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Hidden Horrors: Japanese War Crimes in World II

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150 Naval War College Review

This book is unique in that both authors were in positions of responsibility during the 1962 crisis. It belongs in the library of anyone seeking to understand better the Cuban Missile Crisis. In it are unique and interesting insights, and lessons learned by both sides of the conflict.

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Tanaka, Yuki. *Hidden Horrors: Japanese War Crimes in World War II*. Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1996. 267pp. (No price given)

It is only in the last two or three years that there has been any indication of Japanese willingness to acknowledge guilt or responsibility for anything that happened in the Pacific during World War II. Therefore, it is a matter of satisfaction to find a work by a Japanese scholar that examines the record and accepts that the Japanese war crimes catalogue is at least as grave as in the European theatre.

One issue was that of the "comfort women." Much has been heard about those women, who were used as sexual playthings for the Japanese forces. They were conscripted and sent as camp followers to whatever theatre in which the Japanese were engaged. While the author devotes a full chapter to "Rape and War: The Japanese Experience," which is critical of Japanese actions, his effort to deflect criticism of the Japanese leaves much to be desired. He argues that since rape occurs in every war, and since many armies establish or supervise brothels for their troops (as the British

did in Egypt during World War II), the criticism of Japan is excessive and misplaced. Tanaka ignores, or does not appreciate, the difference between tolerating brothels (in which women are paid and there of their own accord) and conscripted women (who are there against their will, sent abroad and treated as sex slaves). Nor does he recognize the difference between individual acts of rape and mass rape as a matter of organized policy.

In another discussion, Tanaka provides a very detailed account of cannibalism by Japanese troops, making it quite clear that it was not an isolated practice. His explanation for it is difficult to accept, especially when he concedes that in some instances the cannibals were in fact well disciplined and often well fed. "The widespread occurrence of cannibalism," he argues, "was by Japanese soldiers who had been abandoned by their commanders. Responsibility for these crimes must rest principally with Imperial headquarters and its ill-considered ad-hoc Southwest Pacific strategy," which did not prepare the troops for the stresses and difficulties of jungle warfare. However, the same can be said of the Australian, American, British, and New Zealand commands, and their forces seem not to have been affected in the same way!

As for massacres of civilians and prisoners of war, Tanaka is under the impression that Japanese officers and soldiers were not sufficiently aware of the limitations imposed by international law (were Allied personnel more learned in this area?) and so cannot be much blamed for their actions. In the context of their belief in *gyokusai*

(glorious self-annihilation) and their devotion to the emperor, they regarded the "lives of detainees . . . as obstacles toward the successful completion of glorious self-annihilation."

Among the most horrendous crimes committed by the Japanese were their medical experiments (which General Douglas MacArthur refused to treat as warranting criminal prosecution). Tanaka explains away the doctors' actions as "doubling"—asserting that while "they maintained a conscience [the doctors] were concerned with their responsibilities to others, not to the people they experimented on. Doubling enabled them to see experimenting on prisoners as consistent with the high moral causes of saving Japanese lives and demonstrating loyalty to the emperor." Regarding the Allied accusations that the Japanese abused the Red Cross to secure immunity from attack, Tanaka suggests that such charges were "perhaps an attempt to exculpate the Allies for acts such as the bombing of Japanese hospitals."

Most of the research for this work was done while the author was a Visiting Research Fellow at the Australian National University, and the book is, therefore, primarily concerned with the treatment of Australian prisoners and civilians—although it may be presumed that Japanese behavior here was in no way unique. Tanaka uses the Australian War Crimes Commission archives, but he fails to understand that body's task. Thus he complains that trials were confined to offences against Australians or Allied personnel, and that the Japanese were not accused of war crimes against their own men or charged with the

contemporaneous murder of German missionaries.

There is much to criticise in the author's philosophising, but one must be grateful that a Japanese author has not hesitated to disclose, examine, analyse, and even deplore some Japanese actions during the Pacific War and condemn them as war crimes. Perhaps we may hope that this work indicates a true awakening of the Japanese conscience.

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Baker, David. *Adolf Galland: The Authorized Biography*. London: Windrow & Greene, 1996. 316pp. \$29.95

Adolf Galland rose by ability and circumstance to become the youngest German general of the twentieth century. In November 1941, at age twenty-nine, he was appointed to command the Luftwaffe fighter arm, a position he retained for three years. Then, condemned by Hermann Goering, "Dolfo" finished the war where he began it: leading a combat unit in the air, as a two-star wing commander.

Although Galland has been the subject of previous biographies and wrote his own classic, *The First and the Last*, British author David Baker provides the definitive word. He worked extensively with Galland up to the general's death in February 1996. Baker's background in aviation literature includes some fifty books in addition to projects with NASA and the U.S. Air Force.

Throughout the text, Baker excels not only at describing Galland's