

1982

Old Friends

J.K. Holloway

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review>

Recommended Citation

Holloway, J.K. (1982) "Old Friends," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 35 : No. 2 , Article 17.
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol35/iss2/17>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Naval War College Review by an authorized editor of U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. For more information, please contact repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu.

74 Naval War College Review

have the economic strength and the manpower necessary to oppose Italy, Japan and Germany.

JOHN J. MEARSHEIMER
Center for International Affairs
Harvard University

Marder, Arthur J. *Old Friends, New Enemies: The Royal Navy and the Imperial Japanese Navy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1981. 521pp. \$49.50

After Arthur Marder died on Christmas Day, 1980, the *Times* of London wrote that he was "a supreme naval historian" who was "one of the greatest exponents of British naval history of the Edwardian and Georgian eras." This posthumous volume (the only one we shall see of a projected two) confirms that tribute. Marder's relentless research, fair-mindedness and happy way with words all shine in this book. Although the bibliography was to be in the second volume, there are plentiful references to sources in the footnotes.

Marder's subtitle is "Strategic Illusions, 1936-41," but he shows clearly that the real illusion began in 1922 with the abrogation of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902 and its replacement with the innocuous (misspelled in the text, a sure sign that Professor Marder had not lived to shepherd his book past the printer's wolves) Four Power Treaty. "We have traded whisky for water," moaned one Japanese admiral, who also may have been having fun with the new American prohibition amendment. Under that treaty and the concomitant 5:5:3 battleship limitation Britain and the United States had ceded strategic superiority in the Western Pacific to Japan. Yet they both refused to adjust their political goals accordingly. By 1936, the threat of Hitler's Germany forced Britain to make such an adjustment; the United States never did so until Pearl Harbor changed the

political map of Asia. As late as November 1941, the State Department was resisting successfully "on political grounds" the Navy's request to remove the Marines from Shanghai and Peking.

Marder moves from his strategic appraisal to his main theme, the two navies. Here the contrasts are fascinating. Japanese officers who spent decades slanging their superiors to their faces with impunity (true, all were in their cups) are company men to the last, while the Royal Navy types, Dartmouth-tied and stiff-upper-lippish, cheerfully blackguard their comrades. Marder notes that this difference plus the destruction of much Japanese archival material has made his analysis of the two organizations hard to balance. But it is the mark of the historian that he has achieved a balance, while never losing that sharp eye for the telling personal foible which also enlivened the five volumes of *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow*.

The last third of Marder's work is titled "The Saga of Force Z," that ill-fated mini-task force that the Royal Navy was forced to use instead of sending the "main fleet to Singapore." Here Marder's control of his materials recalls his handling of Jutland in the third volume of his main work. The men and materiel are compared; the battle is well-charted and well-described; the summing up judicious and fair, although there is an ambiguous mention that the crew of the *Prince of Wales* was "a mixed one, mostly 'hostilities only,' and the latter could be difficult."

In concentrating on Admiral Phillips and his two capital ships, Marder does not scant the larger picture. Churchill really believed a few big ships alone could make a difference; he had never forgiven those who had allowed the *Goeben* to escape nor forgotten his own role in sending capital ships on the successful hunting of von Spee. Churchill had cited the roles of the *Bismarck*

and Tirpitz in tying down the Royal Navy as justification for Force Z. Did Churchill also have in mind the possibility of getting more American support at Singapore by offering an earnest of his own? Marder does not pursue the line of some critics that the disaster could have been avoided had British planes bound for Singapore not been diverted to the USSR. That Singapore was at jeopardy at all was a reflection of a strategic choice dictated by reality.

One comment (from both British and Japanese sources) that might bother sensitive American readers is that Force Z at least died in a try at the enemy, not running away from him as did the U.S. Asiatic Fleet. Had Professor Marder lived to do the second volume, he surely would have reported that the Asiatic Fleet's lamentable performance was due not only to inferior numbers, poor torpedoes, and the loss of air support at Clark Field, but also because of British insistence that the U.S. cruisers and destroyers be used for escorting convoys to Singapore rather than in offensive action.

One closes this volume with the melancholy reflection of Gibbon (which Marder himself had once quoted) on finishing *Decline and Fall*: ". . . I had taken my everlasting leave of an old and agreeable companion"

J.K. HOLLOWAY
Naval War College

Leutze, James. *A Different Kind of Victory*. Annapolis: U.S. Naval Institute Press, 1981. 362pp. \$21.95

Although he was on active duty during World War II as a full admiral, today only a few naval officers could identify Admiral Thomas C. Hart without first reading this particularly good biography. Hart is of interest to us today primarily because he was commander of the United States Asiatic Fleet from 1940 until early 1942.

When Hart relieved Admiral Harry E. Yarnell in 1940 the Asiatic Fleet was

not an impressive naval force. It consisted of only 2 cruisers, 13 destroyers, 12 submarines, a few auxiliaries, and the 4th Marine Regiment. It possessed no tactical aircraft. The United States wanted a four-star officer to command it so that this country's representative in the many discussions that animated the international community in China would be equal, if not senior, to the officers of the other navies on the scene.

At that time the Japanese were attempting to consolidate their position in China by eliminating the British, French, and American presences there. The Europeans were preoccupied and weakened by their reverses in Europe and the United States had only begun to rearm. The United States and Japan were on a collision course that ended at Pearl Harbor.

Under these circumstances Hart's principal task as a naval diplomat was to conduct a presence mission in the classic sense: show the flag and exert what influence he could. Using firmness, patience and tact coupled with "common" sense, that rarest of all commodities, Hart wrung as much advantages for his country as was humanly possible from very difficult circumstances. Those who today so glibly talk of presence missions would do well to consult this biography.

In addition to a crumbling and increasingly dangerous situation in China, Hart had to deal with the British and the Dutch to coordinate some form of common action against the Japanese threat to Southeast Asia. Since Washington was neither willing nor able to make the necessary political commitment, Hart found himself in an almost impossible position.

When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, Hart was as surprised as anyone else that they attacked where they did. But he and the Asiatic Fleet were ready for war. Hart's preparations stand in stark contrast to those of General Douglas MacArthur who allowed the