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## Reluctant Allies: German-Japanese Naval Relations in World War II

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the national war effort.” As a result, the characteristics of sound transmission beneath the surface of the oceans, especially the effects exerted by thermal layers, became the focus of scientific research sponsored by the Navy. By 1918 the resulting underwater sound-sensing and transmission systems had “helped keep the U-boats at bay.”

World War I ended less than two years after the United States entered, and for a few years thereafter it seemed as if the wartime spirit of cooperation in the naval-scientific inquiry into oceanography’s utility to naval warfare would continue. However, the Republican era was a time of American isolationism and naval retrenchment, and by 1924 the budgetary axe had decapitated the fledgling naval-scientific hybrid. A revival of the joint effort by scientists and the Navy did not come until 1940, but not until the attack on Pearl Harbor did the fiscal floodgates of defense spending on such topics truly swing open.

In the Second World War the final form of American naval oceanography began to emerge. Just as the submarine is the weapons system around which Weir weaves his story, his concept of a cultural clash between naval officers and scientists constitutes his institutional or political theme. Still, as Weir points out, “Effective submariners and ASW officers soon realized that applied oceanography improved a ship’s chance of survival and increased the likelihood that crewmembers would again see their families after a difficult North Atlantic convoy or a submarine patrol near the Japanese home islands.” Besides patriotic motivation, the scientists hoped that memory of “the profitable wartime application of oceanography and the lives spared in combat would induce the Navy to

become the generous patron” of postwar oceanography.

That was how it turned out, but only because the unanticipated Soviet submarine threat provided an irresistible impetus for many shrewd oceanographers and some astute naval officers who served as the “translators” between their respective cultures. The two groups cooperated for mutual and national benefit in the Cold War, but the cultures of the warrior and the scientist remained as separate as oil in water. Their testimonials were parallel, not unified—the invincibility of U.S. fast-attack and fleet ballistic missile submarines for the Navy, and the intellectual fecundity of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution and the Scripps Institution of Oceanography for science.

This book is not light reading, but it is invaluable to every serious student of naval strategy, weapons systems, and the marine environment that shapes and limits modern warfare at sea.

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Krug, Hans-Joachim, et al. *Reluctant Allies: German-Japanese Naval Relations in World War II*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2001. 456pp. \$38.95

With the exception of Carl Boyd, John Chapman, Gerhard Krebbs, and Bernd Martin, historians have largely ignored German-Japanese relations in general and naval relations in particular. (A further exception would be Werner Rahn; see his “Japan and Germany, 1941–1943: No Common Objective, No Common Plans, No Basis of Trust,” in

the Summer 1993 issue of this journal.) That gap in the literature has now been filled by this collection of essays by four eminent German and Japanese naval officers and historians: Hans-Joachim Krug, Yōichi Hiramata, Berthold J. Sander-Nagashima, and Axel Niestlé. Each contributes from his research specialty, and the product is a welcome re-examination of a “missed opportunity” based on sources in British, German, Japanese, and U.S. archives.

Part I consists of a historical overview and analysis of German-Japanese naval cooperation by Captain Krug, German Navy, and Admiral Hiramata, Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force. Their message is straightforward—there never existed real cooperation between Berlin and Tokyo, as each side was intent merely to use the other to further its own power-political agenda. This is as true for the Anti-Comintern Pact of November 1936 as it is for the follow-up Agreement for Cultural Cooperation of November 1939. Various technical, joint, and military affairs committees were eventually formed, mainly for “propaganda purposes”; they never met before Pearl Harbor and thereafter only “for protocol and courtesy.” The result was a “reluctant” alliance. In August 1939 Adolph Hitler did not tell the Japanese of Germany’s nonaggression pact with the Soviet Union until two days before its signing. In April 1941 Hitler refused to inform the visiting Japanese foreign minister, Yosuke Matsuoka, of his decision to invade the Soviet Union. Matsuoka, in turn, did not inform the Germans that on his way home he would sign a neutrality pact with the Soviets. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor came as a complete surprise to the Germans. Hastily arranged joint warfare

agreements among the three Axis powers on 11 December 1941 and 18 January 1942 brought few concrete measures.

Much of the book rests on the detailed radio transmissions of the German naval attachés in Tokyo, Admiral Paul Wenneker and Captain Joachim Lietzmann. These show that even in the area of possible joint operations in the Indian and Pacific Oceans, there was mutual mistrust and jealousy. This stemmed from lack of prior cooperation, racial arrogance (by both sides), linguistic difficulties, and especially the fact that German auxiliary merchant cruisers and submarines had to diesel more than thirteen thousand miles across a hundred degrees of longitude en route to the Far East. Admiral Karl Dönitz reduced the cargo capacity of U-boats by insisting that they carry full loads of torpedoes; he refused to share German weapons and equipment technology with the Japanese until August 1944, and then only at Hitler’s insistence. In the Indian Ocean, the one place where German and Japanese naval forces might have been able to coordinate operations, nothing of the sort eventuated.

Part II, by Sander-Nagashima, a German naval officer and historian, fleshes out much of the above. Sander-Nagashima first analyzes the command structure of both navies and then examines technical and personnel matters (“Cooperation with Caution”). He is especially critical of German duplicity in continuing to supply Chiang Kai-shek with military material in large quantities and in building submarines for China, stating that they were for Germany—in the process “purposefully fooling the befriended Japanese.” Perhaps in return, the Japanese refused to give direct help to German warships in the Far East; supplies,

until 22 June 1941, had to be shipped via the Trans-Siberian Railroad. In the final analysis, Sander-Nagashima concludes, naval cooperation between the two allies was restricted to “the limitation of the operational zones through 70 degrees east longitude.”

Part III, written by Niestlé, a businessman and author of numerous works on German U-boats, details the meager logistical exchanges between Berlin and Tokyo. In terms of passengers traveling by transport ship, a mere twenty-one people went from Europe to Japan, and not quite nine hundred from the Far East to Europe; by submarine, the totals are ninety-six and eighty-nine, respectively. In terms of material exchanges, in 1941–42 Japan shipped 104,233 tons to Germany, of which 19,200 were lost; in 1942–43 half the 104,700 tons shipped was lost. Of the goods shipped in both directions by submarines, only between 20 and 40 percent ever arrived. While the Germans were anxious for deliveries of rubber and precious metals, the Japanese requested industrial products, technical equipment, and chemical goods. Part IV consists of a conclusion by Sander-Nagashima.

My criticisms of this superb work are but two. First, the fact that it has four authors writing separate sections has resulted in a good deal of overlap, retelling various aspects of the story. Second, the title does not do the book justice; it was hardly a “reluctant” alliance but rather a hollow, empty, or wasted one.

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Herwig, Holger H., and David J. Bercuson. *The Destruction of the Bismarck*. Overlook, N.Y.: Overlook Press, 2001. 314pp. \$35

Rhys-Jones, Graham. *The Loss of the Bismarck: An Avoidable Disaster*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2000. 272pp. \$32.95

During the early evening hours of 22 May 1941, the German battleship *Bismarck* departed Bergen, Norway, to face the might of the Royal Navy with only the heavy cruiser *Prinz Eugen* in company. It was to be the battleship’s first and only operational deployment. Five days later, the ship went down with over a thousand of its crew.

Considered then to be the world’s most powerful battleship, *Bismarck* entered the Atlantic when Britain was stretched almost to the breaking point. With the critical Battle of the Atlantic hanging in the balance, the pursuit and sinking of *Bismarck* was one of the war’s most dramatic episodes; many books and a movie were dedicated to it. Those early works, written mostly within twenty years after the war, focused almost entirely on the operation itself. None devoted attention to the strategies, political aspects, or operational and politico-strategic backgrounds that shaped the battleship’s deployment and the Allied responses to it.

That void has now been filled by the two books under review, *The Destruction of the Bismarck*, by Holger Herwig and David Bercuson, and *The Loss of the Bismarck: An Avoidable Disaster*, by Graham Rhys-Jones. Both books bring new information and fresh perspectives to the tale, putting *Bismarck*’s operation in its strategic context. In doing so, the authors highlight the strategic impact of the potential outcomes of Operation RHINE, the code name for *Bismarck*’s