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Guadalcanal Remembered

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marks the entry of Admiral Sergei G. Gorshkov as head of the Soviet Navy. Perhaps, no other military leader has done so much in the second half of this century to develop a strategy, build a modern and capable fleet, and influence events worldwide as has Admiral Gorshkov. Make no mistake about responsibility for expansion of the Soviet Navy over the past quarter century. This book documents and reflects the Red navy's accomplishments under the able leadership of Admiral Gorshkov.

Commander Watson organizes his book by oceanic regions. He clearly states historical and political developments affecting Soviet sea power in these several regions. Capabilities and limitations which the Red navy faces along with predicted future incursions are presented logically. The areas categorized are the North Atlantic, the Caribbean, West Africa, the Mediterranean, and the Pacific and Indian oceans.

Watson discusses in depth the significant historical events which affect current strategies. The Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, the Arab-Israeli War of 1973, Okean 75, US and Soviet crisis responses in the Indian Ocean during the 1970s, and Soviet reaction to the Sino-Vietnamese conflict in 1979 give insights to Soviet perceptions for naval responses and crisis management.

The expansion of Soviet naval presence in and near the Caribbean, West Africa, the Mediterranean, Ethiopia, Yemen, and Vietnam as well as the use of Cuban surrogates has generally been successful. The Soviets have gained influence in the third world, and it is in this arena that future confrontation has greatest probability for the 1980s. The United States has become accustomed and accepts Soviet presence in Cuba as well as Cuban adventurism throughout the Caribbean. Cuban surrogate forces

are deployed routinely to Angola and Ethiopia. Penetration and domination of South Africa is an ultimate Soviet goal. In addition, the Soviets have established support bases outside of their northern and geographically restricted home operating areas. These bases are situated along the world's important sea lines of communication. They will become even more important as third world raw resources become competitive in world economic markets.

Commander Watson's objective assessment and alternatives for the future are not all pessimistic. The Soviets are hampered by geographical restrictions. Their four major fleets are homeported at great distances from the major sea lines of communication, and mobility is a serious problem for the Red navy. For the present, the US Atlantic and Pacific fleets are powerful deterrents to any Soviet aggressiveness or international lawlessness. It is sea-based tactical air that gives the US fleets superior mobility and power projection.

The maps, tables, photographs, and statistics are excellent and substantiate vividly Commander Watson's objective assessments. This book should be readily available to all wardrooms. It is certainly requisite reading for every student at the department head school, tactical action officer schools, fleet tactical training groups, and war colleges.

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Merillat, Herbert Christian. *Guadalcanal Remembered*. New York: Dodd, Mead, 1982. 332pp. \$14.95

Certain battles have a special quality which cause them to be written about and written about again. Guadalcanal is such a battle. Thirty-eight years ago Herbert Christian Laing Merillat wrote

The Island, the first comprehensive history of the campaign. Then a Marine Reserve captain, and a veteran of the campaign for Guadalcanal, he prefaced *The Island* with a *New York Times* quote portending that in the Pacific War (for such it was already being called) Guadalcanal "will assume the symbolic import that Verdun did in the last war, and Stalingrad in this war."

Now that we are into the 40th anniversary cycle of World War II, there is a spate of books, some new, some reprints, on that last "good" war. Merrillat was chagrined to learn that *The Island* had reappeared in an unauthorized reprint (the copyright had expired). He was also intrigued by recent revelations concerning code-breaking and he wondered how much the reading of Japanese message traffic might have affected the course of the campaign. He wondered, for example, how much of the intelligence attributed to the legendary "coast watchers" might in fact have come from code-breaking. This determined him to "revisit" Guadalcanal and write a second history of the campaign.

The convoy bearing the 1st Marine Division from Norfolk reached New Zealand in mid-June. Merrillat met Maj. Gen. Alexander A. Vandegrift, commanding general of the 1st Marine Division, and began to form his impressions, mostly positive, of the commanding general and his division staff. On 4 July Merrillat learned that the division was going to the Solomons. He headed for a public library, found an atlas, and in it located Tulagi and near it a larger island labeled "Guadalcanar."

Merrillat kept a personal diary. (No one told him not to.) In his new book he draws heavily upon it. Snippets from the diary appear and then are followed by exposition.

The division headquarters followed

the 5th Marines ashore at Guadalcanal on 7 August 1942. The other two infantry regiments were the 1st Marines and the 2nd Marines, the latter borrowed from the 2nd Marine Division. The landing was unopposed. (The concurrent landing at Tulagi, across what would come to be called Ironbottom Sound, had hard fighting.) From his bivouac in the coconut palms just west of the Tenaru, Merrillat would watch the terrifying naval battle of Savo Island on the night of 8 August and the next afternoon see the last of the Navy's ships depart. Vandegrift set up his perimeter defense arcing around east and west of Lunga Point and enclosing the unfinished airstrip that would become Henderson Field.

The Japanese began gathering reinforcements for Guadalcanal. The code-breakers at Pearl Harbor learned that the "Ikki Ikki detachment" was on its way. This was Col. Kiyonao Ichiki's 28th Infantry Regiment. Vandegrift was informed of the threat in a generalized way by Rear Adm. Richmond Kelly Turner, the amphibious task force commander. The Ichiki Detachment landed from destroyers the night of 18 August and the next day Marines met them for the first time.

While the Ichiki Detachment destroyed itself in wild attacks against the Marines, the Japanese and the Americans above and beyond the island wrestled for control of the sky and the sea. On the 20th, the first planes, a squadron each of Grumman Wildcat fighters and Douglas Dauntless scout-bombers, the beginnings of the "Cactus Air Force," landed at Henderson Field.

In September Maj. Gen. Kiyotaki Kawaguchi arrived with a heavily reinforced brigade and orders to retake the field. He wrecked his brigade in successive assaults against Bloody Ridge, held by Edson's Raiders, in mid-September.

Even so, some few Japanese got through to the division command post and caused consternation. Admiral Turner came ashore with a gloomy estimate of the situation; the Japanese were massing in the northern Solomons. The operations officer had an undated order drawn up for continued resistance from the hills if it came to that.

Three days later, the 7th Marines, the Division's third organic infantry regiment, arrived from Samoa, "a very good sight to see." The division command post now had tents with wooden decks.

Off the northwest tip of Guadalcanal the Battle of Cape Esperance was fought. On 13 October, the 164th Infantry regiment, North Dakota National Guardsmen, landed. That night Henderson Field suffered the heaviest pounding of all—bombing, artillery, and naval shelling.

With the Cactus Air Force all but knocked out, six Japanese transports brazenly unloaded thousands of fresh troops within eye-shot of the Marines. Lt. Gen. Haruki Hyakutake, commanding general, Seventeenth Army, had arrived on 9 October to take personal charge of the Japanese counterattack. His largest unit was the Sendai Division. Hyakutake planned to penetrate the Lunga perimeter at three points: crossing the Matanikau, the "sinister river," near its mouth to attack the extreme western salient of the American perimeter; another assault against Bloody Ridge; and a third between those two. His coordination was bad. The Sendai crossed the Matanikau on the night of the 23rd. The other attacks did not get going until the next two nights.

The Sendai commander sent a premature signal on 25 October: "Banzai! Occupied airfield at 2300." Admiral Yamamoto sortied his Combined Fleet from Truk to complete the Americans'

destruction. The Battle of the Santa Cruz Islands followed. Yamamoto came close to winning the battle but in doing so used up virtually all his carrier aircraft. It was twenty months before there would be another battle of carriers against carriers, the Battle of the Philippine Sea.

Ashore, as Merillat puts it, "The shattered Sendai Division reeled back into the rain forest . . ." There was still hard fighting ahead but the issue was no longer in doubt. The Marines began their counterattack to the west on 1 November. Another 2d Marine Division regiment, the 8th Marines, arrived, followed by the Army's 182d Infantry.

The Japanese, still doggedly trying to reinforce, managed to land most of the 38th Division. Pushing through the transports precipitated another night surface action off Guadalcanal on 13 November: Rear Adm. Daniel J. Callaghan's five cruisers and ten destroyers against Vice Adm. Hirokai Abe's two battleships, one cruiser, and fourteen destroyers in what Morison has called "the most desperate sea fight since Flamborough Head." Callaghan lost two cruisers and four destroyers but saved Henderson Field from a pulverizing bombardment. The Naval Battle of Guadalcanal climaxed two nights later with a battleship action: the *Washington* and *South Dakota* against the *Kirishima* with the *Kirishima* going down.

"Groundlings and airmen on Guadalcanal," writes Merillat, "could only watch in awe and anxiety the wild melee at sea, which at enormous cost in lives and ships, had been their salvation."

In Tokyo a debate raged within the imperial general staff: the Navy wished to evacuate Guadalcanal, the Army did not. By the first of December the reluctant conclusion was reached that Guadalcanal was lost. On the island

itself, the Americal Division's third regiment, the 132d infantry, arrived on 8 December and next day the island passed from Vandegrift to Maj. Gen. Alexander M. Patch, US Army. That same day, Merrillat, most of division headquarters, and the 5th Marines embarked for Brisbane, Australia.

Guadalcanal Remembered is one of the best of the Guadalcanal books. It won't nudge aside Brig. Gen. Samuel B. Griffith's *The Battle for Guadalcanal* or Rear Adm. Samuel Eliot Morison's *The Struggle for Guadalcanal* but it does reduce the campaign to more human if less epic proportions. As for the answer to his question as to how much the breaking of the Japanese codes might have affected operations ashore, he found it a rather cold trail. The very special handling of radio intercept intelligence kept Vandegrift from getting such information directly; it had to be sanitized as in the case of the warning that the Ichiki Detachment was about to land.

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Willis, James F. *Prologue to Nuremberg*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1982. 292pp \$29.95

This scholarly study of the political attention paid to war crimes during and immediately after the First World War fills a major gap in the literature of diplomacy and international law. It is thoroughly researched, written in a lively, direct, jargon-free style, and clearly organized.

Willis starts by noting that "Violations of the laws of war undoubtedly occurred, for some soldiers are ill-disciplined in every war" (p. 13). In the democracies arrayed against Germany and its allies, the popular reaction to acquaintance with the horrors of war was to elect wartime leaders who promised to visit as

much horror as possible on the enemy officials who, the allied leaders assured their constituents, were wholly responsible. American public opinion, not directly affected by those horrors and less convinced of the location of all evil in the Central Powers, was notably more moderate despite some rhetorical excess. At Versailles, Secretary of State Lansing, with the backing of President Wilson, strongly resisted the victorious allies' push to hang the Kaiser and his advisers, taking the rather extreme position that "The essence of sovereignty was the absence of responsibility . . . legally speaking" (p. 74). The result of this difference of view was articles 227-230 of the Versailles Treaty (conveniently set out in an appendix with the equivalent provisions of the other peace treaties of 1919 and 1920). These provided for international military tribunals to try whomever the victors requested, including the Kaiser, who had meantime abdicated and found haven in the Netherlands.

These articles were not implemented against the German leaders, but under public pressure from the Allies, a series of "ordinary war crimes" trials was held by German courts in Leipzig, resulting in three convictions on British evidence, one on French evidence, none on Belgian. On reconvening, another French case resulted in a ludicrous sentence and a final British case, involving the firing on lifeboats after the sinking of a hospital ship, the *Llandovery Castle*, resulted in a noteworthy legal analysis and a major conviction. Some indication of the confusion in Germany at being made to display German justice before allies who were not applying equivalent rules to their own military thugs, can be gathered from the words of the President of the Court, Dr. K.L.F. Schmidt, in convicting one of the defendants in the first round of cases submitted by the British. He concluded