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## Viking of Assault: Admiral John Lesslie Hall, Jr., and Amphibious Warfare

Paolo E. Coletta

Susan H. Godson

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Yet despite these criticisms, Shachtman's work makes fascinating reading. The author provides a balanced and compelling account of a year that changed the face of European and world politics. It is popular history at its best, and even those thoroughly familiar with the history of the second world conflict, will enjoy reading this account. For those unfamiliar with the period *The Phony War* is a splendid introduction to further study.

STEVEN T. ROSS  
Naval War College

Godson, Susan H. *Viking of Assault: Admiral John Lesslie Hall, Jr., and Amphibious Warfare*. Washington: University Press of America, 1982. 237pp. \$10.50

John L. Hall (1891-1978), stood at 6'2" and weighed 200 pounds while at the US Naval Academy before World War I. He lettered in football, basketball, and baseball, continued in athletics while serving in various ships, and had several tours as the Academy's football coach.

His early professional career gave no indication of the kind of work he would be called upon to do in World War II. Yet if the billets assigned him before that war were unspectacular, his fitness reports mention various sterling qualities; such as his dedication to duty, and his calmness under stress. He was painstaking, forceful, and competent. And he broadened his intellectual horizons while serving from 1937 to 1940 as an instructor and then head of the strategy section of the Naval War College.

Except for studying the disastrous Gallipoli campaign of 1915 and planning for and witnessing Fleet Exercise Seven in February 1941 in the Caribbean, Hall had no amphibious experience. He acquired a little when he served as chief

of staff to the admiral who carried the First Marine Brigade to Iceland in July 1941, and a lot more when in a similar billet he helped Adm. H. Kent Hewitt plan for the landing of American troops in French Morocco as part of Operation Torch in 1942.

Perhaps in the same way that no one could tell whether a non-aviator, Raymond Spruance, would make a good carrier admiral, no one knew what a generalist like Hall could do in amphibious warfare until he was directed to engage in it.

He learned a great deal about amphibious operations by witnessing Torch. He saw the need for pre-invasion training, for maintaining good relations with the other services and with joint commanders, for naval gunfire and aerial support of troops making a landing, for improved landing craft and equipment, and for beach parties to direct traffic and preclude the piling up of stores on a beach.

Mesmerized by the many dramatic assault landings made in the Pacific, American scholars have tended to overlook the important amphibious landings made in the Atlantic and Mediterranean in World War II. Mrs. Godson evaluates Samuel E. Morison's 15-volume *U.S. Naval Operations in World War II* as the standard work on the Mediterranean and European theaters, but she adds that "There are no volumes about amphibious warfare" (p. xi).

She is right. While we have the seminal work of Isely and Crowl and a plethora of specialized works on amphibious warfare in the Pacific, one would have to read far and wide to obtain a history of amphibious operations in the Atlantic in World War II. This is the void the author seeks to fill. And she fills it well, for Hall had a command in all the American naval amphibious operations

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in the Atlantic and Mediterranean. Later, in the Pacific he trained soldiers and sailors for seaborne landings and commanded the Southern Attack Force at Okinawa. Last, he trained the invasion forces and commanded a transport group that would put three army divisions ashore on Kyushu in the subsequently scrubbed Operation Olympic.

In describing Hall's wartime career, Godson mentions the many problems involved in amphibious warfare in the Atlantic theater: the training of Army and Navy personnel in amphibious techniques, the difficulties in finding knowledgeable Army Air Force officers to serve with him, the lack of suitable command ships, the need to develop doctrine for the employment of new

amphibious ships and craft, the acquisition of hydrographic data, much more including communications, naval gunfire, and aerial support (when 144 of the Army and Air Force's transport planes veered off course during the invasion of Sicily, Hall's gunners shot down 22 of them!).

Godson has used interviews with Hall, transcripts of oral interviews of various naval leaders; official naval records and documents, letters from many who had worked with Hall, and a wide and wise selection of secondary sources to produce not only a biography but a history of amphibious operations in the Atlantic in World War II.

PAOLO E. COLETTA  
US Naval Academy

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Annotated by

Doris Baginski, Steven Maffeo, Mary Ann Varoutsos, and Jane Viti

Brice, Martin. *Axis Blockade Runners of World War II*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1981. 160pp. \$18.95

During World War II the economy of Nazi Europe became significantly self-sufficient. Nevertheless, considerable quantities of critical materials, particularly rubber, had to be continuously imported. Ranging from overall scope to fine detail, Brice describes the formidable task that fell upon the German merchant marine in response to this need. From 1941 to 1944, Axis ships delivered 43,891 tons of natural rubber and 68,117 tons of such items as edible oils, wolfram, tin, opium, and quinine to Europe. In the opposite direction, 56,987 tons of machinery, chemicals, and other items reached Japan. However, faced with seas increasingly dominated by Allied navies determined on a stringent blockade, the price was high. Brice indicates that the German leadership ultimately viewed the blockade running effort as too costly for its increasingly diminishing returns. Indeed, the Germans suffered huge losses in ships and men; 19 merchantmen and 16 warships were lost in the rubber traffic alone.