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may find the discussion of hegemony unpersuasive. At best, readers are almost certain to find more value in the individual parts than in the whole. These limitations notwithstanding, this volume probably contains the most extensive survey on advisory missions that has yet been published and will be of great value to researchers. Of particular note is the excellent discussion of Soviet bloc advisory missions, relying heavily on Russian-language source material. Likewise, the chapters on the post-2001 advisory efforts in Afghanistan provide the reader with top-notch field research and first-hand insight. The authors should also be commended for not limiting themselves to military, police, and intelligence advisory missions; instead, they devote a considerable portion of the book to other types. Moreover, the authors succeed in raising many red flags that will hopefully be heeded by policymakers and practitioners.

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A.J.A. Morris, *Reporting the First World War: Charles Repington, The Times and the Great War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015. Bibliography, Index, xv + 395pp. ISBN: 978-1-107-10549-2. Hardback. £64.99.

The role of the press in Britain in the era of the First World War has long been recognised as being of critical importance. Charles à Court Repington, successively military correspondent of *The Times* and the *Morning Post*, was the single most significant military journalist of the period. Impeccably well-connected, Repington possessed a keen analytical brain, and his journalism was both admired and feared. By producing this very welcome and well-researched study, the distinguished historian A.J.A. Morris has filled an important gap in the literature.

Repington's background was as an army officer. Forced to resign his commission in 1902 because of a scandal, (he blamed his fellow Rifleman, Henry Wilson, for wrecking his military career), Repington picked up his pen to earn a living. Repington, as Morris graphically portrays, was exceptionally extravagant. Perhaps his most enduring work, *The First World War*, was published in 1920 in an (inevitably unsuccessful) attempt to clear his debts. This book took the form of a diary, in which he had no compunction about recounting his private conversations with the great and the good. While anyone speaking to him would have had a fair idea of the risks - Morris includes a caricature by Max Beerbohm, in which Repington is shown clutching a notebook. But the book outraged its victims, and reinforced Repington's reputation among the elite as an untrustworthy bounder. His diaries are an invaluable source for the historian, but their publication reinforced the unflattering image of

Repington as an 'elderly thruster', loudly calling for greater sacrifices from army and nation from the comfort of armchair or fashionable restaurant. Professor Morris's achievement is show the substance behind the façade, that as a commentator on military affairs, and to some extent as an actor in the politico-military arena, Repington deserves to be taken seriously.

As Morris argues, the height of Repington's influence came from 1903 to the outbreak of war, and 150 or so pages of the book are devoted to this period. Repington had two avenues of influence. The first was through his writings in *The Times* and elsewhere. Repington was a first class journalist, and people paid attention to his views - although their reaction may not always have been positive. Repington found himself at odds with the experts - 'profoundly mistaken naval fire eaters', in his view – who wrote in his newspaper on naval affairs. So, he invented an alter ego, a German, Colonel von Donner und Blitzen, who wrote letters to *The Times* that embarrassed the Admiralty and raised concerns with the wider public. Secondly, Repington also had an important role behind the scenes. Morris traces his involvement with successive Secretaries of State for War, H.O Arnold-Forster and R.B. Haldane, and the *eminence gris* of the British defence establishment, Lord Esher; and Repington's involvement with the creation of the *Army Review*, a laudable attempt to stimulate intellectual debate and discourse within the officer corps. Morris's careful, and highly detailed, assessment of Repington's role is a significant contribution to our understanding of the politics of defence in the run-up to the First World War. Morris is clear on the limits of Repington's influence. On one issue, Morris comments that a conversation between Repington's nemesis Henry Wilson and the Prime Minister 'achieved more than he had after a long and painstaking campaign'.

Repington was on good terms with Field-Marshal Sir John French, the first commander of the British Expeditionary Force. Indeed, the journalist played a significant role in the 'shells scandal' of 1915, when French blamed the failure of an offensive on the Western Front on the shortage of munitions. This led to attacks by the Northcliffe press on the previously untouchable Lord Kitchener, the Secretary of State for War, and fed into a political crisis that that culminated in the fall of the Liberal government and its replacement by a coalition, still led by Asquith. Repington colluded with French and his staff in producing a report that was implicitly highly critical of Kitchener, with whom his once friendly relations had deteriorated since the outbreak of war. Morris argues, persuasively, that Repington did not set out to bring down Asquith's government: his real target was Kitchener. He clears Repington of being in cahoots with his employer, Northcliffe, in launching and sustaining the shells crisis. Morris argues plausibly that Repington could claim credit for creating an opportunity for Lloyd George 'to begin to introduce what became a total war economy'; for out of the mess emerged the Ministry of Munitions, with Lloyd George

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at its helm. This was possibly the most important outcome of the entire affair, but at the beginning of the process that he helped begin Repington could not have seen the significance of its outcome.

Repington and French's successor Haig were contemporaries in the Army, but they were not soul-mates. Indeed, there is a sly comment in Repington's memoir *Vestigia* (1918) about 'enthusiasts' in the army of his youth, which appears to be aimed at Haig (this is not picked up by Morris). The personalities of the two men were as chalk and cheese; and while Repington was dubious about Haig's ability as a commander (his doubts predated 1914), Haig unfairly lumped Repington's journalism in with 'the gutter press'. Nonetheless, as Morris makes clear, Repington overcame his personal qualms and gave Haig strong support as Commander-in-Chief of the BEF. Both were convinced 'Westerners'. Repington and Haig shared the belief that Britain's objective was the defeat of Germany, and that could only be accomplished on the Western Front. Thus, Repington was relentless in his demands for more war material to be sent to the BEF - not that Haig showed any gratitude. Yet Repington's staunch public advocacy was of incalculable value to Haig, especially with Lloyd George installed in Downing Street. It undoubtedly played a role, for better or worse, in Haig's survival as C-in-C.

Unfortunately, the book is marred by the absence of a balanced view of Douglas Haig. Given the importance of the Haig-Repington relationship, this is a serious weakness. *Reporting the First World War* would have been greatly improved by the removal of comments such as this: that Haig 'maybe because he was persuaded that he was divinely inspired, for long seemed to think he could win without acceding to the same dreadful imperatives as other commanders. He insisted he would find a way to break through the enemy lines and gallop on to victory'. Haig's conduct of the war deserves careful, nuanced criticism, but sadly it is not to be found in these pages. He assumes, for instance, that Haig only had one plan for the Somme, 'a swift and decisive breakthrough' when in reality he also had a Plan B, for attrition. The book would have benefitted from a more nuanced treatment of the war of attrition to which Repington was committed. It is perhaps significant that the most recent scholarly biography of Haig, written by this reviewer, does not appear in the bibliography. Neither do the works of Stephen Badsey, and David Kenyon, which have transformed our understanding of cavalry on the Western Front; and other key writings on various topics by the likes of David French, William Philpott, Hew Strachan and Jim Beach do not seem to have been consulted.

Morris is candid on his subject's failings: his sizeable ego; Repington's 'arrogant self-assurance'; and his failure fully to understand the extent to which being criticised in print could alienate people. Yet Morris's Repington is a man of principle, who supported Haig, despite his reservations about his suitability as C-in-C, because of

his firm belief in the primacy of the Western Front. Likewise, Repington did not move to the *Morning Post* because, as Geoffrey Dawson, the editor of *The Times* believed, he had negotiated a large pay-rise. Rather, Repington could no longer agree with Dawson's editorial line on key aspects of the war effort, particularly the provision of manpower, and the relationship between the two men all but broke down. Morris's view that Repington truly regarded his action as patriotic and disinterested is convincing. Unfortunately for Repington's standing, his many enemies, who included the Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, saw his move as being Machiavellian, prompted by his well-known hatred for the new Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Henry Wilson. His reputation never fully recovered. Repington's shade has good reason to thank A.J.A. Morris for this scholarly reassessment which, despite the flaws mentioned earlier, does its subject justice.

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