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# Combat Fleets of the World 1986/1987: Their Ships, Aircrafts, and Armament

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the Royal Navy. The British, hence the Canadians, thought they would fight surface actions against Axis raiders with guns. This led the Canadians to acquire heavy "Tribal"-class destroyers under the absurd assumption that "several [Tribals] acting in concert posed a credible threat to a lone battleship." The many-gunned Tribals absorbed dockyard space, resources, and manpower badly needed by the depth-charge-throwing escort fleet which the Canadian Navy became.

When the operations of the U-boat made it clear that the war in Europe would be decided in the Atlantic, the Canadians' second problem arose—expansion. Canadian industry had to learn to repair and build vessels while the RCN grew to 50 times its prewar strength. This expansion, as Milner points out, created an almost endless and insuperable set of problems. That the Canadians did as well as they did is truly remarkable.

The third problem, Milner avers, was the RCN's difficulty in obtaining radar sets and radar operators for its escorts. The critical equipment did not come quickly enough nor in adequate quantity to let the Canadians do a proper job.

Lack of training for the men, crews and escort groups contributed to the fourth and most difficult problem which Milner recounts. Training from that of the highest staff officer to that of the lowest seaman had to be done with little time, few facilities, and hardly any ships. Inadequate doctrine, poor equipment, and a lack of training

contributed to the fourth and most difficult problem which Milner recounts. Training from that of the highest staff officer to that of the lowest seaman had to be done with little time, few facilities, and hardly any ships. Inadequate doctrine, poor equipment, and a lack of training

ized training and sheer weight of numbers almost pooped the Royal Canadian Navy during this period. Unfortunately, Milner fails to put the Canadians' magnificent effort into a global perspective. He fails to show clearly the linkages between the Canadian, British, and American efforts in the war against the submarine. And too many words are devoted to the internal politics of the RCN during the war. The work's organization makes for occasional heavy going.

The problems and issues of which Milner writes, the questions he raises, and the still-remaining need for the Atlantic nations to understand submarine warfare, make his book valuable. As part of a growing body of excellent Canadian oceanic scholarship, Milner's work will, whatever its faults, stand as a classic for serious naval scholarship.

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Baker, A.D. III, ed. *Combat Fleets of the World 1986/1987: Their Ships, Aircraft, and Armament*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1986. 764pp. \$91.50

Brauzzi, Alfredo et al. *Almanaco Navale*. Genoa, Italy: The Istituto Idrografico Della Marina, 1986. 999pp.

Both of these yearbooks, *Combat Fleets 1986/1987* and *Almanaco Navale 1986*, are impressive compendiums of current world naval fleet information. *Combat Fleets*, an English

adaptation of the prestigious French *Flottes de Combat*, in existence since 1897, is rapidly becoming the English language rival to the British annual, *Jane's Fighting Ships*. It exceeds *Jane's* in detailed information, drawings and unique photographs, and this information reflects, in part, the French and American resources available. It appears this year in a new, larger format which allows for the reproduction of larger photographs and even more information. It is now a large, heavy volume providing impressive detail on not only ships but naval aircraft and armament systems. Of particular note are the ship line drawings with component callouts by Gassier (really outstanding), Simoni, Dumas and Baker—the last of the hardworking editors of this English edition. Strangely, none of these profiles are provided for the U.S. carriers, yet all other carriers are available. This book contains as much information as *Jane's*, costs nearly 40 dollars less, and is so good it should threaten the Naval Institute's periodic books on the U.S. (*Ships & Aircraft of the U.S. Fleet*) and Soviet (*Guide to the Soviet Navy*) Navies.

*Almanaco Navale* has also been around for a long time but is not well known in the United States since it is only available in Italian. It, too, has grown both physically and in content over the years. Its general arrangement has all countries in alphabetical order. Each country is then broken down, much as in the German *Weyers Flottentaschenbuch*, with ship statistics followed by photographs and line drawings. The latter are the most

extensive of any of the naval annuals and are excellent, often including underwater portions (particularly submarines) and ship plan forms. The book is worth examining for these alone. Included in this edition is a clever projection of the new Soviet 65,000-ton aircraft carrier (the *Kremlin*). It may prove to be very wrong but it displays considerable logical deduction. In addition, line drawings of the U.S. carriers, often including plan views, are included.

A separate appendix deals with hydrographic and oceanographic ships, a unique feature since these ships are folded into the regular national sections of the other yearbooks. There are appendices as well, the first on naval aircraft, shown initially by country (numbers and type), followed by selected three-view drawings of major designs. A third appendix covers missiles in a similar manner but with no graphics. A fourth briefly reviews gun armament, followed by appendices on torpedoes, naval shipboard radar, then an addendum and, finally, an index. All in all, it is an excellent volume.

Naval annuals have come a long way since the fifties when the only compendium on world naval forces available in English was *Jane's Fighting Ships*—an annual that began to approach its nadir once its extremely competent editor, Oscar Parkes, had passed from the scene. The ship profile artwork for which the book had been noted had degenerated badly, and much of the information was less professional than before.<sup>2</sup>

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Today a new breed of technically-oriented editors has appeared, supported by organizations with resources. These men are doing an excellent job of describing the world's navies which are now much more complex than formerly. Ships have been joined by aircraft, electronics, missiles and various forms of nuclear power, all of which need some form of statistically-oriented description. Reported are the hardware components which implement the maritime policies of the world, too little understood by those both in and out of the service but which, because of the awesome power involved, excite great interest. So now there are several annuals available to English readers: *Jane's*, *Combat Fleets* and *Weyer's*, all of which are excellent, each in its own way. *Jane's* has recovered in quality under John Moore and is published on the best paper of the three. Both *Jane's* and *Almanaco Navale* present recognition silhouettes, presumably to help with whatever is on the horizon. *Jane's* are poor and not to a common scale; *Almanaco's* are very good and to scale, but one wonders about the real need for either. All of these books have become large, heavy tomes which would be difficult to use on any bridge or CIC. These types of books have moved in the direction of the ships they describe for they are not only bigger but very expensive—and not for the casual reader. Thus there are increasingly detailed descriptions available to fewer and fewer casual readers describing an increasingly complex set of interactive naval

systems. Impressive progress in doing this has been made, but one wonders what James C. Fahey would do. His first *Ships and Aircraft* cost 50 cents and could fit in your coat pocket. Yet each page contained a staggering amount of information. No such periodic review of the world's navies currently exists or, perhaps, can exist. I suspect Fahey would say that it could be done.

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Gibson, Charles Dana. *Merchantman? or Ship of War*. Camden, Me.: Ensign Press, 1986. 214pp. \$18.75

Written by a licensed master mariner (any ocean, any tonnage) who started his career during World War II, *Merchantman? or Ship of War* is succinctly described by its amplified title: *A Synopsis of Laws; U.S. State Department Positions; and Practices Which Alter the Peaceful Character of Merchant Vessels in Time of War*. In recognition of the fact that ships and their embarked crews are an entity, much of the content of this 214-page volume is devoted to the status of these seamen when, to meet military requirements, ships are requisitioned or operated directly by the U.S. Government.

The author presents, in the first 84 pages of the book, a brief account of the use by the Federal Government of privately-owned merchant ships during wars in which the Nation was involved up to the year 1918. The second section of 48 pages is an