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# Sink the Haguro!

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moments frustrated or flawed the libertarian intentions of Russia's revolutionaries and reformers?" In the course of interpreting the evidence concerning the writings and activities of the Decembrists (1825), the Russian Populists (in the 1860s and the 1870s), the various participants in the revolutions of 1905 and 1917 as well as the present-day dissidents, the Harvard professor unveils a rich mosaic of institutional and personality factors which, in each period, provides a distinct setting for the operation of the prime suspect—Russian nationalism.

Shared by virtually every Russian, even Russian revolutionaries, was the conviction that only the firm rule of the autocrat could contain the centrifugal forces present in the vast territory "gathered" by previous tsars. They also credited the tsar for Russia's emergence, following the defeat of Napoleon, as the greatest military power in Europe.

It was precisely the firmness and power of the tsarist autocracy which forced Russia's revolutionaries to resort to extreme remedies. During the 19th century, revolutionary measures only exacerbated a regime's reaction. Such extremes allowed little room for reform. Professor Ulam correctly observes that both the social reform of the 1860s and the political reform of 1905 were initiated by the tsar in the wake of military defeat. Only when the autocrat's own failures undermined Russia's greatness, and thus his bond with the people, did the need for reform manifest itself. World War I destroyed the bond, but only after political assassinations, bureaucratic collapse, liberal and radical intrigues, Rasputin's antics, and the rumors about German sympathizers in high places had created substantial uncertainty about the regime's worth.

There are different perspectives from which one can evaluate Russia's revolutions. The historian, worker or peasant in the Soviet Union readily would acclaim the Bolshevik revolution a

success. Under the rule of the Communist Party, the Soviet Union has become a superpower. The national mystique formerly accorded the tsar now bolsters the Soviet leadership.

Professor Ulam believes that all of Russia's revolutions have failed precisely because Western concepts about "democracy, intellectual freedom, the rule of law, [and] socialism" still do not guide political and social activity in the U.S.S.R. Given his perspective, one can understand why he so carefully examines the reasons for the failure of the liberals who ruled in the Provisional Government. They attempted to incorporate these concepts!

The Provisional Government fell, according to the Harvard professor, because it failed "to exploit the period of nationalist enthusiasm which followed the [February] revolution." Nationalism might have been the brake which could have prevented Russia's slide from liberty to anarchy. Russia's anarchy cried out for the firm rule that V.I. Lenin was all too willing to provide.

Adam Ulam's study, *Russia's Failed Revolutions*, is both much richer and more subtle than this review has indicated. The many vignettes in the book not only demonstrate the author's mastery of the source material, but render his history immensely readable!

Finally, we must contemplate Professor Ulam's conclusion that "there is little that can be described as uniquely Russian about the country's pattern of political development in the last century and a half." Our acceptance or rejection of his optimistic conclusion provides the very foundation for our views about Soviet-American relations.

WALTER C. UHLER

Winton, John. *Sink the Haguro!*  
London: Seeley, Service, 1979. 182pp.

Naval operations in the Indian Ocean during World War II are considered by most historians to have been an unimpor-

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tant footnote to the dramatic campaigns waged in the Atlantic and Pacific. For the most part, that assessment is correct. The Japanese were firmly entrenched in Thailand, Malaya, and Sumatra, and their warships were deployed to counter the Allies in the Pacific, operating infrequently but with impunity in the Indian Ocean from their base in Singapore. In opposition was the East Indies Fleet, a ragtag collection of ships operated more or less willy-nilly from Trincomalee (Ceylon). *Sink the Haguro!* focuses on that fleet's single moment of magnificence and a night's battle that assured their largely forgotten efforts a small place in history.

A *Nachi*-class heavy cruiser, *Haguro*, at 15,000 tons, displaced more than twice the combined displacement of the five destroyers that sunk her. She was armed with ten 8" guns, eight 5" guns, over 50 25mm guns, long-range torpedoes and two seaplanes. In contrast, the destroyers of the 26th Destroyer Flotilla—*Saumarez*, *Venus*, *Virago*, *Verulam*, and *Vigilant*—were smallish at 1,800 tons, modestly armed with four single 4.7" guns, close-in torpedoes, and primitive radar sets. However, the British had the distinct advantage of knowing the general movements of the Japanese capital ships by means of ULTRA intercepts and additionally had surveillance and attack aircraft available from the carriers that joined the fleet in 1944. Though located, *Haguro* still represented an elusive threat in the restricted waters of the Malaccan Strait and, in the end, it was a fortuitous combination of well-practiced tactics, surprise, and better maneuverability that proved to be the key elements of victory. The actual sinking is a fascinating story that has been imaginatively pieced together from ships' action narratives, message files, diaries, photographs, and postaction accounts (including those of Japanese officers assigned to *Haguro*). Winton's skills as a novelist (*H.M.S. Leviathan*) take the reader into

the action on the bridges, flight decks, action information centers, gun turrets and tubs, and down on the deckplates.

However, the battle action itself is only a small part of this fast-moving book, for Winton paints a vivid backdrop of the tedious days at Trincomalee, the frustrating life at sea seeking to engage the enemy, the trials and tribulations of World War II vintage carrier aviation, submarine warfare, and the newest invention of the war—radar. One of the Allies most productive innovations, ULTRA, played a major role in the East Indies operations and provided vital tactical intelligence that guided the efforts of the fleet.

Finally, Winton injects the book with a colorful flavor of the personalities of the fleet—from the fleet commander to the fireroom stoker, to the radar operator who tracked *Haguro* in the early morning of 15 May 1945, more than a week after V-E Day had ended the war for all but a few. Casual historians will appreciate the peculiarly British flavor of this very readable account, its first person style, and the thorough research on which it is based.

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Y'Blood, William T. *Red Sun Setting. The Battle of the Philippine Sea.* Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1981. 257pp.

"The Battle of the Philippine Sea in June 1944 was a naval action equal to Midway in tactical interest, and decisive on the outcome of the war, for it was the greatest carrier action of all time." So states Rear Adm. Samuel Eliot Morison in his famous *History of the United States Naval Operations in World War II*. Taking his cue from Admiral Morison, author Y'Blood gives us an hour-by-hour account of what became known as the "Great Marianas Turkey Shoot" and what was clearly one of the