

1985

## Conway's *All the World's Fighting Ships, 1947-1982*

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disjointed because Mr. Wheeler switches between the MacArthur and the Nimitz campaigns without sufficiently orienting the reader as to what role the Marines played in the strategy of each commander or in how the demands for their resources shaped their development. Mr. Wheeler tries to give the book a unifying theme where one is not necessary.

Nonetheless, Mr. Wheeler does a creditable job in describing the battles for Wake, Guadalcanal, Bougainville, Tarawa, Saipan, Guam, Peleliu, Iwo and some parts of Okinawa. In fact, the account of each battle is almost a complete story in itself. The reader not only is given the necessary tactical information, which is easily followed with well-drawn maps, but also is given the story from the human point-of-view.

The best part of Mr. Wheeler's book is his narration of the battle for Guadalcanal. This is the first book I have read which describes adequately the American problem in holding on to Guadalcanal. As Mr. Wheeler relates, the US Navy was still too weak to engage in a Mahanian showdown with the Japanese Navy and thus left the Marines inadequately protected and supplied. What saved the Marines was, according to Mr. Wheeler, poor planning, poor communications, and the lack of resolve on the part of the Japanese high command to retake the island; the great distances—this problem was particularly severe for the Japanese fighter aircraft who had to do battle at their extreme range and thus could

not provide any real air support for their land and sea forces; and the excellent job the Seabees did in building and sustaining Henderson Field.

Mr. Wheeler aptly describes Japanese strategy to defend Okinawa in 1945 and how the decision not to contest the Americans on the beaches affected their tactics inland. The American advantage of overwhelming material and technical superiority could only be upset where stiff Japanese resistance disrupted the Americans' ability to coordinate their forces effectively. Yet, the author fails to make clear why the American forces suffered 25,000 casualties in a battle the reader is led to believe was relatively easy. There is a dimension about the battle's true ferocity which is left undeveloped.

Another major problem with the book is Mr. Wheeler's own Corps bias, as he credits every major accomplishment of the Marines to the fact that "they were Marines." That reason may explain a lot, but it is hard to believe it explains everything. *A Special Valor* will not meet every reader's needs, but it will serve those primarily interested in specific battles or in the Nimitz campaign.

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Gardiner, Robert, ed. *Conway's All the World's Fighting Ships, 1947-1982*. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, Part I: *The Western Powers*, 1983. 298pp. \$34.95. Part II: *The Warsaw Pact and Non-Aligned Nations*, 1984. 210pp. \$34.95

These two volumes are the third part in a series by the Conway publishing house, the first two being *All the World's Fighting Ships 1860-1905* and *1922-1946* respectively. This pair covers the post-World War II era, during which there has been a major political and technical upheaval throughout the nautical world. Taken together, these books do a superb job of covering an enormous amount of information.

Of particular note in the first part (*The Western Powers*) is the section on the United States of America. The editors provide a thoughtful, incisive essay covering both the technical and political imperatives that drove the changing shape of the US fleet. The authors correctly identify two of the major themes of post-WWII US naval force structure as "the capability to attack land targets, both coastal and deep inland; and anti-submarine warfare." This, of course, is far from the whole story, but it does serve as a concise definition of two major trends. The section continues to concentrate on technological improvements and their influence on force structures.

Each of the volumes is organized around sections detailing particular countries. The coverage is exceptionally good on the Western Powers, not surprisingly. Each major class of warship in commission during the post-WWII years is detailed, and the photographs and sketches are first-rate. The volumes also cover both future and aborted developments in force structures (such as the VSTOL Support Ship Project, the Sea

Control Ship Project for the United States and the Aircraft Carrier Project of the Soviet Union).

In an era of threats from minor as well as major sources, it is important to have a sense of the naval capabilities of countries such as Libya, Iran, Iraq, and so forth. These are well covered in the second volume of the set, and are complete with thumbnail sketches of naval policy in such countries as well.

The information in the books continues into 1983, although the title implies that it ends in 1982. The authors have done a commendable job of projecting outward, giving the volumes a very contemporary perspective.

Given the scope of the works, the level of detail is satisfactory. There is a decent attempt made to cover weapons and sensors, although the books should not be purchased as a substitute for an edition of *Jane's* or *Combat Fleets*. The strength of the works is the sense of development and change that comes across in the post-World War II era. As reference works to a world of rapid change from 1947-1982, these volumes do a fine job of showing the progression.

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Jordan, John. *Soviet Warships—The Soviet Surface Fleet 1960 to the Present*. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1983. 128pp. \$18.95

This is a high quality product—well researched, thoroughly compiled and smoothly presented. It lacks the pretense of some publica-