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U.S. Armored Cruisers: A Design and Operational History

Strafford Morss
U.S. Army Reserve (Ret.)

Ivan Musicant

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the overall impact of indecisive campaigns, culminating in the horrendous Battle of Verdun, weakened the effectiveness of the German Army and ensured its eventual defeat. Tactically, the argument is plausible, though Verdun's ultimate significance may well be the part it played in the policy decisions attendant to the ascendancy of Hindenburg and Luddendorff and their challenge to responsible political authority. Robbins plausibly contends that the most devastating application of sea-power consisted of the Allied blockade and the German submarine campaign, though his claim that neither was decisive merely begs the question of the relative weight of the various modes of warfare in the ultimate synthesis of victory.

One of the most informative and pertinent sections embraces an extensive discussion of the higher conduct of war centered upon the vexing and complex issue of civil-military relations. The unprecedented material and manpower requirements of the war established an inherent tension between politically responsible authority and military leadership. Robbins provides an excellent survey of the conventional story of military usurpation of political authority in Germany with its disastrous impact upon German war policy. But rightly he appraises the British case in civil-military relations as more complex in its need to marshal a democratic nation for protracted global war. The author's contention that civilian control was maintained despite the prevalence of the strategic views of

the military is open to question. Admittedly, forms and appearances were maintained, but the inescapable reality was *de facto* military dominance of policy broken only belatedly by Lloyd George.

Finally, Robbins' penchant for ambiguity embraces his final assessment of the war. The principal thrust is that while numerous trends and developments were exacerbated, and that the course of European and world history were irrevocably altered, a rapid return to "normalcy" in reality and perception obviated claims of truly cataclysmic change. Such claims should be received with skepticism, for all periods are ones of transition. But the fact remains that some are more so than others; that Western history has on occasion witnessed periods of fundamental dislocation despite themes of continuity—the fall of the Roman Empire, the Reformation, the democratic revolutions of the late 18th century, and the Industrial Revolution, to note several. In many ways the seminal event of the present century, the Great War, is an obvious addition.

FRANK JORDAN
Advanced Amphibious Study Group
Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps

Musicant, Ivan. *U.S. Armored Cruisers: A Design and Operational History*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1985, 240pp. \$26.95

This is the history of 12 ships with 24 names. Only one, the *Brooklyn*, retained her original name through-

out her service period. *New York*, the eldest with the longest period of service, carried two other names: *Saratoga*, and finally, *Rochester*.

The other 10 ships, ordered within 5 years of the end of the Spanish-American War, were obsolete by the time they entered service. They had been rendered obsolete by the high-speed all-big-gun ship, the British *Dreadnought* and the American *Michigan*. However, obsolete or not, these ships served their country well, and that is what the book is about.

The book is laid out in the manner pioneered by the successful Dulin and Garzke modern battleship series books, and again followed by Reilly and Scheina in their book on American predreadnoughts, all published by the Naval Institute Press. The photography is good but the drawings are a weak point—they are small and undetailed. In fact, all the drawings for the *Tennessee* class appear on one page. No class has a set of body plans although there are sections of the *New York* and *Pennsylvania* classes and one section of the *Brooklyn* and *Tennessee* each. The difference between Mr. Musicant's drawings and that of Reilly and Scheina's, in dealing with vessels of the same era, is particularly pronounced.

One can also draw a comparison with *U.S. Cruisers: An Illustrated Design History* by Friedman. These same 12 ships are covered in about 30 pages, including superior drawings. However, the negative comparisons stop here. Mr. Musicant set out to give us a design and operational history, and he has done his job well. Each ship is

followed, beginning with builders' trials. A problem of America's best shipbuilders of the day—improperly pitching and machining propellers—is part and parcel of a lack of shipbuilding experience at the time. As one reads on, one wonders that if we, as a nation, may not be repeating some of the same types of errors, now that the Navy is the only shipbuilding game in town. To paraphrase the head of the Bethlehem Fore River Shipyard's apprentices in 1941, "Shipbuilding is not like making love; you have to be taught!"

As Mr. Musicant gets further into each ship's career, it cannot help but prick your interest to learn the *Brooklyn* was severely damaged by grounding off New Bedford during the course of a fleet problem in 1902; or the events that caused the *South Dakota* to be in Vladivostok to "keep order" covering the withdrawal of American and Allied forces during January and February 1920. Perhaps even to this day the Russian people and Government do not pass off slightly that U.S. Expeditionary Force when evaluating U.S. intentions and actions.

More directly, there are detailed accounts of both the *New York* and the *Brooklyn's* actions off Cuba. The capsizing in 20 minutes of the *San Diego* (formerly *California*) from one torpedo off Long Island near the close of the war in 1918 indicates the limited military value of these big ships in the face of modern weapons. More poignant is the history of the *Tennessee* (later *Memphis*). Plagued with troubles from her trials on—the

trials board noted the “filthy and disorganised condition of this vessel” as delivered by the builders—she came to her end as a result of a tidal wave while anchored off Santo Domingo in 1916.

If the traditional military value of these ships was slight, their large hulls, particularly the *Pennsylvania*'s and *Tennessee*'s, gave the Nation exceptional value in the development of naval aviation. It was on the *Pennsylvania* that Eugene Ely first landed and from her that he took off in 1911. Marc Mitscher was in command of the aviation detachment aboard the *Huntington* (formerly *West Virginia*) when he went through experiences that perhaps presaged his “Turn on the lights” order in 1944.

That Mr. Musicant is an enthusiast is evident; that he is not a technician is also apparent. Reading the book, there are several occasions where you are jarred by the terminology. The problems in Dr. Friedman's cruiser book and now these minor, but noticeable problems in Mr. Musicant's book cause one to wonder about the naval knowledge of the editors of what is normally thought of as a prestigious naval publisher. “Depth” instead of “draft” marks, “contraptions” instead of “gear” and the probable misuse of “compression stroke” when referring to reciprocating steam machinery are examples.

The foregoing notwithstanding, if you are interested in the development of ships, and particularly their times and flavor, *U.S. Armored Cruisers* is a book well worth having. It is enjoy-

able and it has an added dimension, it can cause you to think.

STRAFFORD MORSS

Commander, U.S. Naval Reserve (Ret.)

Friedman, Norman. *U.S. Battleships: An Illustrated Design History*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1986. 463pp. \$46.95

Now that Norman Friedman's battleship book is out, it must be considered on two levels. First, in the context of other dreadnought retrospectives. Second, in the context of his own series. It is the fourth volume, and the culmination of a series that includes destroyers, aircraft carriers, and cruisers. Now all the classic forms of the battle fleet have been covered.

What does this book tell us? What does his series tell us?

His book is not a BB log. It does not confine itself to the narrative of ships built in the age of steam and iron. In fact, major portions of the text talk about ships that never were, ships planned and cancelled, paper ships, even fanciful designs. Nearly 40 percent of the text addresses design planning; how actual ships came to be, and why others meant to be, never were.

This is a book not simply about battleships. It is a remembrance of what the capital ship concept meant to five or six generations of the U.S. Navy. The battleship was the source and centerpiece of strategy, indeed, the touchstone of seapower itself. In even bigger terms, it was the rough equation of national power, the