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Combat Fleets of the World 1976/1977

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This reviewer would therefore suggest that the "dramatic shift" which Aliano tried to picture was in actuality only a short-lived experiment, with the trends in the final months of the ill-fated Kennedy administration moving back toward something resembling the U.S. Defense posture in the Eisenhower years. The subsequent "buildup" in conventional forces was President Johnson's reversal of Kennedy's ultimate reversal, accomplished by LBJ mainly by drawing down capabilities in inventory in various places which were then redeployed to Vietnam, supported by massive reliance on conscription for manpower needs.

In conclusion and on balance, the strengths of this book easily outweigh its weaknesses. We greatly need a new generation of research scholars with a dedicated interest in studying the evolution of U.S. military policy, carefully utilizing documentary sources within the traditional perspectives of political science. In this respect Dr. Richard A. Aliano is a most welcome and talented newcomer from whom we can hopefully expect more and better efforts in the future.

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Cecil, Robert. *Hitler's Decision to Invade Russia, 1941*. London: Davis Poynter Ltd., 1975. 192pp.

In his study of Hitler's decision to invade Russia, Robert Cecil provides a neat, concise description of one of World War II's most crucial events. Although his book contains nothing that is startlingly new, Cecil has put together a well-written, well-organized summary of the best and most recent research.

Hitler's motives are clearly documented and the author notes that Hitler always intended to attack and destroy the Soviet Union. The leader of

Germany was, of course, flexible as to matters of timing and detail, but he never lost sight of his basic objective. Hitler even rejected opportunities to expand German power in other areas in order to husband resources for his great eastern venture.

Hitler's willingness to open a second front was, according to Mr. Cecil, based upon a number of miscalculations. Nazi racial ideology led Hitler to underestimate the abilities of the Russian soldier and the strength of the Soviet regime. The determination to enslave the Russian people made it impossible for the Germans to appeal to anti-Stalinist elements within the Soviet Union and guaranteed that the war would be fought with the utmost savagery. Poor military intelligence led to poor estimates of the Russian order of battle, and past German victories convinced Hitler that victory was in any case inevitable.

In 1941 Russia posed no direct threat to Germany's vital interests. Stalin did not want to fight and went to great lengths to appease Germany. Many German officers and civilians were reluctant to fight the Soviets, but Hitler ruled Germany and his obsession ruled him. Thus, Hitler not only decided to have a war, but also decided that the war would be one of ideological extermination. Mr. Cecil has presented a fine summary of the origins of the conflict that ultimately brought Soviet power into the heart of Europe.

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Couhat, Jean Labayle, ed. *Combat Fleets of the World 1976/77: Their Ships, Aircraft, and Armament*. Translated by Comdr. James J. McDonald, U.S. Navy (Ret.). Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1976. 575pp.

Since 1905 the standard reference work in the English-speaking world on

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ships and aircraft has been the familiar *Jane's Fighting Ships*. The French equivalent, *Les Flottes de Combat*, predates *Jane's*, having been published since 1897, and is now available for the first time in an English translation. Other compilations of world navies which appeared at about the same time are still being published. To a large degree all were undoubtedly influenced by Mahan and the emerging age of empire at the turn of the century when he did his major writing. It is inevitable that *Combat Fleets*, to be published biannually by the U.S. Naval Institute, invites close comparison with *Jane's*. But first a few words about *Combat Fleets*.

In general, *Combat Fleets* is well organized and has a concise, systematic breakdown which is superior to other compilations in this respect. Ships, aircraft and weapon displays are integrated in a single section with major equipment identified in the drawings. (*Jane's* does not do so.) The U.S. Navy merits 92 pages, the Soviet 72, France 53 and Britain 43; all navies are illustrated by lavish and uniformly excellent photos and sketches. While less is offered on details of modernization, naval plans and programs than might be desired, a more balanced presentation is achieved by more information on small navies and a more consistent manner of presentation.

A few other points are worthy of mention.

- The use of the European system of dates, day-month-year vice the American month-day-year, is sometimes confusing: 1/7/77 is not January 7 but 1 July. Metric dimensions common to the rest of the world are used throughout. Conversion tables are provided for easy reference by Americans, West Indians, Malawians and other societies which still cling to the English system.

- The use of "... " to indicate information unknown or not available is quite helpful.

- A few vessels sold or given to other countries do not always show the same characteristics after the transfer as their sister ships with the parent navy. Armaments may change but displacements ordinarily should not, even when an overstatement may have political significance.

For the Western reader the Soviet section is of primary interest and a few additional comments are appropriate. Most of the 116 navy descriptions are preceded by a foreword on general naval policy and a summary of overall capability. The Soviet section includes a number of pithy, epigrammatic statements by naval and defense leaders, and a discussion of each of the four Soviet fleets. While generally accurate, this section contains numerous small errors, important mainly because they should not have occurred.

The discussion of Soviet maritime areas omits Ulad as an ice-free port; at the end of this section (p. 375), the statement is made "the geographic characteristics of the Soviet maritime areas indicate why it is essential that the country have 4 fleets." There may be strategic reasons why the U.S.S.R. has ships in each of the four sea areas; it is not essential, however, that they have a fleet in each area merely because the areas are isolated each from the others. The U.S. Navy is essentially isolated between Atlantic and Pacific yet in most of her history as a world power, the United States did not find it strategically necessary to create a two-ocean navy.

The discussion of the Soviet Fleets (p. 375), contains several errors. The statement is made that the Northern Fleet and Baltic Fleet construction yards are used for maintenance as well as construction of atomic submarines. There is much doubt that building yards in both areas are used for maintenance as well. The statement is further made that control of the Baltic is "assured . . . by extending their naval bases

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towards the West," which also is questionable. In the Pacific area, the discussion suggests that Vladivostock and Petropavlosk are congruent, whereas they are 1,400 miles apart. (This may be an error in translation.) A similar careless statement appears (p. 383) in the allegation that until recently the Soviet Union had little interest in antisubmarine warfare. They had little success, it is true, but it may be assuming too much to concede that this indicated a lack of interest.

The sections on the U.S. and Soviet navies are obviously the most important in any compilation today. These again suggest interesting comparisons of *Combat Fleets* with *Jane's Combat Fleets*. *Combat Fleets* offers the finest drawings of Soviet ships yet to appear in a compilation, the first description of the Soviet SSN-15 missile, the first mention of the Super Delta class ballistic-missile submarines, new drawings and photos of the modified *Kashin*-class guided-missile cruiser, and the most detailed and accurate drawings to date of the *Kiev*. And *Kiev*, incidentally, is identified correctly as a through deck ASW cruiser, not an aircraft carrier or attack carrier as in many other U.S. publications.

Despite some minor errors, *Combat Fleets* overall is superior on the Soviet fleet. On the U.S. side, new photos of the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier *Nimitz* and the new icebreaker *Polar Star* appear in *Combat Fleets*. Nevertheless, the *Jane's* section on the U.S. fleet, painstakingly done by Norman Polmar, former Naval Institute editor, is probably superior to anything else in print today.

One obvious advantage of *Combat Fleets* over *Jane's* is physical size. The data on ships, aircraft and armaments of the 116 nations is compressed into a single, thick, 8- by 10½-inch volume of 575 pages. Comparable data appears in three volumes, *Jane's Fighting Ships*, *All the World's Aircraft* and *Jane's Weapons Systems*, totaling 2,389 pages. In

addition, the specialist may wish to add *Jane's Surface Skimmers*, *Jane's Infantry Weapons* and *Jane's Ocean Technology* of 1,494 additional pages. Adding still more roughage to a very heavy diet is 316 pages of advertising. The sheer bulk of the three primary volumes is a consideration which may require a new bookshelf—perhaps one each year. At \$72.50 per volume, the three *Jane's* primary volumes (or the five-volume set at \$362.50) makes the cost comparison particularly significant. Additionally, the extensive advertising suggests one additional factor in evaluating the relative merits.

Editors, like other suppliers of services, can hardly free themselves of responsiveness to the interests of their constituencies. While almost impossible to verify empirically, one gets the feeling that *Jane's* tends toward the high side on choices concerning forces and equipment levels. There may be a reluctance to retire older vessels from naval lists; editorializing suggests a tendency to assume an aggressive intent in naval policies of opponents. While much of this may reflect merely a conservative philosophy—and *Jane's* is conservative—there is neither philosophizing nor pontificating nor, in fact, any advertising in *Combat Fleets*.

In sum, *Jane's* may remain the standard reference work on the library shelf, but it is a rare need even for the specialist which is not completely fulfilled by *Combat Fleets*. Offering far more for the money, the consumer advocate would clearly rate it a best buy.

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Dinerstein, Herbert S. *The Making of a Missile Crisis, October 1962*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976. 302pp.

The Cuban missile confrontation of 1962 bears the singular distinction of being the most extensively studied