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Eric Larrabee, **Commander in Chief: Franklin Delano Roosevelt, His Lieutenants, and Their War**, Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 2004. 735 pp.

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The late Eric Larrabee, former editor of *Harper's*, *American Heritage*, and *Horizon* wrote a valuable and insightful examination of American war leadership which will help historians and students alike in better understanding the war presidency of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Larrabee wrote several articles and lectured on a variety of subjects, but in the case of *Commander in Chief* he successfully forged thirty years of reading with his own military service in the United States Army to produce military history at its best.

Commander in Chief is a very readable book which focuses on Franklin D. Roosevelt, war leader, grand strategist, and the men who helped win the Second World War. The author has engaged in some intensive research, pulling together personal memoirs, official histories, sifting through various manuscripts and relevant monographs to explain a very complex story in a cogent manner.

The book contains ten chapters. In the first chapter, the author discusses Franklin D. Roosevelt, then in the subsequent nine chapters Larrabee examines the men through whom Roosevelt exercised his power, notably Marshall, King, Arnold, Vandegrift, MacArthur, Nimitz, Eisenhower, Stillwell, and LeMay. The author argues that Roosevelt, the domestic reformer, has received far more attention than Roosevelt the war leader. After the attack on Pearl Harbor Roosevelt was forced to rethink American foreign policy, abandoning the unilateral model forged by America's first grand strategist John Quincy Adams, embracing a cooperative response formalized through the creation of the Grand Alliance.

As would be expected General George C. Marshall is given considerable attention. The gripping analysis of Marshall lends considerable weight to Harry Truman's assertion that "Marshall won the war." Marshall, the chief of staff, organized the ground forces that in the end, combined with the air force, secured the victory in Europe and paved the way for the subsequent defeat of the Japanese. The author stresses Marshall's role in the Victory Plan of 1941 and the impact in Germany after the plan was exposed by the *Chicago Tribune*. Marshall became frustrated while planning the

invasion of France and he considered re-directing forces to the Pacific Theatre before Roosevelt intervened.

The entirety of the work stresses the interrelationship between Roosevelt and his commanders. According to the author Roosevelt ran a unified command, holding the reins of power tightly and employing the commanders and the military as servants and tools of the state. Roosevelt was a fast study and he used all of power of persuasion to keep his commanders working together, making the United States Military a more effective fighting force. All the while, Roosevelt waged a successful global military campaign, never losing sight on the prospects of the post-war world.

In concluding a careful reading of the book one cannot but marvel at two things: Roosevelt's inspiring ability as a war leader and a military strategist; and his ability to attract to his command some of America's most talented military men. Although this work was originally published in 1987 his chapter notes and thirteen-page bibliography will serve as a rich resource for scholars for years to come.

However, Roosevelt was far from perfect. The author clearly illustrates Roosevelt's many missteps by neglecting to establish a coherent China policy, and his interference with the command of Major General Joseph Warren Stillwell was truly a black stain on the President's record. Roosevelt undermined and compromised Stillwell's authority at nearly every turn by sending a steady stream of presidential representatives who knew nothing about China.

On the whole, this book, the winner of the Francis Parkman Prize is highly recommended for readers interested in Roosevelt's role as war leader. The work is well written, truly engaging, demonstrating a masterful use of the available resources, and is well worth the effort.



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