

Kent Deng

London School of Economics

Email: k.g.deng@lse.ac.uk

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Gregory L. Schneider. *Rock Island Requiem: The Collapse of a Mighty Fine Line*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2013. xx + 380 pp. ISBN 978-0-7006-1918-4, \$39.95 (cloth).

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The story of the long, slow death of the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad Company (CRIP) is well known. A staid, highly respected Granger Road falls on hard times, along with the rest of its industry, as automobiles, trucks, and airplanes siphon off traffic. A suitor willing to buy and save it appears in the form of the Union Pacific Railroad (UP), but a decade of delays by the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) dooms the merger. When the green light to proceed is finally given, the UP has lost interest and the Rock Island limps on before being dissolved and sold off in segments.

*Rock Island Requiem* goes behind these generalities to detail the drawn-out decline of the CRIP, which began in March 1962 when it opened merger talks with the UP. Two years later, the corporations forged an agreement in principle and the UP submitted it to the ICC in September 1964. Five years after that, the Justice Department approved the merger, which is when things got really interesting. Opposition from neighboring railroads and nervous shippers slowed proceedings to a crawl, and the CRIP stopped maintaining its physical plant, which deteriorated to the point at which there was more slow-order track than not. When the ICC finally authorized amalgamation in November 1974, the UP and its would-be merger partner, the Southern Pacific, had lost interest. Unable to secure financing, the CRIP declared bankruptcy in March 1975.

Even though it was the beginning of the endgame, that was not the end of the story. Gregory Schneider of Emporia State University explores in great detail how and why the bankruptcy Trustee, William Gibbons, believed “the Rock” could be saved despite the external forces arrayed against it and the desire of its largest shareholder, Henry Crown, to liquidate it. Though it was running low on cash and providing unreliable service, the Rock ran trains into 1979, when a terrible winter and a crippling strike resulted in court-ordered liquidation the next year. Selling the lines took four years, and not until

1988 did the Rock Island (by then an asset-holding company called the Chicago Pacific Corporation) finally cease to exist.

Along the way, Schneider shows how Rock Island chairman Jervis Langdon tried desperately to negotiate with other railroads during the merger proceedings and how his diplomacy was blocked by the UP. By 1974, things were so bad that the CRIP was living from hand to mouth, with insufficient cash on hand to meet payroll and additional capital impossible to secure. Approaching the United States Railway Administration for loans proved increasingly frustrating and, though in 1977 the government of Iowa tried to resuscitate branch lines in the state, Crown urged the court-appointed trustee to liquidate the railroad. When the corporation ran out of cash, the sell-off began. As Schneider writes, this was an incredibly successful venture in which the creditors lost nothing. Emblematic of the cash value of CRIP assets was the bidding war between two rival railroads for the Rock Island “spine line” between St. Paul and Kansas City, which pushed the price up from \$76 million to \$93 million.

Schneider places the Rock Island case into its historical contexts to explain the wider significance of the bankruptcy. Those contexts include government regulation and its multiple failures; national politics and why the federal government privileged East Coast railroading over the Midwest when it created Conrail but allowed the Rock to expire; the declining railroad industry of the Midwest; how other lines stabbed at the merger to derail it; and legal squabbles over how the merger should be handled and how the bankruptcy should unfold.

Schneider labels his work a “policy history” (p. 9), but it is much more than that. This is a very human story. He introduces the main characters evenhandedly, including executives on competing railroads who caused frequent delays to ICC hearings and worked diligently to make sure their lines survived at the Rock’s expense. He has combed through manuscript collections, legal hearings, regulatory briefings, newspaper accounts, and secondary sources. One source he eschewed, however, is interviews with the main players, many of whom were still alive when he wrote the book, because he wanted the interpretation to be unsullied by the recollections of participants (p. xii). This is a pity, though not a weakness, because their differing perspectives would have added nuance to the narrative.

In an otherwise excellent work of detailed historical analysis, the interpretation stumbles when Schneider seeks to assign responsibility for the Rock Island’s demise. He blames organized labor and federal regulators for the collapse of the Rock Island when the villains were many, including economic forces beyond contemporaries’ control. With stunning exaggeration, Schneider fingers the United Transportation Union for protecting its twenty-four members operating Rock Island passenger

services, claiming that the union's intransigence "would wind up costing labor thousands of jobs a few years later" (p. 193). Although the Brotherhood of Railway and Airline Clerks' strike "would kill the Rock Island," the corporation was already on life support (p. 230) and theirs was merely the fatal blow. Regulators bore a share of the responsibility for the railroad's demise, although Schneider exaggerates their effect, too. It is true that "regulatory intrusion" (p. 60) and an ICC that wielded "too much bureaucratic power and failed to do its job properly" (p. 61) were partly responsible for the railroad industry's decline, but economic recession, competition from other modes of transportation, and the refusal of railroads to cooperate contributed to the Rock's collapse.

Ultimately, this is an important work. Viewed from the court bench and the boardroom, the Rock's fate is complicated and messy. Schneider concludes that the destruction of the Rock laid the foundation for a new relationship between federal government and railroad industry, beginning with partial deregulation in 1980. That so much of the Rock's mileage is still in use proves the old adage about the phoenix and its ashes, an adage the currently profitable railroad industry demonstrates.

Simon Cordery

Western Illinois University

Email: S-Cordery@wiu.edu

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Katherine C. Epstein. *Torpedo: Inventing the Military-Industrial Complex in the United States and Great Britain*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014. 328 pp. ISBN 9780674725263, \$47.50 (cloth).

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Historians often push the origins of phenomena further back into the past; Katherine Epstein does just that by locating the origins of the military-industrial complex in turn-of-the twentieth-century British and U.S. torpedo production, rather than in the Cold War arms race. Epstein asks us to redefine the scale of the military-industrial complex's features and cast our attention not just on the United States, but on Great Britain as well. Because of the tremendous technical detail and perceptive analysis, this proves easy enough. *Torpedo* combines the fields of legal, business, and science and technology history to offer fresh insight on a subject usually left to military historians.

The book comprises six chapters that alternate between the United States and Great Britain. Before diving into the particularities of