considering that President Theodore Roosevelt had just announced what has become known as the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine in an open letter of May

20, 1904, the need to include a preventive intervention in the two services' planning would seem to have been obvious.⁶⁶³

Bliss's logical presentation carried the day. Two weeks later, Admiral of the Fleet George Dewey, president of the Joint Board, wrote to the Secretaries of War and the Navy that the Joint Board recommended the following studies:

1. That the United States finds itself obliged, for any assumed cause growing out of the Monroe Doctrine, to intervene in the affairs of an independent country in the West Indies or on the mainland of Central or South America; and that this intervention is carried out under the following successive conditions:
 - a) To restore order, without complications with any other foreign power;
 - b) For the purpose of aiding the country in which intervention takes place against another foreign power not of this hemisphere;
 - c) Against the country in which intervention takes place, assisted by a foreign power not of this hemisphere;
2. Under the foregoing conditions the problems involve a compete study—
 - a) Of the Caribbean Sea as a theater of war;
 - b) Of the Philippine Archipelago as a theater of war

The Acting Secretary of War, Robert Shaw Oliver, approved this recommendation on June 28, 1904, and the next day Dewey informed the Army Chief of Staff, Lieutenant General Adna R. Chaffee, that the Secretary of the Navy, William H. Moody, had also approved.⁶⁶⁴

⁶⁶³ Nathan Miller, *Theodore Roosevelt: A Life* (New York: William Morrow, Quill paperback, 1992), 393-5.

⁶⁶⁴ Dewey to the Secretaries of War and the Navy, June 24, 1904, with endorsements June 28 and June 29, RG 225, Box 2, file #325, NARA.

His early contributions to the professional journal of the military had established Tasker Bliss as a leading student of military history in the Army. With this reputation, combined with his experience at the Naval War College and his knowledge of American higher education in general, he was a logical choice to be the President of the Army War College. In that position, he became the Army's spokesman as the United States made its first attempt to coordinate strategic planning in the armed forces. In that role, Bliss served his country well. It is clear from his writings in 1904 and 1905 that he remained a keen student of warfare while also following world events closely. Thus he could argue persuasively for a realistic appraisal of likely military actions by the United States, effectively countering the Navy's economic determinism and obsession with Germany.

These writings are important for another reason. In the 1890s and early 1900s, Bliss wrote as a scholar but also as the voice of the Army. His views on such questions as the role of the militia, or the need for a professional army, appear to have been those typical of most Army officers at that time. His study of land conflicts and his effort to disprove the work of Ivan Bloch were probably also typical of Army thinking. In spite of the realism he demonstrated in his consideration of the likely scenarios for United States military action in 1904, he was not any more realistic than were his colleagues about the approaching cataclysm in Europe. When it arrived, its impact on Tasker Bliss would be all the greater because he had not seen it coming.

CHAPTER 8

GOVERNING THE MOROS

Tasker Bliss' new assignment in the Philippines appealed to him. Ever since his cadet days at West Point, a part of him had sought a combat career. His friend and classmate Hugh Scott had served on the frontier, joining the famous 7th Cavalry in the months after that unit suffered terrible losses at the Battle of the Little Bighorn. Frontier service meant Scott's Academy reputation as a soldier's soldier continued to grow. Bliss had a reputation, too, but as an intellectual and an administrator. His excellent work in Cuba persuaded Secretary of War Elihu Root that Bliss should be assigned to the Moro Province, the army's principal combat command in 1905, but also an administrative position. Since the United States had created the Moro Province in 1903, the governor had also been the military commander of the Department of Mindinao. Bliss would have to serve a few months in Manila, commanding the Department of Luzon, but after that he expected an extended tour on Mindinao, keeping the peace and maintaining the authority of the United States. It was the one place an American officer could serve in 1905 with the expectation of commanding troops in combat. Nothing could have pleased Bliss more.

It was a considered policy on the part of Root, President Theodore Roosevelt, and Root's successor, William Howard Taft, to send the men they considered the

army's best officers to the Moro Province. Thus as governor Bliss found himself sandwiched between Leonard Wood, his former commander from the Cuban occupation, and John J. Pershing, one of the army's rising stars. Both of those officers had already made reputations commanding troops while for Bliss that opportunity had just arrived.⁶⁶⁵

The Philippine-American War of 1899 to 1902 followed immediately on the end of the Spanish-American War of 1898.⁶⁶⁶ It had involved two distinct phases.

⁶⁶⁵ Wood served as governor of the Moro Province from August 1903 to April 1906. His work is discussed in detail in Hermann Hagedorn, *Leonard Wood: A Biography* (New York: Kraus Reprint Co., 1969, originally New York and London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1931), II, 1-69, and in Jack Lane, *Armed Progressive: General Leonard Wood* (San Rafael, Ca. and London: Presidio Press, 1978), ch. 9, 114-131. Pershing's duties took him to the Moro Province twice. First, from 1899 to 1903, he served as adjutant general of the Department of Mindanao-Jolo (where he enjoyed opportunities for action in the field) and then commanded the Lake Lanao district, the most difficult region on Mindanao. Pershing returned as governor in 1909 and served in that capacity until 1913; he was the last military governor. Accounts of his service can be found in Donald Smythe, *Guerrilla Warrior: The Early Life of John J. Pershing* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973), 61-110 and 144-204, and Frank E. Vandiver, *Black Jack: The Life and Times of John J. Pershing* (College Station and London: Texas A & M University Press, 1977), 246-317 and 464-572.

⁶⁶⁶ The literature on the Philippine-American War is extensive and highly politicized. The best study of the war is Brian Linn, *The Philippine War, 1899-1902* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2000). An excellent recent collection of essays with a highly theoretical and analytical approach is Julian Go and Anne L. Foster, eds., *The American Colonial State in the Philippines: A Global Perspective* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003). See especially Donna J. Amoroso, "Inheriting the 'Moro Problem': Muslim Authority and Colonial Rule in British Malaya and the Philippines," 118-147. An old popular history is Leon Wolff, *Little Brown Brother: How the United States Purchased and Pacified the Philippine Islands at the Century's Turn* (New York: Bookspan, Francis Parkman Prize Edition reprint, 2006, original 1960). Scholarly studies include John M. Gates, *Schoolbooks and Krags: The United States Army in the Philippines, 1898-1902*, Contributions in Military History, No. 3 (Westport, Ct. and London: Greenwood Press, 1973) which seeks to explain the friendly US-Philippines relations that emerged from the war; Stuart Creighton Miller, "*Benevolent Assimilation*": *The American Conquest of the Philippines, 1898-1903* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982) condemns every aspect of the American colonial project. David J. Silbey applies new historical approaches to the history of this conflict in *A War of Frontier and Empire: The Philippine-American War, 1899-1902* (New York: Hill and Wang, a Division of Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007). H. W. Brands, *Bound to Empire: The United States and the Philippines* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992) examines the relationship between the two countries from 1898 to 1991. Recent world history provides a lens for a brief analysis by John Coats, "Half Devil and Half Child: America's War with Terror in the Philippines, 1899-1902," in Isaac Land, ed., *Enemies of Humanity: The Nineteenth-Century War on Terrorism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 181-202. By far the most sophisticated study of American ideas about the Filipino people is Paul A. Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines* (Chapel Hill:

The first was a conventional war of large units in which the U.S. Army quickly defeated, pursued and largely destroyed the Philippine Liberation Army.⁶⁶⁷ Rather than capitulate, the principal Filipino leader, Emilio Aguinaldo, shifted the fighting to the second phase, a guerrilla war that continued for the next two years, with increasing brutality on both sides. With an inadequate supply of even small arms and ammunition, the Filipinos had no choice but to employ the tactics of ambush and infiltration, surprise and stealth, relying on their ability to mix with the rest of the native population. American troops responded with brutal treatment of prisoners and of native non-combatants. They even resorted to outright torture to extract information, including the “water cure.”⁶⁶⁸ American commanders employed standard methods against the Filipinos. They herded the rural population into camps to separate the people from the guerrillas, and in the countryside they burned crops, killed livestock, and destroyed villages. With the guerrillas separated from the

The University of North Carolina Press, 2006). Interesting works that explore specialized aspects of the American colonial experience include Elizabeth Mary Holt, *Colonizing Filipinas: Nineteenth-Century Representations of the Philippines in Western Historiography* (Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2002) and David Brody, *Visualizing American Empire: Orientalism and Imperialism in the Philippines* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

None of these works devotes much space to the Moro Province, especially not after Leonard Wood’s time in command. Since so many army officers served in the Philippines (Wood, Bliss, Pershing, Robert Lee Bullard, Arthur MacArthur, Henry T. Allen) and in following years served in important commands, there are many biographies that include a chapter or more on the officers’ colonial service. There are also these important dissertations, two of which do examine the Moro Province in detail: George William Jornacion, “The Time of the Eagles: United States Army Officers and the Pacification of the Philippine Moros, 1899-1913” (University of Maine, 1973), Wayne W. Thompson, “Governors of the Moro Province: Wood, Bliss, and Pershing in the Southern Philippines, 1903-1913” (University of California, San Diego, 1975), and George Y. Coats, “The Philippine Constabulary, 1901-1917” (The Ohio State University, 1968).

⁶⁶⁷ There are good accounts of this phase of the war in the works by Linn and Silbey, mentioned above, and also in Kenneth Ray Young, *The General’s General: The Life and Times of Arthur MacArthur* (Boulder, San Francisco, Oxford: Westview Press, 1994), 173-290.

⁶⁶⁸ For an image of this practice, see Brody, *Visualizing American Empire*, 75, which reproduces an illustration from the *New York Evening Journal*, April 15, 1902.

general population, American troops considered anyone found in the deserted countryside to be an active enemy, a policy that sometimes led to indiscriminate killing.

For the most part, the Philippine-American War had ended by 1902. The capture of Aguinaldo by Brigadier General (U.S. Volunteers) Frederick Funston in March 1901 deprived the *insurrectos* of their most important leader.⁶⁶⁹ Filipino resistance dwindled on Luzon, but it continued in some parts of the archipelago. The intensity of the fighting varied with the specific conditions on the larger islands. For instance, the American commander on Leyte, Colonel Arthur Murray, combined intelligent applications of benevolence with an aggressive campaign that forced the guerrillas into constant motion, never allowing them to maintain a secure base. As a result, a small number of American troops was able to bring resistance to an end by May 1901.⁶⁷⁰ By contrast, the combination of determined guerrilla leadership and inept American led to a long and brutal campaign on neighboring Samar. For years afterwards, U.S. Marine veterans of that struggle would be greeted in mess halls with the tribute, “Stand, Gentlemen, he served on Samar!”⁶⁷¹

In the southern Philippines, Filipino resistance to American governance had a special character, just as had been the case under Spanish rule. Most of the people there were Muslims. They had effectively resisted the Christianizing efforts of the

⁶⁶⁹ A brief account of Funston’s operation can be found at <http://www.armyhistory.org/ahf2.aspx?pgID=877&id=101&exCompID=56> (accessed July 16, 2011); a longer version is in Silbey, *War of Frontier and Empire*, 174-178.

⁶⁷⁰ Linn, *The Philippine War*, 235-240.

⁶⁷¹ Quoted in *ibid.*, ch. 14, “Samar,” 306. Linn provides an excellent in-depth analysis, 306-21.

colonial government and the Roman Catholic Church, confining Spanish authority to only the largest towns. The U.S. government expected its military governors to extend American colonial authority into the interior of the islands. Even in 1906, that would be the challenge facing Tasker Bliss.

Before Bliss arrived on Mindinao, the largest of the southern islands and the core of the Moro Province, two other tasks lay before him. The first was to visit Japan as part of Secretary of War William H. Taft's delegation of American political leaders. To prepare for the visit, Bliss spent much of his time on the trans-Pacific voyage studying Japanese history and customs, though he received more coaching on Japanese court etiquette once he arrived in Japan. As his official biographer comments, Bliss must have been aware of the contrast he was experiencing between "the court of the rising nation" and his "royal reception in Madrid at the court of the descending nation."⁶⁷² He sent home long descriptions of the court ceremonies, telling his daughter that he had "bowed down until a long nose would have touched the knees!" He noted that the Japanese had placed him third in precedence behind Taft and U.S. Ambassador Lloyd C. Griscom because Bliss was the "principal military man in the party and that's what counts" in Japan. He also recounted the challenge of fitting his large frame into the sleeping berth of a Japanese railway carriage.⁶⁷³

⁶⁷² Frederick Palmer, *Bliss, Peacemaker: The Life and Letters of General Tasker Howard Bliss* (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries reprint, 1970), 82.

⁶⁷³ THB to Eleanor Bliss, October 27, 1905, quoted in *ibid.*, 83.

Both American public opinion and the official views of the Roosevelt administration favored Japan in its war against Russia, and many observers considered the Taft party's visit one more sign of American support for Japan's overseas empire. The Russian ambassador, Roosevelt wrote in May, was "having a fit" because of the Taft trip.⁶⁷⁴ Officially the group was a congressional delegation, but Taft conducted the most important diplomatic business of the visit when he conversed with Japanese Prime Minister Katsura Taro on July 27, 1905. The memorandum of their conversation, dated the 29, while secret, expressed Taft and Roosevelt's willingness to accept Japanese domination of Korea while Japan acknowledged the United States' control of the Philippines.⁶⁷⁵

The negotiations must have been instructive for Bliss. His recent service on the Army General Staff and the Joint Army-Navy Board, discussing possible wars involving the United States, meant he was well aware of the conflict between the U.S. Army and Navy over the defense of the Philippines. Taft and Roosevelt had discussed the same question not long before the delegation left for Japan. As the President put it, "This country must decide definitely whether it does or does not intend to hold its possessions in the Orient—to keep the Philippines and Hawaii." If the American people and government were not willing to spend what was necessary

⁶⁷⁴ Henry F. Pringle, *The Life and Times of William Howard Taft: A Biography* (New York and Toronto: Farrar & Rinehart, Inc., 1939), 298.

⁶⁷⁵ In this conversation, Taft made it clear that he was expressing his personal views, but Roosevelt responded to Taft's report with the comment that Taft should "state to Katsura that I confirm every word you have said," *ibid.*, 299. James Bradley, *The Imperial Cruise: A Secret History of War and Empire* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 2009) considers this secret agreement a case of presidential overreach that led directly to World War II.

for Pacific defense, Roosevelt believed, then “we had far better give up the Philippine Islands entirely.”⁶⁷⁶ As the Taft-Katsura meeting took place, Roosevelt had already initiated the talks that would lead to the Treaty of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, later that same year, ending the Russo-Japanese War, one of the most significant international negotiations to that time in U.S. history. Bliss knew that he would be on the front lines in a region of intense great power conflict.

The second task facing Bliss was a brief period commanding the Department of Luzon. While this assignment was duty with troops, it was not a combat zone. The Filipino war for independence had effectively ended more than two years earlier, making Bliss’s task on Luzon colonial administration.⁶⁷⁷ The eight months he served on this largest of the Philippine islands was simply “garrison duty with no new problems of administration.”⁶⁷⁸

The contrast with the Moro Province could not have been greater. There Bliss was both the governor and the military commander; the Moro Province government was not part of the civil government of the Philippines. It was an American colonial creation intended to meet the special situation of the southern Philippines.⁶⁷⁹ While

⁶⁷⁶ Quoted in Ralph Eldin Minger, *William Howard Taft and United States Foreign Policy: The Apprenticeship Years, 1900-1908* (Urbana, Chicago, London: University of Illinois Press, 1975) 141. Minger and Pringle agree that although there is no record of verbal or written instructions from Roosevelt to Taft for the diplomatic meetings in Tokyo, it is “reasonable” (Minger’s word) or “plausible” (Pringle’s) that TR briefed Taft before the latter departed Washington.

⁶⁷⁸ Palmer, *Bliss, Peacemaker*, 83.

⁶⁷⁹ President Theodore Roosevelt wrote to William H. Taft, Governor General of the Philippines, that “I gave a good deal of thought to the subject [of the government of the Moros]. The idea . . . was that the Moro and Pagan tribes were to be regarded as semi-independent nations, occupying substantially the same relation to the civil government under the sovereignty of the United States that the Indian tribes have borne to the government of this country.” Letter of October 25, 1902, file no. 5075, Box 402, RG 350, Bureau of Insular Affairs, General Records, 1898-1914, NARA.

Bliss shared the racial prejudice of most white Americans of his time, he was also one of the idealistic imperial administrators who hoped to do great work to benefit the colonized peoples. He worried about his power as both governor and department commander, admitting that he was “part of a despotic machine.” His hope was that his rule would leave this “part of the world better” than he had found it. He considered it his “bounden duty” to work for what the “intelligent majority” of the Moro people would want – once they were educated and civilized.⁶⁸⁰

Of all the different population groups in the Philippine Islands, the Moros presented the greatest challenge to American authority. The Spanish colonial government had never fully controlled them. The large island of Mindanao featured a rugged mountainous interior, and in its separate valleys, according to Paul Kramer, there were “powerful, militarized polities under the Muslim *datus* [chiefs, who] actively resisted the imposition of Spanish control.”⁶⁸¹ The Filipino independence movement had always been shaky at best. Brian Linn’s study of that war demonstrates that Emilio Aguinaldo and the rest of the native leadership made many errors of judgment, and they never intended a social revolution.⁶⁸² Their movement was strictly a political revolution and would have left the Filipino elite, not the peasantry, in control of the country. Under those circumstances, the Filipino struggle meant little to the Moros. During the Philippine-United States War, the American

⁶⁸⁰ “Annual Report of the Governor of the Moro Province for . . . Fiscal 1906,” 69-70, copy in the THB Mss, USAMHI.

⁶⁸¹ *Blood of Government*, 217.

⁶⁸² *The Philippine War*, 17-23 and 33-36.

colonial government had lived with the Bates Agreement, signed by Brigadier General John C. Bates and the Sultan of Sulu on August 20, 1899. The sultan “accepted United States sovereignty” in the Moro Province of Mindinao and the Sulu Archipelago in return for American protection from his enemies and the promotion of free trade.⁶⁸³ In other words, the Muslims in the southern Philippines were essentially neutral while the United States defeated the Filipino independence movement. Once that war was over, however, the American colonial government abrogated the Bates Agreement.

The very concept of “Moro” was an anomaly. When the Philippines became a Spanish colony in the sixteenth century, the colonial government bestowed that name on the Muslims in the Philippines. The Americans adopted it because it set apart the Muslims in the southern Philippines, a group that had fought fiercely for centuries to maintain its independence from Spanish colonial power. Using the term fit with American thinking about Filipino Muslims, but there were two major problems with this terminology. First, the Muslims in the Moro Province were not a unified group; there was in fact a diversity of groups present.⁶⁸⁴ Second, there were people in the province who were neither Christian nor Muslim, so the Philippine Commission, the American colonial government, created the “Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes” in 1900

⁶⁸³ Ibid., 123.

⁶⁸⁴ Thomas M. McKenna, *Muslim Rulers and Rebels: Everyday Politics and Armed Separatism in the Southern Philippines* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1998), 104. Not every scholar agrees with McKenna’s analysis. The foremost nationalist historian of the Moros argues for the unifying nature of Islam; see Cesar Adib Majul, *Muslims in the Philippines*, 2d ed. (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1973). Peter G. Gowing, *Mosque and Moro: A Study of Muslims in the Philippines* (Manila: Philippine Federation of Christian Churches, 1964) begins with a chapter discussing the various Muslim peoples of the southern Philippines.

to gather information about these groups. In 1901 the bureau became the Ethnological Survey. This change of name was part of the American debate about the status of those tribes and the nature of the peoples, pointing to the racial basis of the provincial government as a “site of struggle.”⁶⁸⁵ In 1913, when John J. Pershing was governor, his estimate of the population was “approximately 520,000, of whom about 325,000 were Moros (Mohammedan), 85,000 Filipinos (Christian) and 105,000 wild tribes (pagan).”⁶⁸⁶ Without an accurate knowledge of the people and cultures, the American creation of the Moro Province as a political and social unit rested on a questionable foundation.

By 1906, when Bliss arrived in the provincial capital of Zamboanga, the Philippine war for independence was over and most of the colony was under a civilian colonial administration. The Moro Province was different. The Philippine Commission created the province in 1903 intending it to be different from any other part of the colony. It was an administrative unit of five districts, each under a governor and a board. In areas with a Christian majority, there were “municipalities,” but in places with Muslim or animist majorities, the district governors enjoyed almost all authority.⁶⁸⁷ Because the U.S. colonial regime considered the Moros an especially warlike people, “only the U.S. military could guarantee order and stability.”⁶⁸⁸ The

⁶⁸⁵ Kramer, *Blood of Government*, provides a nuanced discussion of these issues; see esp. pp. 211-213.

⁶⁸⁶ Donald Smythe, *Guerrilla Warrior: The Early Life of John J. Pershing* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973), 144. Smythe discusses Pershing's service as Governor of the Moro Province in chapters X, XI and XII, 144-185.

⁶⁸⁷ Kramer, *Blood of Government*, 217.

⁶⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 218.

army commander of the Department of Mindinao was also the governor of the Moro Province. The governor and the Legislative Council were responsible to the Governor General and the Philippine Commission, the leaders of the American colonial government of the islands. Any legislation the Council passed had to gain the approval of the Commission, but in practice the Moro Province leadership “enjoyed considerable freedom of action in their organization of the province and [the] implementation of laws and decisions of the Commission.”⁶⁸⁹

The entire colonial government of the Moro Province was built around the use of army officers in civil positions. The province consisted of five districts (Cottabato, Davao, Lanao, Sulu and Zamboanga), and the government leadership in each was a district governor and secretary. During Bliss’s tenure as governor, military men detached from their units held both positions in each district. The district governors were the chief law enforcement officers of the colonial government, but in practice the governors relied on local Moro headmen (*datus*) whose loyalty they trusted. In these circumstances, the “personal qualities of each district governor” became the “primary factor” in successful local administration.⁶⁹⁰ While some exceptionally capable officers served in the Moro Province, in general the frequent turnover among them made it difficult to establish the personal relationships with the Moro people and especially the *datus* that effective pacification required.⁶⁹¹

⁶⁸⁹ Jornacion, “Time of the Eagles,” 196. The discussion in the following paragraph of the Moro Province government, its structure and problems is based on Jornacion, 196-99.

⁶⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 198.

⁶⁹¹ See for example the letters of THB to Wood, April 19 and 21, 1907, and Wood to President Roosevelt, Sept. 26, 1906, which discuss some of the problems frequent changes caused; all are in the Wood Mss., LC.

Bliss must have hoped for a happy reunion with his friend Hugh Scott as well as some good advice about the local culture, because Scott had been serving as a district governor. Bliss was mistaken on both counts.⁶⁹² Though they were the same age, Bliss was now a brigadier general, and Scott was a major who had sought promotion and been denied. Scott asked for his son to be assigned to him as an assistant, but Bliss turned him down, believing that inexperienced young officers should stay with their regiments (which of course Bliss had not done in his own career). Scott complained, but Wood agreed with Bliss. In Scott's view, the issue centered on "personal loyalty," which he could count on from his son but now felt he did not have from Bliss, while Bliss thought Scott expected too much. Bliss hoped Scott would stay on because he had established strong relationships with the *datus* in his district and could build on his reputation for working with "savages." Ignoring Bliss, when Scott had the chance to move on to the Superintendency of the Military Academy, he accepted immediately.⁶⁹³

As governor and department commander, Bliss followed Leonard Wood, a commander of intense energy. Wood's idea of colonial military administration was to be in constant motion; his diary is a record of nearly continuous inspection trips

⁶⁹² This account of their brief falling out is based on Thompson, "Governors," 125-128.

⁶⁹³ Early in his time in Mindinao, Scott captured a *datu* who asked if he could return to his village to tell them he would be going to prison. Scott agreed, but as they approached the cotta, the inhabitants opened fire, hitting Scott in the hand. He lost one finger and the hand was broken. Scott was famous in the army as the leading white expert on Plains Indian sign language, but now his colleagues said that he spoke sign language "with a stutter." See Scott to Wood, Dec. 4 and Dec. 8, 1903, Box 33, Wood Mss, LC. When Scott left, the Moro chiefs gave him an impressive farewell ceremony. To close out his paperwork, Scott had to call in rifles that he had given them. One chief, Kalbi, asked if he could keep his Mauser rifle. Scott referred him to Steever, his replacement, but quietly urged Steever to let Kalbi keep it. When Steever agreed, Kalbi "preached for half an hour saying that the justice of the Americans was like the justice of God." Quoted in Palmer, *Bliss, Peacemaker*, 87.

and pacification campaigns. For Wood, any challenge to American authority had to be met by a demonstration of American power. Since Moro culture emphasized warrior virtues and most Moro men carried weapons, life for them revolved around fighting, acquiring slaves, and seeking to become a *datu*.⁶⁹⁴ As a result, those challenges came frequently, and even Jack Lane, Wood's biographer, admits that many of Wood's punitive expeditions were responses to "minor incidents." Moreover, Lane observes, these large campaigns sometimes "destroyed . . . the alliances painstakingly negotiated by local commanders" and as a result, "rather than quieting disturbances, [they] often created even larger ones."⁶⁹⁵

As Wood explained to Bliss, the "whole secret in handling the Moro situation . . . is in dealing with these small questions with reasonable promptness."⁶⁹⁶ He believed that a show of force was the best way to demonstrate American power and resolve. Since Wood never doubted his own methods or actions, he did not understand that his actions could escalate out of control.

Bliss planned to take a different approach to pacification.⁶⁹⁷ He was fully aware that "[a]fter all is said and done, [the government of the Moro Province] is a military government conducted by officers of the Army."⁶⁹⁸ Preserving peace depended on the presence of military force, though not necessarily on the use of

⁶⁹⁴ Jornacion, "Time of the Eagles," 196.

⁶⁹⁵ *Armed Progressive*, 124-125.

⁶⁹⁶ Wood to Bliss, July 17, 1906, quoted in Thompson, *Governors*, 159.

⁶⁹⁷ Brian M. Linn, *Guardians of Empire: The U.S. Army in the Pacific, 1902-1940* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 39-42 provides the best brief scholarly discussion of Bliss's approach to governing the Moros.

⁶⁹⁸ *Annual Report of the Department of Mindinao*, quoted in Jornacion, "Time of the Eagles," 200.

force. Bliss's goal was to use the local headmen as the first level of peace enforcers, with the Philippine Constabulary as the next. Rather than respond to violent incidents with military expeditions, Bliss treated them as police matters that could be handled best by Filipinos. If they proved unequal to the task, then the army would be available, but the troops would act under the authority of the civil government and civil officials would accompany them during operations.⁶⁹⁹ Sending the army into the field to pursue criminals scared the people of the province, undermining the pacification effort, and Bliss preferred to use the Moro units of the constabulary to apprehend lawbreakers.⁷⁰⁰ As one of his subordinates put it, the Americans would "refrain from bringing on hostilities unless some vital principle is at stake or some of these headmen act in defiance of United States authority."⁷⁰¹ While Bliss would never publicly criticize his predecessor, he thought Wood's use of force had been excessive and had "killed unknown thousands" of Moros.⁷⁰²

Bliss and Wood also had very different conceptions of their role as governor. Wood's goal was to break the Moros' ability to resist and impress them with the power of the United States, leading to their submission and cooperation. He explained to his friend President Theodore Roosevelt that "one clear-cut lesson will be quite sufficient for them, but it should be of such character as not to need a dozen fitting repetitions."⁷⁰³ In the end, the Moros needed many more than just one lesson

⁶⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁰ THB to Director of Constabulary, April 7, 1908, THB Mss, vol. 90, LC.

⁷⁰¹ Quoted in Linn, *Guardians*, 40.

⁷⁰² THB to EAB, January 26, 1906, Bliss Mss, LC.

⁷⁰³ Wood to Roosevelt, August 3, 1903, quoted in Lane, *Armed Progressive*, 121.

of the sort Wood offered. For instance, Captain John J. Pershing served as a district commander under Wood, and in 1903 he conducted a major campaign against the Moros living around Lake Lanao, Mindinao's most defiant groups who also inhabited the island's most challenging terrain.⁷⁰⁴ When Wood decided in 1904 that he needed to punish the same Lake Lanao Moros, he asked the new district commander, Major Robert Bullard, to prepare a "list of Moro 'lawlessness' " in the area from July 1903 to March 1904. Bullard's list "revealed a minor but consistently annoying pattern of violence: sniping, rifle snatching . . . , two jailbreaks, attacks on isolated sentries in which seven soldiers had died."⁷⁰⁵ These annoyances were enough for Wood to order Bullard to carry out another punitive campaign.

The culmination of Wood's policy was the 1906 fight at Bud Dajo, a volcanic crater on the island of Jolo. An attempt to impose a head tax on the Moros led thousands of them to flee to their forts, or *cottas*, in this crater. A force of 800 American troops and Philippine Constabulary surrounded the mountain. The Moros resisted in a three-day battle that killed hundreds of them, including women and children. The army and constabulary losses were twenty-one dead and seventy-three wounded, "the heaviest of any post-Philippine War engagement" in the extension of American colonial control.⁷⁰⁶ The slaughter created an enormous controversy in the

⁷⁰⁴ For an account of Pershing's expedition, see Smythe, *Guerrilla Warrior*, 94-110.

⁷⁰⁵ Allan R. Millett, *The General: Robert L. Bullard and Officership in the United States Army, 1881-1925*, Contributions in Military History, Number 10 (Westport, Ct., and London: Greenwood Press, 1975), 181.

⁷⁰⁶ Linn, *Guardians*, 39. See also Hermann Hagedorn, *Leonard Wood*, II, 63-65; Lane, *Armed Progressive*, 127-30, and Kramer, *Blood of Government*, 128. Somewhere between 600 (Lane) and 1000 (Kramer) Moros died in the battle. For a personal account and justification, see Wood to Henry C. Corbin, April 26, 1906, in the Wood Mss., LC.

United States, but Wood's explanation was that the Moros would not surrender, the women fought as fiercely as the men, and in any case they were dressed similarly and impossible to distinguish, and even the children had attacked the troops and refused to surrender.

By contrast, Bliss considered his most important task to be the maintenance of peace in order to promote the commercial prosperity of Mindinao. He wanted his subordinates working to develop local businesses and plantations, not conducting military campaigns. In that way the U.S. colonial administration would foster the development of "civilization." Early in his tenure as governor, Bliss traveled to the island of Jolo to visit *datu* Indanan, who had been one of the most "implacable" enemies of the United States, who had once proposed that he would gather one thousand of his Moro followers to fight one thousand Americans "to determine who should rule in Jolo."⁷⁰⁷ Now, Bliss brought him a cultivator and a 12-disc harrow as presents, because Indanan had become the "first farmer" of Jolo, raising a large cash crop of hemp. On the same trip, Bliss visited the Moro Exchange, an American-sponsored marketplace, and found it "doing very well indeed," full of men and women selling a variety of foods and wares. He recorded proudly that the "civilizing effect of these exchanges is immense by getting the people together [and] teaching them the advantage of selling . . . for cash."

Bliss believed that American authority was secure in the Moro Province and would not be undermined by the criminal actions of a few Moros or by their blood

⁷⁰⁷ This account is from Palmer, *Bliss, Peacemaker*, 87-88, citing a journal that Bliss began when he arrived in the Moro Province but did not continue. The story is under the date of July 8, 1906.

feuds. He was willing to tolerate a certain amount of criminal behavior, even the occasional murder of an American, if the perpetrators could be caught by local headmen or the constabulary. Bliss would send American troops only if he thought they could act without worsening the situation or triggering larger-scale hostilities.⁷⁰⁸ He explained his rationale in his 1907 report when he wrote about the island of Basilan. Parts of the island had become havens for murderers and thieves from other islands, but he hoped a secret expedition by the constabulary would capture the “principal offenders.” If not, a “larger scale” expedition might be necessary, but he knew that “such expeditions, however successful in their immediate object, are in various ways productive of unfortunate results.”⁷⁰⁹

In the Moros’ warrior culture, killing was not unusual; a small fine was adequate compensation and reasonable punishment. A major military expedition scared the natives who then retreated into the forests and mountains, leaving the plantation owners without enough labor. Bliss came to the conclusion that “it is better that a crime which implies no resistance to the Government” should be unpunished for a “considerable time” while the authorities worked to “quietly arrest” the perpetrator, “rather than that the progress of a large [region] should be checked for years by a formidable expedition which may or may not be successful.”⁷¹⁰

⁷⁰⁸ See THB to Steever, June 22, 1907, vol. 65, and THB to Wood, Feb. 28, 1907, vol. 62, THB Mss, LC.

⁷⁰⁹ *Annual Report of the Governor of the Moro Province for . . . Fiscal 1907* (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1907), 25.

⁷¹⁰ *Ibid.*

Bliss was definitely the right man to encourage commerce in the Southern Philippines. The revenue of the Moro Province government derived primarily from its customs receipts, and after his Cuban experience, Bliss knew more about tariffs and customs administration than anyone else in the U.S. Army. As governor, he worked hard to open more ports on Mindinao and to increase trade through existing ports, knowing that to accomplish its work, the provincial government “must not only . . . protect its existing revenue, but also . . . increase it.” In the manner characteristic of the American occupation of Cuba and the colonial administration of the rest of the Philippines, the provincial revenue was spent on road projects, sanitation improvements, improving market facilities, and developing a school system.⁷¹¹

For Bliss the most frustrating aspect of the customs administration was that so much of the province’s trade came in and went out on coasting vessels from Manila.⁷¹² Most imports and exports from Mindinao paid taxes in Manila, and the money never found its way back to the provincial government. If he could open more ports in the province and build up the export-import trade, while also reducing smuggling and piracy, then the provincial revenue would grow and he might achieve his dream of a better life for the Moro peoples.

One of the most troublesome spots in this regard was Sitanki, a small community on a coral island that was more than two hundred miles from Zamboanga but only thirty miles from Borneo. Bliss – and most other Americans – believed it

⁷¹¹ “*Annual Report for . . . 1907*,” 11-13.

⁷¹² This discussion is based on Thompson, “Governors,” 131-136.

was a principal entry point for smuggling opium and “Chinese tobacco” (tobacco laced with opium), both government monopolies. During Bliss’ inspection tours he became convinced that smuggling through several ports in the Sulu islands was a major problem, but simultaneously he decided that the only way to stop smuggling was to acquire a fast revenue cutter, which the provincial government could not afford. After two years of futile effort, Bliss unhappily gave up and the Sulu islands west of Jolo became a free trade zone.

Bliss enjoyed greater success in his efforts to open up an additional port on Mindinao.⁷¹³ The provincial government subsidized stops at Zamboanga by freighters of the China Navigation Company, as well as small boats that brought products to the port to be picked up there. Just as these efforts began to expand, the Philippine government responded to white businessmen in Manila by granting them a subsidy for their own ships to carry cargoes in the southern Philippines, again giving Manila control of the trade and the revenue. Finally, when Bliss closed the customs houses in the western Sulu islands, he persuaded the insular government to open a new one at Davao. The Norddeutscher Lloyd line then began picking up abaca there for direct shipment to Singapore, allowing the provincial government to collect an export tax.

Bliss felt such urgency to increase the province’s revenue because much of the money went to the schools, and public education was a critical aspect of the American colonial state. For American colonial administrators, for the propagandists

⁷¹³ Ibid., 135-36.

supporting the colonial project, and for the American teachers participating in it, creating a system of public education in the Philippines became one of the principal means of justifying the colonial enterprise. The best-known case of such justification was the arrival of the *U.S.S. Thomas* in the Philippines on August 21, 1901, a transport carrying 509 Americans seeking positions as teachers in a Philippine school system that was yet to be created. Numerous American writers portrayed the group as missionaries and civilizers who would “uplift” the Filipinos, bridging the gap between the two peoples to make eventual self-government possible.⁷¹⁴

Bliss shared fully in this conception of the American mission, but his early impression of the American-sponsored schools in the Moro Province was that they were “practically futile.”⁷¹⁵ Moro culture placed little value on education, and if the local population associated education and Christianity, then their resistance increased. For Bliss, there were two essential steps that would prepare the way for improvements. First, life for the natives had to be made more secure by a reduction in violence, and second, the American government had to convince the Moros that freedom of religion would be enforced. Sensitivity to the prejudices of the local populations was essential. Bliss developed an awareness of local attitudes, as he demonstrated in a letter to the Archbishop of the Philippines. There were Roman Catholics in the Moro Province, primarily in the port towns, and the archbishop was about to name a Filipino to the position of bishop. Bliss recommended otherwise,

⁷¹⁴ Kramer, *Blood of Government*, 168-69.

⁷¹⁵ THB to Brigadier General Charles L. Hodges, November 16, 1907, quoted in Palmer, *Bliss, Peacemaker*, 89.

because “Filipinos here hate and fear the Moros, and have no interests or associations with them; the Moros respond to this feeling with contempt.” He suggested that a Spanish prelate would be more effective.⁷¹⁶

In his report for 1907, Bliss set out many of his goals as governor as he explained why the educational system in the Moro province had to focus on industrial education. His discussion of education policy demonstrated its close relationship with economic development as well as the “civilizing” and benevolent intentions of the American government. The enrollment of Christian Filipino children actually exceeded the expected numbers (approximately 4,000 expected while 4,414 had enrolled, with more attending the parallel Catholic schools), but “conditions [were] far different” for the Moro and other non-Christian population groups.⁷¹⁷ There should have been 20,000 Moro children and 11,200 other non-Christian children attending classes, but the actual numbers were 793 and 165, respectively. Bliss considered several factors as he reflected on this situation. The Christians felt a “greater natural friendliness” toward English language schools run by Americans. The Moro and other non-Christian peoples lived in more scattered communities than did the Christian Filipinos, who were more likely to live in cities and towns, and the non-Christians in particular were nomads who would “wander over the vast interior

⁷¹⁶ THB to Archbishop Herty, July 10, 1908, quoted in *ibid*.

⁷¹⁷ Bliss wrote to Wood about the schools, “If I could see my way to do it, without making a tremendous row, I would appoint all the padres public school teachers and pay them as such. I should be only too delighted to have the church take care of the education of all of the Filipino school children, leaving us free to devote our attention to the education of Moros and pagans.” He added that he had promised the local priests that he would provide them with transportation around Mindinao and would help them move supplies from place to place. THB to Wood, July 21, 1906, Wood Mss, LC.

territory.” What the provincial administration had to accomplish, therefore, was to offer the Moros and other non-Christians “attractions” that would draw them into a more settled way of life. Bliss defined those inducements as “adequate protection for property and an unflinching means of livelihood.” Around Davao “villages of considerable size” were growing near the hemp and cocoanut plantations, where the need for labor provided unflinching employment and the colonial government could maintain law and order.

The lesson Bliss drew from this process was that a “certain progress in civilization must be made before the schools, as ordinarily understood, [could] begin effective work.” This reasoning led Bliss to the conclusion that his most important work as governor was to encourage the agriculture, manufacturing and commerce of the Moro and non-Christian peoples. “The development of these branches of industry will induce community life and the accumulation of property—conditions themselves highly civilizing as well as essential to the establishment of schools.”⁷¹⁸

The staff in the province’s schools was a mixture of Americans, Christian Filipinos and Moros. The Americans worked as deputy superintendents, “advanced or industrial” instructors, and primary school instructors for both Filipinos and Moros. In Moro communities, the Christian Filipinos “are unable to act as teachers,” but there were few Moros qualified to preside over classrooms. That meant Americans had to teach in schools with a student population of Moros. Bliss planned a rapid increase in the number of native teachers, and they would replace Americans

⁷¹⁸ *Annual Report . . . 1907*, 15-18.

who left. The resulting financial saving could be used to increase the pay of the Americans who remained, allowing the province to “obtain and hold the very best school men available.”⁷¹⁹

The primary course of instruction was to be four years, “laying great emphasis upon industrial work.” It was a new curriculum providing instruction “suited to the locality. . . and the product should be useful, salable if possible . . . and artistic.” Examples included rattan work for the boys and needlework for the girls. This emphasis on industrial education fit the American image of the Filipinos, whether Moro or not, along with the “civilizing mission” Americans brought to the islands. As Paul Kramer explains, throughout the colony the administration stressed “manual and industrial training over literary or civics education.” Trade schools and industrial education would teach the Filipinos strength and discipline while steering them away from “political topics such as . . . Philippine sovereignty.”⁷²⁰ What Paul Kramer presents as a choice American officials made based on racial images, Bliss considered a decision rooted in experience with the local culture. He was explicit in his belief that even “the most advanced” of the Moros “had no conception what [self-government] means.”⁷²¹ In the end, the Moros had no great interest in American-sponsored education, and Bliss’s program for the schools never attracted many students. In his entire time as governor, the enrollment never grew beyond 5,000, and most of the students were Christian Filipinos.

⁷¹⁹ Ibid., 13.

⁷²⁰ Kramer, *Blood of Government*, 315.

⁷²¹ *Annual Report . . . 1907*, 23.

Education in the Moro Province cost more than elsewhere in the Philippines because the population was so scattered. The higher cost made it even more essential that the provincial economy develop quickly. Products that Bliss believed could be sold in increased quantities included lumber, copra, cocoa, rubber, coffee and hemp. What Bliss considered the “most important legislation” of his first year as governor was the Road Law, which required five nine-hour days of labor each year from each male inhabitant on “public highways, bridges, wharves, or trails.” Better roads into the interior not only facilitated military operations but stimulated economic development as well. Planters were already working to establish farms in the hills closest to the coast, since that land was better suited to agriculture than the coastal lowlands.⁷²²

While Bliss favored the growth of plantations, that did not occur without problems.⁷²³ Lieutenant Edward Bolton of the 17th Infantry was the district governor of Davao, where he also became a planter. In his role as governor, he tried to help plantation owners gain a large supply of cheap labor by appointing white planters as local headmen to replace the *datu*s. They would then use the local government structure to organize the hill people as laborers. Of course, such actions aroused the resentment of the traditional leaders, but Bolton wanted to prove that rumors of unrest were exaggerated. He and Benjamin Christian, a former soldier who had become a planter, set out alone on a hike through the affected area. They accepted the

⁷²² Ibid., 25-7.

⁷²³ The account of this incident is summarized from Thompson, “Governors,” 143-146.

hospitality of Mangalayan, a local *datu*, who promised to help them reach the coast. Having reached the sea, they stopped to rest, and Mangalayan murdered them.

As soon as the news reached Zamboanga, Bliss sent one hundred soldiers to secure the region. They found and killed Mangalayan, but the troops learned that the conspiracy had involved over twenty *datu*s and a white planter who supplied them with ammunition.

The real problem had been the labor issues, and Bliss sent a constabulary officer to Davao to investigate. The more Bliss learned about the case, the more angry he became. As a Christian who believed in original sin, he thought that these abuses reflected “what men will do on a remote frontier, where they are removed from the immediate operation of law and from observation and criticism, [and their] only object is to make money as rapidly as possible.” Bolton’s decision to become a planter and his effort to create planter-officials created an obvious conflict of interest that could only lead to oppression of native labor. As the planters responded to his investigation, they sent Bliss letters that would have been “a disgrace to a Georgia slave-driver seventy-five years ago.”⁷²⁴

Knowing that such stories would damage his efforts at economic development, Bliss did not describe the situation accurately in his annual report. Instead, he described the planters’ efforts as a “kindly” attempt to teach the hill people the value of labor and guide them “along the . . . road leading to a settled

⁷²⁴ Both quotations are from *ibid.*, 146. For Bliss’s contrasting belief that local peoples had a right to acceptable officials in control of local governments, see THB to Wood, July 21, 1906, Wood Mss., LC.

life.”⁷²⁵ This compromise with the complete truth was not the only time Bliss concealed some of the realities of life in Mindanao. He also described the new town of Dansalan, near Camp Keithley on Lake Lanao, as “an orderly and well-regulated community” of the sort that American settlement could produce. According to Wayne Thompson’s research, in reality “Wood and Bliss had driven the saloons, gamblers, and Japanese prostitutes away from Camp Keithley [but] the exiles built their own town just across the river. The soldiers pronounced Dansalan ‘damn saloon.’”⁷²⁶

In facing other aspects of life in East Asia, Bliss was more realistic. He learned the socio-economic structure of Mindanao’s towns, which reflected the Moros’ previous lack of interest in business. One of the advantages he saw for the Moros in American-sponsored exchanges was that the profits they made would get them “out of the clutches of the Chinese whose object has been to keep them in perpetual debt.”⁷²⁷ He also observed that the people who took fullest advantage of the agricultural opportunities in Davao were Japanese immigrants. Bliss urged the governments in Manila and Washington to find some way to oppose what he called “Japanese colonization under the guise of corporations.” This migration began when white planters utilized a Japanese labor contractor to bring in more laborers. He established a residence in Davao, and within three years there were two hundred Japanese living in the area, establishing plantations or small businesses. After a

⁷²⁵ *Annual Report ... 1907*, 32.

⁷²⁶ “Governors,” 148.

⁷²⁷ Quoted in Palmer, *Bliss, Peacemaker*, 88, from a journal Bliss began when he arrived in the Moro Province but did not continue.

decade, the Japanese laborers had become plantation owners and dominated the hemp production around Davao.⁷²⁸

Bliss favored some sort of restriction on Japanese immigration, but not because of racial prejudice. His advice to Filipinos from the northern islands living on Mindinao was to “bury all petty social and religious prejudices and meet together with the government on common ground.”⁷²⁹ He thought Mindinao should remain the land of the Filipino peoples who lived there. One of the most important ways in which Bliss differed from most early-20th-century imperialists -- European, Japanese or American -- was in his attitude toward land ownership. A distinctive feature of modern imperialism was that it usually involved a program of alienating indigenous populations from control of the land.⁷³⁰ Bliss saw little chance of that and was in fact prepared to defend the local peoples’ rights to the land. He believed that “the Moro Province will continue indefinitely to be the home of the people who now inhabit it; . . . the white man will never come here in such numbers as to make even a beginning of ousting the native from his occupation of the soil.”⁷³¹ His projects to encourage economic development and western-style civilization would help Moros maintain control.⁷³² When Bliss spoke at Zamboanga’s provincial fair in 1907, he told the

⁷²⁸ Thompson, “Governors,” 150-152.

⁷²⁹ Bliss speech, Zamboanga provincial fair, 1907, copy in Box 352, THB Mss, LC.

⁶⁶ Jane Samson, *Race and Empire*, Seminar Studies in History (Harlow and London, England, New York, et al: Pearson Education Limited, 2005), 4.

⁷³¹ *Annual Report ... 1907*, 35.

⁷³² *Ibid.*

crowd that when they became part of the “one civilization” that bound them to the United States, it would make them “happy, rich and free.”⁷³³

Ethnic and racial tensions played a major role in the most difficult case Bliss handled during his three years on Mindinao, a case that exposed him to widespread criticism.⁷³⁴ One of the traditional businesses in the Sulu Archipelago was its pearl fishery, which was controlled by the local peoples. During the early years of the American colonial administration, whites and Japanese began fishing the pearl beds. Moros under the leadership of Jikiri responded by murdering an American and a Dutchman, although there were many “witnesses” who claimed that Jikiri’s band was also responsible for the deaths of nearly one hundred people, especially Chinese shopkeepers, who were often the targets of local resentments.

When many Chinese shops in one town were sacked, the surviving Chinese merchants complained that the local sultan condoned the attacks—even though a house he owned had been destroyed as well. The situation led to complaints from the Chinese consul general in Manila to Governor-General James F. Smith. Whites in Zamboanga reacted to the murders of the American and the Dutchman (and ignored the murders of the Chinese). While Bliss sent four companies of infantry and a machine--gun platoon in pursuit of Jikiri and his bandits, the troops had no hope of catching the fugitives, who enjoyed great popular support. What Bliss wanted was some fast gunboats to pursue pirates in general and Jikiri’s band in particular, but the provincial budget could not provide them. He had had them early in his tenure but

⁷³³ Speech, Bliss Mss, Box 352, LC.

⁷³⁴ This account relies on Thompson, “Governors,” 154-161.

they were withdrawn in 1907. Eventually the navy contributed two disabled boats that had been decommissioned in Manila, but only one could be restored to service. Two gunboats did finally arrive in February 1909, but by that time Bliss was in Manila, so Colonel Ralph Hoyt and the 25th Infantry gained credit for eliminating Jikiri.

For Bliss, one of the saddest aspects of the work in the Moro Province was the personal criticism he received, which in some cases strained his friendships. He could not have been entirely surprised that Leonard Wood criticized his administration, since he chose to use different methods than Wood in dealing with the Moros. Having worked under him in Cuba, Bliss knew that Wood never hesitated to criticize fellow officers. But since Wood had moved up to command of the Philippine Division, he was Bliss's superior and in a position to help or hinder Bliss's work. Wood thought that Bliss should be more active in responding to violent incidents, and late in Bliss's tenure, as he pursued the criminal Jakiri on Basilan Island, Wood had occasion to speak with Lieutenant Arthur Poillon, Bliss's former aide now detailed to the General Staff. By then Wood was commanding the Department of the East in New York City. After Poillon called, Wood told his diary that they had discussed the Moro Province at length. Poillon

while in no way being disloyal to his late chief, corroborated pretty thoroughly my suspicions as to the real cause of the Moro trouble: an entire failure to keep up the patrol system and an entire lack of practical knowledge of handling wild people. Too much academic discussion and writing, and too little traveling about.⁷³⁵

⁷³⁵ Wood diary, entry for June 21, 1909, Box 4, Wood Mss., LC.

It was typical of Wood to take this conversation at face value, forgetting that when a major general converses with a capable and intelligent lieutenant, the major general can expect to hear what he wants to hear. It was also ironic, because Bliss had been asking for fast gunboats in order to carry out precisely the sort of active pursuit that Wood preferred.

It was a different matter with two civilian colonial administrators, W. Morgan Shuster and W. Cameron Forbes.⁷³⁶ Shuster had worked under Bliss in Cuba and had shown great administrative ability. He had moved to the Philippines and soon became secretary of Public Instruction and had a seat on the Philippine Commission, which oversaw the entire colonial government. Bliss must have thought he had an ally in a key position to help him with his plans for education. Instead, Shuster became involved in a series of disputes with Forbes, the Commissioner of Commerce and Police, putting Bliss squarely in the middle.⁷³⁷

In December 1907, just before departing for a long leave in the United States, Shuster visited the Moro Province, expecting that Bliss would provide him with a boat to go bird hunting and a guide for a hike to Lake Lanao. Unfortunately, General Wood also chose that day for his final inspection before vacating his position as commanding general of the Philippine Division. Bliss naturally gave priority to his

⁷³⁶ This account is based largely on Thompson, "Governors," 136-140.

⁷³⁷ For an example, see THB to Wood, May 14, 1907, reacting to Shuster's opinion that the government of the Moro Province should be strictly subordinate to the Philippine Commission; Wood Mss., LC.

superior officer, but Shuster apparently believed he was the victim of “intentional rudeness.”

While Shuster was away, Forbes solidified his position in the Philippine government and soon was the Governor-General. One of his projects was to end the military government of the Moro Province and bring it under his own control. To make a case for his plan, he disparaged everything Bliss had accomplished. In a long letter to the new Secretary of War, Jacob Dickinson, Forbes complained that “things had been allowed to slide more or less since General Wood” left Mindinao. What was needed, he wrote, was a “young and active man” with “wide experienced in administration and in affairs of that locality.” His real object, as revealed in a continuing correspondence, was to establish a civilian government for the Moro Province.⁷³⁸

By the time Forbes penned most of those letters, Bliss had moved on, first to Manila and then back to Washington. Answering for the provincial government was Captain Charles B. Hagadorn, the secretary and acting governor. He wrote to Clarence Edwards, chief of the Bureau of Insular Affairs in the War Department, that the Moro Province should remain a separate entity. The Moros were a people unlike the other Filipinos, and the Manila government would never be able to control them. The “great work” to be done was the “subjugation of these wild peoples,” which could “only be done by the military.” He added that the Province was “in better condition today than it has been at any period since its organization,” more

⁷³⁸ Forbes to Secretary of War, August 10, 1909; the correspondence quoted here is in RG 350, Box 402, files 5075-, NARA.

prosperous and cleaner.⁷³⁹ Writing to Bliss four months later, Hagadorn commented on Forbes' "attitude" toward the Moro Province government, which was to "butt in" too often because he thought that the province was run for the benefit of the army. Hagadorn was especially annoyed by Forbes' claim that the roads were in bad shape when in fact "[t]hey never were better."⁷⁴⁰

By then, Bliss was on his way back to Washington, after a short stay in Manila commanding the Philippine Division. Returning home meant a trip covering half of the globe, and he did take the opportunity to visit Singapore, Cairo, Genoa, Venice, Vienna, Paris and London.⁷⁴¹

Nothing was more basic to Moro culture than the *kris* that each warrior carried. The *kris* was a long, broad sword with a curved blade, swung with two hands, usually carried in a wooden scabbard of two halves bound together with hemp. The Moro warrior did not need to unsheathe it, but could count on the force of the downward stroke parting the cords that held the scabbard together. The Moros were gradually acquiring modern firearms as well. Bliss always believed that true peace would not come to the province until the Moros were disarmed, but he also knew that any attempt to confiscate their weapons would lead to the biggest fights the Americans had ever encountered. Leonard Wood evaluated the situation in exactly the same way.⁷⁴² Eventually it was Pershing who found the way to accomplish this task.

⁷³⁹ Hagadorn to Edwards, September 6, 1909, in *ibid.*

⁷⁴⁰ Hagadorn to THB, Jan. 10, 1918, vol. 98, THB Mss, LC.

⁷⁴¹ An itinerary is in Box 382, THB Mss, LC.

⁷⁴² THB to Wood, Sept. 14, 1907, July 7, 1908, both in Wood Mss, LC.

There were many features of the Moros' culture that Bliss enjoyed. With his facility for languages, he learned enough Malay to be understood by the locals. His description of the elaborate ceremonies of a Moro wedding filled two pages of his journal. Part of the ritual presented an everyday human problem for the local *datu* in a way that amused Bliss. *Datu* Mandi staged the event for one of his daughters. On the one hand, his generosity in providing food and entertainment was an essential part of his status, but on the other hand, because the wedding ceremonies went on for several days, Mandi worried that his guests were "eating him out of house and home."⁷⁴³

Many aspects of Bliss's time as governor made the assignment special. He always remembered the pleasant evenings after sunset spent reading or listening to music. When his family joined him, Nellie proved to be an even better student of Malay than he was, but he gained more knowledge of the local seashells.⁷⁴⁴ After Bliss had left Mindinao, he wrote to a friend that he had "never had a detail so agreeable."⁷⁴⁵ For some of the time, his entire family was with him, and he always loved talking with his children about their school subjects. That was especially true of Eleanor's college major, geology.

Bliss was a general with an attractive daughter who had recently graduated from an elite college. Many young army officers were eager for social duties such as escorting Eleanor to various events; they enjoyed the company of the woman and

⁷⁴³ The account of the wedding is in Palmer, *Bliss, Peacemaker*, 90-91.

⁷⁴⁴ These details are from *ibid*, 91-95.

⁷⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 95, quoting a letter to Colonel James A. Irons, May 12, 1909.

hoped to please their superior officer at the same time. Tasker and Eleanor shared the time of his aide-de-camp Lieutenant Arthur Poillon, a Princeton alumnus. When Bliss was at home in Zamboanga, he regularly took long afternoon walks with Poillon, both for exercise and for the joy of the cleansing shower that followed.⁷⁴⁶ They must have enjoyed each other's company, because Bliss asked for Poillon to serve under him again during the Paris Peace Conference. During numerous horseback rides and dances, Eleanor and Poillon developed a lasting friendship. When they had both returned to the United States, he called on Eleanor and sent her flowers.

Their friendship never became a romance, perhaps because Eleanor preferred to continue her education in geology. She contacted Florence Bascom, professor of geology at Bryn Mawr College, to inquire about pursuing a Ph. D. Bascom in turn contacted Johns Hopkins University, which was willing to sponsor Eleanor's studies even though she would be at Bryn Mawr. By the spring of 1909 she was back at the college. Tasker was intensely proud of her work, and had she failed to secure a fellowship, he was ready to pay her tuition.⁷⁴⁷

It is hard to evaluate Bliss's tenure as governor. From his point of view, it was all that he had hoped. Bliss gained experience commanding troops in the field, and while the Moros were a challenge to govern, he respected them enough to learn some of their language and culture. He received considerable criticism from some

⁷⁴⁶ Palmer, *Bliss, Peacemaker*, 95.

⁷⁴⁷ There are numerous letters about Eleanor's graduate program and other aspects of her relationship with Bryn Mawr College in Box 389, THB Mss, LC.

quarters for a variety of problems, but there were many Americans in the province who considered his policies eminently successful. One officer in the constabulary wrote home in 1907 that the Moros were “pretty well pacified and are becoming, strange to say, intensely American.”⁷⁴⁸ After Bliss departed, even Forbes wrote him friendly letters.⁷⁴⁹ Donald Smythe’s account of Pershing’s governorship in the years immediately following Bliss reads almost exactly like the latter’s annual reports, both in the problems Pershing found and many of his policies.⁷⁵⁰ On February 3, 1909, the *Mindanao Herald* published a special “Historical and Industrial Number Commemorating a Decennium of American Occupation,” and the paper referred to the Bliss administration as “the peace era of the Moro Province.”⁷⁵¹ Bliss had gained the front-line experience he had sought for so long, but it does not seem to have changed his reputation in the army. As for the Moro Province, perhaps the best indication of the effectiveness of the American efforts at pacification, “civilization,” and cultural transformation is that the southern Philippines continue to this day to be the seat of a violent independence movement. No American could find a solution to its problems.

⁷⁴⁸ Quoted in Linn, *Guardians*, 40.

⁷⁴⁹ Palmer, *Bliss, Peacemaker*, 99.

⁷⁵⁰ For instance, Smythe quotes a Moro *datu* that the most important change the Americans brought was the road between Iligan and Lake Lanao, but construction of that road began under Bliss; Smythe, *Guerrilla Warrior*, 150; *The Annual Report of the Governor of the Moro Province for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1908* (Zamboanga: The Mindanao Herald Pub. Co., 1908), 10.

⁷⁵¹ A copy of this commemorative booklet is in the Bliss Mss, USAMHI. It includes a substantial article by Bliss on “The Government of the Moro Province and Its Problems.”

CHAPTER 9

GUARDING THE SOUTHERN BORDER

Tasker Bliss arrived in Washington, D. C., in the late summer of 1909, taking up a position that was familiar to him, president of the Army War College. He could enjoy working at the new War College building (now the National War College) at Washington Barracks (now Fort Lesley J. McNair), a structure that had been designed and approved during his previous tour as president. Unfortunately Bliss served in this position for only a few months, as he was shifted to the General Staff effective December 1.⁷⁵² His official title was assistant to the Chief of Staff, which meant he worked first for Major General J. Franklin Bell and then for his former superior from Cuba, Major General Leonard Wood. Bell's tenure of the office was important because he was only the fourth Chief of Staff, and for the first time since the creation of the office in 1903, the Chief of Staff was not the senior general officer in the army. President Theodore Roosevelt's choice of Bell came closer to the original intent of the Elihu Root reforms; that is, the president should choose a general in whom he had great personal confidence. The powers of the Chief of Staff should come from the support he enjoyed from the Secretary of War and the President, not from his

⁷⁵² *Annual Report of the United States War Department for 1910* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1910), v. 1, 125, cited hereafter as *WDAR* with volume number and year.

seniority among the line officers of the Army. Having served on the original general staff from 1903 to 1905, Bliss brought experience and background knowledge to his work that supplied an important element of continuity, given the frequent changes in the officers assigned to the general staff.

This rapid shifting of personnel seems to have been all too typical of the Army at the time. Ironically, Bliss's successor in command of the Philippine Division, Major General William P. Duvall, noted in completing the annual report for the Division for 1909 that his subordinate "commanders in their annual reports invite attention to the very frequent changes in the personnel of their staffs."⁷⁵³ He could have used Bliss as an example of the same problem in the Army at large, as Bliss was destined to serve less than a year on the General Staff before leaving to command the Department of California. It was an appointment that demonstrated that the War Department no longer had any clear plan of how to utilize its best officers, because Bliss had just come from four years of commanding troops and administering a department, he had been away from the General Staff for more than four years, but soon he would be assigned to command a department that did not appear to face any critical problem. After a year in California Bliss noted the same problem in his first annual report, commenting that the failure to keep "officers, particularly organization commanders, with the same organizations for at least a reasonable length of time, . . ." was "difficult to understand."⁷⁵⁴

⁷⁵³ *WDAR, 1909*, v. 3, 175.

⁷⁵⁴ *Annual Report of Brigadier General Tasker H. Bliss, US Army, Commanding the Department of California, 1911* (San Francisco: Headquarters, Department of California, 1911), 35.

His few month's service as Assistant Chief of Staff left Bliss once again eager to leave Washington for a field command. Far too often he found himself submerged in trivia, and the occasional important issue that he handled was all too familiar. While he was in Washington, the Army and the Navy resumed their struggle over the proper preparations for war in the western Pacific. Ever since Admiral George Dewey's service in the Philippines, the Navy had argued for the principal naval base there to be at Subic Bay, also known as Olongapo. The Army maintained that because it had to defend the capital city of Manila and also Manila Bay, it did not have the resources to defend a separate naval base as well.⁷⁵⁵ The issue had never really been resolved, although the Joint Army and Navy Board had discussed it. Now Bliss found himself in the middle of a renewed battle between the armed services. Early in 1909 the Navy had revived its efforts for a base at Subic Bay, but after arguing until November, the Joint Board reached a compromise only when the naval members agreed that "their plans required no measures by the Army for a land defense at Olongapo."⁷⁵⁶

That compromise quickly fell apart. The Navy had promised not to build extensive base facilities at Olongapo, and the Army planned to concentrate its efforts on fortifying the islands in the entrance to Manila Bay. The two services began another argument over the disposition of the Navy's "advanced base material," and in particular several 6-inch guns. If war seemed imminent the Army wanted the guns

⁷⁵⁵ This controversy is thoroughly explored in William R. Braisted, *The United States Navy in the Pacific, 1909-1922* (Austin and London: University of Texas Press, 1971), 61-76.

⁷⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 63.

for the completion of the Manila Bay defenses, and the Army also expected the Navy to shift a floating dock from Subic Bay to Manila Bay. The Navy was not so eager to shift the dock, and it had plans to use the guns in the land defense of Olongapo. Bliss set out the Army's view in a long endorsement that he submitted to Chief of Staff Bell on March 2, 1910.⁷⁵⁷ The Army had no confidence the Navy would move the floating dock in time when war threatened, and more important, the earlier agreement was "understood" to mean "that no defensive land works should be constructed . . ." at Subic Bay. If the Navy committed Marines to such land defenses, rather than allowing them to assist the Army around Manila, then not only would the administrative center of the colony be endangered but also "their services would be thrown away" in a hopeless defense of the naval base. Bliss recommended that the Chief of Staff await detailed reports on the Navy's activities from the Army's commander in the Philippines. Bell was willing to wait. He remained convinced, nevertheless, that any "kind of land defense whatever" would be "inconsistent" with the earlier Joint Board agreement.⁷⁵⁸ For Bliss to find that the two services were conducting the same dispute as when he had left Washington five years earlier was frustrating, to say the least.

Bliss wrote to Leonard Wood about the situation, but Wood had already weighed in with his view that the Navy was pursuing a mistaken policy. Bliss expressed his desire to escape from Washington and Wood sympathized. Still, Wood

⁷⁵⁷ A copy is in v. 102, THB Mss, LC.

⁷⁵⁸ A copy of Bell's endorsement, March 5, 1910, is in v. 102, THB Mss, MD, LC.

responded that even with such annoyances, he hoped Bliss would continue as an Assistant Chief of Staff.⁷⁵⁹ In spite of the dissatisfaction that Wood had expressed with Bliss's handling of the Moro Province, Wood realized that Bliss was an excellent administrator and strategic thinker, qualities that made him a desirable assistant, yet Bliss remained more interested in field service.

The trivial issues that came across Bliss's desk indicate that the general staff remained an institution too far removed from being the thinking and planning agency that its creators had intended. Bliss studied and wrote about questions ranging from the pay of the Army Nurse Corps to the physical examinations given to officers in line for promotions. There were numerous appeals from officers who sought a change of assignment, and on one occasion he wrote to the Washington Board of Charities to help Mamie Naylor enter the Freedmen's Hospital for an operation. She was, Bliss declared, "a very worthy woman who . . . is without means to defray the expense . . ." and needed their help. Three West Point cadets found guilty of "hazing and physically striking plebes" deserved to be dismissed, but Bliss warned the Secretary of War that they would probably use their congressional connections to have that punishment overturned. He also exchanged letters with Hugh Scott, now a colonel and serving as Superintendent of the Military Academy, about the lighting in the cadets' rooms. The Secretary of War asked Bliss to write because he had heard from "a gentleman" who had just visited West Point that the ceiling light fixtures were too weak and too far from the cadets' work, thus straining their eyes. Scott

⁷⁵⁹ Wood to THB, March 21, 1910, v. 102, THB Mss, LC.

replied that in fact the lights were already being replaced. Wall brackets the “gentleman” had asked about were actually gas jets for use in an emergency, and when they had been used for lighting the cadets had disliked them because of the glare and the shadows they cast.⁷⁶⁰ None of these questions should have taken the time of the Assistant Chief of Staff, at least not if his principal work was supposed to be thinking and planning.

One task that was worth special notice was Bliss’s attendance at a review of a brigade of the Maryland National Guard in Baltimore. The commander wrote a note of thanks because “the interest you . . . manifested in our troops is highly appreciated and has increased the enthusiasm of all.” Bliss responded that it had been an “interesting and profitable visit,” and he looked forward to similar visits in the future. The incident is noteworthy because at a time when many Army officers were hostile to the National Guard, Bliss was one of the few who maintained good relations with these citizen-soldiers.⁷⁶¹

The prospect of working with National Guardsmen was only a part of the good news Bliss received in a letter from Major General Thomas H. Barry, whom he was about to replace as commander of the Department of California. Barry was working on the plans for joint Army-National Guard maneuvers to take place in September. While he planned to convene a board of officers to draw up a program of

⁷⁶⁰ This sampling of issues comes from v. 102, THB Mss, LC; the exchange with Scott is THB to HLS, April 9, and HLS to THB, April 11, 1910.

⁷⁶¹ The exchange of letters about the National Guard is Charles F. Macklin to THB, March 22, 1910, and THB to Macklin, April 1, 1910, THB Mss, LC, v. 102. There are also news clippings about the events which the Baltimore *American* reported (March 19) as “the biggest and most interesting event in the recent history of the Guard.”

instruction, he welcomed any suggestions or questions Bliss might have about the maneuvers. He also promised to send plans of the house Bliss would enjoy along with information about the furnishings. With fond memories of his previous duty in San Francisco, Bliss was eager to be on his way.⁷⁶²

As they moved first to Washington and then to San Francisco, the Bliss children faced the issues that come to “service brats” because of frequent changes of location along with the social whirl of garrison life. Eleanor continued work toward her Ph. D. in geology at Bryn Mawr, and she continued to exchange letters with Arthur Poillon in a brief interval when he was not serving as the General’s aide. Having served with Bliss in the Moro Province, he was now assigned to the Mounted Service School at Fort Riley, Kansas. Poillon sent news that James Shannon, Bliss’s other aide in Zamboanga, had married, but clearly he most enjoyed telling her about his work at the school. Each of the officers had two horses to break and train, and so far Poillon’s horses had kicked him only once in that process. It was a favorable contrast with another officer who had been thrown and seriously injured. He added his opinion that Eleanor’s father had proven his ability in the Philippines and should be the next chief of staff, but he also asked her not to tell Bliss that he had said so.⁷⁶³ In the spring, Poillon wrote again to predict how much Eleanor would like living in San Francisco with her father, for many reasons including especially the opportunity to ride almost every morning. He concluded that letter with a brief paragraph

⁷⁶² Barry to THB, April 2, 1910, v. 102, THB Mss, LC.

⁷⁶³ Undated letter, Poillon to Eleanor Bliss, Box 392, THB Mss, LC.

agreeing with Eleanor's earlier comments on marriage.⁷⁶⁴ In a subsequent letter he again discussed the philosophy and theory of marriage, and in particular noted that Kansas required a physical examination before allowing couples to marry.⁷⁶⁵ This discussion indicates a romance had blossomed in the Philippines, at least in Poillon's mind.

Shannon wrote occasionally as well. He was also at Fort Riley, which he described as "great horse country," commenting that many of the officers at that post enjoyed playing polo, and some even kept horses of their own for the matches. Shannon apologized for a trunk of Eleanor's which had gone astray and been delayed, but he was sure she felt as he did: "*Isn't it good to be home in the good old United States where you get a cool breeze now and then?*"⁷⁶⁶

While Bliss was in California, he planned to send his son Goring to West Point. Probably because of their years in Zamboanga, Goring's academic preparation was inadequate. To be ready for the demands of the Military Academy's classrooms, Goring attended a military preparatory school in Washington, D. C. Goring's sporadic diary from this time demonstrates how much he enjoyed traveling with his father or meeting his father when Bliss was in the field.⁷⁶⁷ Four days before Goring

⁷⁶⁴ Poillon to Eleanor Bliss, April 21, (1910?), *ibid.*

⁷⁶⁵ Undated letter, Poillon to Eleanor Bliss, *ibid.*

⁷⁶⁶ Letters of June 30 and August 5, 1909, emphasis in original, Shannon to Eleanor Bliss, *ibid.* In the same box in the THB Mss. is a sad final note on this relationship. It is a bit of note paper with the information of exactly where Lt. Col. James Shannon, 112th Infantry, was buried in the Argonne American Cemetery, Romagne (Meuse).

⁷⁶⁷ The diary is in the Edward Goring Bliss Papers at the Military History Institute at Carlisle Barracks, Pa., hereafter cited as EGB Mss, MHI. For examples of Goring's pleasure at joining his father's activities, see the entries for September 25, 26 and 29, 1910.

left California for Washington, Bliss talked with him after dinner and “gave [him] some advice about going East.” Bliss also told his son that he hoped to have him come back to California for Christmas, but he could not be sure of it.⁷⁶⁸ The next day Goring went back to San Francisco with his mother and sister, having secured a berth on the train to St. Louis. In the evening before he left home he felt “mighty blue about leaving.”⁷⁶⁹ On the morning of his fourth day on the train, he arrived in St. Louis, breakfasted in the Fred Harvey restaurant in the station, and strolled around downtown. As soon as the gate opened, he boarded the train for Washington and immediately began to write another letter home. After reaching his destination, Goring wrote in his diary, “one never knows what a blessing a home is until one is cut off from it.”⁷⁷⁰

Goring quickly immersed himself in his school routine. He had arrived three weeks into the term, so he had to catch up. He was taking classes in English, French, mathematics, and U.S. History, and in spite of being new to the school, he was appointed a “second sergeant” in his company. In that position, he soon found himself assigned to lead drills, but to his embarrassment his voice was not effective, and he did not know the drill manual well enough to explain it to his company. Equally challenging was French, but in U.S. History he earned high marks.⁷⁷¹ To deal with his loneliness Goring visited the War Department offices, calling on

⁷⁶⁸ Diary entry for September 29, 1920, EGB Mss, MHI.

⁷⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, October 2, 1920.

⁷⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, October 6 and 7, 1910.

⁷⁷¹ *Ibid.*, October 13, 17, 23 and 24, 1910.

Generals Leonard Wood,⁷⁷² whom he knew from the Philippines, and George Davis, and making use of the departmental library.⁷⁷³

Taking command in San Francisco on August 19, 1910,⁷⁷⁴ Bliss must have expected his tenure as the commander of the Department of California would involve nothing more than routine duties. Since Hawaii was within the geographical limits of his command, perhaps he had thoughts of visiting that appealing possession. He had probably heard about it when he served as aide-de-camp to Commanding General John M. Schofield, since Schofield had visited the islands in 1872 and recommended establishing a U.S. base there. (In honor of that suggestion, the largest Army base in Hawaii retains the name Schofield Barracks.)

The Army's activities in the Department of California while under the command of Tasker Bliss can be separated into three general categories. First there was the normal instruction and training of the troops, especially in larger units. While some aspects of this work had been growing since the 1870s, in many ways the training program reflected the changes that the Root reforms had brought to the army. There were, second, several routine duties that the army had to undertake even though they interfered with the program of instruction. Finally, there would be emergency service created by the Mexican Revolution.

Among the training activities there were garrison schools for officers, and in the case of two officers from the organized militia, they attended the school at Fort

⁷⁷² Ibid., October 15, 1910.

⁷⁷³ Ibid., February 3, 1911.

⁷⁷⁴ *Report of the Department of California, 1911*, 1.

Rosecrans and were recommended for continuation the following year.⁷⁷⁵ Another especially important part of training was target practice, something that Bliss had promoted when he was on the staff of Commanding General Schofield. The troops of Bliss's command made regular trips to the School of Musketry, in Monterey, California, and they participated regularly in rifle target practice.⁷⁷⁶ There were regular "camps of instruction" for different units, involving even the Training School for Bakers and Cooks as well as the Hospital Corps and Signal Corps. Bliss also believed in the importance of practice marches for all troops, and whenever units were called away from their regular duty stations, he liked to see them return on the march. An experience that was not unusual involved Troop A, First Cavalry in a 307-mile return march.

One of the many military improvements that Secretary of War Elihu Root and his band of military reformers had supported was an increase in training activities and field instruction for larger units.⁷⁷⁷ In 1910, the army still did not have a permanent organization for field service larger than a regiment, but one of the regular activities in any of the geographic departments was the assemblage of temporary large units for training in the field. During Bliss's first year in California, most of the units under his command established camps of instruction at least for a few weeks during the summer. In most cases, the units of the regular army marched to their summer

⁷⁷⁵ Ibid, 24.

⁷⁷⁶ Bliss makes repeated references to units involved in these activities in *ibid*, "Record of Events," 5-15, from which this paragraph and the next are drawn.

⁷⁷⁷ For an insightful examination of this issue, see Charles D. McKenna, "The Forgotten Reform: Field Manoeuvres in the Development of the United States Army, 1902-1920," (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Duke University, 1981).

camps. Bliss believed that the “instruction obtained on such marches is really the most valuable portion” of any summer camp, because “only at that time do the conditions of service approximate” those of an active campaign in wartime.⁷⁷⁸ The training program involved practice every morning, with other work in the afternoon, and tactical rides twice a week, each one involving the officers of one battalion, until all the officers present had been on at least one ride.⁷⁷⁹

Another of the reforms of the early twentieth century was to assemble state militia forces – the National Guard – to attend summer camps of instruction along with regular army troops. The program Barry and Bliss developed for the militia units in California started with the basics. There was artillery and small arms target practice, practical lessons in the work of the quartermaster and subsistence departments, and instruction for soldiers in cooking, pitching a tent, bivouacking, properly using “the haversack ration,” and even boarding and leaving railroad trains. Bliss found that the militia units were not prepared to take advantage of the opportunity to work with regulars. “None of the militia organizations attending this encampment were [sic] sufficiently instructed to properly take up maneuver work. Much greater benefit would have resulted to them from being assembled . . . near their home station . . . and there given more thorough instruction in company, battalion and regimental work.” Bliss went on to suggest that before any militia unit joined regulars in a camp of instruction, a regular officer should inspect the militia

⁷⁷⁸ *Report of the Department of California, 1911*, 31.

⁷⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 29.

outfit. The many absentees among the enlisted men in some of the National Guard units made the camp useless for the unit as a whole. Only if it was ready both in terms of previous instruction and current personnel should the militia organization be allowed to attend the summer camp with the regulars. Otherwise, sending them was a “wasteful and indefensible use of the Nation’s money”⁷⁸⁰

Bliss appreciated the volunteers’ enthusiasm, but he was realistic about what these maneuvers accomplished for the regulars. While the summer camps were meant to be for the “mobilization and training of troops under the approximate conditions of field service in time of war,” in fact nothing like that happened. “Orders published weeks or months before the encampment” gave all of the units involved time for the “leisurely” arrangement of travel for the men and the equipment, while other detachments went ahead to prepare the grounds and lay out the camp. As a result, the staff departments did not receive training in the “rapid concentration and supply of troops in campaign,” and the troops themselves received training that was hardly more valuable than what they could accomplish at their regular posts. The one really useful part of these activities, Bliss thought, was in “the concentration of a larger command and the use of a more varied and extensive maneuver ground.”⁷⁸¹ He did not recommend discontinuing the camps, but he suggested that they should continue along with the organized militia with training closer to campaign conditions.

⁷⁸⁰ Ibid, 30-31.

⁷⁸¹ Ibid, 31-32.

Among the routine duties for troops in the Department of California, there were two that were only for units stationed in the American west. Each summer some cavalry units left their regular stations for duty in the national parks, acting essentially as a combination of park police and park rangers. Bliss protested in his annual report that such duty “hopelessly handicapped” the training of the cavalry units assigned to it.⁷⁸² Another duty that would seem routine to any westerner but interfered with the regular instruction and training of military units was fighting forest fires. A difficult fire season would lead to calls for help from local governments, and the Army was the most convenient source of manpower for that purpose.

What began as a routine tour of duty became something entirely different, when the Mexican Revolution erupted in 1910. Over the next few years, Bliss frequently found himself dealing with the myriad of issues that the revolution created in Mexican-American relations.⁷⁸³

By January 1911 the War Department directed Bliss to send units to the border to aid in enforcing the neutrality laws, and for the rest of his time in California, border patrols became a frequent assignment for some of his troops, especially cavalry units.⁷⁸⁴ In March Bliss received orders to bring together several units in the

⁷⁸² Ibid, 25.

⁷⁸³ For a thorough study that puts the events of the Mexican Revolution into the historical context of border issues, see Clarence C. Clendenen, *Blood on the Border: The United States Army and the Mexican Irregulars* (New York: Macmillan Company, London and Toronto: Collier-Macmillan Ltd., 1969), esp. 116-138 and 152-176. By far the most thorough and sophisticated history of the international aspects of the Mexican Revolution is Friedrich Katz, portions trans. by Loren Goldner, *The Secret War in Mexico: Europe, the United States and the Mexican Revolution* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1981).

⁷⁸⁴ The following discussion is based on *Report of the Department of California, 1911*, 11-15, 22, 39-42 and 44-45.

San Diego area for the same purpose. He had troops ready to move the next morning, but a shortage of railcars along with heavy rains that washed out some portions of track slowed the troop movements. To improve administration and supply, Bliss took the initiative and formed a provisional brigade; he had men from four different regiments along with support troops for a total of over 1,700 officers and men, growing to nearly 2000 by mid-June. While various units patrolled the border, Bliss utilized this concentration for another camp of instruction, including a move of twenty-one miles by four columns marching on four different roads in twenty-four hours. From April to June, the War Department sent a large number of National Guard officers from nine states to train with the provisional brigade, each one working with a regular officer, an activity which Bliss thought provided the volunteers "much benefit." He kept the provisional brigade together until June 15, and then he left three companies of infantry and five troops of cavalry at various border stations.

Continuing in the pattern of moving officers from assignment to assignment after short intervals in each position, the War Department soon re-assigned Bliss to the command of the Eastern Division. He was relieved from duty in California as of July 29, 1911, and as of August 13, his headquarters became Fort Totten, New York, where he would remain until February 13, 1913. That period of duty seems to have been largely routine; Frederick Palmer, in his family-sponsored biography, devotes less than two complete sentences to this period of Bliss's career. At least from a

father's point of view, one blessing in this assignment was the opportunity for frequent visits with his son, who was now at the Military Academy.

Goring arrived at West Point in the summer of 1912 as part of the Class of 1916. He immediately received extra attention from the upperclassmen because of his father's position, quickly acquiring the nickname, "the Brigadier." In early July he wrote to his sister, mentioning that he was "getting enough devilment on account of [his] name" and wanted to do nothing to add to it."⁷⁸⁵ The brutal routine of that plebe summer camp clearly bothered him. When he wrote, he had just done his first night of guard duty, and it had been "lively." He rushed to finish the letter before leaving on a long practice march. He told his sister he had "not had more than seven hours sleep any night for the last month. I could almost sleep standing." Then he added the usual plea of a plebe, "[f]or heaven sake keep on writing often and tell all my friends to write and that I will answer as soon as I get time and the upper classmen will let me."⁷⁸⁶

Soon he was writing again, offering Eleanor birthday best wishes that were late because he had to write letters on "the installment plan."⁷⁸⁷ Goring was thinking of ice cream and cake while also instructing Eleanor that the family must "treat me to a seven course dinner when I come to Philadelphia to the Navy Game [or] I am going to disown you." His other great concern at the time was a rumor that his father was going to be the next Superintendent of the Academy. Goring told his sister that if it

⁷⁸⁵ EGB to Eleanor Bliss, July 7 and 12, 1912, Box 389, THB Mss, LC.

⁷⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁷ EGB to Eleanor Bliss, July 14, 1912, Box 389, THB Mss, LC.

were true, then he was “in for the hardest year of my life.” Echoing his father’s reactions to life at the Point, Goring commented that camp life did not especially appeal to him, and once again he emphasized the importance of mail: “It is the only connecting link with the outside world.”⁷⁸⁸

Summer camp for the plebes went on until August 27. The schedule kept them so busy that Goring even suggested that there was no reason for his mother to visit, because he would not “have any time to see her.” If Eleanor came to visit, she should ask to see one of the upperclassmen she knew. “Then if it is possible [Goring could] come out with him to see you. You had better not ask to see [Goring] at the guard tent. [The upperclassman] will find me if it is possible . . . , and if you don’t mention my name it will maybe keep me out of trouble. . . .”⁷⁸⁹ There is no indication whether this visiting strategy worked.

In September Goring expressed his disappointment that Eleanor was unable to visit the Point for the Yale game, but he still hoped she would visit for one of the later contests.⁷⁹⁰ He suggested seeing the game against the Carlisle Indian School. Goring was confident of getting tickets to any game at the Academy, but he was equally certain that his father would have to get tickets for the Navy game at Philadelphia. Continuing the letter the next day, “as usual,” Goring acknowledged a package from Eleanor that contained a knife he needed to complete his equipment and avoid

⁷⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁹ EGB to Eleanor Bliss, July 19, 1912, Box 389, THB Mss, LC.

⁷⁹⁰ EGB to Eleanor Bliss, September 20, 1912, Box 389, THB Mss, LC.

demerits. He added that he envied her story of automobile rides. He wondered “what it would feel like to have my hands on the steering wheel of a car again.”

Goring felt lonely in part because his roommate, Duncan, was in hospital with an extremely painful ingrown toenail. “Life here without a roommate is pretty lonesome. There is not much time to talk but just the presence of somebody else in the room is company.”⁷⁹¹ He was hoping for a visit from his father now that Bliss had moved to Fort Totten in New York City.

In a surviving fragment of a letter, Goring told Eleanor that he had put in for tickets to the Carlisle football game, and in addition he was hoping for a visit from her on Thanksgiving.⁷⁹² The daughter of an officer serving at West Point had invited Eleanor for dinner, and if she came, Goring expected to receive permission to join them. He was writing on an unusual holiday,

a famous day in cadet history. On account of the death of Vice President [James S.] Sherman all duties except the necessary police and guard duties have been suspended. No drills, no classes, no inspections, no anything. It is the first real holiday we have had for [the] five months I have been here. Besides all this we were given the holiday privilege of late reveille [7 o'clock]. Joy prevails.⁷⁹³

Such uninhibited joy was hardly the way to mourn the death of the vice president, even one paired with the unpopular president William H. Taft.

Goring went on to express his worries about mathematics. He was struggling to stay in the tenth section, but he told his sister he had resolved to work hard and

⁷⁹¹ Ibid.

⁷⁹² Letter fragment, EGB to Eleanor Bliss, November 2, 1912, Box 389, THB Mss, LC.

⁷⁹³ Ibid.

move up at the next re-sectioning. There was also a sad note, because four first classmen had just left the Corps of Cadets, two of them dismissed and two suspended for one year for drinking. Goring was sorry to see them go “for they were all good men” but added “[n]ice man but he would drink.”⁷⁹⁴

In December, Goring was writing with more confidence, thinking that he had a chance to “wear a yearling service stripe after all though at times last week I [had] grave doubts.”⁷⁹⁵ He had just survived his first set of examinations in Geometry, and he confessed to having “aged two years in that last week.” In a later letter he reported that his French examination had earned a 78, which though a disappointment was still an improvement on his scores from earlier in the year.⁷⁹⁶ While Goring worried that his marks would prevent his being one of the highest-ranked cadets for the year, at least his work was “very satisfactory” in the eyes of the Academy.

Goring was more interested in Eleanor’s impression of the class crest, which was on his writing paper and had been designed by Bailey, Banks and Biddle, the prestigious Philadelphia jewelers.⁷⁹⁷ He passed on the news that a new detail of officers had arrived at the Point, some of them instructors and some of them new Tactical Officers. He did not yet know what his company’s new “Tac” would be like,

⁷⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁹⁵ EGB to Eleanor Bliss, December 15, 1912, Box 389, THB Mss, LC.

⁷⁹⁶ From an undated fragment attached to the letter of December 15, and apparently, judging from the paper and the handwriting, from about the same time, Box 389, THB Mss, LC.

⁷⁹⁷ Ibid.

but in the first two days of inspections he did not “skin” anyone (that is, he assigned no demerits). “That’s a good beginning,” Goring commented.⁷⁹⁸

The most important activity for Tasker Bliss in his new command once again involved combined maneuvers with the National Guard.⁷⁹⁹ In one of the largest such operations yet attempted, regular troops joined with National Guard units from Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, and Vermont to for eight days of activity across Connecticut and eastern New York. The Red Team played the part of invaders, seeking to capture New York City by seizing the city’s water supply at the Croton Dam in Westchester County. The Blue Team defended against this attack. For several days “thousands of local townspeople . . . flocked to see these local rivals . . . , providing lemonade and other cold drinks to the troops.” When the final “battle” took place, there were estimates of as many as 50,000 spectators, as well as eleven newspaper reporters and one newsreel team present to see New York be saved.⁸⁰⁰ Once again, the maneuvers did not approximate actual wartime conditions, although once again, Bliss worked comfortably with the National Guard in his role as chief umpire.

Having been in California during the beginning of the Mexican Revolution, Bliss must have followed its general course from his new headquarters in New

⁷⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹⁹ For a full account of these actions, see *Report of Brigadier General Tasker H. Bliss, U.S. Army, Commander of Maneuvers and Chief Umpire, Connecticut Maneuver Campaign* (no place of publication or publisher, 1912?).

⁸⁰⁰ “Soldiers Passed This Way in August of 1912,” accessed at <http://www.monroehistoricalsociety.org/175thcolumns.html> on August 22, 2006.

York.⁸⁰¹ The relations between the United States and Mexico had been difficult in the past, but under the presidency of Porfirio Diaz, Mexico had welcomed American investment and other types of economic penetration. The Diaz regime sought internal stability and foreign investment as its twin goals, and it became more and more oppressive over the years Diaz remained in power. William Randolph Hearst enjoyed substantial cattle and mining interests, and the Guggenheim-controlled American Smelting and Refining Company was another American company Diaz welcomed. The Mexican Petroleum Company's owner was another American, William Doheny.⁸⁰²

As the poverty of the average Mexican increased and Diaz repression became more complete, the stage was set for the revolution. The United States could not avoid involvement on some level, since many Mexicans lived in the country, many revolutionaries used it as a base, and the two countries shared a long, rugged border that would facilitate arms smuggling. The borderlands region of northern Mexico

⁸⁰¹ Two classic works on the Mexican Revolution are Robert E. Quirk, *The Mexican Revolution, 1914-1915: The Convention of Aguascalientes* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., Inc., paperback ed. 1960) and John Womack, Jr., *Zapata and the Mexican Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books paperback, A Division of Random House, 1968). Important works on the best-known of the Mexican revolutionaries are Friedrich Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa* (Stanford, Ca: Stanford University Press, 1998) and Jim Tuck, *Pancho Villa and John Reed: Two Faces of Romantic Revolution* (Tucson, Ariz.: University of Arizona Press, 1984). Other works include Adolfo Gilly, trans. By Patrick Camiller, *The Mexican Revolution* (New York and London: The New Press, 2005), a crude Marxist interpretation, and Suzanne B. Pasztor, *The Spirit of Hidalgo: The Mexican Revolution in Coahuila* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press and East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2002), a detailed analysis of the social and economic structure of the state where Venustiano Carranza was governor before becoming president of Mexico.

⁸⁰² Josiah Edward Spurr, ed., *Political and Commercial Geology and the World's Mineral Resources: A Series of Studies by Specialists* (New York and London: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1920), 11-14; Percy Falcke Martin, *Mexico of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Dodd, Meade and Co, London: Edward Arnold, 1908), 315-317; *The New York Times*, Feb. 6, 1916, p. 57. accessed through *ProQuest Historical Newspapers*.

was very different from other parts of the country, in part because of the American influences that were so much greater, in part because of the ease of crossing the lengthy border for almost any purpose.

Before Tasker Bliss arrived on the scene, there were long-standing problems for residents on both sides of the United States-Mexico boundary, including smuggling, cattle rustling, and Apache raids. When the border regions became involved in Mexican revolutionary politics, the conflicts and tension there increased. In 1882 the United States and Mexico reached an agreement allowing mutual border crossings by military or police units in close pursuit of groups of “savage Indians.”⁸⁰³ The cooperation the two governments established was reflected as well in their agreement to work together to gather information and control revolutionaries. By 1910 the border problems were of national, not just regional importance, for both countries. Mexican revolutionaries sought to use the United States as a safe haven and as a source of financial support, while the United States’ economic stake in Mexico had grown substantially. By the time the Revolution began, the United States had invested over \$1 billion in Mexico, and since 1890 it had replaced Great Britain as Mexico’s leading trading partner.⁸⁰⁴

⁸⁰³ Linda B. Hall and Don M. Coerver, *Revolution on the Border: The United States and Mexico, 1910-1920* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988), 10.

⁸⁰⁴ Katz, *The Secret War in Mexico*, 18-41, discusses these interests in detail along with the international maneuvering they influenced, and they are summarized in Hall and Coerver, *Revolution on the Border*, 10-15. Katz’s book is truly an international history, as he made use of Mexican, American, British, German, Japanese, Dutch, French and Austrian sources.

Since Mexican President Porfirio Diaz encouraged this growing American economic penetration, the United States government supported his regime.⁸⁰⁵ At the same time, Mexican radicals used the United States as a refuge from the Mexican police, while the U.S. Secret Service and the State Department worked with the Mexican authorities to control their activities. The leader of the Mexican Liberal Party (PLM), the anarchist Ricardo Flores Magon, entered the United States in 1904 and directed his movement first from St. Louis and then from Los Angeles. Francisco Madero was another anti-Diaz leader who escaped to the United States, in his case to San Antonio, Texas. He freely acknowledged that he was leading a revolutionary movement, but he was careful not to violate neutrality laws. Federal and state authorities watched his activities but could find no basis for an arrest. An additional revolutionary group formed in El Paso under the leadership of Bernardo Reyes.⁸⁰⁶ His effort to unseat President Diaz failed, and Texas and United States authorities arrested many of his followers. They received light sentences from a federal court, while Reyes himself escaped into Mexico. Even Francisco “Pancho” Villa, at one of the low points in his career, had lived in Texas.

In charge of the Mexican government’s response to these revolutionary efforts was Enrique Creel, first as governor of the northern province of Chihuahua, then as ambassador to the United States, and finally as Minister of Foreign Affairs. Creel

⁸⁰⁵ The following summary of the intelligence cooperation between the United States and Mexico is based on William Dirk Raat, “U.S. Intelligence Operations and Covert Action in Mexico, 1900-1947,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, 22 (October 1987), 615-638.

⁸⁰⁶ El Paso was a center of international intrigue during the Mexican Revolution; see Charles H. Harris III and Louis R. Sadler, *The Secret War in El Paso: Mexican Revolutionary Intrigue, 1906-1920* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2009).

employed Mexican operatives working in the United States as well as American private detectives, and he enjoyed the cooperation of the United States authorities. While he served as ambassador in Washington, Creel coordinated the work of the private detectives with those of government operatives, and he sent information to Mexican Vice President Ramon Corral, the State Department, and the various Mexican consulates in the United States. Working with

members of [the U.S. government's] developing espionage system . . . [Creel] funneled information . . . to the State Department, which in turn handed it over to Justice Department marshals, the Treasury's Secret Service and the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization. In addition, U.S. military personnel, secret service agents, customs officials and immigration officers worked hand in hand with private detectives.⁸⁰⁷

It was an elaborate system and it appears to have been effective.

Officials in the consulates of both countries, especially the military attachés, worked to gather information, hinder the revolutionaries, and support the Porfirian regime. Bliss must have known about this system. He was a former military attaché, and he came to the border after recent service on the general staff and with the Army War College, which was the army's war plans agency at that time.

When the Mexican Revolution began, Oscar B. Colquitt, the governor of Texas, issued his own proclamation of neutrality; while it added little to the existing federal legislation, it did indicate his special interest in the issue.⁸⁰⁸ In March 1911, President Taft formed the Maneuver Division with its headquarters at Fort Sam

⁸⁰⁷ Raat, "Operations," 619.

⁸⁰⁸ Don M. Coerver, *Texas and the Mexican Revolution: A Study in State and National Border Policy, 1910-1920* (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1984), 71-72.

Houston in San Antonio, Texas, specifically to protect American lives and property along the border. Governor Colquitt deployed a large force of Texas Rangers and called the Texas National Guard into service for the same duty. As Bliss warned Chief of Staff Hugh Scott two years later,

At a time when relations along the border were very delicate, the Governor . . . sent twelve organizations of his State troops to various points Their presence [on the border] was regarded as dangerous to international Peace, but [he] refused to withdraw them unless the War Department would replace them man for man. . . . This Agreement between the War Department and the Governor . . . must be kept in mind so long as there is a possibility of any trouble.⁸⁰⁹

In a speech to the Texas Cattle Raisers' Association in March 1914, Colquitt issued a direct challenge to President Woodrow Wilson, stating that in the protection of Texas citizens, the governor's authority was "superior to" the president's.⁸¹⁰ A governor who conducted his own foreign policy was just one more complication in an already difficult situation. Yet another complicating factor was the political pressure from American border communities demanding military protection through their representatives in Congress.⁸¹¹

The best study of the international setting of these events remains Friedrich Katz' *The Secret War in Mexico: Europe, the United States, and the Mexican*

⁸⁰⁹ THB to HLS, Chief of Staff, April 2, 1915, v. 190, THB Mss, LC.

⁸¹⁰ Hall and Coerver, *Revolution on the Border*, 20. Another of Colquitt's ideas was to organize units of "home guards" for border protection. His ideas often involved the use of the Texas Rangers, at the time a tiny organization of fewer than two dozen men; see Charles H. Harris III and Louis R. Sadler, *The Texas Rangers and the Mexican Revolution: The Bloodiest Decade, 1910-1920* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004).

⁸¹¹ For examples of this pressure, see the letters from W. W. Bogel to Senator Morris Sheppard, Feb. 25 and March 6, 1913, in v. 116, THB Mss, LC.

Revolution. Katz provides an analysis in depth of the roots of the revolution, but most important, he details the growing competition among the great powers for investment opportunities in Mexico. The Taft administration's ambassador to Mexico was Henry Lane Wilson, who had encouraged Victoriano Huerta's coup that led to the 1913 overthrow and murder of Francisco Madero, just days before Bliss arrived to command the Southern Department. Wilson left Mexico later that same year when President Woodrow Wilson refused to recognize the Huerta government. As relations between the United States and Mexico deteriorated, Germany and Britain hoped to gain economic and political advantage. Bliss was aware that every decision he made could have a profound impact on this tangled situation.

In the lame-duck days before Woodrow Wilson took office, the Taft administration recognized that Ambassador Wilson was operating far outside the bounds of official policy. While Secretary of State Philander Knox expressed official disapproval, the ambassador knew that in the end, the U.S. government would support his activities. Since those actions could lead to war or a military intervention in Mexico, the War Department responded by reorganizing the troops along the border and sending one of its ablest generals to the critical area. Bliss took command of the newly-created Southern Department on February 26, 1913.⁸¹² The same general orders that assigned him the command created that department as of February 15, 1913 and with it the Cavalry Division. The War Department recognized the need for a stronger mobile force in the area as well as the need for unity of command for the

⁸¹² G.O. No. 9, War Department, Feb. 6, 1913.

troops patrolling the border. The new department consisted of Texas and Louisiana (minus the Coast Artillery Sub-Districts of Galveston and New Orleans, respectively), Arkansas (except for Fort Logan H. Root), Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Arizona. Department headquarters were at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, as were the headquarters of the Cavalry Division. The latter consisted of two brigades of regular cavalry, a total of six regiments plus supporting troops, but the unit was not even close to full strength. As of June 30, 1913, the total strength of the department was 422 officers and 6822 men, present and absent. For Bliss there was also a happy personal side to the new assignment. His friend and West Point contemporary, Hugh L. Scott, took command of the Second Brigade on May 1, 1913.⁸¹³

The Taft administration created the Southern Department out of concern for the critical problems along the border; consolidating the command across several states was a sensible response. With Bliss serving as the department commander, it would have made sense to add at least southern California to the department, to complete that unification. The War Department's reasoning is not clear, although for most of California, even as far south as San Diego, the principal military task had always been coastal defense. But as Bliss had good reason to know, the issues of border security and border policing were of great importance in southern California as well as in Texas, New Mexico and Arizona. Unity of command along the entire border would have brought significant advantages to the Army.

⁸¹³ *Annual Report of Brigadier General Tasker H. Bliss, U.S. Army, Commanding the Southern Department, 1913*, (no place of publication or publisher listed, 1913).

The Woodrow Wilson administration's efforts to deal with the Mexican situation invite historians' critiques. Wilson approached Mexico with an attitude of cultural superiority tinged with racism. While he spoke in lofty -- and condescending -- terms about teaching the Mexicans to elect good men, and he condemned their use of violence, he soon resorted to armed intervention himself.⁸¹⁴ Given the rapid changes in the situation, the unavoidable American influence on events, especially in northern Mexico, and the ease of moving both people and arms across the border, it is hard to imagine any other president handling the situation more effectively.

In this political and military arena, facing a tangle of revolutionary political and military conflicts, Bliss confronted many difficult choices. American citizens demanded protection from Mexican raids, but he had a limited number of units to deploy. There was a constant threat of the fighting spilling into the United States, and any Mexican unit that believed itself in danger might choose to retreat across the border to take its chances with the American authorities. American arms smugglers

⁸¹⁴ For critiques of Wilson's foreign policy, see Lloyd C. Gardner, *Safe for Democracy: Anglo-American Response to Revolution, 1913-1923* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984) and *Wilson and Revolutions, 1913-1921* (Philadelphia: J. P. Lippincott and Co., 1976), Frederick S. Calhoun, *Power and Principle: Armed Intervention in Wilsonian Foreign Policy* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1986) and *Uses of Force and Wilsonian Foreign Policy* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1993). Less critical is Mark T. Gilderhus, *Diplomacy and Revolution: U.S.-Mexican Relations under Wilson and Carranza* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1977) and the same author's broader work, *Pan American Visions: Woodrow Wilson in the Western Hemisphere, 1913-1921* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1986). For the work of a historian who presents sophisticated arguments that Wilson's diplomacy has shaped all of U.S. foreign policy since Wilson, see Frank Ninkovich, *Modernity and Power: A History of the Domino Theory in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994) and *The Wilsonian Century: U.S. Foreign Policy Since 1900* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1999). For narratives of Wilson's interventions in Mexico, see Clendenen, *Blood on the Border: The United States Army and the Mexican Irregulars* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1969), Robert E. Quirk, *An Affair of Honor: Woodrow Wilson and the Occupation of Veracruz* (Lexington: Published for the Mississippi Valley Historical Association by the University of Kentucky Press, 1962), and John S. D. Eisenhower, *Intervention!: The United States and the Mexican Revolution, 1913-1917* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1993).

could expect large profits from selling weapons to one or another group in Mexico. While the Woodrow Wilson administration struggled to define its policy toward Mexico, and the fortunes of the various Mexican factions swayed to and fro, Bliss had to maintain peace and security along an extended international boundary in the face of continuous small-scale conflict. It was an extremely challenging assignment, although it was also a compliment to Bliss to be chosen to handle that challenge.

The most important and the most difficult duties that Bliss faced involved the border in relation to the continuing instability in Mexico. As he explained in his Annual Report for 1913: “The conditions . . . which lead to one successful revolution unfortunately seem always to point the way to a counter-revolution.”⁸¹⁵ Bliss expected that the continuing conflict in Mexico would require the maintenance of a strong United States border patrol until “an established government proves strong enough to crush the counter-revolution” and can “occupy and hold its own border towns.”⁸¹⁶ His use of general terms rather than naming specific forces or leaders makes it clear that Bliss did not choose sides in these conflicts; he was speaking in a general way about any Mexican government.

No matter what his own views or his instructions, Bliss had to deal with many aspects of the Mexican Revolution. There were battles immediately across the border as well as the constant threat of raids into the United States. Bliss’s most obvious problems stemmed from the battles for control of the Mexican border towns. For

⁸¹⁵ *Annual Report, 1913*, 37.

⁸¹⁶ *Ibid.*

instance, on March 13, 1913, rebel Mexicans under Alvaro Obregon attacked Nogales, south of Tucson, Arizona. It was a particularly difficult area for border operations, because the boundary ran through the town, right down the middle of a main street! Obregon's forces defeated the government troops defending the city, who then chose to take refuge in the United States, where they were arrested by United States troops. During the fighting, stray rounds flew into the United States, wounding a 5th Cavalry trooper and also a Mexican boy who was herding cattle.⁸¹⁷ The casualties could have been much worse, because a crowd of curious Americans formed to watch the fight.⁸¹⁸

In his 1913 report Bliss highlighted the difficulties of these situations that might otherwise appear almost comic. Whenever a fight threatened in a Mexican border town, the American policy was to notify the leaders of both sides that they must not fire into the United States. "They invariably replied that they would try to observe this requirement. But in spite of this [promise] many shots did fall on the American side." Complicating the situation were the "crowds of curious . . . sightseers" as well as the Mexicans who routinely crossed the border when a battle threatened, waiting for its conclusion before returning. Bliss rightly believed that "under these circumstances the conduct of our troops and exercise of good judgment

⁸¹⁷ Ibid., 38; Hall and Coerver, *Revolution on the Border*, 31-32.

⁸¹⁸ Anita Brenner and George R. Leighton, *The Wind That Swept Mexico: The History of the Mexican Revolution, 1910-1942* (Austin and London: University of Texas Press, 1943 and 1971) is a photographic history, and plate 67 is a photo of Americans in El Paso crowding onto railroad freight cars in order to watch a battle in Ciudad Juarez on May 10, 1911.

and self-restraint on the part of commanding officers was creditable in the extreme.”⁸¹⁹

During one phase of the Mexican Revolution, Madero’s forces tried to seize the city of Ciudad Juarez, across the Rio Grande from El Paso, in order to gain a port of entry from the United States; if successful, their supply problems would be eased and they would gain tariff revenue as well. Once Madero gained the presidency of Mexico, the garrison of Juarez mutinied. The threat of bullets flying into El Paso seemed very real until Pascual Orozco, loyal to Madero, arrived and ended the mutiny. A month later, Orozco revolted against Madero. These rapidly shifting allegiances were typical of Mexico’s revolutionary politics, but they certainly made it difficult to create and follow a consistent American policy.

Further fights flared up in March and April 1911 at Agua Prieta, where the Mexican rebel garrison included a large number of Yaqui Indians. When federal forces attacked, the Yaquis deserted, crossed the boundary, and surrendered to United States troops. The number of those refugees eventually reached 213. When the federals gained the town, the rest of the defenders also crossed over and surrendered to the Americans. The wounded of both sides ended up under the care of civilian doctors in the United States. During the March fight, three soldiers and three animals of the 9th Cavalry were wounded, while in April, several civilians in Douglas, Arizona suffered wounds, one of whom died.⁸²⁰ On May 10, near Reynosa, Mexican

⁸¹⁹ *Annual Report, 1913*, 43.

⁸²⁰ *Ibid.*, 39-40; *NY Times*, April 18 and 19, 1911, p. 2.

federal troops, outnumbered six to one, chose to cross the border to surrender to the Americans. Eleven wounded combatants, from both sides, ended their battle in the United States.

These prisoners presented Bliss with difficult problems; his command soon had over 800 Mexicans as prisoners, both rebels and federals. Part of the problem was that they had to be held separately. The War Department instructed Bliss to release the Mexicans “a few at a time” and allow them to “filter back to their own people.”⁸²¹ For the rebels this plan was fine; when released, they promptly crossed the border and rejoined their units. For the federal troops, there was no such easy solution. Bliss feared that the revolutionaries would “summarily deal” with any returning federal troops. His alternative idea gained the approval of the War Department. The Mexican government, through its consul in Naco, provided the money to transport its troops to El Paso to be returned at Juarez. As their train approached the bridge to enter Mexico, however, new orders from the War Department directed that the train stop and the prisoners be retained in the United States. They were to be held until further notice at Fort Bliss.⁸²² Presumably, the change of orders reflected the Wilson administration’s hostility to Mexican president Victoriano Huerta.

Similar problems developed in Naco in October 1914, when Mexican federal troops besieged rebels there. Six troops and the machine gun platoon of the 9th

⁸²¹ *Annual Report, 1913*, 41.

⁸²² *Ibid.*

Cavalry joined four troops of the 10th Cavalry that were already there to protect the border. As the American troops watched the Mexicans in combat, eight troopers in the 10th Cavalry were hit, the 9th suffered some killed and wounded, and the Buffalo Soldiers lost several horses and mules. Interrupted by a two-week truce, the siege went on from October 17 to December 18, and it severely tried the patience of the American cavalrymen, who were under orders not to return fire. Their biggest problem, according to one observer, was “holding back the crowds of visitors from Bisbee and Douglas [Arizona] who flocked to see the ‘battles,’ in automobiles, wagons and [on] horseback.”⁸²³

The War Department supervised equally closely any of Bliss’s troops whose activities could lead to border conflicts. In the fighting at Agua Prieta in March, the War Department instructed Bliss that Colonel John Francis Guilfoyle, 9th Cavalry, was to contact the leaders of both Mexican forces. As the Mexicans prepared for battle, Guilfoyle warned them that: “They must not direct their fire so that the bullets should come across the [boundary] line.”⁸²⁴ The rebel commander agreed at once, notifying Guilfoyle when he intended to attack and promising that he would try to prevent any shots from falling on the American side. In a rebel attack on Matamoros on June 3, over 100 federal troops fled to the Mexican end of the bridge to Brownsville, Texas. “The position of this force was such that any resulting fight”⁸²⁵

⁸²³ This account is based on “Buffalo Soldiers at Huachuca: The Battle of Naco,” *Huachuca Illustrated: The Magazine of the Fort Huachuca Museum* (1993), available at <http://www.net.lib.byu.edu/estu/wwi/comment/huachuca/HI1-10.htm>, accessed on July 16, 2012.

⁸²⁴ *Annual Report, 1913*, 40.

⁸²⁵ *Ibid.*

would cause fire to fall in Brownsville, where many people had assembled to watch the conflict. General James Parker was present and instructed Captain Kirby Walker, 14th Cavalry, to intervene and permit the federals a safe withdrawal to the American side. Only one American soldier and two Mexican refugees were wounded in this affair.⁸²⁶ During two engagements at Naco in April, Major Louis Brechemin, Jr., of the Medical Corps organized a hospital in a local opera house and treated 114 wounded Mexicans.⁸²⁷ After Bliss moved to Washington to serve again on the General Staff, he found himself continuing to address the problem of the Mexican wounded. In this case, he wrote to a Mexican official that the Secretary of War had confirmed the practice of allowing the wounded to be

brought across the border into the . . . United States only when such action was absolutely demanded in the interest of humanity.

The instructions [otherwise] that you now request . . . would result in the relief of one of the contending parties from any necessity for providing and caring for its own wounded. This . . . makes the United States an auxiliary to one of the contending parties.

The Commanding General of the Southern Department has full discretion . . .⁸²⁸

From these situations rather than from any specific directive, the United States government's policy becomes clear: the wounded would be treated as a humanitarian case, while defeated troops could enter the country but would be imprisoned. Rebel troops from a faction the U.S. government supported would eventually be allowed to

⁸²⁶ Ibid.

⁸²⁷ Ibid., 16.

⁸²⁸ THB to Enriqu  Llorent , April 2, 1915, v. 190, THB Mss.

return to Mexico, but not Mexican federal troops as long as President Wilson continued to oppose President Huerta.

Secretary of War Lindley Garrison understood the difficulties of the situation, especially in dealing with refugees from Mexico as well as the prisoners. In an extended letter of commendation, he told Bliss that he recognized the “nature and character of the work” in the department, and he felt he had to “give expression to the appreciation that I and all others . . . who know the situation have of the high character of the service rendered.” In a situation where mistakes could easily produce international incidents of the gravest sort, Garrison knew the troops had demonstrated “intelligence, courage, activity, and the exercise of a rare degree of wisdom.” He expressed the “greatest pride” in the worthy manner in which they had carried out their duties. “You have had under your jurisdiction over a thousand miles of border to patrol, and have had to meet and dispose of questions of the most difficult and delicate character almost daily. . . . [Y]ou have done so in a way to win universal approbation of your course [and are entitled] not only to my thanks but to those of the country.”⁸²⁹

The constant but small scale issue that Bliss faced in this border command was trying to prevent arms trafficking. He knew that the border was too long and difficult, and he had too few troops available, to prevent weapons from reaching the Mexicans. As he explained, “practically the whole border population on the American side is in sympathy with the . . . rebels,” and as a result, “every hardware

⁸²⁹ Garrison to THB, January 28, 1914, v. 116, THB Mss, LC.

store along the . . . border is in constant receipt of large consignments of arms and ammunition.” While his troops had seized large quantities of these supplies, “either by stealth . . . or more or less openly” large quantities continued to reach Mexico. Bliss did not see any possibility of stopping this illicit trade without powers that “would have to be granted that have not been granted, nor will they probably be in a time of profound peace within our own territory.”⁸³⁰ He noted that the troops’ enforcement work would be much easier with “detailed instructions as to the specific things which they more or may not do,” but he had not received such instructions and did not expect to. As a result, he issued instructions on his own authority that “may not all pass the scrutiny of higher or more learned authority.”⁸³¹ The method he found that worked best was to have the American patrols no “nearer the International Boundary than absolutely necessary. . . . [P]ractically no patrols or detachments are under observation from [the] Mexican side.” Bliss reported that his “troops are performing difficult duty with great discretion.”⁸³²

With the organized militia also involved in border operations, Bliss renewed some of his recommendations from his earlier work with them. His department had held five schools of instruction for militia officers. The instructors had found both the militia officers and enlisted men “deficient in many elementary features,” although they showed “much enthusiasm.” There would be eight camps of

⁸³⁰ *Annual Report, 1913*, 44-45.

⁸³¹ *Ibid.*, 46-47.

⁸³² Telegram, THB to the Adjutant General, Washington, D. C., March 11, 1913, v. 160, THB Mss, LC. See also THB to the Adjutant General, July 2, 1913, *ibid.*, for Bliss’s instructions to enforce the neutrality laws.

instruction for militia units from Texas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Arizona and Oklahoma. He renewed his recommendation that the Army detail a “liberal supply” of officers and experienced non-commissioned officers to these camps because of the need for so much basic instruction, and he suggested that medical officers screen out the physically unfit. It would be better to do that at a summer camp of instruction, Bliss reflected, than to do it out of necessity when the National Guard units were called to active duty. Finally, he mentioned one of the most basic needs of the infantrymen: good shoes. Troops had arrived at the camps “shod with every variety of foot gear from dancing pumps to brogans,” yet for troops about to undertake strenuous marches, “proper shoeing is an absolute necessity.”⁸³³

Early in 1915, Bliss learned that he would be moving, this time back to Washington, D. C., to serve once again as Assistant Chief of Staff. With Europe involved in its Great War, the position was an exceptionally important and responsible one. Nevertheless, the most basic tasks were packing, moving and securing a place to live in Washington. In the latter, Bliss was fortunate. He had offers from two West Point classmates. Hugh L. Scott, the Chief of Staff since the previous November, had just served as Bliss’s subordinate in Texas. The situation does not seem to have made either of them feel any awkwardness. Scott wrote suggesting that Bliss and his family stay at Scott’s home until they found a suitable place in Washington; Bliss replied cordially that another of their classmates, Bob

⁸³³ Bliss discussed militia affairs in his department in *Annual Report, 1913*, 21-25.

Evans, had offered his home, which he had been trying to rent for nearly a year.⁸³⁴ He told Bliss he would accept the general's commutation as the rent, even though the house was completely furnished. It was simply too good an offer to refuse, although apparently Bliss planned to move out in the fall. Evans would be able to secure a higher rent when "people begin to crowd into Washington" after the summer heat ended.

Of course, the crisis in Mexico was about to become even more critical, and for months there seemed to be a good chance of war. In August 1915, Bliss had warned Secretary of War Lindley M. Garrison that a "reckless and desperate Mexican military commander" might conduct a raid on American territory.⁸³⁵ Six months later, Francisco "Pancho" Villa, disappointed in his own pursuit of the Mexican presidency, appears to have decided that if he could provoke the Americans into pursuing his troops into Mexico, it would increase his own popularity while discrediting the new Constitutionalist president Carranza.⁸³⁶ In January 1916, Villa captured and executed a group of Texas mining engineers traveling on a train in northern Mexico. He followed up that outrage with a March raid on Columbus, New Mexico, burning part of the town and killing more Americans. President Wilson sent

⁸³⁴ THB to HLS, February 6, 1915, Box , THB Mss, LC.

⁸³⁵ Coerver and Hall, *Texas and the Mexican Revolution*, 89, quoting a letter of THB to Garrison, August 12, 1915.

⁸³⁶ This is the conclusion of Clendenen, *Blood on the Border*, 199-200. No historian is certain about Villa's motives for the Columbus raid. Donald Smythe, *Guerrilla Warrior: The Early Life of John J. Pershing* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973), 218, offers the possibilities of replenishing supplies, resentment toward the United States for its recognition of the Carranza government, or the less likely chance that Villa was acting for the Germans. Frank McLynn, *Villa and Zapata: A History of the Mexican Revolution* (New York: Carroll and Graf Publishers, 2001), 319 ff, considers revenge against the United States to be the most likely motive.

the Punitive Expedition in pursuit of Villa, commanded by General John J. Pershing.⁸³⁷

In such circumstances, the General Staff invested considerable effort in developing plans for a possible war.⁸³⁸ When Bliss served as the department commander in the most likely war zone, he submitted his own plans; however, Chief of Staff Leonard Wood insisted on keeping planning functions centralized in Washington. From Texas, Bliss warned that any U.S. intervention was likely to unite the Mexican factions; if they did unite, their troops would greatly outnumber the American troops along the border and thus the “present regular force cannot guarantee the integrity of the border.”⁸³⁹ In Washington, Bliss found himself on the opposite side of this internal struggle. The General Staff’s first plan recommended an invasion of Mexico along two axes of advance, the primary effort from Vera Cruz to Mexico City and a secondary effort from Texas toward Monterey.⁸⁴⁰ That was a repetition of U.S. operations in the war of 1846 to 1848. There were significant problems with this plan. First, it ignored the most likely problem that would start a war or an armed intervention: violence along the border. Second, the implicit assumption in the General Staff plan to capture Mexico City was that by doing so the

⁸³⁷ Detailed accounts of the expedition are in Clendenen, *Blood on the Border*, 213-342, and Smythe, *Guerilla Warrior*, 217-80.

⁸³⁸ This discussion of war plans, the General Staff, and the Southern Department is based largely on John A. Hixson, “The United States Army General Staff Corps, 1910-1917: Its Relationship to the Field Forces,” Master’s essay, Rice University, 1971, especially chapter III, “Plans and Operations—Attempts at Linkage,” 45-73. John Hixson was a career officer who both was graduated from West Point and taught history there.

⁸³⁹ Quoted in Coerver and Hall, *Texas and the Mexican Revolution*, 64; THB’s letter was forwarded by Secretary of War Garrison to Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan, August 18, 1913.

⁸⁴⁰ Hixson, “General Staff Corps,” 48.

United States would control events in northern Mexico. There was no reason whatsoever to believe that was the case. In his own earlier plan, Bliss thought the United States should protect its border by moving forces into northern Mexico, supplying them along the existing rail lines. Familiar with conditions in Mexico, Bliss was aware of the disconnect in Washington's planning. While Bliss had a tendency to "see vast clouds of Mexican cavalry sweeping across the deserts . . . toward the border,"⁸⁴¹ his plan focused on what the United States most wanted to accomplish, the protection of the boundary. His plan had other advantages as well, in particular the ease of logistical support it offered. There were four railroads from the United States into northern Mexico, facilities that would make supply easier than a seaborne invasion through Vera Cruz and would allow the U.S. troops to utilize several different lines of advance, threatening multiple possible targets. Once again Bliss displayed his ability as a strategic thinker and operational planner.

While Wood was Chief of Staff, Bliss's plan went nowhere. Then in April 1914 William W. Wotherspoon replaced Wood. Wotherspoon brought a very different attitude to the work of planning. He wanted the work to be done based on conditions in the Western Hemisphere, not in Europe, and he was much more open to contributions from department commanders.⁸⁴² He served in the office only seven months, and in November Hugh Scott replaced him. Having just come from service with Bliss in Texas, Scott was also ready to listen to an alternative idea, and in June

⁸⁴¹ Ibid., 54.

⁸⁴² Ibid., 60-61.

1916, he ordered a revision of the existing plan, dropping the attack on Mexico City in favor of attacking the Mexican field forces which were primarily stationed in the north.⁸⁴³ When Bliss joined Chief of Staff Scott at the War Department, he took charge of the Mobile Army Division of the General Staff with the specific task of preparing the troops for their probable use in Mexico.⁸⁴⁴ In that position, he remained a supporter of the departmental commander. When Francisco “Pancho” Villa’s raid on Columbus, New Mexico, made some sort of intervention inevitable, Bliss left the planning to General Frederick Funston, the departmental commander. As John Hixson concludes in his study of these plans and operations, the result was “a fine example of how a theater of operations was supposed to be organized and operated as outlined in the Army’s Field Service Regulations” of 1914.⁸⁴⁵ In his new position as Assistant Chief of Staff, Bliss had shown yet another quality: he was willing to support the ideas of the commander in the field while he remained content to stay in the background. Many historians have commented that the operations along the border and in Mexico helped the United States Army prepare for the greater test it would face in the World War. That conclusion seems questionable in the light of the completely different conditions in Europe. Certainly for Bliss, his approach to planning and operations as well as his willingness to rely on the judgment of the commander in the field were about to meet an even greater test.

⁸⁴³ Ibid., 68.

⁸⁴⁴ Ibid., 64.

⁸⁴⁵ Ibid., 63.

CHAPTER 10

FIGHTING, THEN NEGOTIATING

Tasker H. Bliss was the army's leading strategic thinker during the first two decades of the twentieth century. He had served on the army's General Staff at its creation and as president of the War College when it drew up the first war plans the army ever possessed. No doubt when Bliss became Assistant Chief of Staff in 1915 he must have anticipated serving once more in a position to utilize these talents; he quickly learned he was mistaken. When the major European powers declared war in 1914, President Woodrow Wilson followed the nation's traditional policy of neutrality. In a direct challenge to the president's policies, Leonard Wood, Bliss's former superior in both Cuba and the Philippines, pursued his campaign for American "preparedness." By the time Bliss arrived in Washington, a political battle raged over the Woodrow Wilson administration's proposed legislation for military and War Department reforms that Wood's efforts had prompted. Russell Weigley comments that to see the "prolonged and unpleasant struggle" in Congress as entirely a battle over preparedness "is to oversimplify grossly."⁸⁴⁶

⁸⁴⁶ Russell Weigley, *History of the United States Army* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, Enlarged edition, 1984), discusses the legislation on pp. 342-350; the quotation comes from p. 344.

One factor in the controversy was what many political leaders saw as a clear need for a larger army with a reliable reserve force supporting it. But Progressives' fears of militarism mixed with Southerners' belief in states' rights to create strong opposition, while in the background of the debate was the war in Europe and political differences about possible United States involvement. There was also an element of partisan and personal revenge for former Adjutant General Fred C. Ainsworth and his political allies in Congress.

His new assignment placed Bliss in the middle of this struggle over the future of the army. In 1912, the previous Secretary of War, Henry L. Stimson, had asked the general staff to prepare a report on the best future organization of the army. With significant input from John McAuley Palmer, a West Pointer whose grandfather had been a successful citizen-general during the Civil War, Stimson's report called for a regular army organized into divisions ready for immediate use as an expeditionary force, and as the much-needed reserve, reliance on the existing National Guard along with a mass army of citizen soldiers to be raised when needed.⁸⁴⁷ When the outbreak of the Great War led to the preparedness controversy, President Wilson's Secretary of War, Lindley M. Garrison, asked the general staff for a proposal to improve the readiness of the army for a large-scale war. He accepted their draft legislation and submitted it to Congress, a mistake that drove him out of the Cabinet.

⁸⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 337-341; I. B. Holley, Jr., *General John M. Palmer, Citizen Soldiers, and the Army of a Democracy*, Contributions in Military History, Number 28 (Westport, Ct. and London: Greenwood Press, 1982), 202-213; see also John Patrick Finnegan, *Against the Specter of a Dragon: The Campaign for American Military Preparedness, 1914-1917* Contributions in Military History, Number 7 (Westport, Ct. and London: Greenwood Press, 1974).

Garrison's proposals reflected the continuing influence of Emory Upton's history of the army. They included a federally-controlled reserve and dismissed the state militias, known as the National Guard, as a "system that has utterly failed in the past [and] which menaces our safety now."⁸⁴⁸ When Wilson agreed with Representative John Hay, Chairman of the House Military Affairs Committee, on compromise legislation that abandoned Garrison's plan, the Secretary had little choice but to resign. Out of this mix came the National Defense Act of 1916.

This legislation authorized an enlarged army of 175,000 organized for easy expansion in case of war to a strength of 286,000, but it also provided for much stronger federal supervision of an enlarged National Guard (its members to be paid by the U. S. government) along with a federal enlisted reserve. Bliss had not been involved in the preparation of the plan, and he never spoke publicly about it. His papers make clear that he disliked the proposed law, for several reasons. First, he doubted that many men would sign up for the new federal reserve. Second, he thought the law created a third force, when the real need was to blend the regular army and the National Guard more effectively. Here was another indication that Bliss remained comfortable with the Guard and its personnel, in spite of what he had seen along the Mexican border. Third, the legislation purported to be a response to the need for "preparedness" against a possible invasion, but Bliss realized that after the

⁸⁴⁸ Quoted in Finnegan, *Against the Specter*, 86.

destruction already evident in the European war, no “war worn victors would have the ability” or the interest to attack the United States.⁸⁴⁹

Supporters of former Adjutant General Fred C. Ainsworth, still angry that their congressional favorite had been forced into retirement because of his conflict with then Chief of Staff Leonard Wood, inserted into the law a provision intended to cripple the general staff.⁸⁵⁰ It limited the number of officers who could be assigned to the general staff to 55, and no more than half of those could be on duty in Washington. When Bliss left Texas, he returned to this truncated organization.

When commanding in the most active region of field operations, along the Mexican border, Bliss expressed the belief that field commanders should have important input into operational planning and decisions. Changing his location and his position changed Bliss’s perspectives and recommendations as well, at least for the moment. He now saw the delicate Mexican situation from a different perspective while retaining his ability to base his plans on the strategic goals of national policy. With Brigadier General John J. Pershing’s troops deep in northern Mexico, Major General Frederick Funston, the new commander of the Southern Department, sent a message to the War Department that provoked Bliss’s wrath. Bliss wrote to the new Secretary of War, Newton D. Baker, that Funston’s plan “indicates a desire to begin fighting at the earliest possible moment and to capture *something, some place,*

⁸⁴⁹ These arguments are summarized from Palmer, *Bliss, Peacemaker*, 107-108, which is based on memoranda Bliss wrote at the time and in part on a letter from Bliss to Palmer.

⁸⁵⁰ For the details of their struggle, see Weigley, *History*, 329-333, Jack Lane, *Armed Progressive: General Leonard Wood* (San Rafael, Ca. and London: Presidio Press, 1978), 158-167, and Mabel Deutrich, *Struggle for Supremacy: The Career of General Fred C. Ainsworth* (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1962).

anything, without any clearly expressed idea as to . . . the ultimate object.”⁸⁵¹ After further consultation with Baker, Bliss telegraphed new orders to Funston.

[The Secretary hopes that] the concentration of our troops with the minimum of fighting, or without any at all, [will lead] the Mexicans . . . to evacuate the widest possible strip of their territory from the border south. . . . But the Secretary . . . orders that no general movement across the border will be made until [he gives] specific instructions In case of actual conflict . . . you may occupy and protect all international bridges. You may occupy the Mexican towns immediately adjacent to our border where necessary to protect our side of the line.⁸⁵²

In this case, Bliss overruled the commander on the scene, but he was not simply asserting Washington’s power to control subordinates. His purpose was to fulfill the mission and avoid pursuing a distraction.

It certainly proved helpful that the United States did not become more deeply embroiled in the Mexican situation. War against Germany seemed likely, even as President Woodrow Wilson’s re-election campaign utilized the phrase, “He kept us out of war!” as its centerpiece. Wilson insisted on maintaining the appearance of neutrality, and Bliss and the American General Staff became entangled in the President’s efforts.

In discussing the army’s mobilization once the United States declared war, Frederick Palmer, author of the family-authorized biography of Bliss, stressed the wisdom and experience the Chief of Staff, Hugh L. Scott, and Bliss as Assistant Chief, brought to their leadership of military policy. As he put it, when the two stood

⁸⁵¹ Bliss memorandum of June 16, 1916, quoted in Palmer, *Bliss, Peacemaker*, 114-115.

⁸⁵² Telegram of July 2, 1916, quoted in *ibid.*, 115.

before Secretary Baker's desk, they had "an appealing majesty." The pair displayed "honesty," they would be an "austere barrier against any corrupt practices," and they would never allow the sort of "political favoritism" that had produced scandals in 1898. Since most historians consider both generals' tenures as Chief of Staff failures, it is important to consider what Bliss contributed to the war effort while he was in Washington, D.C.

Bliss greatly influenced the War Department's decision to commit American forces almost exclusively to France. In September and October 1917, Bliss supervised the work of the War College Division of the General Staff as it developed arguments against tangential adventures. This project was a distinct change from pre-war thinking.⁸⁵³ Bliss wanted arguments with which to oppose schemes for the use of American troops in the eastern Mediterranean. In two reports to the Secretary of War, Bliss and the War College Division argued that the "Easterners" who supported the idea made many strategic mistakes, such as underestimating the enemy or overlooking the shipping problems involved in sending troops to the Middle Eastern front. For instance, the available shipping limited American troops to one theater; it would be impossible to send supplies to a second, more distant front. Their fundamental error, however, was a misunderstanding of the best way to defeat Germany. One of the leading Easterners was British Prime Minister David Lloyd

⁸⁵³ For details of other proposals, see Ronald Spector, "'You're Not Going to Send Soldiers Over There Are You!': The American Search for an Alternative to the Western Front," *Military Affairs*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (Feb., 1972), 1-4. As late as September 20, 1917, Wilson had enough interest in avoiding the commitment of American troops to the Western Front that he raised the issue with Secretary Baker.

George, whose slogan for attacking Germany's allies was "knocking away the props."⁸⁵⁴

The War College strategists believed that as the heart of the enemy coalition, Germany propped up its allies, not the other way around. As a memorandum accompanying the War College study stated, "France was the critical theater of the war. No campaign however brilliant and successful in another theater would make up for a disaster in France."⁸⁵⁵ The way to win the war was to defeat Germany in France. The Easterners, Bliss argued, were "assuming that a successful campaign [in the Balkans] would result in an [end] of the war. While such would be a contributing influence. . . , as long as [Germany's] armies are intact and aggressive the war probably will continue." Even with the armies of Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire separated from the Austrian and German armies, Bliss went on, "we have no reason to assume that the latter will not last for . . . months or even years." By contrast, if the Allied and U. S. troops "fought hard enough to put the German forces on the wane, it is only a question of time until we shall succeed."⁸⁵⁶ Bliss persuaded Baker, and Baker's arguments convinced Wilson.

With the United States committed to sending a large field army to France, the next task was to choose its commander. The creation of this position raised new and important questions for the leadership of the army and the War Department. The

⁸⁵⁴ Correlli Barnett, *Britain and Her Army, 1509-1970* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1970), 399-400.

⁸⁵⁵ Quoted in *ibid.*, 3.

⁸⁵⁶ The first quotation is from the War College Division study of September 28, 1917, transmitted to Baker by Bliss with a report dated October 11, from which the second quotation is taken. Both are in reel 91, Woodrow Wilson Mss, Ms Div., LC.

model for the General Staff Act⁸⁵⁷ and the General Staff regulations had been the German General Staff, but there were important differences between the two institutions that surfaced in the new circumstances of 1917. John Hixson explains that the German General Staff “concerned itself only with the various facets of strategic planning during time of peace and the execution of operations during war.” In the American system, the Army Chief of Staff was not necessarily a commanding officer; the assumption in the legislation was that he would remain a military adviser to the secretary of war and the president. The commander of American forces in France would have as much discretion as the president chose to allow him.⁸⁵⁸

That consideration made political reliability a critically important factor, and John J. Pershing had demonstrated his reliability during the Punitive Expedition into Mexico. President Wilson considered Leonard Wood, the other most likely choice, to be unreliable and insubordinate. Both Scott and Bliss recommended Pershing. In the end, the choice seemed obvious.⁸⁵⁹ Pershing became the commander of the American Expeditionary Forces, enjoying more power and freedom of decision than any other modern American field commander, and by the Armistice, he becomes a full general.

One of the most important issues early in the U. S. involvement in the war was the orders to be given to General Pershing. He would be leading the largest army in American history, he would be deeply involved in the final crises of the war, and

⁸⁵⁷ See chapter 6.

⁸⁵⁸ John A Hixson, *The United States Army General Staff Corps, 1910-1917: Its Relationship to the Field Forces*. Master's thesis. Rice University, 1971.

⁸⁵⁹ Donald Smythe discusses the selection of Pershing in detail in *Pershing: General of the Armies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 2-4.

his instructions would turn out to be of supreme importance for both his troops and the Allies. Bliss was one of the first to sound a warning about an issue that became central to the American war effort. Both the British and French governments had sent military missions to the United States with recommendations for how the new belligerent could best help the common cause.

Reacting to the Allies' proposals, Bliss wrote a memorandum on May 4, 1917, remarkable for its farsightedness. Bliss noted that the Allies disagreed with the original American idea to send a small force to Europe quickly, to sustain the Allies' morale, but then keep the rest of the American forces at home until they formed well-trained and fully organized divisions. Instead, the British and French missions suggested that American troops should be sent "abroad for their training as rapidly as they can be organized and as rapidly as available shipping can take them," even if that meant having them subsist on British rations. There was not even a need to give them any training, since it might mean "teaching men things in America that they will have to unlearn in Europe."⁸⁶⁰

Bliss acknowledged that "if we want to get into this war 'with both feet' at the earliest possible day, the only way to do it is to follow the recommendations of the two Missions." This course might even be desirable, Bliss thought, if the shipping was available to maintain a steady stream of troops from the United States to Europe. If so, "such a movement and the evidence of its feasibility would produce a vastly greater moral effect . . . in Europe on both sides than the sending of a division or any

⁸⁶⁰ Memorandum, Bliss to Scott, May 4, 1917, Bliss Mss, vol. 212, LC; it is also quoted in Palmer, *Bliss, Peacemaker*, 147-149.

other small force with no evidence that it was to be rapidly followed by a large army.” While Bliss preferred the plan of sending the maximum number of troops to Europe quickly, his memorandum included a second plan in which the United States sent four divisions to Europe but retained the rest of its men at home. The force of four divisions was likely to include the most experienced American officers, so it would quickly gain a position in the front lines. As a result, it would “entitle our commanding general to the consideration that his force would warrant. We could from the beginning secure our proper and independent place on the line and not run the risk of having our organizations fed in here and there and thus losing our identity as a national army under our own control.”⁸⁶¹ Clearly Bliss was already considering the political side of the war effort and the need for the United States to make an independent contribution to victory.

With so much of the war effort depending on them, these orders turned out to be even more important than could have been expected; they became the basis for the postwar battle to see who would claim credit for the victory. Pershing built his entire two-volume memoir around the theme that he and he alone stood up to the Allies and refused to allow them to amalgamate American troops into their units,⁸⁶² and wartime Chief of Staff General Peyton C. March devoted two chapters of his memoir to

⁸⁶¹ Ibid.

⁸⁶² John J. Pershing, *My Experiences in the World War* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1931), see 30-40 for his initial discussion of the amalgamation issue.

refuting Pershing's specific claims as well as his general criticisms of the War Department and the General Staff.⁸⁶³

Pershing sailed to France under two sets of orders, both dated May 26. Pershing and his Chief of Staff, Major James G. Harbord, wrote one of them, which they showed to Bliss, at that time the Acting Chief of Staff. He signed. (Chief of Staff Hugh Scott had left Washington as part of the Elihu Root Mission going to Russia.) The second set was the work of the new Acting Assistant Chief of Staff, Francis J. Kernan. Secretary Baker had signed those orders. While Kernan wrote them, their essence probably came from discussions among Baker, Bliss and Kernan. On May 25, Bliss wrote to Baker that the Army General Staff was becoming suspicious of Allied plans. "It seemed to most of us that what both the English and French really wanted from us was not a large well-trained army but a large number of smaller units which they could feed promptly into their line as part of their own organizations." If such a policy prevailed, then

when the war is over it may be a literal fact that the American flag may not have appeared anywhere on the line because our organizations will simply be parts of . . . the Entente Armies. We might have a million men there and yet no American army and no American commander. Frankly, I have received the impression from English and French officers that such is their deliberate desire. I and many other General Staff officers have expressed . . . [the] view . . . that the time has come for the [Allies] to stand fast and wait until our reinforcements can reach them in such a way as to give *the final, shattering blow*. I doubt if the Allies will [agree], but I think

⁸⁶³ Peyton C. March, *The Nation at War* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc., 1932), chs. XIX and XX, 243-298.

it is a course our Government should urge upon them with all the force at its disposal.⁸⁶⁴

Bliss would never get over his suspicions of the Allies' motives, although for the time being, he subordinated his distrust to the need to defeat Germany.

A difficult question for Bliss was how to deal with Leonard Wood, the retired former Chief of Staff who had been Bliss's immediate commander in both Cuba and the Philippines. Wood's support had been vital when Bliss earned his first start and the latter knew it. He had defended his former commander during Wood's confirmation hearings as a major general. To the Europeans, Wood was a far more familiar figure than Pershing. When Wood visited Britain, he spoke openly with various British leaders of his unhappiness with the Wilson administration's conduct of the war thus far.

As Wood's frustrations mounted, Bliss became one of the targets of his attack. To his friend Theodore Roosevelt, Wood described Bliss as "an active participant in the hostilities" against himself, and he described Bliss and Chief of Staff Hugh L. Scott as "altogether contemptible . . . a couple of weaklings."⁸⁶⁵

Wood's attitude toward Scott and Bliss indicates the way his ambition combined with his dislike of Woodrow Wilson to warp his judgment. The officers Wood maligned had served under him, and both tried to warn him about the consequences of his political statements, but to no avail. According to one newspaper

⁸⁶⁴ Bliss to Baker, May 25, 1917, quoted in Palmer, *Bliss: Peacemaker*, 152-54.

⁸⁶⁵ Wood to TR, August 14 and 28, 1917, Box 101, Leonard Wood Mss, LC.

report, at least one “White House official” believed that Wood’s activities so clearly violated the

President’s and the Secretary of War’s orders that disciplinary action would be appropriate. Jack Lane, the most recent biographer of Wood, writes that the president’s “advisors” urged caution because of Wood’s national following. Bliss warned Wood that “he would receive no important command unless he changed the ‘widespread impression that [he had] political ambitions.’”⁸⁶⁶

Wood desperately desired a command in France, but there was virtually no chance that Wilson and Baker would give him such a post. His political involvement in the preparedness movement included strong criticism of the president, and Wood’s own White House ambitions were well known. With the United States entering the Great War, Wood’s desire for a combat command must have appeared to be a plan to emerge as a man on horseback.

Bliss journeyed to Europe in January 1918, following in Wood’s path by only a few days. After just four days in England, Bliss wrote to Secretary of War Baker, perhaps not realizing that he was joining in a chorus of complaints about Wood. Bliss told the Secretary:

From the moment of my arrival, I have heard repeated to me from all sides many reckless remarks made by General Wood in regard to our military situation. The sum and substance of it seems to be that he had done his best to discredit the United States here in Europe. He has told of everything that has not been done and nothing as to the things which have been done. Men like Mr. [Oscar?] Crosby and Mr. [Paul] Cravath have expressed themselves to me very forcibly as to the impropriety of his conduct. General [Thomas H.] Barry tells me that it has been the same during his trip in France. I think I can already see

⁸⁶⁶ Lane, *Armed Progressive*, 208-09.

the evil effect produced on the minds of the British officials here. It is going to [make] it much more difficult for us to negotiate about getting aid in shipping if people here believe that whatever sacrifices they make . . . is [sic] only for the purpose of bringing over an unorganized and undisciplined mob.⁸⁶⁷

Bliss was only too aware that the European leaders wanted to subordinate the American military effort to their own schemes for aggrandizement. Wood's comments made a difficult situation worse.

Bliss believed that Wood's ambitions lay at the bottom of this problem. He warned Secretary Baker:

General Wood is a man who makes reckless promises, regardless of whether they can be carried out He knows that the British and French want us to do certain things which I am afraid the American people will be very loath to approve. He can tell their commanders and heads of their governments what he would do were he in control, leaving them with the conviction that he would do exactly what they wish. I should not be surprised if you were to find a quiet movement initiated through diplomatic channels to substitute him for General Pershing.⁸⁶⁸

This letter Bliss entrusted to General Thomas Barry, who was about to return to Washington after an inspection trip to France. If Baker needed more details, Barry could provide them.

The Wood case was important enough, and Wood was so well known abroad, that Chief of Staff Peyton C. March devoted an entire chapter of his memoirs to the

⁸⁶⁷ THB to Baker, January 22, 1918, Box 74, THB Mss, LC.

⁸⁶⁸ Ibid.

question of “Why General Wood Did Not Go to France.”⁸⁶⁹ Acknowledging that when the United States entered the war, Wood was probably “the best known officer of the American Army, internationally,” March wrote that Secretary Baker made the decision to keep Wood at home based on “what he had seen personally of General Wood’s physical condition,” going on to quote a letter from Baker that explained the Secretary’s doubts.⁸⁷⁰ General Pershing asked specifically that General Wood be retained in the United States, which would have put March in the position of choosing between the two if he had not already made up his own mind.⁸⁷¹ Pershing wrote to March with stories similar to those mentioned in Bliss’s letter.⁸⁷²

Woodrow Wilson explained his own thinking in a letter to the Springfield *Republican* newspaper that was not published until after his death.⁸⁷³ As he put it, there were two reasons not to send Wood to France. First, Pershing did not want him there.⁸⁷⁴ Second, Pershing’s request made sense because “[w]herever General Wood goes there is controversy and conflict.” He was a man of great ability but “absolutely unable to submit his judgment to those who are superior to him in command.” While there can be little doubt that there were many reasons President Wilson did not want Wood going to France, Bliss’s unfavorable report and evident anger helped to cement Wilson and Baker’s decision.

⁸⁶⁹ *Nation at War*, ch. V, pp. 57-68.

⁸⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁸⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁸⁷² The memorandum from Pershing is quoted in *ibid.*, 61-62.

⁸⁷³ The letter is quoted in full in *ibid.*, 67-68.

⁸⁷⁴ For Pershing’s reaction to Wood, see Lane, *Armed Progressive*, ch. 17.

The Allies suffered a series of disastrous defeats during 1917. In the spring, the French army's commander, General Robert Nivelle, launched his "Nivelle Offensive" promising great results, but it produced only disastrous losses instead. Several French army units mutinied and many others announced that while they would hold their lines, they refused to attack. General Philippe Pétain replaced Nivelle as the commander of the French army. He restored order and slowly began to rebuild French morale, but the French army on the Western Front was largely inactive through the summer months. The British army carried the burden of the principal offensive, but after a promising start at Arras, British efforts bogged down in the mud of Passchendaele. In the end the British, too, suffered heavy casualties for meager results. In Russia, while the Provisional Government that had replaced the tsar made every effort to stay in the war, the summer "Kerensky Offensive" resulted in failure. In November, the Bolsheviks seized power and began to negotiate peace terms with the Germans. With the Russian effort fading, the Germans moved troops from east to west and in October assisted the Austro-Hungarian army in an attack on the Italian front. The Battle of Caporetto became a major Italian disaster.

These developments compelled the Allies to reconsider their methods for coordinating strategy. Earlier in the war they had made efforts to work together more closely, but in 1917, they faced a possible defeat even after the American entry into the war. The situation encouraged clear thinking, and quickly it became clear to the Allies that they needed better arrangements for coordinating their military operations.

For the British Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, this obvious need fit perfectly with his own political desires. He was a confirmed “Easterner,” one of the British leaders who sought to avoid the bloodletting of the Western Front by attacking the other members of the Central Powers. His principal military leaders, Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, commanding the British army in France, and General Sir William Robertson, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, advocated a concentration of resources on the Western Front. Lloyd George sought a means to circumvent their control of operations without causing either to resign, and so he became the leading advocate of creating an Allied leadership group that would coordinate strategy and operations. He wrote to President Wilson hoping to gain additional support for this idea:

I am convinced from my experience of the last three years that the comparative failure of the Allies in 1917 is also in some measure due to defects in their mutual arrangements for conducting the war. . . . [I]f we are to make the best possible use of the forces at the disposal of the Allies, it is of supreme importance to establish effective unity in the direction of the war on the Allied side. . . . In my opinion it will be necessary to establish some kind of Allied Joint Council. . . .⁸⁷⁵

Lloyd George pressed the issue, and as the Allies discussed it, the Battle of Caporetto supplied a final and convincing argument. In a conference at Rapallo, Italy, on November 7, the Allies agreed to create the Supreme War Council as a political body to coordinate strategy.

⁸⁷⁵ Lloyd George to Wilson, September 3, 1917, quoted in David F. Trask, *The United States in the Supreme War Council: American War Aims and Inter-Allied Strategy, 1917-1918* (Middletown, CT.: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), 25.

Two aspects of this organization warrant particular attention. First, no American was present at the Rapallo meeting that created it, so the American attitude toward it was yet to be determined. Second, although there were military representatives on the staff, they did not sit on the Council itself. They could recommend actions but the political leaders would make the final decisions. Then again, the Supreme War Council was itself an advisory body that served only to coordinate the recommendations made to the governments.

The Rapallo meeting had not included any American because General Pershing declined Lloyd George's invitation to attend, considering the meeting too political for him to be involved.⁸⁷⁶ On the day the Allied leaders signed the Rapallo agreement, a group of Americans landed in Great Britain on what came to be called the House Mission. Led by Colonel Edward M. House, this delegation included officials from the State and Treasury Departments as well as the leaders of the American armed forces, Admiral William S. Benson, the Chief of Naval Operations, and Bliss, the Acting Chief of Staff of the Army. The delegation left Washington, D. C. in the strictest secrecy. As Bliss wrote to his wife in what became a diary of the trip, "[a]fter we left the house, we zigzagged about town until I was dizzy. . . [F]inally we came to Kensington [and] passed through a little place called Tuxedo and . . . crossed a bridge over a railroad track . . . where we took the train. We are on our way to Halifax where we go [to Britain] by two American cruisers. . . ."⁸⁷⁷

⁸⁷⁶ Trask, *Supreme War Council*, 27-28.

⁸⁷⁷ THB to EAB, 1917,

The secrecy was so great that the cruisers had been ordered to Halifax without knowing their mission. Once House and his group were on board, the ships departed slowly, in order to transit the most dangerous part of the journey at night in a period of no moon. Bliss found the shipboard activities fascinating, especially the new “depth charges,” which he described in detail for his wife. He also spent at least one extremely uncomfortable night on board, when the weather was unusually difficult.

As Bliss recounted to his wife:

The night was the most disagreeable I have ever had at sea. I sat up until 2 am reading. . . . It was impossible to stay in a fore and aft bed. . . . When I turned in at 2 am, the cabin was a wreck. All the chairs except mine were overturned and in a confused pile smashing back from one side to the other, mixed up with silver water pitchers, trays, broken glass, books, etc. . . . After listening to things smashing all over the ship for an hour I fell asleep⁸⁷⁸

By the time the Mission was on its return trip, Bliss anticipated a crisis in the spring of 1918. He was completely convinced that the Allies needed better strategic coordination at least, and perhaps even a supreme military commander. He reported as much to Secretary Baker, with a recommendation for the President, in a dispatch from the *U. S. S. Mt. Vernon* on the voyage home. Among his conclusions were the following:

1. A military crisis is to be apprehended culminating not later than the end of the next spring, in which, without great assistance from the United States, the advantage will probably lie with the Central powers.

⁸⁷⁸ Ibid.

2. This crisis is largely due to the collapse of Russia . . . and to the recent disaster in Italy. But it is also largely due to lack of military coordination, lack of unity of control on the part of the Allied forces in the field.
3. This lack of unity of control results from military jealousy and suspicion as to ultimate national aims.
4. . . . In making the great military effort now demanded of us we should also demand as a prior condition that our allies also profit by the experience of three and a half years of war in the matter of absolute unity of military control. . . even going if necessary (as I believe it is) to the limit of unified command. . . .
5. The securing of this unified control, even unified command in the last resort, is within the power of the President if it is in anyone's power. The military men of the Allies admit its necessity and are ready for it. . . .

The difficulty will come with the political men. . . . They do not fully realize that now the only problem is to beat the Central powers. They are thinking too much of what they want to do after the Central powers are beaten. . . .⁸⁷⁹

Bliss believed that the Allied prime ministers were “looking to the President” to help them do what was necessary, even if unpopular.

In January, 1918, Bliss sailed for Europe to take up his duties as the American military representative on the Supreme War Council. By this time, he had already developed the attitudes that would guide his thinking through the rest of the war and the peace conference. He was a westerner in strategy, believing that defeating and disarming Germany were essential goals. He was suspicious of Entente war aims, and he favored an independent American army as a symbol of the United States’

⁸⁷⁹ Ibid., entry for November 7, 1917.

independent role in the war. The Supreme War Council consisted of the heads of government of the major Entente powers, Britain, France and Italy. In 1918, Bliss served as one of the military representatives, the technical advisers to the political leaders. Although Colonel Edward House attended a few of the meetings as the American political representative, to a large extent Bliss and his staff developed policy on their own, although Bliss worked closely with the General Headquarters (GHQ) of the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF).

As soon as Bliss arrived in Europe, his suspicions of Entente aims and methods began to grow more certain. "National interests," he confided to his diary, had a "tendency to pull the Allies apart. The American Military Representative was the only one who could give fair and independent study to any subject."⁸⁸⁰ In this atmosphere of national rivalries, Bliss believed that President Wilson was losing his best chance to achieve his war aims by insisting that political and military decision making could be kept separate. Bliss knew well that strategy necessarily involved politics, but in spite of his pleas for detailed instructions, he rarely received clear direction from Washington.⁸⁸¹ The time to negotiate common ends was while the Allies were desperate for American manpower, not after victory had been assured. Bliss told Peyton March in October, 1918,

From various little indications . . . it seems to me . . . that the [Allies] will attempt to minimize the American effort. . . . I heard a gentleman in high position here say that the United States was building a bridge for the Allies to pass over; that the time for the United States to secure acquiescence in its wishes was while

⁸⁸⁰ THB diary, January 1, 1919, Box 65, THB Mess, LC.

⁸⁸¹ For instance, see THB to Henry McCain, May 26, 1918, in the Wilson Mss, reel 96, LC.

the bridge was building; that after the Allies had crossed over the bridge they have no further use for it or for its builders.⁸⁸²

Of course by October, the warning was already too late. Had it come earlier, it would have raised the question of choice. Would the United States be willing to insist on its demands even during the great crisis of March 1918? In any case, the importance of the American role was less in the strength the United States provided in 1918 than in the promise of much greater strength in 1919. It was the knowledge of millions of fresh American troops about to arrive in Europe that led General Erich Ludendorff to gamble in time that his *Friedensturm* could win the war before the American contribution made German defeat certain.

Failing in these efforts to convince Washington to force the issue of war aims while the United States retained its leverage, Bliss concentrated on keeping Allied strategy in tune with American interests. It suited his position and his personality to be a reconciler of differences among the military representatives. He worked hard to create an Allied Supreme Commander for the Western Front, and he helped to convince his own as well as Allied governments that France was the decisive theater.⁸⁸³ Because he saw France as the decisive front, Bliss opposed schemes for intervention in Russia when they came before the Supreme War Council in 1918. When President Wilson decided for American participation in the Russian expeditions, Bliss kept a close eye on these events and opposed any project that went

⁸⁸² THB to March, October 14, 1918, Box 75, THB Mss, LC.

⁸⁸³ THB to Baker, May 20, 1918, Box 74; THB to March, August 5, 1918, Box 75; and THB to Baker, October 3, 1918, Box 74, all in the Bliss Mss, LC. Trask, *Supreme War Council*, chs. 4 and 7.

beyond the two limited purposes of recovery of military stores and rescuing the Czech legion.⁸⁸⁴

Part of a correct U. S. strategy, as Bliss had thought for so long, was an independent American army. But in the crisis following the German offensive of March 21, 1918, Bliss was willing to put national ambitions aside temporarily in order to deal with the potential disaster. In doing so he forever lost Pershing's respect. The AEF commander's focus on this one issue led him to an unfair judgment. Bliss had opposed amalgamation from Washington, and when he reached France, he almost always supported Pershing in public and in controversies with the Allies. For instance, on April 10, he told General Ferdinand Foch, the newly-created Allied Supreme Commander, that "General Pershing has sole charge of everything connected with the use of American troops." In June, he told French Premier Georges Clemenceau "very frankly" that there were "only two men in France who can settle this question, namely General Foch and General Pershing."⁸⁸⁵ Seeing first hand the desperate situation of the Allies as they prepared for the Germans' March offensive, Bliss briefly softened his views, at least privately. He wrote to Baker that the Allied manpower situation was so critical that in an emergency, the United States might have to accept temporary amalgamation. Even when Bliss wrote that, he added

⁸⁸⁴ Trask, *Supreme War Council*, ch. 6.

⁸⁸⁵ THB to Baker, April 10, 1918, Box 74, THB Mss, LC. After the war, Bliss mistakenly recalled that he had never favored schemes for amalgamation; diary entry, January 1, 1919, Box 65, and THB to Baker, March 23, 1920, Box 75, THB Mss, LC.

that until such an emergency arrived, the correct policy remained the creation of separate American divisions.⁸⁸⁶

The crisis of March and April led Bliss to agree to a temporary change in policy, bringing over American infantry and machine-gunners and using them in Allied units.⁸⁸⁷ On March 27, Pershing walked out of a meeting of the military representatives of the Supreme War Council called to discuss amalgamation. Bliss lost his patience with Pershing and signed Joint Note 18, agreeing to limited and temporary amalgamation. This decision in turn made Pershing furious with Bliss. The result of their split was to open the door to further negotiations that began immediately in London, Paris, Washington and elsewhere, with none of the negotiators knowing what the others were doing. The issue continued to be a subject of debate until the Seventh Session of the Supreme War Council in early July (2nd-4th). By then, the French and British had fallen out on the issue, Bliss was once again supporting Pershing, and successful Allied counterattacks would soon end the crisis atmosphere.⁸⁸⁸

The importance of this episode lies in its demonstration of the Wilson administration's desire to avoid political contacts with the Allies, even on the most important issues. As a result, negotiations on this issue occurred in the wrong place and the wrong levels and caused unnecessary acrimony. Dealing with the crisis required an American political representative in France or coordination from

⁸⁸⁶ THB to Baker, February 2, 1918, Box 74, THB Mss, LC.

⁸⁸⁷ THB to March, April 20, 1918, Box 75, THB Mss, LC.

⁸⁸⁸ This account relies greatly on Trask, *Supreme War Council*, ch. 5.

Secretary Baker of President Wilson. Pershing was correct in principle, but he never acknowledged that amalgamation was a question over which reasonable men could differ, especially when the German offensives appeared to be on the verge of success. For Bliss, the question became one of victory or defeat. As he had written to Baker in his February letter anticipating the German attack, “if we do not make the greatest sacrifices *now*, and as a result, a great disaster should come, we will never forgive ourselves nor will the world forgive us.” Perhaps Pershing’s judgment and nerve were superior to everyone else’s and he alone correctly judged the extent of the crisis, but American historians have been far too quick to accept Pershing’s views as the only sensible approach to the issue.

With the German army clearly defeated and in disarray, the next crisis of the war effort involved the terms of the armistice. Facing this issue, most of the American leadership, including Bliss, sought the harshest possible terms to guarantee that the Germans would be unable to resume fighting.⁸⁸⁹ Bullitt Lowry argues in his book on the Armistice that the agreement became a preliminary peace settlement, though he acknowledges that not every major victorious power intended that result.⁸⁹⁰ In a similar unintended and gradual shift, what Wilson and the Allied leaders had planned as a preliminary peace conference during its first six months “imperceptibly became the real thing.”⁸⁹¹

⁸⁸⁹ “Report of the Representative of the War Department (Bliss),” United States Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1917, Supplement 2, The World War*, Volume 1 (1917), 386-388, accessed on-line through <http://digioll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type+toto&i> . . . on April 7, 2007.

⁸⁹⁰ The best scholarly study of the negotiations is Lowry’s *Armistice 1918* (Kent, Ohio and London: Kent State University Press, 1996, superseding Harry R. Rudin, *Armistice 1918* (New Haven, Ct.:

With the fighting at an end, Bliss expected to be nearing the end of his time in France. He was both surprised and honored when President Wilson appointed him as one of the American Commissioners leading the country's delegation at the peace conference. Wilson had intended to appoint Baker, but the Secretary thought he needed to remain in Washington to supervise demobilization. He recommended Bliss instead and the president agreed.⁸⁹²

While Bliss was pleased to be one of the American Commissioners to lead the country's delegation,⁸⁹³ there was immediate criticism of Wilson's choices, causing an "uproar in the United States at the time and . . . controversy ever since."⁸⁹⁴ The most frequently repeated criticism is that Wilson should have named a prominent Republican to the Commission. The party had just won control of the Congress in the 1918 elections, and it had generally supported the war effort. The Republican Wilson did name, Henry White, a retired career diplomat, politically carried no weight at all. Nonetheless, it is hard to see which member of the opposition Wilson could have included. One of the most frequently mentioned possibilities, Elihu Root, was a man of enough power and reputation to have expected to be a strong voice in the leadership, and that was a role Wilson would never have allowed.

Yale University Press, 1944).

891. Lowry, *Armistice*, xi, 176.

892. Frederick Palmer, *Newton D. Baker: America at War* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1931), II, 392, and Palmer, *Bliss, Peacemaker*, 353.

893. *Ibid.*

894. Margaret MacMillan, *Paris, 1919, Changed the World* (New York: Random House, 2003), 5-6.

Bliss would not be able to help politically, but Wilson had read many of his letters and reports, which Baker had forwarded to him. The President knew he had found an intellectual companion and disciple in this general. Among the delegation there were those who considered Bliss “past his prime,”⁸⁹⁵ or perhaps “slow of understanding and of action in political matters.”⁸⁹⁶ In fact, he was the American with the most extensive recent experience in Europe and with the Allied leadership, and his work during the peace conference and the decade following would reveal that neither his mind nor his energy had slackened.

The experience of Tasker Bliss at the Paris Peace Conference is part of the larger tragedy of Woodrow Wilson and the lost peace, to borrow Thomas Bailey’s phrase.⁸⁹⁷ One part of that tragedy, Bailey argues, is that during the war Wilson had delegated authority to able subordinates, but at the peace conference, he carried the burden of the negotiations alone.⁸⁹⁸ Actually that was not a new situation, since the president generally sets foreign policy. Since the resignation of William Jennings Bryan, Wilson had been his own Secretary of State. For Wilson, diplomacy was too

⁸⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁸⁹⁶ Arthur Walworth, *Wilson and His Peacemakers: American Diplomacy at the Paris Peace Conference, 1919* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Co, 1986), 9.

⁸⁹⁷ Bailey wrote two works on the general topic of the 1919 treaties and the U.S. Senate’s failure to ratify them: *Woodrow Wilson and the Lost Peace* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1963, originally 1944), and *Woodrow Wilson and the Great Betrayal* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1967, originally 1945). Other works consulted for this chapter include Walworth, *Wilson and His Peacemakers*, and Arno Mayer, *Politics and Diplomacy of Peacemaking: Containment and Counterrevolution at Versailles, 1918-1919* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967. For first person accounts, see Edward M. House and Charles Seymour, eds. *What Really Happened at Paris: The Story of the Peace Conference, 1918-1919, by American Delegates*. Reprint: Safety Harbor, Fl.: Simon Publications, 2001. For Bliss’s role, see David F. Trask, *General Tasker Howard Bliss and the “Sessions of the World,” 1919, Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, New Series, Vol. 56, No. 8* (1966).

⁸⁹⁸ *The Lost Peace*, 56-57.

important to be left to the diplomats, but with the other heads of the Allied governments coming to Paris, Wilson really had little choice but to attend himself.

In the case of Bliss, it was unfortunate that Wilson made so little use of his fellow Commissioners, the leaders of the American Commission to Negotiate Peace. Bailey comments that “there are some who believe that [Bliss] was the ablest men on the American commission.”⁸⁹⁹ Whatever his talents, Bliss believed that he had little opportunity to use them.⁹⁰⁰ It was a strange development, because Wilson had a high opinion of Bliss’s talents, and he knew that on many issues they shared similar views.⁹⁰¹ Furthermore, with the possible exception of Colonel Edward M. House, Wilson’s intimate friend and confidante, no other American had had as much experience with the principal Allied leaders in Europe as had Bliss.

When Bliss began his labors in Paris, he was more than ever convinced of the validity of two policies he had advocated since 1917: suspicion of Entente war aims and an independent American approach to the peace settlement. He felt deeply the responsibility for achieving a lasting peace, which to him meant a Wilsonian peace. The war, he wrote, would be a “doubly hideous crime if it does not result in *something* that will make another such war, or anything [like it], an impossibility for a hundred years to come.”⁹⁰² He expected the Allies to pursue the diplomacy of imperialism and militarism that had led to the war in 1914. As he summed up the

⁸⁹⁹ *The Lost Peace*, 91.

⁹⁰⁰ Palmer, *Bliss, Peacemaker*, 363.

⁹⁰¹ For Wilson’s opinion of Bliss, see Baker to Bliss, May 31, 1918, Wilson to Baker, May 6, 1918, and March to Bliss, October 17, 1918, all in Box 75, Bliss Mss, LC.

⁹⁰² Bliss to Baker, October 9, 1918, Bliss Mss, LC.

negotiations with Turkey over the pieces of what had been the Ottoman Empire, “when it is all done, the United States will find that the European Allies have gotten . . . mandates for every oil well and gold mine that there may be in Asiatic Turkey and we will be asked to take a mandate for whatever pile of rocks and heap of sand may be left. I hope that we will have sense enough to keep out of it altogether.”⁹⁰³ Bliss wrote sadly to Baker with the trenchant observation that this most destructive of all wars had accomplished little “more than the abolition of *German* militarism while leaving *European* militarism as rampant as ever.”⁹⁰⁴

Bliss’s solution to the problem of dealing with the Europeans remained the same. The United States must be prepared to stand alone, if necessary, for Wilsonian principles. The primary tool for achieving these goals, he thought, should be economic power. Bliss encouraged Wilson to use reconstruction loans for political leverage, and the thought that Allied military adventures in Russia or the Balkans would fail if denied American support.

There was only one time that Bliss came close to breaking with Wilson, and that was in the debates over the fate of the German concession in China, at Shantung. President Wilson recognized that allowing Japan to take control of Shantung violated the principles he had announced in the Fourteen Points. Yet he knew as well that Japan might well refuse to join the League of Nations if her claim, based on wartime treaties, was not upheld. In a letter to Nellie, Bliss described the concession to Japan as “outrageous,” and in response to a request from Secretary Lansing and Henry

⁹⁰³ Bliss to Charles Deering, October 22, 1919, Bliss Mss, USAMHI.

⁹⁰⁴ Bliss to Baker, October 9, 1918, Box 74, Bliss Mss, LC.

White, he wrote to the President in protest, mentioning another situation in which Wilson had held firm. “If it be right for Japan to annex the territory of an Ally, then it cannot be wrong for Italy to retain Fiume taken from the enemy.” He added that if the United States yielded to Japan, it would be sowing the seeds of a future war.⁹⁰⁵ Bliss had hesitated to send the letter, recognizing the difficulty of the president’s situation; nonetheless, he wrote his wife on May 1 that he was “mortified” when he learned that Wilson had agreed to let Japan have Shantung.⁹⁰⁶

The two central questions for the peacemakers were Germany and Russia. Bliss saw the two as inextricably bound together because of the danger to Europe posed by Bolshevism. A liberal settlement with Germany, except in military terms, was at the core of Bliss’s program. He told General Henry Allen that everything possible must be done to strengthen the existing German government, which appeared to be genuinely democratic. He wrote, “The problems [of Europe] all center about Germany. Yet these short-sighted politicians think that they can solve these problems without the aid of the Germans. . . . Western Europe can defend itself against Bolshevism . . . only by the aid of Germany.”⁹⁰⁷ Pursuing this idea, Bliss continually urged the French to moderate their demands on Germany, but without success.⁹⁰⁸

Bliss regarded Bolshevism as a threat to the growth of western civilization since the Greeks and Romans. Even so, he stood out as one of the strongest

⁹⁰⁵ Bliss to EAB, May 8, 1919, Box 244, THB Mss, LC; Bliss to Wilson, quoted in Palmer, *Bliss, Peacemaker*, 394-95; and A. Scott Berg, *Wilson* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 2013), 580.

⁹⁰⁶ THB to EAB, quoted in Palmer, *Bliss, Peacemaker*, 395.

⁹⁰⁷ Bliss to Allen, October 13, 1919, Box 233, Bliss Mss, LC.

⁹⁰⁸ Bliss diary, January 2, 1919, Box 65, and Memorandum of July 10, 1919, Box 71, Bliss Mss, LC.

opponents of military intervention in Russia or Hungary. As he told the Council of Four, “It is true that you can prevent an army of Bolsheviks from coming out of Russia by posting on its borders a sufficiently large military force. But you cannot in this way prevent Bolshevism from coming out. You cannot stop the progress of an idea, whether good or bad, by a line of bayonets.” He urged the Council to recognize that revolution, in any form, proceeded from discontent among the people. One solution, then, was to relieve the discontent, rather than kill the discontented. His suggestion was that “much of the existing discontent could be relieved by the immediate declaration of peace; . . . [and] by restoring the ordinary economic conditions and relations.” Bolshevism was growing “simply because of [the] delay in doing these things.”⁹⁰⁹

If peace was the solution to the problem of Bolshevism, then the activities at the conference were too often self-defeating. Bliss expressed his scorn in a letter to his wife:

The most exasperating thing to me is the time that is wasted on subjects that don't in the least concern us . . . For one hour that is passed in discussing . . . a treaty, whole days [pass] discussing Bolshevism . . . until everyone is in a perfect muddle. . . They have talked for days about sending an Allied Army to Hungary [and] are quite enthusiastic . . . until [the Americans refuse to pay for it or provide the troops]. Then they all look blankly at each other, until a bright idea occurs to some one who proposes that they send a telegram to Bela Kun calling him a liar and a thief – at which they brighten up immensely, order the telegram sent, and then pass on to something else equally inane and futile.⁹¹⁰

⁹⁰⁹ “Remarks of General Bliss at the meeting of the Council of Four,” March 27, 1919, Box 71, Bliss Mss, LC.

⁹¹⁰ Bliss to EAB, July 17, 1919, Bliss Mss, USAMHI.

It was this sort of experience that led Bliss to declare in another letter to his wife that “Bolshevism is the outcry of peoples against the idiocy of their governments.”⁹¹¹

His wartime experiences convinced Bliss that the destructive power of warfare had become a menace to the survival of civilization. In an age of aerial warfare, traditional ideas of strategic frontiers and natural boundaries meant little. Thus the most important element in Bliss’s concept of a peace settlement was arms limitation, or what he and most others generally called disarmament. He explained his ideas in a letter to Sidney Mezes:

I . . . believe that disarmament and a League of Nations go hand-in-hand. When a dozen men sit around a table to [negotiate] and it appears that some of them have a pistol in each pocket and a knife in their belts, while others have penknives and fire-crackers or nothing at all, the *first* and *sole* question is disarmament. There can be no fair and free discussion of anything till that is settled. . . A League having some nations armed to the teeth will be dominated by those nations. That is what they will be armed for.⁹¹²

If the United States tried to participate in such a militarized League, Bliss feared the result might well be a militarized United States.

While these hopes for disarmament may have been unrealistic, Bliss offered other advice that demonstrated a realistic appreciation of the strengths of traditional U.S. foreign policy. Bliss argued that the American people were not ready to abandon their traditional independence from European politics. He recounted in his diary how he had told a visiting university professor that “it would be difficult enough to cause the [American people] to change within a long time their general attitude

⁹¹¹ Bliss to EAB, January 4, 1919, Box 66, Bliss Mss, LC.

⁹¹² Bliss to Mezes, December 26, 1918, Mezes Mss, Stirling Memorial Library, Yale University.

towards intervention in political affairs here; but that to effect this change . . . at once . . . was . . . quite impossible.”⁹¹³ Not only did the American people feel this way, Bliss shared their view. Independence from European affairs had served the country well, and it remained the best policy. He warned Baker that “the wisest thing for the United States is to get its troops home as soon as [possible]. We . . . have accomplished all that we came over here to do *without armies*. After that comes the time for the exercise of our moral suasion. If we maintain a great military force here . . . we will soon become involved in entanglements of which we have no idea.”⁹¹⁴

Wilson believed that the war had transformed the attitude of the American people; Bliss was equally certain that it had not. He was no isolationist, but he believed a foreign policy independent from European affairs served the nation best. Disarmament and a League of Nations, one that included the United States, were necessary to preserve the peace, but too close an association with Europe would corrupt the United States. That Europe represented evil while the United States represented good is a questionable proposition, then or now, but Bliss realized that the war and the peace conference had served to reinforce that traditional American viewpoint, not destroy it.

⁹¹³ Bliss diary, January 22, 1919, box 65, Bliss Mss, LC.

⁹¹⁴ Bliss to Baker, November 22, 1918, Box 74; see also Bliss to James McAndrew, January 17, 1919, Box 71; both in Bliss Mss, LC.

CHAPTER 11

WORKING FOR PEACE

When Tasker Bliss returned to Washington, there was still work to do for the American mission to the Paris Peace Conference. As a serving officer in the Army, he could not take part in the political battle over the ratification of the treaties, but he would go on to display strong support for the Wilsonian vision. His support for the treaties, for the League of Nations, and especially for the limitation of armaments led him into an active retirement, working with the foreign policy elite, peace activists, and young people. For several years, Bliss was a national figure whose military career allowed him to speak with credibility on issues of war, peace, and armaments. While he was deeply involved in this work, he watched his family grow and his children prosper.

Bliss had applied for the position of Governor of the Soldiers' Home in Washington, D. C., in January, 1920, a post with a three-year renewable term.⁹¹⁵ His old colleague Samuel B. M. Young was leaving the position, and Bliss learned of the potential vacancy and applied to the Board of Commissioners of the Soldiers' Home. In his letter, he wrote that he expected to be available for duty when "the

⁹¹⁵ THB to the Board of Commissioners, Jan. 15, 1920, THB Mss, LC, Box 367.

position shall become vacant, which I understand will be in the month of April, next.”⁹¹⁶ From this letter, it appears that Bliss was well informed about Young’s plans, presumably through their friendship. Serving as Governor of the Soldiers’ Home would be a perfect situation for him. It provided housing for him and his wife, they would have a steady though small income, and he would have work to do and a secretarial staff to help him. After his service in the war and doubtless with the support of Secretary of War Newton D. Baker, it was hardly surprising that he gained the appointment.⁹¹⁷

Even while Bliss served as Governor, he became involved in national peace activities while also enjoying being a parent and grandparent. His son Goring soon came to live in Washington, resigning from the Army to work for the local telephone company. That brought granddaughter Betty nearby, and many of his most enjoyable hours were spent with her.⁹¹⁸ Bliss soon learned that his daughter would be settling in New Haven, Connecticut, easily reached by train.

Bliss was intensely proud of his daughter’s work. She was graduated from Bryn Mawr College, which was conveniently next to his wife’s family home in Rosemont on Philadelphia’s Main Line. Having majored in Geology, Eleanor continued at the college, studying for her Ph. D. in the subject with her Bryn Mawr professor, Florence Bascom, even though the school did not have such a program.

⁹¹⁵ Ibid.

⁹¹⁷ Special Orders, No. 55-0 [but pencil note indicates XLVII], War Department, Washington, D. C., March 6, 1920, copy of an extract in the Box 367, THB Mss, LC.

⁹¹⁸ Palmer, *Bliss, Peacemaker*, 439, and photograph and caption between pp. 422 and 423.

Bascom was already a legendary figure in the field, the first woman to earn a Ph. D. degree from the Johns Hopkins University in 1893.⁹¹⁹ After earning her doctorate, Eleanor worked for the U.S. Geological Survey, where she met Adolph Knopf, another geologist. From their correspondence, it appears that on April 7, 1919, doing field work in Arizona, they decided they should marry.⁹²⁰ In the summer after the Peace Conference, Adolph wrote to a relative about his view of the Bliss family, a letter that is full of information about the family dynamics. Eleanor was about to leave to visit her father in Paris, and Adolph was “glad she is alone and has six days . . . to rest and recuperate.” She had been watching over her mother and as a result “she is nearly a wreck.” Most important, when she got to Paris, she would be able to discuss her marriage plans “with her father before her mother arrives. I feel that she is much closer to her father than to her mother.”⁹²¹

Knopf was working at Yale University, and in the winter of 1920, he applied for a position as a professor there. Teaching would mean an end to his uninterrupted research, but Knopf thought it would be a better situation for a married couple.⁹²² It was certainly better for Eleanor’s father. With Bliss making frequent trips to New York, he could maintain the close relationship with his daughter.

Established by act of Congress in 1851, the Soldiers’ Home was a retirement community for men who had had “some service as enlisted men in the regular

⁹¹⁹ For further information about Dr. Florence Bascom and the history of the Geology Department at Bryn Mawr College, go to <http://www.brynmawr.edu/Alumnae/bulletin/geolog.htm>, accessed on November 24, 2006.

⁹²⁰ Adolph Knopf to Eleanor Bliss, Box 391, THB Mss, LC.

⁹²¹ Adolph Knopf to “Nancy,” Aug. 20, 1919, Box 389, THB Mss, LC.

⁹²² Adolph Knopf to Eleanor Bliss, April 15, 1920, Box 391, THB Mss, LC.

army.”⁹²³ In a sense, it was a relic of the old frontier army, a force in which many of the long-service men were bachelors, immigrants and African-Americans. There was no indication in the records of the Home whether it was open to African-Americans, but neither was there any indication of separate facilities for black veterans. Since the army was still segregated in the 1920s, and Washington, D. C. was a segregated city, the lack of comment about the issue makes it likely that the Soldiers’ Home was a whites-only facility.

The capacity of the Home, including the hospital, was about 2000 residents, but it was never full while Bliss was Governor.⁹²⁴ On May 1, 1920, his first day on duty, there were 823 residents present, 347 absent, for a total of 1170, but many of the absent were receiving treatment at Fort Bayard, New Mexico, or at St. Elizabeth’s Hospital, an asylum in Washington, D. C. The last day of Bliss’s service as Governor was April 30, 1927, when there were 1291 present and 387 absent. Of course there was a steady stream of new men throughout his tenure, with some residents leaving when dismissed for disciplinary infractions and always a few deaths each month. In May 1920, Bliss’s first month at the Home, Bliss saw eight deaths; the total number in his seven years as Governor was about eight hundred. Among them were the last

⁹²³ This summary of eligibility is from a “Circular for the Information of Applicants for the Benefits of the U.S. Soldiers’ Home,” in Records of the United States Soldiers’ Home, Entry 9, Correspondence and Orders, 1851-1930, Vol. 1, Administrative Memoranda and Orders, 1852-1923, RG 231, NARA.

⁹²⁴ Information on the numbers of residents comes from Records of the United States Soldiers’ Home, Entry 17, Consolidated Morning Reports of Inmates, 1857-1927, which includes a bound volume of reports for Jan. 1919 to Dec. 1927, in RG 231, NARA.

veteran of the Mexican War, in 1925, and many Civil War veterans, who were reduced to thirty-three of the residents by 1930.⁹²⁵

A day at the Soldiers' Home began with reveille at 6:10 am, with breakfast following at 6:50 and the surgeon's call at 8:00 am. First call for dinner was at 11:50, and the second call for supper at 5:30. The residents heard Call to Quarters at 8:50 pm, with Taps at 9:10 pm.⁹²⁶ It was a routine typical not only of an army post but also of many residential institutions.

When accepting applicants the government gave priority to men with twenty years or more service, those who had suffered disabling wounds or illness while on active duty, and any soldier who had served in wartime.⁹²⁷ Among the factors that might disqualify a veteran were conviction for a felony "or other disgraceful or infamous crimes of a civil nature" during his military service, or habitual drunkenness, unless he could produce evidence of "good conduct and reformation of character." There was provision for "outdoor relief" for men who had need of it, and veterans who had no pension received \$1.50 each week as spending money. Those veterans who had a large enough pension or some other source of income were expected to pay the cost of living in the Home, which was about \$15/month in 1918. Veterans who were eligible to live in the home but who had tuberculosis were sent to

⁹²⁵ Paul R. Goode, *The United States Soldiers' Home: A History of Its First Hundred Years* (Privately published, 1957), 185; there is a copy in the library at the USAMHI.

⁹²⁶ Orders No. 53, "Daily Program," October 1, 1926, in Orders Issued by the Office of the Governor, volume 2, Entry E.10, Correspondence and Orders, 1851-1930, RG 231, NARA.

⁹²⁷ Information in this paragraph is a summary of a Memorandum of November 27, 1918, in Records of the United States Soldiers' Home, Entry 17, Consolidated Morning Reports of Inmates, 1857-1927, which includes a bound volume of reports for Jan. 1919 to Dec. 1927, in RG 231, NARA.

the hospital at Fort Bayard, New Mexico, for treatment, but the Home paid \$4.50 per week for their upkeep and \$0.25 each day for medicine.

The grounds of the Soldiers' Home totaled about 500 acres, half of which was the original property purchased from George W. Riggs, a Washington banker.⁹²⁸ Small tracts had been added until 1872, when the government bought 191 acres, the estate of "Harewood," from a "Mr. Corcoran," probably another Washington banker. About 150 acres of the land were usually under cultivation to provide produce for the kitchen. The principal entrances were at Upshur Street, Park Road, and First Street Northwest, while streetcars on 9th Street and Georgia Avenue brought passengers. The buildings of the Home stood in three groups: "Administrative and Barracks Buildings, located in the North end of the grounds; the Hospital group, located in the center of the grounds; and the Dairy Group, located in the Southern part of the grounds near the First Street entrance." The Home's library contained over 16,000 volumes, and the dairy "[had] one of the finest herds of Holstein cattle in the United States."⁹²⁹ Bliss now had the responsibility for a large and varied organization.

When Bliss began his first three-year term at the Soldiers' Home, the Secretary of War told him it was in good condition both physically and in terms of discipline.⁹³⁰ Bliss gave due credit to his predecessor, General Young, responding to the annual inspection report that "during the period covered by the . . . Report, . . .

⁹²⁸ Information in this paragraph is from a Memorandum giving the history of the Soldiers' Home, dated September 1, 1922, in *ibid.*

⁹²⁹ Both quotations are from *ibid.*

⁹³⁰ Memorandum, SecWar to THB, September 20, 1920, Box 366, THB Mss, LC.

General Young was Governor . . . for ten-twelfths of the time and I only for two-twelfths of the time, [so] it is needless for me to say that the most that I could do was to keep the Home . . . in the ‘admirable condition’” it already was when Bliss became Governor.⁹³¹

According to a privately published history, the Home in fact was experiencing significant difficulties.⁹³² Contributions from soldiers’ pay had stopped in 1908, so funding for the Home shrank at the very time the number of residents grew as the War Department broadened the eligibility standards. Several buildings required renovation, and the roads through the grounds were in need of major reconstruction. The Fire Department of the District of Columbia reported that the Home’s fire mains were inadequate. Fortunately for the Home, the District government built new mains and split the expense.⁹³³ In 1922 an audit uncovered embezzlement by the Home’s chief clerk in the office of the Secretary-Treasurer, but the Home recovered the funds. To relieve the burden of paperwork on the Secretary-Treasurer and to ensure improved supervision of spending, a post of Quartermaster was added to the staff.⁹³⁴

One of the reasons for Bliss’s early success in the position of Governor was the strong support he received from Secretary of War Baker. The two had worked together for years and became close confidants. When a resident of the home complained to Bliss, as he had already complained to General Young, of “alleged . . .

⁹³¹ THB to SecWar, September 23, 190, Box 366, THB Mss, LC.

⁹³² Goode, *Soldiers’ Home*, 182-187.

⁹³³ *Ibid.*, 186.

⁹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 180-181.

bad medical treatment” and abuse by “other inmates,” Bliss responded that these charges must be put in writing in order to be investigated. The resident then asked for a furlough of four months; Bliss replied that there could be no furlough until the charges had been investigated and the investigation reached a conclusion. When the resident then asked to be discharged from the home, Bliss again responded that no discharge was possible until the investigation reached a conclusion. The resident threatened to go over Bliss’s head and appeal his situation directly to the Secretary of War. Baker assured Bliss that he would not do anything “at variance with your action in the matter.”⁹³⁵ In the same way, when residents with tuberculosis asked to be shifted to Fitzsimmons Hospital, a veterans’ facility in Denver, Bliss consulted the Surgeon General, who responded that allowing patients to move to hospitals of their own choice would “make a carefully prescribed and uniform regime, so essential in the treatment of tuberculosis, impossible” Again Baker supported the recommendations of Bliss and Surgeon General M. W. Ireland.⁹³⁶

Most of Bliss’s work as Governor consisted of routine administrative tasks. In the book of orders issued by the Governor, the last from General Young is dated April 12, 1920; the first from Bliss is dated May 24. Bliss prescribed a program of activities for the observance of Memorial Day, which of course had special significance for the residents. Even then, the special formation and parade to the cemetery on the grounds was voluntary, for “inmates of the Home who desire to join

⁹³⁵ THB to NDB and NDB to THB, Oct. 1 and 2, respectively, 1920, Box 366, THB Mss, LC.

⁹³⁶ NDB to THB, Jan. 15, 1921, Memorandum, Ireland to NDB, Jan. 24, 1921, NDB to THB, Jan. 27, 1921, and THB to NDB, Jan. 29, 1921, all in Box 367, THB Mss, LC.

in the proper observance of the day.”⁹³⁷ For the officers, the standard was a little different. Governor Bliss informed them that he “would be pleased” to have them attend the services, and even among retired army personnel, when a general officer indicates he would be pleased, one assumes his subordinates know to attend. As another indication of his close relationship with the Secretary of War, Newton Baker gave an address at the Home on the holiday afternoon.⁹³⁸

Other routine items of business at the Soldiers’ Home included the semi-annual muster and the annual inspection by the Inspector General.⁹³⁹ Some of the residents served as first sergeants, one for each building, and they were to submit in duplicate a “nominal list” of everyone who should be sleeping on each floor as of midnight at the beginning of the day of the muster. The hospital gave a separate report, and there were “inmates who sleep on the Home grounds, outside the main buildings,” as well as some who slept outside the grounds, all of whom would report to the sergeant major at headquarters. Those who slept outside the grounds had to be prepared to “quote the authority granting this permission.” As part of the inspection, not only were the residences checked along with the headquarters, but so also were the hospital, dairy, grounds, power plant, laundry, garage, chapel and maintenance shops.

⁹³⁷ Orders No. 13, Orders Issued by the Office of the Governor, volume 2, Entry E.10, Correspondence and Orders, 1851-1930, RG 231, NARA.

⁹³⁸ Memorandum, May 26, 1920, *ibid.*

⁹³⁹ Orders No. 14, June 21, 1920, *ibid.*, give the details of the muster, while a Memorandum of July 6, 1920, *ibid.*, spells out the details of the inspection.

There were two other routine activities that filled Bliss's time. One was accepting the resignation of first sergeants and appointing new ones.⁹⁴⁰ The other involved enforcing discipline on the residents. The Soldiers' Home was a military facility; the men living there had been soldiers at a time when serving as an enlisted man in the army was generally a job for men from the lower strata of society. These men in particular were vulnerable to the usual problems of retired soldiers without any close family with whom they could live. The most common problem was drinking, which would lead to dismissal from the Home.⁹⁴¹ There were several absences without leave, which could also lead to dismissal.⁹⁴² Some of the discipline cases leave a reader wondering what was the rest of the story; these would include "making indecent and scandalous proposals" to other residents, and an incident in which a resident took property of the Home and the Justice Department found it in his daughter's residence in Florida.⁹⁴³

Because the residents of the Home were civilians, they enjoyed more personal freedom than did enlisted men in the service, even though the Home itself operated under a semblance of military discipline. This situation created a problem in the medical treatment of some residents. In his first months as Governor, Bliss wrote to the Surgeon General of the Army, Merritte W. Ireland, to bring this issue to his

⁹⁴⁰ The discipline cases and the resulting punishments are listed *ibid.*; see for example Memorandum, Dec. 22, 1920, or Orders No. 38, April 28, 1927.

⁹⁴¹ See for example, Orders No. 21, Sept. 14, 1920, or Orders No. 9, March 12, 1921, *ibid.*.

⁹⁴² For example, Orders No. 30, August 17, 1921, *ibid.*

⁹⁴³ For the first incident, Orders No. 37, October 21, 1921, and for the second, Orders No. 29, Dec. 6, 1920, both *ibid.*

attention.⁹⁴⁴ Even if a resident was in the middle of treatment for an illness, Bliss complained, he was free to come or go as he chose:

The consequence is that inmates who are suffering from curable diseases continue to suffer from those diseases year in and year out, simply because they refuse to take the scientific treatment recognized as necessary to cure their disability. They thus make themselves a constant burden on the resources of the Home and perhaps also on the Pension Bureau.

This problem of patients not completing the course of treatment would be familiar to any medical professional today. The veteran could not be held there to complete it; the discipline in the Home had limits.

Bliss went on to give Surgeon General Ireland a striking illustration of this problem. He cited one resident's record of seventeen discharges from the home at his own request, followed by readmission, between May 20, 1904, and July 19, 1920, and all the while the man suffered from pulmonary tuberculosis! General Ireland replied with a sympathetic letter that anticipated even more problems with veterans of the World War. Nevertheless, he admitted that "[j]ust what can be done I do not know, but probably nothing under the present law."⁹⁴⁵ Another aspect of the problem was that residents would leave the home and then request treatment at one of the National Volunteer Soldiers' Homes of their own choice. While regulations permitted doing so, the cost of treatment would be charged to the Soldiers' Home in Washington, and

⁹⁴⁴ THB to Surgeon General, July 28, 1920, Box 366, THB Mss, LC.

⁹⁴⁵ Surgeon General Ireland to THB, July 29, 1920, Box 366, THB Mss, LC.

Bliss did not want that charge to exceed what the Home would pay for his care at an Army Hospital.⁹⁴⁶

Many of the problems Bliss had to deal with were also typical for such places; there were many issues that would sound familiar to any dormitory prefect or supervisor. There was of course the telephone service to consider. In 1923 the Home gained an extra trunk line to improve service, but Bliss issued orders that brevity was a necessity in all conversations, especially between 8:30 am and 1:00 pm, the hours of peak use.⁹⁴⁷ Calls between the buildings during the overnight hours were to be for emergency situations only.⁹⁴⁸ By 1924 the Home was using the switchboard to convey information, keeping a list there of “members dismissed in the last few years.” Presumably there had been calls for such former members, but apparently they had also tried to visit. The same memorandum mentioned “such folks are not to be admitted . . . unless not doing so appears likely to jeopardize their survival.”⁹⁴⁹ In 1921 Bliss prohibited lamps (with open flames) in any of the barracks or wards.⁹⁵⁰ The next year he issued an order prohibiting possession of firearms among the residents, and he also had to deal with a water shortage during the summer.⁹⁵¹ Social activities at the Home adjusted to modern conditions. The first radio arrived in 1923;⁹⁵² “moving pictures” began at the home in 1923, along with concerts. The

⁹⁴⁶ THB to Secretary of War Baker, January 21, 1921, Box 366, THB Mss, LC.

⁹⁴⁷ Orders No. 61, December 11, 1923, *ibid.*

⁹⁴⁸ Memorandum for the Telephone Switchboard, March 12, 1926, *ibid.*

⁹⁴⁹ Memorandum, March 14, 1924, *ibid.*

⁹⁵⁰ Orders No. 3, February 4, 1921, *ibid.*

⁹⁵¹ Orders No. 10, April 27, 1922, and Memorandum and Orders No. 18, both June 10, 1922, *ibid.*

⁹⁵² Goode, *Soldiers' Home*, 184.

public was welcome, although visitors had to leave promptly at the end of the programs.⁹⁵³

Not everything would sound familiar today. In 1923 Bliss had to deal with questions of shoe repair for the residents, as well as sell the Home's sheep herd to the Department of Agriculture.⁹⁵⁴ The hope had been that tending the sheep would give some residents "light, healthy outdoor employment." Not enough of the men were interested. Then there was the problem of what clothing should be used to dress the bodies of deceased residents for their funerals, and Bliss decided that each man should have a "complete new outfit of clothing."⁹⁵⁵ One point worth noting is that by 1923 Bliss no longer used the term "inmate" when referring to the Home's residents. He used "member" instead, the result of a decision by the Board of Governors.⁹⁵⁶

Part of the appeal of governing the Soldiers' Home was that its Washington location made it easier for Bliss to maintain old friendships. Many active or retired military officers lived in or visited the area, as did many of the civilians with whom he had worked with during his career. Throughout the 1920s, Bliss was active as a speaker and writer on world politics, and much of that work involved travel to New York City. That was not difficult from his base on North Capitol Street. Writing to one old friend and colleague, [probably Colonel William B.] Wallace, Bliss seriously

⁹⁵³ Memorandum to the Sergeant of the Guard, September 26, 1923, in Orders Issued by the Office of the Governor, volume 2, Entry E.10, Correspondence and Orders, 1851-1930, RG 231, NARA.

⁹⁵⁴ Orders No. 3, June 4, 1923; and Memorandum Orders No. 7, April 5, 1923, both *ibid.*

⁹⁵⁵ Orders for the Clothing Sergeant, March 7, 1922, *ibid.*

⁹⁵⁶ Goode, *Soldiers' Home*, 182.

misjudged his future activities, saying that he had quit bothering . . . about this wobbly old world and am going to let it wobble as it will: My principal occupation and amusement is reading Latin and Greek classics with some of the professors at the adjacent to our grounds here. It is more amusing and less irritating to read of the squabbles in the Roman Senate than it is those of . . . our own.⁹⁵⁷ Earlier in the same letter, discussing the future of the Philippines, Bliss observed that the two political parties appeared headed toward opposing positions on the issue. If so, then an important question could “be decided by the effect which the [Teapot Dome] ‘oil scandal,’ or the result of any of the countless muck-raking investigations may have on the next election.”⁹⁵⁸ Bliss had lost none of his dislike for the partisan games he observed in the United States Congress.

Living in Washington enabled Bliss to keep up with the activities of the Army’s leadership and the War Department. In particular, he received regular notices of lectures at the Army War College, attended a few, and delivered one of his own on the work of the Supreme War Council. Sometimes he was asked for advice or ideas about current issues. For instance, members of Congress sought his views on the needs of the coast defenses, and he was able to maintain contact with officers who had served under him, especially Stanley D. Embick.⁹⁵⁹

⁹⁵⁷ THB to --- Wallace, March 6, 1924, THB Mss, LC, Box 369. For an example of Bliss’s continuing interest in proper Latin translation, see THB to Father Christopher, Feb. 12, 1924, Box 368, THB Mss, LC.

⁹⁵⁸ Bliss referred to one of the scandals of President Warren G. Harding’s administration.

⁹⁵⁹ The late James E. Hewes of the Center of Military History, Department of the Army, had a particular interest in Embick’s career, and he considered Embick’s service under Bliss at the Paris Peace Conference to have been especially important in its influence on Embick’s thinking, and thus on the Army when Embick served as Chief of the War Plans Division of the General Staff.

There was an unhappy side to being near old friends and colleagues in the Washington area; Bliss was often involved in the funeral arrangements as they passed away. He was a pallbearer for the Army's medical pioneer, former Surgeon General William Gorgas,⁹⁶⁰ as well as an honorary one at the funeral of Woodrow Wilson. The former president died on Sunday, February 3, 1924, and the funeral took place on Wednesday, February 6. A massive crowd attended, the funeral was broadcast on national radio, and in New York City, everything from office elevators to Broadway shows paused for a moment of silent tribute. While Bliss attended in uniform, *The New York Times* commented on the absence of both Colonel Edward M. House and former Secretary of State Robert Lansing, who remained bitter over their breaks with Wilson.⁹⁶¹ Bliss could have shared their reaction, given his feelings about the Peace Conference, but his commitment to Wilsonian ideals helped him value the former president's efforts while putting aside his own disappointments. When asked for a comment on the former president's death, Bliss told *The New York Times* that "his ideals and his heroic fight in the face of the great odds will live on forever. . . [Those] ideals . . . shall stand as a monument . . . and it shall never be forgotten that . . . he also sought peace for other nations as well."⁹⁶²

That commitment had already led to further involvement with national and international peace efforts when Bliss became a trustee of the Woodrow Wilson

⁹⁶⁰ THB to Captain Richard H. Gorgas, Aug. 12, 1920, Box 366, THB Mss, LC. William Gorgas became famous through his work on the cause and cure of yellow fever.

⁹⁶¹ *The New York Times* coverage was on Thursday, February 7, on pages 1, 2 and 3. The note about the absentees is on page 2.

⁹⁶² February 4, 1924, p. 3.

Foundation. Established in New York, the Foundation existed “in recognition of the national and international services of Woodrow Wilson, . . . who furthered the cause of human freedom and was instrumental in pointing out effective methods for the cooperation of the liberal forces of mankind throughout the world.” The Foundation made awards from time to time in recognition of “meritorious service to democracy, public welfare, liberal thought or peace through justice.” The chairman of the Foundation was Franklin D. Roosevelt, who had served in the Wilson administration as Assistant Secretary of the Navy. Bliss was one of the permanent trustees. The president of the trustees was Ernest Martin Hopkins, president of Dartmouth College.

⁹⁶³ Bliss served on the board until his death in 1930.⁹⁶⁴

There was no friend or colleague to whom Bliss felt closer than Newton Baker. Baker’s law practice frequently brought him to Washington, and Bliss managed some occasional visits to Cleveland.⁹⁶⁵ He became part of an effort by Baker’s friends to force a revision in the entries of the 1922 edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Bliss learned of the problem from Ralph Hayes, a New York banker who told him that Baker himself was “indisposed to quarrel with the editors,” which left the task to his friends.⁹⁶⁶ The *Britannica*’s entry for Baker described his tenure as Secretary of War as

⁹⁶³ *The New York Times*, May 1, 1923, p. 44; the report on the Board election is the next day, p. 19.

⁹⁶⁴ Frederick A. Delano to THB, December 18, 1929, Box 374, THB Mss, LC.

⁹⁶⁵ On a visit in the summer of 1923, Bliss enjoyed “the time of my life.” THB to Ralph Hayes, July 14, 1923, Box 368, THB Mss, LC.

⁹⁶⁶ Hayes to THB, July 20, 1922, Box 368, THB Mss, LC.

widely condemned throughout the United States as lacking in energy, foresight, and ability, . . . especially for his failure to prepare adequately in the months immediately preceding the American declaration of war.⁹⁶⁷

Hayes wrote to Bliss to enlist his help in protesting to the editors about this entry.⁹⁶⁸ Bliss gladly contributed his name to the project, which succeeded in getting the entry amended in 1924 and changed again in the 13th edition, in 1926. Among those who had joined in objecting to the description of Baker were Bernard M. Baruch, President James R. Angell of Yale, Generals Frank Hines and Hugh L. Scott, and Samuel Gompers. The revised entry stated that Baker had centralized the war effort, insisted on the selective draft, and “prevented any political interference with the conduct of the war.” The new version appearing in 1926 explained that while there was war-time criticism of Baker’s administration, “much of it was for partisan ends.” Baker’s friends were pleased with the changes, and they arranged to have copies of their letters of protest collected in a morocco-bound volume which they presented to Baker. It was a curious testimonial, but a testimonial nonetheless.

Later in 1926 Bliss had occasion to write to Baker personally, congratulating him for an article on sewage disposal in big cities, one of the 1920s echoes of the pre-war Progressive reforms. In this case the topic was the Chicago drainage canal. Bliss shared Baker’s opinion that “the time [has] come when every community . . . should be compelled to dispose of its waste otherwise than by dumping it into streams,

⁹⁶⁷ Enclosure with *ibid.*

⁹⁶⁸ The following information about the efforts to protest the *Britannica*’s description of Baker come from a memorandum by Ralph Hayes, Nov. 10, 1926, copy in the Box 369, THB Mss, LC.

navigable or not.” That practice had more or less destroyed an important food supply in the rivers Bliss knew well – the Susquehanna, Potomac, Hudson, and Delaware – and the Chicago canal now threatened the Mississippi. He thanked Baker for raising the topic, saying he viewed the article as almost “a personal favor to me.”⁹⁶⁹ Even on a topic so distant from the usual War Department business, these two close friends shared similar thoughts.

Another task that Bliss assumed cheerfully after the Peace Conference was the presidency of the American-Yugoslav Society. This organization came into being in 1923, the work of Americans who believed that the success of the new kingdom of Yugoslavia was one of the keys to the success of the 1919 peace settlement. The organizing committee, which became the committee on nominations, unanimously chose Bliss as president, having solicited his interest in earlier correspondence.⁹⁷⁰ He received a nice compliment when former Assistant Secretary of State Frank L. Polk, who had been part of the U.S. delegation at Paris in 1919 and was now part of a law firm on Broad Street in New York City, accepted the position of vice president. “I am . . . particularly glad to be an officer of any organization in which General Bliss is President,” Polk commented.⁹⁷¹ Bliss’s friend Hamilton Fish Armstrong, from the Council on Foreign Relations, was another of the organizers,⁹⁷² and Bliss enjoyed

⁹⁶⁹ THB to NDB, July 28, 1926, Box 369, THB Mss, LC.

⁹⁷⁰ The information about the organizing efforts comes from John A. Kingsbury to THB, September 13, 1923, Box 368, THB Mss, LC.

⁹⁷¹ Polk to Kingsbury, no date but accepting the position of vice president, copy in Box 368, THB Mss, LC.

⁹⁷² This biographical information about Hamilton Fish Armstrong appears on the website of the Mudd Library at Princeton University,

working with him. Elihu Root, a former colleague for whom Bliss had the highest regard, was another one of the founders. It was Root who stated the purposes of the Society in a letter to John A. Kingsbury, the Secretary.

The people of the United States have of course certain general ideas about the older and long established States in the community of nations. . . . There is . . . no such guide to the meaning of the term Yugo-Slavia. I think comparatively few people in the United States know, except in the most vague and indefinite way, where it is and what it is. Before there can be said to be any real relations between the people of the United States and the people of Yugo-Slavia . . . the two peoples must be introduced to each other and must make each other's acquaintance. That is what I hope the new Society will be able to accomplish. The first thing is to get people to look at the map and see where Yugo-Slavia is, and next is to get them to read something about its history to show what it has been, and next to get them to read something about the present conditions – the life, the customs, the industries, the productions, the trade, etc., etc. All these things would be for the purpose of clothing the idea of Yugo-Slavia with a place and a personality among nations which it has not now in the minds of the American people.⁹⁷³

Other notables among the organizers were Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler, President of Columbia University; Dr. Charles Seymour, a future president of Yale; Albert G. Milbank, a leading Wall Street attorney; Professor Douglas Johnson of Columbia; and former Attorney General George W. Wickersham. Clearly this organization included many members of the foreign policy and investment banking elite of the United States. Since Yugoslavia was hardly a tempting target for their financial endeavors, they must have come together in the belief that the future of Yugoslavia was essential to their hopes for a peaceful future for Europe.

http://libweb.princeton.edu/libraries/firestone/rbsc/finding_aids/armstrong.html, accessed on September 28, 2003.

⁹⁷³ Elihu Root to Kingsbury, Sep. 28, 1923, copy in Box 368, THB Mss, LC.

Ironically, one of Bliss's first tasks as president was to wire Kingsbury, the secretary, not to send a letter to Belgrade inviting the King of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, over Bliss's name, to become a patron of the new organization along with President Calvin Coolidge.⁹⁷⁴ Bliss immediately sent a follow-up letter, explaining the problem. Such a cable would put Bliss, "in [his] capacity as an officer of the United States Army, in the position of communicating direct with a foreign government."⁹⁷⁵ He did not expect the officers of a foreign army or a foreign government to understand such a communication as anything but official and from the United States government. Bliss had consulted the State Department and learned that it agreed with his interpretation. He also learned from the diplomats that the Yugoslav king would not become a patron until he learned whether the U.S. president would become one as well. So the first thing to be done was to find out the attitude of President Calvin Coolidge.⁹⁷⁶ Apparently Coolidge agreed with the goals of the Society, since part of the program at the inaugural banquet was the reading of telegrams from both the King of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes and the President of the United States.⁹⁷⁷ The incident demonstrates Bliss's fastidious attention to the etiquette of his situation. He would show such concern in other circumstances, too, as he balanced his role as an advocate for specific national policies with his position as a civil servant under the authority of the War Department and the President.

⁹⁷⁴ Telegram, THB to Kingsbury, Sep. 15, 1923, copy in Box 368, THB Mss, LC.

⁹⁷⁵ THB to Kingsbury, Sep. 15, 1923, Box 368, THB Mss, LC.

⁹⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷⁷ Bliss's copy of the program, along with a typed list of speakers, is in the Box 368, THB Mss, LC.

As president, Bliss was the keynote speaker at the first dinner of the new organization, held in New York City in 1924. He began his remarks with what he described as “a very brief statement of the exact origin of the America-Yugoslav Society . . . and, in general, the motives out of which it grew.” Bliss believed that it along with similar organizations “will play a very considerable part in developing an interest among our people in foreign affairs. . . . They will play a very important part in determining the attitude of our people toward foreign countries.” He asked Armstrong to research the number of such societies and some of their titles to include mention of them in his address. By this time Bliss himself was deeply involved with several such groups, and he knew they could influence American foreign policy. His own activism had two goals: to influence specific policies, and to encourage U.S. internationalism. He utilized every opportunity to promote public involvement in U.S. foreign relations.

There was an impressive guest list at the event, demonstrating the widespread appeal of this new international friendship organization. Dr. Isaiah Bowman of the American Geographical Society and the future president of the Johns Hopkins University was one of the speakers, and others on the list of attendees included the attorney Milbank and George A. Plimpton, a partner in the textbook publishing firm Ginn and Company. Archibald Cary Coolidge, one of the founders of the Council on Foreign Relations and the editor of its journal Foreign Affairs, attended, as did the well-known physicist and engineer Dr. Cary T. Hutchinson. Also among the notables were diplomatic representatives from the “Little Entente” nations: the Minister from

the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, A. Tresich-Pavichich; the Minister from the Czechoslovak Republic, F. Chvalkovsky; the Chargé d'Affaires of the Rumanian Legation, F. Nano; the former Serbian Consul-General, Michel I. Pupin (in 1924 he was a professor at Columbia University); and the Consul-General of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, Pavle Karovitch. With them in mind Bliss spoke of the need for the new, small states of eastern Europe to put their trust in the League of Nations as "the only hope for the smaller States, and perhaps for the greater ones themselves." For the immediate future, Bliss expected peace in Europe, and the great problems for these states were not immediate but at "some distance in the future." The worst mistake the small states could make, Bliss believed, was to rely on their own armed strength for security, since they could not support large-scale armed forces in the long run. A larger state might then offer them assistance but probably "for selfish purposes of its own."⁹⁷⁸ Today his speech reads like a diplomatic history of the small nations of eastern Europe between the two wars.

Although Bliss consistently declined offers to publish his memoirs, he considered accurate histories of the Great War and the Paris Peace Conference to be of great importance. He was glad to assist such efforts to present the facts to the public. In one case, Professor Douglas Johnson of Columbia University, a colleague from the peace conference, asked for help with a military geography of the war that he was writing. Bliss happily read the proofs and then contributed a foreword.⁹⁷⁹

⁹⁷⁸ *The New York Times*, January 25, 1924.

⁹⁷⁹ Johnson to THB, November 27 and December 24, 1920, both in Box 366, THB Mss, LC. The book appeared as *Battlefields of the World War: Western and Southern Fronts : A Study in Military Geography* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1921).

Later Isaiah Bowman of the American Geographical Society, another veteran of the peace conference, wrote to tell Bliss that Professor Edward A. Ross of the University of Wisconsin had told him that Bliss had penned “one of the finest introductions that I have ever read.”⁹⁸⁰ More important to Bliss than the personal praise was the knowledge Johnson gave to the public. Bliss soon wrote to General Douglas MacArthur, the Superintendent of the Military Academy, suggesting Johnson as a lecturer for the Corps of Cadets.⁹⁸¹

Another opportunity to share his experiences with a wide audience came from the Philadelphia Forum, sponsored by a number of civic groups and the *Public Ledger* newspaper.⁹⁸² As one of a series of speakers in what became a book, *What Really Happened at Paris*,⁹⁸³ Bliss addressed “The Problem of Disarmament.” Once again, his goal was to get the truth, as he saw it, before the public. His account brought him a great deal of praise as well as inquiries from a number of peace groups.⁹⁸⁴ It was the beginning of a series of talks on international arms limitation that Bliss delivered for the Philadelphia Forum.⁹⁸⁵

The Great War and the peace conference had made Bliss a well known figure in the United States. Peace activists were only too happy to have a former chief of

⁹⁸⁰ Bowman to THB, January 8, 1921, Box 367, THB Mss, LC.

⁹⁸¹ THB to MacArthur, November 14, 1921, *ibid.*

⁹⁸² Edward M. House to THB, November 23, 1920, Box 366, THB Mss, LC.

⁹⁸³ Edward M. House and Charles Seymour, eds., *What Really Happened at Paris: The Story of the Peace Conference, 1918-1919 by American Delegates* (New York: Scribners, 1921).

⁹⁸⁴ For instance, see William F. Wickersham of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of Friends to THB, May 28, 1921, Box 367, THB Mss, LC.

⁹⁸⁵ See Edward W. Bok to THB, September 19, 1923, in Box 368, THB Mss, LC, and September 29, 1924, in Box 369, along with a copy of the program from Bliss’s speech.

staff of the Army joining them in their work. He served on the Committee of the American Peace Award, which made him a regular correspondent with Esther Everett Lape, the leader of the American Foundation, which gave the award. In that work he was also associated with another retired general, James G. Harbord.⁹⁸⁶ The Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends—the Quakers—quoted Bliss speaking in favor of arms limitation when they wrote to various officers in the U.S. government. The Quakers asked them to support a “holiday” in naval construction and requested that the United States “take the lead in a movement looking toward a world-wide reduction of armies,” a “proposal so convincingly presented by General Bliss.”⁹⁸⁷ William Wickersham, Secretary of the Peace Committee of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, wrote separately, asking Bliss “whether thee is willing for us to circulate” a leaflet featuring the general’s statement: “Those of you are mistaken who may think that there can be an enduring and effective association of the nations for the maintenance of peace so long as those nations are armed to the teeth.”⁹⁸⁸ Bliss agreed, just as he agreed to travel to Boston to speak to the Beacon Society on the subject of the general limitation of armaments.⁹⁸⁹

When Bliss spoke on “The Foundations of Peace” at a public meeting in Washington, D. C., called by the Committee on the Cause and Cure of War, with

⁹⁸⁶ See for instance Lape to THB,

⁹⁸⁷ William B. Harvey, Secretary of the Yearly Meeting, to THB, January 4, 1921, Box 366, THB Mss, LC.

⁹⁸⁸ Wickersham to THB, with a copy of the leaflet enclosed, March 8, 1921, Box 366, THB Mss, LC.

⁹⁸⁹ THB to Edgar R. Champlin, December 27, 1920, Box 366, THB Mss, LC.

Carrie Chapman Catt presiding,⁹⁹⁰ the Cosmos Newspaper Syndicate asked to distribute an edited version of the address. The syndicates sought to give his words “the widest distribution possible.” Again Bliss agreed, so long as the basic idea remained clear, that “we can settle the international disputes which may result in war only in the way in which we settle disputes in the domestic life of a nation.”⁹⁹¹ As late as 1928, Bliss was serving The American Foundation on a committee with James R. Angell, President of Yale University, Henry L. Stimson, the former Secretary of War, and Eleanor Roosevelt, urging the U.S. Senate to approve the Kellogg-Briand Pact.⁹⁹²

Still a faithful Christian, Bliss was happy to work with the Young Men’s Christian Association and the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, providing both organizations with short articles on “How We Can Move to World Peace.”⁹⁹³ Frederick Lynch of the World Alliance for International Friendship Through the Churches and Rabbi Edward N. Calisch of the Central Conference of American Rabbis both contacted Bliss with appeals based on religion. Their scheme involved a weekend when messages in churches and synagogues across the country would address the need for disarmament, followed by sending to Congress congregational resolutions supporting the idea. Bliss responded to Lynch, at length:

⁹⁹⁰ A copy of the program for the December 5, 1926 meeting is in Box 367, THB Mss.

⁹⁹¹ Herbert S. Houston to THB, December 6, 1926, and THB to Houston, December 9, 1926, Box 367, THB Mss, LC.

⁹⁹² There is a report on this work, dated October 5, 1928, in Box 374, THB Mss, LC.

⁹⁹³ Frederick Harris, Executive of the National Council, YMCA, to THB, May 21, 1925, and THB to Harris, May 18, 1925; Samuel McC. Cavert, General Secretary, Federal Council of Churches, to THB, November 11, 1925, and THB to Cavert, November 13, 1925, all in Box 370, THB Mss, LC.

My point of view in regard to the question of the limitation of armaments is so different from that of most people that I talk with that I find it difficult for them and myself to have a common understanding. I would not take a single step in the way of disarmament except as the result of an agreement, thoroughly acceptable to us, between ourselves and the other principal nations engaged in the armament rivalry. I have not the faintest idea of what form that first agreement might take. I have, therefore, no scheme of disarmament to propose. My sole contention is that all discussion on this subject is wasted except as it takes place in an International Conference of the principal nations concerned.⁹⁹⁴

The groups responded enthusiastically to Bliss's idea. Their proposal changed to a call for an international conference to reduce armaments, which Bliss endorsed enthusiastically, even supplying a public letter of support.⁹⁹⁵

Such public pressure may have contributed to convening the Washington Naval Conference of 1921 and 1922. The Conference produced a landmark treaty reducing naval armaments and establishing limits on the displacement tonnage of the capital ships of the five major naval powers. When supporters of the treaty then contacted Bliss, asking for his support, he declined to make any public statement or join any organization that did. He explained that once a specific treaty was under consideration in the U.S. Senate, he, "as an officer of the Government, can take no part." He commented that since the president, elected "by an unprecedented majority," was supporting the treaty, he was confident it would be approved. If not,

⁹⁹⁴ Lynch to THB, March 9, 1921; THB to Lynch, March 21, 1921, Linley V. Gordon to THB, April 9, 1921, Calisch to THB, May 20, 1921, all in Box 364, THB Mss, LC.

⁹⁹⁵ THB to the Church Peace Union, March 27, 1921, *ibid.*

then “for the first time a clean-cut issue [would be] before the people of the United States.”⁹⁹⁶

The work that was closest to Bliss’s heart in these last years of his life involved the international peace movement. He used his reputation and his stature as a general in every way possible to encourage American membership in the League of Nations and to work for the causes of world arms limitation and the peaceful settlement of disputes. The appalling number of deaths and the level of destruction during the World War left the western world stunned, but not everyone reacted in the same way. While many people and governments sought revenge, for Bliss, the Great War demonstrated that modern warfare threatened all of the progress of western civilization since the Greeks and Romans. As a disciple of Woodrow Wilson’s peace program, he believed that the United States had entered the war and negotiated the peace settlement with only the purest motives. Wilson’s goals proved impossible to attain because of the behavior of the victorious European leaders. Bliss presented his pessimistic view in a speech on Armistice Day, 1926.

[The United States] fought for an ideal and for neither money nor territory. So did the men in the ranks of other nations, the common peoples of Europe, even if they only realized it vaguely. Then those who fought and those who were to pay for the fighting put the final settlement into the hands of men who were confronted by the loot of the world. They decided to take the loot, which they could only do by letting the ideal go. The board was cleared for a re-creation of the political world under better and safer conditions in a new arrangement.

⁹⁹⁶ THB to George W. Wickersham, March 1, 1922, Box 365, THB Mss, LC. On the Washington Naval Conference, see Thomas Buckley, *The United States and the Washington Naval Conference, 1921-1922*, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1970), Roger Dingman, *Power in the Pacific: The Origins of Naval Arms Limitation, 1914-1922*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), and Betty Glad, *Charles Evans Hughes and the Illusions of Innocence: A Study in American Diplomacy* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1966).

. . . In the creation of new states . . . , they . . . create[d] grave difficulties impeding the economic revival of Europe and the world in general, but also . . . perpetuate[d] in a new form the racial intra-national discords that marked the system which they purported to destroy. And all of this, at the close of the greatest and most disastrous war in history, merely for the purpose of preparing for the next war. Yet, in view of the heated passions of the moment there can be little doubt that it had to be such a peace as that, or none at all.⁹⁹⁷

While that interpretation may appear simplistic today, there is no doubt that Bliss believed it, based on his experiences in Europe during the war and the peace conference, nor can there be any doubt that many Americans shared his view.

In the atmosphere of the 1920s, emphasizing cynicism in politics and sarcasm in writing, and with the outpouring of memoirs, fiction and poetry about the horrors of trench warfare, the international peace movement flourished. In the United States the peace movement became “enormously important in defining the nation’s role in world affairs.”⁹⁹⁸ Some of the most important political leaders, such as Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes and Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover, had taken the same lesson from the war and were ready for an active American role in world affairs.⁹⁹⁹ Bliss was ready to join the peace movement because he shared their view that the League of Nations was the world’s best hope for avoiding another world war. One speech that he presented in person and in print he hoped would appeal across

⁹⁹⁷ Speech on Nov. 11, 1926, copy in box 373, THB Mss, LC, but the copy does not indicate to whom the speech was delivered. If the date on the copy is incorrect, then it may be an address Bliss delivered on Armistice Day, 1922, to the Pennsylvania Society, Sons of the American Revolution, in Pittsburgh.

⁹⁹⁸ Warren I. Cohen, *Empire Without Tears: America’s Foreign Relations, 1921-1933* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987), accessed through <http://www.ciaonet.org/book/cohenw/chapter3.html> on December 1, 2006, ch. 3, p. 1.

⁹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

party lines; he titled it, “The League of Nations as a Question of Business.”¹⁰⁰⁰ When Bliss delivered the address to the Democratic Women’s Luncheon Club of Philadelphia, he began by declaring that the issue was “a business question, not a partisan one.” By that he meant that the question of membership in the League should be decided the same way that a person, group or government decided whether an “important financial measure” was wise or not. Bliss told the assembled women that the issue had to be presented in those terms “to have any hope of acceptance,” even though doing so might make it sound as though supporters of the League were abandoning the “deeply moral” aspects of the question.¹⁰⁰¹

Then Bliss moved the argument to the idea he would pursue through the remainder of the decade. He argued that just as the “whole progress of man has been marked by this constant struggle to get the individual to surrender for the good of the community what . . . are his admitted rights. This surrender . . . has brought man more and more under the dominion of law.” It was the rule of law within nations that “alone constitutes civilization.”¹⁰⁰² Bliss found it “amazing” that governments were reluctant to take this same step internationally after the First World War, since he considered the League as the only possible course of “sanity.”¹⁰⁰³ Nations must recognize that “history teaches” that the “recurrent disasters” of major wars were only possible while states “cling to the character of relations that the individual man within

1000 There are pamphlet copies of this speech in both the THB Mss, USAMHI and in Box 369, THB Mss, LC.

1001 *Ibid.*, 3.

1002 *Ibid.*, 5.

1003 *Ibid.*, 6.

them long ago rejected as intolerable.” Rather than live and act in a world dominated by the “spirit of ignorance, suspicion and fear,” governments should acknowledge that the League of Nations was the “first attempt to free the world from the domination of that spirit.”¹⁰⁰⁴

Another instance of Bliss speaking for these causes began with a letter from *The Forum* magazine. The literary editor, A. Washington Pezet, wrote to ask Bliss to participate in one of a series of debates in its pages. The subject was to be “various aspects of peace and war,” as well as other contemporary issues of world politics. The magazine had secured an article from Rear Admiral William L. Rodgers arguing that rather than join any of the institutions of world peace or world government, the United States should rely on its own armed might. Pezet sought an opponent for Rodgers, and he considered Bliss ideal for the role because of his “wide military experience” combined with his belief that a “policy of militaristic [sic] isolation can only lead to . . . a repetition of the disaster that befell the late German empire.” Pezet hoped that Bliss would inaugurate this series by contributing an article of no more than three thousand words.¹⁰⁰⁵

From this beginning Bliss became involved not only in writing the article, but in a radio debate with the same opponent on the same subject. Pezet wrote again asking Bliss to participate in such a broadcast. At first Bliss tried to evade participating, but eventually the Radio Corporation of America scheduled a half hour

¹⁰⁰⁴ Ibid., 12.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Pezet to THB, Feb. 24, 1925, Box 370, THB Mss, LC.

debate for a Saturday evening in May 1925. Broadcast in both Washington, D. C., and New York City, the event attracted newspaper coverage in the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*.¹⁰⁰⁶ Admiral Rodgers provided a Darwinian outlook, combining a traditional belief in preparedness and independent American action with a new argument that as the nation began to “fill up,” the American people would “view . . . war as an international struggle for national well-being.” Bliss pursued his theme that the “world is an association of States having common interests which can be guided and controlled only by common and concerted action—and govern our own action accordingly.” Bliss argued that disputes could be settled in only two ways, through war or through “peaceful concerted action.” He was confident that if the United States joined the League of Nations or some similar organization, it would be able to push American ideas for international law and arbitration, ideas that the “people of America have so long advocated.”

An avid supporter of United States membership in the League of Nations, Bliss’s work at the Versailles Peace Conference had left him deeply frustrated. He strongly supported most of President Woodrow Wilson’s peace program, yet he believed that Wilson had not made the best use of him in the negotiations. Many of the experts on the staff of the American Commission to Negotiate Peace shared his frustration, as did many members of the British staff. Younger members of the two delegations met frequently to discuss their situations. From these conversations came

¹⁰⁰⁶ Pezet to THB, March 27, THB to Pezet, March 28 and April 8, Pezet to THB, April 9 and 16, Ralph Edmonds of R. C. A. to THB, April 23, all 1925, and all in Box 370, THB MSS, LC. On May 3, 1925, both papers published articles about the debate; the *Post* article is on p. 4, the *Times* article is on p. 15.

the concept of a group of experts who would be able to lead public opinion on issues of foreign policy.¹⁰⁰⁷ Based on these ideas, the young experts tried to establish an organization for research about and discussion of foreign policy, the American Institute of International Affairs. Despite his age and his support for Wilson, Bliss served as chairman of this group.¹⁰⁰⁸

After struggling for two years, the leaders of the group, Isaiah Bowman of the American Geographical Society and Whitney H. Shepardson, an attorney, discovered that former Secretary of State Elihu Root and others had organized a similar group that met monthly over dinner. These various leaders created The Council on Foreign Relations, with headquarters in New York City. For several years Bliss served on the Editorial Advisory Board of the Council's journal, *Foreign Affairs*, and he was a frequent contributor to its pages. As late as December, 1928, Bliss presided at a dinner of the Council, introducing the three speakers on the program.¹⁰⁰⁹ He was also one of the two honorary members of the Council, in recognition of his role in founding one of its predecessor organizations as well as his eminence "understood perhaps more in Europe than [the United States] for he was averse to all the practices

¹⁰⁰⁷ The source for this general history of the early years of the Council on Foreign Relations is Robert D. Schulzinger, *The Wise Men of Foreign Affairs: The History of the Council on Foreign Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 3-4.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Hamilton Fish Armstrong, "General Tasker H. Bliss," *Foreign Affairs*, V. 9, No. 2 (January 1931), 339.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Walter Mallory, to THB, November 19, 1928, and a report of the executive directors of the Council, November 26, 1928, both in Box 378, THB Mss, LC.

of publicity.”¹⁰¹⁰ In these roles “as in every relationship of his life, he was simple, outspoken, generous with his mind and his time.”¹⁰¹¹

That generosity becomes clear from the number of articles that Bliss produced for *Foreign Affairs* during the 1920s. While it sometimes required pleading, both Archibald Cary Coolidge, the editor, and Hamilton Fish Armstrong, the managing editor, eagerly sought his contributions. Some of his articles were historical and have been mentioned, but some were efforts to promote arms limitation and international conciliation. One such article, “What is Disarmament?,” appeared in *Foreign Affairs* in 1926, and Bliss’s friend James T. Shotwell had it reproduced in *International Conciliation*, a publication of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Bliss enjoyed a close working friendship with Shotwell, a leading peace activist who was a professor at Columbia University as well as a director of the Endowment.¹⁰¹² This essay demonstrates that Bliss’ grounding in history, his familiarity with the workings of governments, and his knowledge of military policy kept his ideas from drifting into fuzzy utopianism. Again he pursued his argument that the rule of law had gradually brought order to society within civilized countries. Consequently, it should be extended to the international arena to preserve civilization from the danger of destructive warfare. Bliss wrote that there were four possible steps before resorting to war,

¹⁰¹⁰ Armstrong, “General Bliss,” 340.

¹⁰¹¹ *Ibid.*, 339.

¹⁰¹² *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. IV, No. 3 (April 1926), 17-33; *International Conciliation*, No. 220 (May 1920), 263-279.

1. Some sort of direct approach, with a view to adjustment; if this fails, then successively,
2. Some sort of conciliation by friendly parties;
3. Arbitration;
4. Judicial procedure.¹⁰¹³

The first two methods, Bliss contended, had been practiced for centuries, at least informally, while arbitration had been growing in the twenty-five years before 1914. Disarmament, he believed, “depends upon some accepted form of arbitration, or some form of Court, or both.”¹⁰¹⁴ Since governments would not give up the right to resort to war as the ultimate means of decision, the possibility of disarmament then rested on their willingness to negotiate treaties promising arbitration and multi-lateral treaties of guarantee. If nations more frequently turned to an international court to settle disputes, then of necessity there would be a growing body of international law.¹⁰¹⁵

Bliss acknowledged that law by itself was not the solution. States would “reduce their forces in proportion as their fear of each other nation disappears.” Then the question of disarmament, while grave and complex, was related to collective security. That could not be based on the often popular effort to distinguish between offensive and defensive armaments, since there was almost nothing that could be called “purely defensive armament.”¹⁰¹⁶ Instead, Bliss called for the “reduction and limitation” of armaments as the only practical method for a beginning. He offered his

¹⁰¹³ *Ibid.*, 265.

¹⁰¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 267.

¹⁰¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 268-269.

¹⁰¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 274.

opinion that the “most practicable” method was to begin with “regional limitation and reduction growing out of increasing regional security.”¹⁰¹⁷ On that basis, he hoped, governments would more readily enter into “treaty obligations to resort to arbitration or to the World Court for the settlement of international disputes.”¹⁰¹⁸

More than any other article he wrote in the 1920s, this one systematically laid out Bliss’s thinking on international relations in the aftermath of the First World War. One of the themes that runs through the entire history of American foreign policy is the conflict between idealism and realism. In the country’s earliest years, American diplomats portrayed themselves as the representatives of a virtuous republic, but in 1783 they did not hesitate to abandon their pledges to the French in order to secure a favorable treaty ending the War for Independence. Throughout the 19th century, the United States sent ministers plenipotentiary abroad as its representatives abroad, not ambassadors extraordinary, declining to portray itself as a major power, yet it pursued an aggressive diplomacy of national expansion. Many historians consider Woodrow Wilson a diplomatist who spoke of noble ideals but frequently used force to protect national interests. In this continuing struggle to guide American foreign policy, the 1920s were the highpoint of idealism. The experience of the World War brought Bliss to share the ideals, but to these discussions he contributed a solid element of realism.¹⁰¹⁹

¹⁰¹⁷ Ibid., 277.

¹⁰¹⁸ Ibid., 279.

¹⁰¹⁹ An outstanding scholarly work that deals with the conflict of idealism and realism in Wilson’s foreign policy is Frank Ninkovich, *The Wilsonian Century: U.S. Foreign Policy Since 1900* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1999); see especially the introduction, 1-16.

One of the most promising peace efforts of the middle 1920s, at least in the minds of peace advocates in the United States and Europe, was what came to be known as the “Geneva Protocol.” It grew out of the persistent French demand for security that had been frustrated since the United States rejected the treaty of guarantee that was part of the Versailles settlement. The British government offered a similar guarantee to the French in 1922, but the French government responded with a request for an accompanying military convention, which did not appeal to the British. The French then rejected the offer of a treaty of guarantee.

In 1923, the French occupation of the Ruhr and the runaway German inflation changed the situation drastically. From the American point of view, the economic chaos in Europe created an opportunity for a revision of the financial aspects of the Versailles peace terms. While the U.S. government cheered from the sidelines, the American bankers Charles G. Dawes and Owen D. Young led an effort to put German finances on a more stable footing. The resulting Dawes Plan brought order to the economic situation in Europe, and by stabilizing the financial situation, it seemed to set the stage for a successful resolution of political disputes as well.¹⁰²⁰

The French linked the issue of disarmament to the problem of security, arguing that France could not disarm without a stronger guarantee of her security. As the French delegate to the League expressed it, “[d]isarmament . . . was a political

¹⁰²⁰ The best study of American diplomacy concerning these issues remains Melvyn P. Leffler, *The Elusive Quest : America's Pursuit of European Stability and French Security, 1919-1933* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979); see esp. 114-115.

rather than a technical question.”¹⁰²¹ Eventually the French diplomats realized that they needed to engage more constructively in the discussion of disarmament, and the British delegation to the Geneva disarmament talks accepted some of the French reasoning about the political basis for disarmament. The result was a proposal for a Treaty of Mutual Assistance “which contained somewhat vague provisions for future disarmament and extremely precise guarantees for present security.”¹⁰²² The 1923 General Assembly of the League of Nations referred this treaty to the member governments but only France and her allies approved it. By 1924, the project was still under discussion in one form or another, and the Assembly of the League again approved it, in slightly different form, as the “Protocol for the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes,” better known as “The Geneva Protocol.” This proposed treaty linked the “concept of compulsory arbitration to . . . scaled down security demands” and thus seemed to break the logjam over which should come first,

1021 Peter Jackson, “France and the Problems of Security and International Disarmament after the First World War,” *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 29, No.2 (April 2006), 265-276, 259.

1022 Edward Hallett Carr, *International Relations Between the Two World Wars, 1919-1939* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Harper Torchbooks paperback, 1966), 89. Carr’s summary of the origins of the Geneva Protocol is on pp. 88-92, but the best work on this topic from the European viewpoint is Zara Steiner, *The Lights That Failed: European International History, 1919-1933* (Oxford, New York, et al: Oxford University Press, 2005), 372-383. See also Andrew Webster, “The Transnational Dream: Politicians, Diplomats and Soldiers in the League of Nations’ Pursuit of International Disarmament, 1920-1938,” *Contemporary European History*, 14: 493-518, published online by Cambridge University Press, November 15, 2005, accessed at <http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayAbstract?fromPage=online> December 3, 2006, and Patrick O. Cohrs, *The Unfinished Peace after World War I: America, Britain and the Stabilization of Europe, 1919-1932* (Cambridge, New York, et al: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 202-205. An older but still useful work is Raymond J. Sontag, *A Broken World, 1919-1939, The Rise of Modern Europe*, William L. Langer, ed. (New York, Cambridge, London, et al: Harper & Row, 1971), 118-127.

disarmament or stronger guarantees of French security.¹⁰²³ In the end, it, too, failed to bridge the gap between the British and French governments.

Nonetheless, the idea led to work in the United States on a treaty of arms limitation and mutual assistance, and Bliss was a principal author of the proposal, along with Professor Shotwell from Columbia University. Even though he recognized the spirit of vengeance that motivated Britain and France during the Paris Peace Conference, Bliss had returned from Paris believing that most of the political leaders in Europe ultimately desired reductions in armaments.¹⁰²⁴

One of his letters demonstrates Bliss's approach to this topic. In the midst of a speaking tour, Bliss carried his usual choices for bedside reading -- a detective story and something in Latin. Now he used his familiarity with classical history to illustrate his idea that to limit armaments and prevent wars would require governments to give up some of their independence to establish international regulations. He told Shotwell that he had been reading Livy, and just as he was about to put the book aside and sleep, the following comment caught his attention. Bliss quoted the Roman author,

So difficult is it for men to impose self-restraint on themselves in the measures they take for defending their liberties. Each one, while pretending that he only wants equality of rights, nevertheless in raising himself presses the other men down. In taking such measures as will relieve themselves of fear, men in reality make themselves objects of fear to others.

¹⁰²³ Jackson, "France and the Problems of Security," 270.

¹⁰²⁴ *The Washington Post*, January 13, 1921, p. 3.

Bliss added that this observation from an “old fellow sitting in the Rome of the first Caesar” managed to catch exactly “the case of modern states when first one and then another begins the process inevitably leading to excessive armaments.”¹⁰²⁵

Shotwell formed a committee to work on an American response to the Geneva Protocol, but he and Bliss did most of the work.¹⁰²⁶ The two peace activists drafted a report not on disarmament but on the limitation of armaments, and the Council of the League of Nations voted to distribute it to all the governments represented in the Council. Bliss had made another suggestion to Shotwell. His idea was that the treaty should contain a preamble binding the signatory powers to this principle:

In future [they would] regard all acts of war . . . under the conditions banned by the Treaty, as constituting a war of aggression and, therefore, not entitled to the sympathy of the world. The Treaty could then go on with its specific provisions which bind the signatory powers to a certain line of conduct. . . . Such a declaration would go a good way toward solidifying world sentiment in such a way that even those powers that may hesitate or refuse to sign the Treaty will, nevertheless, feel that it carries a force that even they must take note of.¹⁰²⁷

This method of making compulsory arbitration the means to define aggression became the heart of the American plan, or what became known in Europe as the “Shotwell-Bliss Plan,” and made it appealing to the French diplomats.¹⁰²⁸

¹⁰²⁵ THB to Shotwell, December 14, 1925, quoted in Palmer, *Bliss, Peacemaker*, 451.

¹⁰²⁶ For a newspaper summary of this work, giving principal credit to Shotwell and Bliss, see *The New York Times*, June 18, 1924, p. 4. The *Times* published an outline of the League’s final version of the Protocol on Oct. 2, 1924, p. 6.

¹⁰²⁷ THB to Shotwell, June 2, 1924, Box 369, THB Mss, LC.

¹⁰²⁸ Jackson, “France and the Problems of Security,” 271.

The hope of American membership had never died among the supporters of the League, and this form of cooperation brought “the liveliest spirit of optimism over the day’s developments.”¹⁰²⁹ In the end Britain refused to accept the Geneva Protocol, with or without the American plan, but according to a recent student of this episode, it was a “decisive moment in the reorientation of French foreign policy.”¹⁰³⁰ Certainly it brought about better relations between the French and American governments and thus helped prepare the way for the Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928, another of the high points of idealistic diplomacy during the 1920s.¹⁰³¹

When the League discussed another treaty draft in August, several Americans were in attendance. These included Bliss and Shotwell, along with David Hunter Miller, but so were former attorney general George W. Wickersham and former ambassador Henry Morgenthau, as well as five members of Congress. Ultimately, the League Council referred the issues to a Disarmament Conference to be held the following year in Geneva.¹⁰³² Nothing immediate came of the Geneva Protocol or the American variant, but the initiative continued to excite the hopes of peace advocates in Europe and the United States. In November, the Council on Foreign Relations hosted a dinner to hear speeches on the subject. The speakers included Bliss, Shotwell, and Elihu Root. The last, a great advocate for the World Court, told

¹⁰²⁹ *The Washington Post*, June 18, 1924, p. 4, and a longer report, including the text of the draft treaty, is in *The New York Times*, June 18, 1924, p. 4.

¹⁰³⁰ Jackson, “France and the Problems of Security,” 275.

¹⁰³¹ The best study of the negotiations leading to this famous agreement remains Robert H. Ferrell, *Peace in Their Time: the Origins of the Kellogg-Briand Pact* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), but see also Steiner, *Lights That Failed*, 572-574.

¹⁰³² *The New York Times*, September 10, 1924, p. 25.

the guests that the “greatest contributions to . . . world peace are the negotiations and exchanges that have failed in their immediate object. . . . What has happened at Geneva is the progressive expression of the world’s demand for peace.”¹⁰³³

Bliss found another way to follow up on his trip to Geneva and his work on the treaty draft. He joined the speakers series at Columbia University and on October 30 delivered an address there about his experience at Geneva.¹⁰³⁴

Bliss prized the opportunities that came his way to work with young people, especially those attending colleges and universities. He eagerly accepted invitations as a commencement speaker, visiting such diverse institutions as Harvard University, the Carnegie Institute of Technology (now Carnegie-Mellon University), and Haverford College. Speaking to the graduating class at the Carnegie Institute, Bliss utilized an idea he borrowed from Plato, that rather than have “age . . . preach the lessons of its experience to youth,” instead “age should reverence youth.”¹⁰³⁵ The retired general told the students that they would be “the Intelligence Officers, the trained General Staff of the great army of brain and hand workers upon whose proper leadership and direction the prosperity and happiness of [the] country and, in some degree, of the world” would depend in the coming years. In that position, he urged on them one critical responsibility, that as they were “taking up the grave duties of citizenship to begin or continue the study of the foreign relations of their country.”

¹⁰³³ Ibid, November 26, 1924, p. 10.

¹⁰³⁴ *The Washington Post*, October 26, 1924, p. A7.

¹⁰³⁵ These quotations come from the excerpts published in *The Carnegie Alumnus*, Vol. 10, No. 6 (June 1924), 3-5, a copy of which was courteously provided by the Carnegie-Mellon University Development Office.

Such study, Bliss believed, had become “necessary to wisely determine our most important domestic problems and in the two together are all the issues of future peace and war.”

Bliss had the opportunity to take this message, or one like it, to many other campuses. When his work at the Home allowed him time, he accepted offers of honorary degrees, usually with a speech involved in the presentation.¹⁰³⁶ The Institute of Politics at Williams College, in Williamstown, Massachusetts, invited Bliss to give its keynote address in 1923. He gladly accepted, but an illness forced him to postpone his presentation until August.¹⁰³⁷ In December 1925 and January 1926, he traveled to a number of colleges at the behest of the Carnegie Endowment. The program was to speak to the International Relations Clubs of various institutions. One trip took him through the Midwest, the second took him to the South. In a letter Bliss described a typical evening on campus.

At [Wilson College in] Chambersburg I found a club of eighteen very intelligent and interesting young women. The meeting . . . when I spoke was an “open” one, that is to say pretty much everyone at the college was present. After my talk I suggested that the members . . . ask questions and express their own views . . . , [b]ut, just as I expected, there was a certain amount of diffidence . [T]his all disappeared in the reception . . . immediately afterwards . A cup of tea and some light refreshment seemed to open the mouths of all of them. Then they put me through a rapid-fire of very intelligent questions. When I asked questions myself

¹⁰³⁶ For offers he declined, see THB to Dr. Emory W. Hunt, March 27, 1920, Box 367, THB Mss, LC, THB to H Walton Mitchell, May 3, 1925, and THB to Hamilton Holt to THB, December 14, 1926, both in Box 371, THB Mss, LC. For an acceptance, see Charles E. Hyatt to THB, May 21, 1925, Dr. W. W. Comfort to THB, March 26, 1927, in Box 372, THB Mss, LC, and The Adjutant General to THB, August 23, 1927, *ibid*.

¹⁰³⁷ President H. A. Garfield to THB, June 29, 1923, and Walter W. McLaren to THB, July 31, 1923, both in Box 368, THB Mss, LC.

they had no hesitation in expressing their own opinions. I think they would have kept it up all night .

At another college for women, the atmosphere became more relaxed after the Dean mentioned Bliss's correct name several times and then, at the end, introduced him as "General Dawes."¹⁰³⁸

With so much time given to peace activities, Bliss may have somewhat neglected his work at the Soldiers' Home. At the beginning of 1926, he had served two terms of three years as the Governor. He desired another term and wrote to the Board of Commissioners requesting one,¹⁰³⁹ but the governing board of the Home was wavering about whether or not to grant it. In a letter written almost a year later to William W. Atterbury, President of the Pennsylvania Railroad, Edward Goring Bliss spoke of being "completely caught napping" in January 1926 by the possibility that the Board would not grant his father another three years.¹⁰⁴⁰ He told Atterbury that the Board met in executive session, decided not to grant the extension, and sent their recommendation to the Secretary of War.¹⁰⁴¹ Taken by surprise, Goring found it "very difficult" because he had to ask the Secretary to go against a definite recommendation. He must have moved quickly, because on January 28, nine days after Tasker's request, Secretary Dwight F. Davis wrote that President Calvin Coolidge had extended his term for one year.¹⁰⁴² There is a clue about the most

¹⁰³⁸ THB to Henry S. Haskell, December 3, 1925, quoted in Palmer, *Bliss, Peacemaker*, 450.

¹⁰³⁹ THB to the Board of Commissioners, U.S. Soldiers' Home, Jan. 19, 1926, Box 370, THB Mss, LC.

¹⁰⁴⁰ EGB to Atterbury, Dec. 13, 1926, EGB Mss, USAMHI.

¹⁰⁴¹ According to Goode, *Soldiers' Home*, 181, they recommended General David C. Shanks.

¹⁰⁴² Davis to THB, Jan. 28, 1926, and S.O. No. 55-0, War Department, Washington, March 6, 1920, all in Box 370, THB Mss, LC.

important influence on the decision in a letter written the following November.

Atterbury commented to Senator David A. Reed of Pennsylvania that Reed had been “most helpful” in bringing about the extension.¹⁰⁴³

Goring Bliss wrote to Atterbury in December of 1926 because he was trying to get an early start on a campaign to gain his father another extension. He had written in November, recalling a conversation they had had two weeks earlier. Goring supplied Atterbury with a list of the members of the Board, but he also commented “the Board will not have much influence in the matter.” Probably any influence that could be exerted needed to be directed at the Secretary of War, “or higher.”¹⁰⁴⁴ Again it is clear that the post of Governor of the Soldiers’ Home had become a political plum, to be awarded on a political basis.

A week after Goring’s letter, General James G. Harbord wrote Atterbury, commenting that “a year ago you were good enough to interest yourself” in General Bliss’s situation and hoping that he would do so again.¹⁰⁴⁵ Having been involved in some of the same peace activities, Harbord credited Bliss with a mind that was “the ablest, in some respects, possessed by any of our military men of my time.” Knowing that Bliss had little income beyond his retirement pay (\$500/month), retaining him in the Governorship meant he would be free to “devote his mind . . . to the solution of some of our problems that have arisen since the War . . . and . . . devote himself to

¹⁰⁴³ Atterbury to Reed, Nov. 24, 1926, copy in the EGB Mss, USAMHI.

¹⁰⁴⁴ EGB to Atterbury, Nov. 16, 1926, EGB Mss, USAMHI.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Harbord to Atterbury, Nov. 23, 1926, copy in the EGB Mss, USAMHI. Atterbury sent the copy to Goring Bliss.

public service.” Harbord told Atterbury that no one in Bliss’s family had approached him to solicit his aid, a comment affirmed by Goring in a letter to Atterbury,¹⁰⁴⁶ but he hoped that “the great power of the Pennsylvania Railroad” could do something for Bliss.¹⁰⁴⁷

Atterbury did contact Senator Reed again, and Reed talked to Secretary of War Davis again.¹⁰⁴⁸ Reed replied to Atterbury that the Secretary thought the matter would not be dealt with until “late in the Spring.” When he passed on this information to Bliss’s son, Goring replied reminding him of their experience the year before.¹⁰⁴⁹ In fact the decision was made in early February of 1927. Goring wrote to Atterbury on February 3, discussing the members of the Board and hoping that he had enough of them convinced to support his father, but in the end he did not.¹⁰⁵⁰ On February 19, the President’s new appointment was announced; Major General Henry P. McCain (U.S. Army, retired) would be the new Governor as of May 1.¹⁰⁵¹

Tasker Bliss was disappointed but not surprised, and he worked to help the staff of the Home get to know General McCain by hosting an informal dinner for the new Governor in mid-March.¹⁰⁵² Bliss would have enjoyed more time as Governor, but by the end of his second tour, there was a growing dissatisfaction with his

¹⁰⁴⁶ EGB to Atterbury, Dec. 13, 1926, EGB Mss, USAMHI.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Harbord to Atterbury, Nov. 23, 1926, copy in the EGB Mss, USAMHI.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Atterbury to Senator Reed, Nov. 24, 1926, and Reed to Atterbury, Dec. 21, 1926, EGB Mss, USAMHI.

¹⁰⁴⁹ EGB to Atterbury, Dec. 13, 1926, EGB Mss, USAMHI.

¹⁰⁵⁰ EGB to Atterbury, Feb. 3, 1927, EGB Mss, USAMHI.

¹⁰⁵¹ S.O. No. 42, War Department, Washington, Feb. 19, 1927.

¹⁰⁵² THB to Major L. A. Kefauver, March 12, 1927, Box 372, THB Mss, LC.

management. Goring acknowledged as much in his February 1927 letter to Atterbury. He had learned that most of the complaints pertained to the finances of the Home. By 1927, Bliss was under increasing pressure to achieve cost reductions and balance the budget.¹⁰⁵³ It is not surprising that the governing board wanted someone new in charge. While the financial problems were real, Goring considered them a “smoke screen” to cover the real reasons for selecting a change: “Financial policy is largely dictated by the Board and limitations are those laid down by the Secretary of War and Congress.”¹⁰⁵⁴ Bliss himself noted in one letter that he was “swamped” with a “prolonged study of the financial situation of this Home,” but he was involved in that task after having learned the choice of his successor.¹⁰⁵⁵

It does appear that many of the methods of the earlier years no longer worked. The Home included a small flock of chickens to provide eggs for the mess. By early 1926, although the flock remained in excellent health,¹⁰⁵⁶ they were not providing enough eggs. The messes had to purchase from outside, and the market price for eggs was charged against the Home’s budget.¹⁰⁵⁷ Earlier, the dairy herd had been a source of pride; Bliss had worked successfully to increase its size and quality.¹⁰⁵⁸ By 1927, even though the health of the herd remained excellent,¹⁰⁵⁹ he was reducing the size to

¹⁰⁵³ Sec of War Dwight Davis to THB, Feb. 5, 1927, Box 372, THB Mss, LC.

¹⁰⁵⁴ EGB to Atterbury, Feb. 3, 1927, EGB Mss, USAMHI.

¹⁰⁵⁵ THB to Hamilton Fish Armstrong, March 16, 1927, Box 372, THB Mss, LC.

¹⁰⁵⁶ J.R. Mohler, Chief of the Bureau of Animal Industry, U.S. Department of Agriculture, to THB, March 26, 1927, Box 372, THB Mss, LC.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Orders No. 13, March 22, 1926, Orders Issued by the Office of the Governor, volume 2, Entry E.10, Correspondence and Orders, 1851-1930, RG 231, NARA.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Sec of Agriculture Henry C. Wallace to THB, Sep. 15, 1922, Box 368, THB Mss, LC.

¹⁰⁵⁹ J.R. Mohler, Chief of the Bureau of Animal Industry, U.S. Department of Agriculture, to THB, March 26, 1927, Box 372, THB Mss, LC.

ninety animals from one hundred. The reduction was achieved by selling the poorest cattle to butchers for beef.¹⁰⁶⁰ The sale helped balance the books.¹⁰⁶¹ More important measures to improve the financial situation involved changes in policy, lending credence to Goring's belief that his father should not have been blamed for the problems. First, many of the patients in hospitals whose costs were charged to the Home were transferred to the Veterans Administration. Second, many applicants for places at the Home were referred instead to the same agency, if it would accept them.¹⁰⁶² Thus two financial burdens on the Home shifted to another account. With the national government unable as yet to bring order to veterans' affairs, it is not surprising that the administration of the Soldiers' Home experienced similar problems.

As the date approached for Bliss and his wife to vacate their housing, they faced a difficult search for a new place. They had to leave by the end of April, but as late as March 23 Bliss wrote to his friend Judge Richard Campbell in New York City that he "had not yet decided where to settle."¹⁰⁶³ Two specific issues made it especially hard to choose. One was that moving forced Bliss to arrange his papers, a task that was taking him weeks. The other was that he did not want to be left with nothing to do. Bliss wrote to Campbell that he dreaded the idea "worse than a woman

¹⁰⁶⁰ THB to General John A. Hull, War Department, Feb. 16, 1927, Box 372, THB Mss, LC.

¹⁰⁶¹ Goode, *Soldiers' Home*, 190-191, explains some of the financial issues involved with the dairy herd and the chicken farm.

¹⁰⁶² *Ibid.*, 182.

¹⁰⁶³ THB to Campbell, March 23, 1927, Box 372, THB Mss, LC.

does about ‘nothing to wear’!’¹⁰⁶⁴ Several institutions of higher education had indicated a desire to have Bliss lecture for them, and he was interested in the possibilities. Most of them, however, were in the Philadelphia area. He mentioned Swarthmore College, Princeton University and the University of Pennsylvania by name and alluded to some “others.”¹⁰⁶⁵ Bliss preferred to remain in the Washington, D. C., area in order most readily to see his family and old friends.¹⁰⁶⁶

Finally he and Eleanora found a house in a favorite neighborhood, on Kalorama Road, a convenient location but a quiet street. True retirement would be a difficult change for Bliss; as he told his friend Campbell, “[f]rom the time I entered the Military Academy at West Point to now I have a record of fifty-six years continuous duty; -- only three months and twelve days absence for all causes. During that time I was entitled to a total of four years and four months leave of absence on full pay.” At the end of his career he was sorry he had not taken that leave, if only to see the world, but as it was he had seen “a good deal of it” and he had to admit that he had “had a good time.”¹⁰⁶⁷

Bliss continued as much of his work as he could. He spoke and wrote of getting his papers in order. He wrote to Hamilton Fish Armstrong that all of his writing had to be postponed to make time for arranging his papers.

I was . . . then immediately obliged to take up the immense task of sorting out all my accumulations from before, during and after

¹⁰⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶⁶ For some of the difficulties Bliss experienced in hunting for a house, see THB to Wallace, March 18, 1927, THB to Sackett, March 21, 1927, and THB to General Thomas Q. Donaldson, April 8, 1927, all in Box 372, THB Mss, LC.

¹⁰⁶⁷ THB to Campbell, March 23, 1927, Box 372, THB Mss, LC.

the Peace Conference. On the floor of my office at this moment I have forty-four large file cases completely arranged. I have enough more papers unarranged on the floor to fill pretty nearly as many more. There are still several unpacked boxes yet to examine.¹⁰⁶⁸

To another correspondent he wrote of the papers, “I have now got all the important ones in a series of approximately one hundred filing cases, and [soon will] have time to go over them more carefully and get everything so I shall know exactly where to find it.”¹⁰⁶⁹ In reality that time never came, and along with the filing cases, there were bundles of papers all over his study. He still received offers for his memoirs, but as time went on, he quit making half-promises and responded simply, “There are the papers.”¹⁰⁷⁰ He seems to have shied away from the inevitable controversies that accompanied the publication of memoirs; as always, he preferred to avoid unnecessary personal conflicts. He was even ambivalent about his own fame. While he was proud of some of his achievements, and he was eager to use his position to push his most important causes, none of that meant that he would accept too great a focus on himself as opposed to the cause. When the sculptor Jo Davidson produced a bust of Bliss, “he sought to buy it so he could suppress it.” Learning the price was three thousand dollars, he gave up on that idea, but he enjoyed the last laugh when one of his colleagues from the war told him the bust “made him look like a Chinese Bismarck.”¹⁰⁷¹

¹⁰⁶⁸ THB to Armstrong, March 16, 1927, Box 372, THB MSS, LC.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Quoted in Palmer, *Bliss, Peacemaker*, 457, but without specifying the date or the correspondent.

¹⁰⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 458.

¹⁰⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 463.

When he worked at his desk in the study, he smoked a pipe; otherwise he chose cigarettes. He had a small study in his house. It was cramped, with his papers taking up most of the space even as they occasionally fell off of the desk. He wrote to Judge Campbell of his new life as a retiree: “My pleasures, as befits an old man, are not so much those of hope as of memory. And no pleasure exceeds that which I feel, as I sit here with my pipe and a book and an occasional cheerful glass, as I think of our long-time friendship.”¹⁰⁷²

In particular Bliss followed carefully the memoir literature on the Great War. “When Atterbury sent him a copy of Major General Sir Henry Maurice’s *The Last Four Months: How the War Was Won*, he followed [his] habit of penciled comments on the margins of pages.” The result when he sent it back was a treasure that Atterbury retained and later showed to Frederick Palmer.¹⁰⁷³

When Frederick Palmer, the World War I correspondent who would go on to write the authorized biography of Bliss, lunched with him, Bliss commented with typical modesty, “I’m a retired, garrulous old army officer. Just throw me out when you are tired of me.”¹⁰⁷⁴ In fact, Palmer wrote later, his mind remained “majestic” in its sweep, running through events from his boyhood to the world depression which had just begun. In all of their hours of talk, only once did Bliss make a negative comment about a colleague, and then it was short and direct; “He was a liar, and I told him so.” Bliss was still proud of his work in Cuba, especially the Reciprocity

¹⁰⁷² The description of the study is in *ibid.*, 457-458; the quotation from the letter is on 460.

¹⁰⁷³ *Ibid.*, 461.

¹⁰⁷⁴ This account of their conversation is from *ibid.*, 462-3.

Treaty, and of the part he played in bringing about the unified command in the Great War. He gave credit to the great chiefs for whom he had worked, John M. Schofield, Root (for whom “his respect was mixed with awe”), and the best-loved of them all, Baker.

Even as Bliss aged, his circumstances changed, and his health declined, his interest in world affairs never flagged. He never gave up his work for peace, arms limitation, and informing the public about these issues. In the late 1920s, he contributed three more articles to *Foreign Affairs*, though it could not have escaped him that two of them were memorials to colleagues. The first of these pieces was a memorial for Archibald Cary Coolidge, a founder of the organization as well as the founding editor of the journal. Hamilton Fish Armstrong wrote to Bliss, asking him to write the article about this man who “gave [the journal] its whole stamp and character.”¹⁰⁷⁵ Bliss credited Coolidge with having as “the real objective of his life” the “scientific study of history and the true utilization of its lessons.”¹⁰⁷⁶ He went on with a typical Bliss observation, that Coolidge “knew that history is the history of man and that to understand man he must know men.”¹⁰⁷⁷ His service as editor succeeded because of “his ripened experience and judgment, his tact, and his good common sense.”¹⁰⁷⁸ As a diplomat, Coolidge contributed reports from a special mission to Vienna that the U.S. delegation to the Paris Peace Conference could rely

¹⁰⁷⁵ Armstrong to THB, Jan. 28, 1928, THB Mss, LC, Box ??.

¹⁰⁷⁶ “Archibald Cary Coolidge,” *Foreign Affairs* (v. 6, No. 3, April, 1928), 352-355, 353.

¹⁰⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 354.

on “for the real truth about events that were so often misunderstood or misstated.”¹⁰⁷⁹ Finally, Bliss noted that while serving as editor, Coolidge had also been for sixteen years Director of the Harvard University Library, which became “the love of his heart. He found it a great library; he left it one of the greatest.”¹⁰⁸⁰ Bliss’s own love of books and the ancient classics shaped his final paragraph, in which he pictured Coolidge as he died among his books, to be welcomed by the spirits of their authors into “their Elysium” not in mourning but in celebration that another “modest and gentle” soul was joining them.¹⁰⁸¹

It took a lot of wheedling to get the next article from Bliss’s pen. In the summer of 1927, at an evening meeting of the editorial board of *Foreign Affairs*, Bliss held forth on “the considerations which should govern the formulation of any foreign policy.”¹⁰⁸² For the next year Armstrong tried to persuade him to use those comments as the basis for an article presenting a “synthetic view of American foreign policy with special consideration of what a foreign policy ought to be.”¹⁰⁸³ Finally, again at Armstrong’s suggestion, Bliss took the occasion of the Council’s publication of its annual *Survey of American Foreign Relations*¹⁰⁸⁴ to write the essay.¹⁰⁸⁵ He reprised his favorite theme that just as private struggles between individuals had

1079 Ibid.

1080 Ibid., 355.

1081 Ibid.

1082 Hamilton Fish Armstrong to THB, Aug. 10, 1928, THB Mss., LC, Box 372 (?).

1083 Armstrong to THB, Aug. 13, 1928, THB Mss, LC, Box 372 (?).

1084 Charles P. Howland, ed., *Survey of American Foreign Relations: 1928* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1928).

1085 “The Development of American Policy,” *Foreign Affairs* (V. 7, No. 3, April 1929), 418-426.

gradually come under government regulation, so warfare must come under international legal control. For the United States that meant it must reject the “theory of an isolation that cannot be maintained, in favor of an active cordial cooperation.”¹⁰⁸⁶ Echoing what he had presented twenty years earlier at meetings of the Joint Army-Navy Board, Bliss believed that historically there were “four cardinal doctrines in American policy – isolation, the Monroe Doctrine, the freedom of the seas, and the Open Door. The first is the parent stock of which the others are necessary offshoots. Yet those others are a direct denial of the first.”¹⁰⁸⁷ He went on to argue that the physical and economic expansion of the country had at an early date made isolationism an outmoded policy, as it certainly was in the 1920s.

This nation more than any other had an interest in the policy of freedom of the seas, Bliss wrote, but that doctrine had become inapplicable as the methods of warfare changed:

When every agency of a government is involved in [war], when not only the armed forces but all men, women and children must contribute their . . . energy to the struggle, then every article of trade down to the food and medicines for little children and for the helpless sick in hospitals becomes lawful prize for the belligerent that can seize it. . . . In addition, if a belligerent is strong enough he rations all neutral countries in a position to carry on their ordinary trade with his enemy.¹⁰⁸⁸

1086 *Ibid.*, 420.

1087 *Ibid.*

1088 *Ibid.*, 424.

The Great War had shown that the “interdependence of modern states . . . exists to a degree never before conceived of.”¹⁰⁸⁹ The Central Powers had controlled a massive block of land in the center of the continent, yet they still broke down under the strain of blockade. For Bliss, it was a situation that indicated the reckless stupidity involved in ever again considering war as a possible national policy.

Then what should be the “cardinal doctrines” in a new United States foreign policy? To Bliss the idea that underlay everything else was the absolute necessity for the pacific settlement of disputes. There were, he wrote, four means to do that. “The first two, diplomacy and conciliation, are generally ineffective when a state believes that it has a vital interest at stake.”¹⁰⁹⁰ That left two other means, arbitration and judicial procedure. If these two methods of settlement were the best possibilities, then the implication, Bliss believed, was the need for more extensive international law, and “no state can have a greater interest in this [project] than the United States.”¹⁰⁹¹ In conclusion he urged that every “intelligent citizen” press the government to pursue a four point policy: first, support for international peace; second, the expansion of international law; third, the retention of current policies that contributed to peace; and fourth, the maintenance of preparations for national defense until “all the great nations” agreed upon proportional arms

¹⁰⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Ibid., 426.

¹⁰⁹¹ Ibid.

reductions.¹⁰⁹² At the end of the decade as at the beginning, Bliss pointed to international law as the necessary means to maintain world peace.

The last of these final contributions to *Foreign Affairs* was another memorial and remembrance. In the spring of 1929, while Armstrong was out of the country, someone else on the staff asked Bliss to write a remembrance of Marshal Ferdinand Foch, who had died on March 20. Bliss agreed, which “delighted” Armstrong. Of all the memorial articles which the editor expected to see, he wrote Bliss, “there is none which I shall look forward to reading with more interest than yours.”¹⁰⁹³ When he read the manuscript, Armstrong commented that the remembrance was “restrained and at the same time full of feeling,” which was just what he had hoped Bliss would produce.¹⁰⁹⁴ That reaction did not spare Bliss any of the pain that comes with the process of editing. He and Armstrong exchanged several more letters, carefully reviewing the wording of several sentences. Armstrong acknowledged that, by working at five in the morning, Bliss “put [him] to shame” to such an extent that “the argument is lost in advance.”¹⁰⁹⁵ At the end of the process he commented that Bliss “should have been a lawyer.” His “abilities in argument

¹⁰⁹² Ibid.

¹⁰⁹³ Armstrong to THB, May 1, 1929, Box 374, THB Mss, LC. Armstrong indicates that he had just returned from abroad and that in the interim, Bliss had agreed to write the article.

¹⁰⁹⁴ Armstrong to THB, May 13, 1929, Box 374, THB Mss, LC.

¹⁰⁹⁵ Armstrong to THB, May 22, 1929, Box 374, THB Mss, LC.

and . . . knowledge of Latin” were both so superior that Armstrong would “admit defeat.”¹⁰⁹⁶

During the war Bliss developed a warm friendship with Foch, along with a deep appreciation for his military abilities and even more his qualities of leadership, and these feelings inspired the memorial tribute.¹⁰⁹⁷ Thus this article gives us an insight into what Bliss considered the most important qualities of a military leader. Bliss recalled that they had first met during “the blackest days of the war, in November of 1917.”¹⁰⁹⁸ In this crisis he had found Foch in a bare room with nothing to indicate it was the headquarters of a coalition of many nations. He was wearing “puttees and shoes instead of boots and spurs.”¹⁰⁹⁹ There were no signs of “mental excitement” but many of his “quickness of thought.” Foch issued orders in “short, staccato-like sentences, each word instantly yet carefully chosen and leaving no doubt as to his meaning [and] rapid, unflinching decision.”¹¹⁰⁰ A few days later, in a discussion of Allied shipping priorities and the need for American troops in Europe, Bliss saw the “man of action.”¹¹⁰¹ Having discussed the crisis with Bliss, General John J. Pershing and General Sir William Robertson, the British Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Foch drafted a memorandum and

¹⁰⁹⁶ Armstrong to THB, May 24, 1929, Box 374, THB Mss, LC.

¹⁰⁹⁷ “Foch,” *Foreign Affairs*, V. 7, No. 4 (July 1929), 532-542.

¹⁰⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 533.

¹⁰⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 534.

¹¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 535.

sent it on to the Maritime Transport Committee. Bliss believed that “more was accomplished in an hour than in the previous month’s conferences.”¹¹⁰² The explanation of these extraordinary qualities of leadership lay in Foch’s earlier life.

Bliss considered Foch’s childhood home to have featured a “stern simplicity” that reminded him of the education of an “ancient Roman.” It taught Foch the “intellectual discipline” that allowed him “loyal and intelligent obedience” that made him devote all his “physical and mental energy . . . [to] making good the purpose of [his] commander.” In addition, this upbringing made Foch a “deeply religious man,” which, in the Third Republic, had more often held him back in his career, not benefited him.¹¹⁰³ Most of all, Foch gained a “fixed habit of orderly thinking” that greatly assisted his military career.¹¹⁰⁴

Foch taught at the *École Supérieure de Guerre*, published several books, and trained many of the French generals of the Great War. Before the war he was known as an advocate of the attack, but Bliss believed that too many writers had oversimplified Foch’s ideas. It was “only those who understood him” who should have tried to translate his thoughts into action.¹¹⁰⁵ According to Bliss, rather than simplistically stressing the

1102 *Ibid.*, 536.

1103 *Ibid.*

1104 *Ibid.*, 537.

1105 *Ibid.*, 538.

offensive, Foch understood that the keys to success were, first, to “read his opponent’s mind . . . , [then] observe quickly and correctly, . . . reason accurately . . . state conclusions clearly and concisely . . . [then] communicate his will in orders that cannot be misunderstood.”¹¹⁰⁶ In the Great War Foch had been able to foresee the critical situation that arose in March 1918, but his recommendation to form a general reserve, though approved by the Allied governments, never came to pass. It was a situation typical of the political limitations under which Foch worked. For Bliss the clearest testimony to Foch’s genius was that in these circumstances he was still able to “inspire others with the spirit of his own will” and lead the Allied armies to victory.¹¹⁰⁷ Armstrong considered this tribute to be “one of the nicest things [the journal] ever have published.”¹¹⁰⁸

Bliss would have loved to see those parts of the world he had not yet seen. In late 1929 he received an offer of a trip to China, and he thought seriously of going. He wrote to Baker about the offer. “My wife, of course, says Go [sic]. She thinks only of what she believes would please me, and of herself not at all. It is the way of such wives as mine. I have practically left it to my daughter to decide, for she will weigh the scales more evenly than either her mother or myself would do.”¹¹⁰⁹

¹¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 538-539.

¹¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 541-542.

¹¹⁰⁸ Armstrong to THB, June 13, 1929, Box 374, THB Mss, LC.

¹¹⁰⁹ THB to NDB, Nov. 29, 1929, quoted in *Bliss, Peacemaker*, 461.

Then, two weeks later, he was in Walter Reed Hospital; accompanying his discharge on January 3 was a strong warning on the need for moderation. It was reasonable advice to a man who had just passed his seventy-seventh birthday, and of course he ignored it.¹¹¹⁰ In March he went to New York to preside at a Council on Foreign Relations dinner in honor of Edward George Villiers Stanley, Lord Derby. Afterwards, at the home of his friend Judge Campbell, he suffered intense abdominal pain.¹¹¹¹

As soon as possible he was back in Walter Reed, and this time he remained. He was there for months with Eleanora visiting daily. His children visited regularly, and in warm weather they sometimes took him for automobile rides. Eventually he became too weak to leave his bed. Even then, his mind was clear and his keen interest in the world remained lively. "Goring Bliss relates how when [Newton] Baker came to see him he would not let Baker go, and they discussed the Russian problem for two hours."¹¹¹² He worried that his granddaughter Betty would be left with unhappy memories of his last days in the hospital, but "he could not deny himself the happiness of seeing her."¹¹¹³

The end came on Sunday, November 9, 1930, "after suffering for six months with an intestinal ailment."¹¹¹⁴ Immediately the appropriate authorities offered tributes to his life and career. Secretary of War Patrick J. Hurley declared that the

1110 Ibid.

1111 Ibid., 464.

1112 Ibid.

1113 Ibid.

1114 *The Washington Post*, November 10, 1930, p. 1.

country had lost “one of her most loyal and able public servants.”¹¹¹⁵ Army Chief of Staff Charles P. Summerall observed that Bliss “gave of himself devotedly and effectively to the military service.” John J. Pershing, by this time retired, commented that Bliss had lived his life “in fulfillment of the motto of his alma mater—Duty, Honor, Country.”

The following Wednesday the funeral took place at the Bliss home on Kalorama Road, and then a procession took the body to Arlington National Cemetery.¹¹¹⁶ When the “flag-draped caisson” came to a halt in front of Bliss’s house, some of his neighbors “learned for the first time how important a neighbor” they had had.¹¹¹⁷ His colleague, friend and classmate Hugh L. Scott observed during the funeral: “We leapfrogged each other through the service. He was Chief of Staff and I was Chief of Staff. In the old days of the West when I toiled along the trail . . . I always wanted a mountain in sight for my guide. Bliss was the mountain on my life’s trail.” His colleague Hamilton Fish Armstrong at the Council on Foreign Relations used the same metaphor in a memorial farewell published in *Foreign Affairs*. “A mountain is gone from the scene. It was not one of those mountains which, imposing and azure-hued on the horizon, seem somehow smaller instead of larger on a close approach. It was a majestic peak, and without it there is a permanent gap in the landscape.”¹¹¹⁸

¹¹¹⁵ This and the following quotations are from *The Washington Post*, Nov. 10, 1930, p. 2.

¹¹¹⁶ *The Washington Post*, November 10, 1930, p. 1, noted that the funeral was planned for Wednesday at the house on Kalorama Road.

¹¹¹⁷ Palmer, *Bliss, Peacemaker*, 1.

¹¹¹⁸ Armstrong, “General Tasker H. Bliss,” *Foreign Affairs*, V. 9, No. 2 (January 1931), 340.

Goring penned the obituary for the annual report of the West Point Alumni Association, and he wrote proudly and accurately of a man whose desires were “first, service to his country, and second, service to world wide humanity.”¹¹¹⁹ He added that his father’s prolific writings “indicate . . . an ability to read correctly the signs of the times and foresee the events of years to come in a manner little short of prophetic.”¹¹²⁰

While kind words and tributes are the stuff of funerals, memorial services, and farewell articles, the affection his colleagues felt for Bliss shines through their words. Yet this extraordinary man requires something more as a summary of his life’s work. Not only was he a “great, modest, faithful public servant from the day he took his oath as a cadet.”¹¹²¹ He was a loving husband and father, a life-long student of the classics, a faithful Christian. When Bliss was graduated from the United States Military Academy, in most minds service in the U.S. Army was synonymous with fighting Indians on the frontier. By the time of his death the Army and the War Department included the structures that had achieved a victory in one world war and would soon fight and win another.

Through his own work Bliss had helped to shape that modern military service, especially in terms of its post-graduate educational system, its institutions for professional development, and its strategic thinking. Most of all he was a military

¹¹¹⁹ EGB, *Sixty-Second Annual Report of the Association of Graduates of the United States Military Academy at West Point*, New York, June 10, 1931 (Chicago and Crawfordsville, Ind.: The Lakeside Press, R. R. Donnelly and Sons, Co.), 140-147; this quotation is from 146.

¹¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹²¹ Palmer, *Bliss, Peacemaker*, 465.

officer who utilized his education and his Christian faith to understand how the weaknesses of human nature had come to threaten the entire progress of western civilization. As a man who had studied Greek and Roman history since boyhood, he possessed a realistic basis for such alarm. Seeing the danger, he gave his utmost effort in response, trying to educate the American public about the necessity, the opportunity and the urgency of a new course in international relations.

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