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The Battle for Guadalcanal

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exposition. There is more they could have said. For example, elements in the Dutch peace movement are Soviet controlled and the Hungarians under Soviet direction once forged and distributed throughout Africa a bogus edition of *Newsweek*. They might also have attempted to judge the impact of active measures initiatives, although such an effort might not in fact be possible. In any case these are minor points. Shultz and Godson have produced a fine book on an important aspect of Soviet foreign policy methods. Their contribution is especially important because active measures have not heretofore been studied in such detail.

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Griffith, Samuel B. II. *The Battle for Guadalcanal*. Annapolis: The Nautical and Aviation Publishing Company, 1979. 282pp. \$18.95

Lee, Robert Edward. *Victory at Guadalcanal*. Novato, Calif.: Presidio Press, 1981. 260pp. \$15.95

Two years ago in my review of Herbert C. Merillat's *Guadalcanal Remembered*, I made the point that while the volume was one of the best of the Guadalcanal books, it was not apt to nudge aside Brigadier General Samuel B. Griffith's *The Battle for Guadalcanal*. What I should have added was that Griffith's classic account was once again in print.

The Battle for Guadalcanal was first
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published in 1963. The present edition forms part of the Nautical and Aviation Publishing Company's Great War Stories series which also includes such titles as Colonel Robert D. Heinl's *Victory at High Tide*, Captain Cyril Falls' *Armageddon*, John Buchan's *History of the Great War*, and two particular favorites of mine, C.S. Forester's *The General*, and Alan Moorehead's *Gallipoli*. The books are facsimile copies of the original editions, printed on good paper, uniformly bound, and with matching book jackets, so that they make a handsome set.

Sam Griffith died last year after a very full life as Marine, scholar, and author. As a lieutenant, he chased the elusive Sandino in Nicaragua. Then came service in China as a language student and an observer of the Sino-Japanese War. He was probably the first person to translate Mao Tse-tung's *Guerrilla Warfare* into English (1941) and one of the first Westerners to rediscover Sun Tzu. He had firsthand knowledge of Guadalcanal: he fought there with Edson's Raiders, first as executive officer, then as commanding officer.

Winston Churchill, in his *Marlborough*, speaks of great battles which "won or lost, change the entire course of events, create new standards of values, new moods, new atmospheres in armies and in nations, to which all must conform." Griffith applies Churchill's definition to the Battle of Guadalcanal.

CominChUSFlt Admiral Ernest J. King had tersely defined the US plan of operations in the Pacific in nine

words: "Hold Hawaii; Support Australasia; Drive northwestward from New Herbrides." In mid-April 1942, Major General Alexander A. Vandegrift was told to ready his 1st Marine Division, then in North Carolina, for a move to New Zealand. On 25 June, Vandegrift reported to Vice Admiral Robert L. Ghormley at Auckland and learned that his division was to wrest Guadalcanal from the Japanese.

The main landing on 7 August by the 1st and 5th Marine regiments was virtually unopposed, but there was hard fighting for the 1st Raider and 1st Parachute Battalions across Skylark Channel at Tulagi and Gavutu. Japanese air raids roared overhead the next day, mostly Betty medium bombers with Zero fighter cover. After an ineffective intercept, Rear Admiral Frank Jack Fletcher, short of fuel, withdrew his carrier task force.

That night, 8/9 August, Vice Admiral Gunichi Mikawa came down The Slot with his cruisers and in the Battle of Savo Island smashed up British Rear Admiral V.A.C. Crutchley's escort group of Australian and US cruisers and destroyers. Next day, Rear Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner, left uncovered and with his amphibious ships only partially unloaded, pulled out of the objective area.

Left alone on the beach, Vandegrift saw his greatest threat as coming from the sea and the air, but there was also an unknown number of Japanese on the island. He decided to throw a defensive perimeter around the unfinished airfield the

Japanese had begun. His engineers, using mostly captured Japanese equipment, went to work on the airfield (soon to be named Henderson Field for a Marine squadron commander killed at Midway). On 20 August two Marine squadrons, one of SBD Dauntless bombers, the other of F4F Wildcat fighters, landed on the coral-surfaced airstrip.

The Japanese were receiving reinforcements of their own. The Ichiki regiment had arrived. On the 21st it destroyed itself in *banzai* attacks against the Marines' left flank along the line of the Ilu River (because of bad maps, both the Japanese and the Marines thought it was the Tenaru). Next day news reached Vandegrift that the Japanese Combined Fleet had sortied from Truk. Fletcher's carriers held off the Japanese carriers in the Battle of the Eastern Solomons, but the transports and their escorts pushed through to 100 miles north of Guadalcanal where they were pounded by a mixed bag of Marine and Navy aircraft from Henderson Field.

The flyers could not stop all Japanese reinforcements. Most of those who got through came by destroyers and barges, and were landed at night. So it was that Major General Kiyotaki Kawaguchi had most of his brigade in hand by the end of August. After an almost incessant day-and-night air and naval gunfire bombardment of the Marine positions, Kawaguchi on 12 September began his attack against what would come to be called "Bloody Ridge." His brigade took 20 percent casualties

in the two-day battle before falling back into the jungle.

On 18 September, Kelly Turner's transports brought in a fresh regiment, the 7th Marines. Vandegrift used them first for some inconclusive attacks to the west against Japanese positions along the Matanikau.

Lieutenant General Harukichi Hyakutake moved the headquarters of his Seventeenth Army to Guadalcanal on the night of 9 October. He planned to take personal command of an attack to begin 17 October using the 2d ("Sendai") Division and the still en route 38th Division.

On the night of 11 October Rear Admiral Norman Scott with four cruisers and five destroyers intercepted a Japanese force thought to be two cruisers and five destroyers (it turned out to be stronger) near Savo Island. He squeaked out a victory in a close-fought action, shielding the Marines from another naval gunfire bombardment but not stopping the steady parade of reinforcements joining Hyakutake.

Vandegrift was also receiving reinforcements. The National Guard's 164th Infantry regiment disembarked on 13 October. That night the airfield received a 70-minute bombardment by the battleships *Kongo* and *Haruna*.

Hyakutake had planned a complicated three-pronged attack. His columns had trouble moving into position and the attack did not get off until late on the 23d. Even then it was badly coordinated and got off piecemeal. Each prong was defeated by

the Marines as it came, the last on 26 October.

The ground action overlapped the standoff naval Battle of Santa Cruz Islands which pitted the Japanese Second and Third Fleets against the US Navy's carrier Task Forces 17 and 61. Ashore, Vandegrift planned once more to advance west of the Matanikau. The attack, begun at midnight on 31 October with a crossing of the river, did not go well. Vandegrift fed the newly arrived 8th Marines into the fight. It managed a 400-yard advance before Vandegrift broke off the attack on 11 November. From 13 through 15 November the naval Battle of Guadalcanal was fought, possibly history's last great surface action of opposing battleships, cruisers, and destroyers.

Hyakutake's two divisions were down to about half strength but they were strongly dug in. On 8 December, Vandegrift turned over command of the operation to Major General Alexander M. Patch, US Army, commander of the American Division, most of which was now on the Canal. Vandegrift departed for Australia. His malaria-ridden regiments soon followed. Patch decided to wait for the arrival of the US 25th Division before continuing the attack.

The 2d Marine Division's organic infantry regiments—the 2d, 6th, and 8th Marines—were already in the fight. A bobtailed 2d Marine Division headquarters arrived to take over command. The two Army and one Marine divisions were bundled together into a brand new XXIV Corps

under Patch. He began the final attack against the Matanikau line on 10 January 1943.

Hyakutake, in a remarkable evacuation conducted during the first week of February, managed to extricate the remnants of his Seventeenth Army, some 10,000 men who lived to fight another day.

Although Griffith writes vividly of the great sea battles that intersticed the ground operations, he writes, understandably, from the viewpoint and perspective of the Marines looking outwardly from the island. For a reader who wants a fuller appreciation of the air-sea-land battle, a comparative reading of Samuel Eliot Morison's *The Struggle for Guadalcanal* is recommended.

There are many other good books on Guadalcanal; so many, in fact, that there seems to be no reason for a book such as Robert Edward Lee's well-intentioned but poorly executed *Victory at Guadalcanal*. Presidio Press is one of the foremost publishers of military history, and it has brought out a number of good Marine Corps books. This, unfortunately, is not one of them. Lee's book is written in adventure magazine language with imagined dialogue that can best be described as being at the television docu-drama level.

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Karnow, Stanley. *Vietnam: A History*.
New York: The Viking Press,
1983. 750pp. \$20.

In *Vietnam: A History*, Stanley
Karnow has produced an interesting,

factual, and unbiased volume that makes a substantial contribution to the growing bibliography of works about the war in Southeast Asia. The book was written as a companion to the television series produced by the Public Broadcasting System (PBS), and serves in that role well. The volume, divided into sixteen chapters, smoothly covers not only the American experience in Vietnam, but the long centuries of war that preceded US involvement and the bitter years since our withdrawal. It contains a fairly good if sketchy chronology, thumbnail portraits of some of the major actors, and a superb set of photographs that precede each chapter. Finally, the book contains six clear and useful maps. It is well indexed and captioned throughout, functioning as an excellent resource work and reference on the war.

Yet Mr. Karnow has given the reader more than a simple chronological treatment of the war. The work has the lean yet anecdotal style common to wartime journalism, and manages to mix the reporter's traditional cynicism and the observer's distant concern about the fate of Vietnam.

Of particular note is the first chapter, the title of which, "The War Nobody Won," more or less illustrates Mr. Karnow's central theme. Agreeing with Colonel Harry G. Summers, Jr., Karnow points out that the "United States won a tactical victory but suffered a strategic failure in Vietnam." The essence of the conflict, according to the author