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Various Authors
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Book Reviews

John Jordan. *Warships After Washington: The Development of the Five Major Fleets 1922-1930*. Barnsley, South Yorkshire: Seaforth Publishing. 2011.

In *Warships After Washington*, historian John Jordan explores the 1922 Washington Naval Conference and its effect on the interwar development of the British, American, Japanese, French, and Italian navies. Jordan's book of eleven chapters is organized into three parts; the first deals with the state of the signatory navies on the eve of the conference in 1921, the second examines the conference itself, and the final part analyzes the development of the five fleets from the treaty's signing in 1922 until 1930. Jordan argues that these navies stood at a crossroads after World War One. None were enthusiastic about embarking on prohibitively expensive fleet expansions, least of all Great Britain, the world's premier naval power in 1918. The British, as Jordan shows, were keen during this period on not only maintaining their naval dominance, but also preserving their strained coffers, preferably by limiting the ability of up-and-comers like the United States and Japan from rapidly expanding and sparking a battleship arms race. Jordan argues that until 1921, where the Royal Navy led, others followed; this would all change after the Washington Conference (7).

The United States and Japan were indeed planning their own fleet expansion programs after the Great War. The former was nonetheless eager to limit expenditures on large warships, and it was ostensibly with this goal in mind that the US government invited the five major powers to Washington DC in 1921. The other, less publicized motivator for the conference was America's desire to isolate Japan by abrogating the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. At the time of the conference France and Italy were both regional powers with regional navies, the former as a great power in decline, the latter as a

young nation on the rise. Both hoped to benefit from a naval arms treaty to modernize their own fleets while curbing the larger navies. France expected parity with Japan, while Italy desired parity with France, her emerging Mediterranean rival.

Jordan illustrates how the treaty was as groundbreaking as it was succinct. It set a quantitative and qualitative limit on capital ships, stymieing a prohibitively costly and potentially destabilizing arms race. Capital ship tonnage ratios for the five powers were established at 525,000 for Great Britain and the United States, 315,000 for Japan, and 175,000 for France and Italy. Aircraft carrier ratios were set at 315,000 for Great Britain and the United States, 81,000 for Japan, and 60,000 for Italy and France. Battleships were also limited to 35,000 tons individual displacement and 16-inch (bore diameter) main armament, while carriers were individually limited to 27,000 tons. Furthermore, the treaty stipulated a ten-year “battleship holiday” in which no new capital ships would be constructed. A qualitative (but not quantitative) limit was also extended to cruisers at 10,000 tons and 8-inch armament. As Jordan reveals, the resulting “treaty cruiser” would become a prolific warship in all five navies.

Jordan suggests that the United States was essentially the winner of the Washington Conference. The US attained capital ship parity with Great Britain, an end to the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and a financially unpopular naval program, and a curbing of the Japanese battle fleet at sixty percent of the United States’ own strength. However, the conference did come at the cost of forward bases in the Western Pacific, which sealed the fate of the Philippines in the event of war. Regardless, with her tremendous industrial potential, the United States had every reason to look upon the post-treaty era with confidence; if any of her rivals were to renege on their treaty obligations, the US could (with the blessing of Congress) simply out-produce them.

Great Britain also emerged a winner of sorts, reducing naval expenses while preserving (for the time being) her naval superiority over potential rivals. However, Britain's long-term prospects in the wake of the treaty were hardly promising as later events would prove. But, this reviewer would argue, that British inability to expand the Royal Navy to the extent necessary to nullify rivals (as she had done in the Victorian era) was not a consequence of the Washington Treaty; it was due to her inexorable decline as a great power in the wake of World War One. In this regard, the treaty arguably prolonged Britain's naval supremacy by curbing not only her own expansion programs, but those of her potential rivals as well.

Imperial Japan, America's emerging rival, benefitted from the clause prohibiting US bases in the Western Pacific. Furthermore, her stipulated inferiority in capital ships (sixty percent of the US Navy) was hardly a genuine impediment as the United States, besides possessing a much larger industrial base for shipbuilding, had two oceans to police. Nevertheless, a militant "fleet faction" in the Japanese naval hierarchy viewed the conference's outcome with dismay. In the opinion of hard-liners like the naval commander Kato Kanji, only a seventy percent ratio vis-à-vis the US Navy would give the Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) a fighting chance in the event of war (72). The years 1941-45 would clearly illustrate that the fleet faction's insistence on this symbolic ten percent increase was meaningless.

Italy was pleased with the outcome of the treaty. While the "big three" debated naval power in the Pacific, she was flattered by the offer of capital ship parity with France. Though inadvertently sparking a naval arms race between Italy and the French Third Republic, it enabled the former to aspire to the role she so keenly desired as a young, ambitious Mediterranean power. Due to her small and ageing battle line, Italy would also be permitted under the treaty to build up

to 70,000 tons of capital ships during the battleship holiday.

France, however, was humiliated. Her delegates had come to Washington expecting naval parity with Japan; instead France (the world's second largest colonial empire in 1921) was lumped into the same category as Italy. Jordan shows how the treaty established ratios, not by world standing or colonial responsibilities, but by the size of the navies at the time of the conference, an approach obviously favoring countries like the United States. The *Marine Nationale* had stagnated during the Great War (when the army had been prioritized) and 1921 saw it at low ebb. In any event, it made little difference; Jordan illustrates how France could only afford to build seven of the twenty-one treaty cruisers she desired to maintain her great power pretensions (73). Furthermore, her priority during this time was not on battleships but on smaller vessel types, and like Italy, the treaty permitted France to modernize her battle fleet by constructing up to 70,000 tons during the battleship holiday.

The Washington Treaty, though drastically curtailing battleship construction, resulted in a heightened focus on cruiser, destroyer, submarine, and aircraft carrier development across all five fleets. The third part of the book, the heart and soul of Jordan's narrative, deals with these technical developments. The author explores the various modernization efforts made to the signatory battleship fleets, as vintage vessels were now expected to continue in service, barring viable replacements. The nations scrapped their oldest vessels, while extensively modernizing those that remained. This rejuvenation ensured that many of the battleships which would see action in World War Two were veterans of the first.

The Washington Conference had eliminated battleships as the cornerstone of post-treaty naval construction; therefore, attention turned to an entirely new monster pioneered by Great Britain—the treaty cruiser. All five navies would commission a number of these

vessels, with Japanese cruisers being especially powerful, and many would go on to play prominent roles in World War Two. Lighter warship development also continued largely unabated, and flotilla craft such as destroyers, like the treaty cruisers, were “hot items” of the 1920s and 30s. France in particular commissioned a series of “super destroyers” whose size and power would earn their designations as light cruisers in allied service. The IJN also produced, with their “Special Type” fleet destroyers, an impressive flotilla force for the Pacific.

Another result of stunting the traditional “big-gun” battleship arm had been to spur navies into pursuing innovative technology alternatives. As Jordan indicates, submarine and aircraft carrier development is perhaps the best example of this trend. All five navies developed large submarine fleets of various types. Especially inventive were the “fleet” and “cruiser” designs of France and Japan. Furthermore, since the treaty no longer permitted a number of large battleship and battle cruiser designs, such as the Japanese *Akagi* and *Kaga* and the American *Lexington* and *Saratoga*, the countries converted their hulls to carriers. In short, the potent World War Two carrier forces of the United States and Japan owed their existence in large part to the Washington Treaty.

In conclusion, *Warships After Washington* is a valuable addition to the literature on interwar naval history. Jordan’s keen insight provides the reader with a heightened appreciation for the political motivations and technical ramifications of the Washington Conference on 1920s and 30s naval development. The book illustrates how the conference was central to the development and doctrine of the interwar fleets that would ultimately face one another on the high seas in World War Two.

John Jordan is a recognized authority on 20th Century naval his-

tory. He began writing about the Soviet Navy in the 1970s, and after the collapse of the USSR shifted his attention to the interbellum French Navy. He has been the editor of *Warship* annual since 2005, and is the author of the books *French Battleships 1922-1956* and *French Cruisers 1922-1956*.

TORMOD ENGVIG

Robin Binckes. *The Great Trek Uncut-Escape from British Rule: The Boer Exodus from the Cape Colony, 1836*. Pinetown, South Africa: 30° South Publishers (Pty) Ltd., 2013.

The book *The Great Trek Uncut* by Robin Binckes covers the timeline of European and Boer colonization in South Africa from the year 1486 when the first Portuguese settler placed boots on the ground until 1852, when the Orange Free State and Transvaal Republics were officially established and given autonomy from British rule.

The author covers in great depth every major and transitional event surrounding the internal and external settlement of South Africa by peoples such as the Khoikhoi, Xhosa, Zulu, French, Dutch, and British populations. He also construes the cultural reasoning for Boer-Khoikhoi and Boer-Zulu interaction; for example, why the Dutch referred to the Khoikhoi as “Hottentot” meaning “stammerer” in Dutch (25). Other notable events Binckes mentions are circumstances such as the emancipation of slave labor in South Africa, which led to the Manifesto of the Emigrant Farmers, penned by Piet Retief in February 1836. Further, he talks at great length about the massacres near the Bloukrans River and other places which followed the Retief party’s massacre in 1838. Finally, he spends a substantial amount of time on post-migration events of the

region, such as the British annexation of the Boer areas and the subsequent independence for the Boer Republics.

In his writing, Binckes' main intent is to differ from the mostly rote historical texts which talk about the period and tell about the Boer Trek in a holistic manner. He does this by seeking to talk about the events through the emotions surrounding the mass exodus of Boers from the British-held South Africa to parts unknown. Simply put, in doing so, he uses emotion to drive the reader in a manner which belies the almost 700 page length book. As he states in his introduction, "The journey of the Voortrekkers belongs to all South Africans - Black, White, Coloured, and Indian. For too long, the story had been sanitized..." (18). Binckes utilizes a multi-faceted approach and perspective to tell about the Boer Trek, which differs from previous texts, as most of those were from the early-to-mid twentieth century and as such, were very biased toward the Boer side.

The author uses many primary sources to gain these angles, most notably six different diaries from people such as Johann Jakob Merklein, a German explorer who spent extensive time at the Cape of Good Hope during the Dutch settlement period; and Erasmus Smit, a religious leader of the Boers who saw many of the Trek's events. However, he also uses other works such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu's Foundation website to give further expressive background from the native African (Zulu and Xhosa) viewpoints.

Within the book, there are extensive maps (22) and illustrations (41) which support the book's flow and storytelling. The author uses the maps to show the Boers' migratory patterns, the battle formations used at Blood River and other places, and the final establishment of Boer footholds in South Africa. While the maps give a great frame of reference to the geography and historical acts, especially in the Natal area, the drawings and photographs themselves

lend the true emotional impetus to Binckes' work. In fact, over a quarter of the photographs were taken by the author himself while standing at such storied locations as Blood River, Vegkop, and uM-gungundlovu (the Zulu Kingdom's capital during the reign of Dingane). By doing so, he allows the reader to place him or herself in the center of those battles and understand some of the methodology used by those leaders. This only further lends to Binckes' intent to make the story more personal.

By utilizing the photographs, Binckes fulfills two separate purposes. First with the landscape photos, he gives an appreciation of the perspective with which the Boer and Zulu leaders made their tactical decisions during battles. With the settler photographs and drawings, the reader gains an understanding of the austere conditions and the emotional aspects of the Boers' everyday lives as they moved out of the "oppressive" British rule into the unknown.

As compared with other texts about this brief historical period, this ranks as the most complete one published on the subject. Other texts centering on the Boer Trek cover mostly the pinnacle events only or give a heavy bias toward the Boer side. Although Binckes postulates on what differing people at that time would have said or thought during an event's occurrence, he does this in an extremely informed and thoughtful manner which does not degrade the historical facts, a risk so often seen when an author deduces on exact events or past emotions.

Although the author spends a great amount of time talking about the background issues and events leading up to the Boer Trek, these are shown as periphery to the work. In fact, almost three quarters of the book concentrate on the time period between 1820 and 1852, the years generally acknowledged as the time frame of the Boer Trek (also known by the name "Great Trek" in some historical circles). A further strength is that during each subplot, Binckes mas-

terfully transitions the viewpoint between the varied parties involved, whether it is through the eyes of a Boer, Zulu, or Christian missionary. Arguably the best example of this is when he explains the contradictory reasons surrounding the Retief party's massacre in the Zulu capital on February 6, 1838. Earlier in the book, he talks about how most of the native conflicts were started due to stolen cattle, which ironically enough, is one of the reasons Dingane uses to justify his slaughter of Piet Retief's exploratory party (27, 367). He also hones in on the warning issued by the Christian missionary William Owen to some of the Voortrekkers regarding the Zulu treachery (366).

There are a couple of weaknesses inherent in the book, most notably the work's sheer length and the chapter subtitles used by the author. While the extreme length and detailed scope of the book are exceptional for one who is researching in depth on this historical series of events, it can be overwhelming for someone wanting to gain just a quick overview of the Boer Trek. To address the length, the author uses chapter titles and subtitles at the beginning of each chapter to ease searching issues; however, the manner in which it is done does not lend to a handy referencing within the chapter itself.

For a reader not very familiar with South African history, "The Great Trek: Uncut" is a solid work which one can use in gaining familiarization with that nation's events. As well, for the avid historian or student performing research on African history, this book is essential reading and would make an excellent centerpiece work in his or her library.

NORMAN HARVEY

Niklas Zetterling and Anders Frankson. *The Drive on Moscow 1941: Operation Taifun and Germany's First Great Crisis in World War II*. Havertown, PA: Casemate Publishers, 2012.

Let us face it – there always seems to be lots of new books churned out on the Russian Front of World War II. Many are well-intended but add little to this field of study. Others, while not contributing to the overall knowledge base, go off on what one might charitably say are ill-founded tangents. One must now wonder about this book with such a buildup. This reviewer has an entire shelf of books that cover this topic alone. However, those readers with a more than passing intellectual interest in the East Front of World War II will discover a somewhat fresh and enjoyable book with a focus that is slightly different than common for books of this genre.

The thesis advanced by the authors in a somewhat oblique manner is that had the *Wehrmacht* captured Moscow, the USSR would have capitulated, or at least been forced out of the war. Since Germany failed to achieve this critical objective, this then was the turning point of WW II. The reasoning behind their thesis is Hitler's own stated fears that the war must be decided before the U.S. fully mobilized its economy and entered the war. Part of their thesis fails simply because the Germans' failure at Moscow was less contingent upon the future U.S. efforts in Europe than their own economic failures. Adam Tolze's *Wages of Destruction* neatly lays out the economic failure in terms of inadequate wartime production in this critical period for the Third Reich. The U.S. was confronting Germany heavily economically by mid-1942 by Lend Lease with its shipments of high-octane fuel to the Soviet Air Force, waterproof telephone wire and radios – and trucks. The commitment of the U.S. to a strategic air offensive hurt Germany greatly in the air from mid-1943 onwards on the East Front, but all this is in the future.

The book is well-written. At times, the authors' English phrasing is slightly skewed. However, for a reader picking up his or her first book on Operation Taifun/Typhoon they could do substantially worse. The authors write lucidly without descending into grognard-type terminology. A huge plus of this book is the amount of time the authors spend on the battles of Mtsensk and Mozhaisk. That emphasis alone makes this a book that the jaded reader wants as these two battles are given short shrift in most accounts. The great overview of logistics makes this a perfect primer for future logisticians. The casual reader will pick up more from this book on the German logistical challenges than many other works. The book's primary weakness is too much orientation on the German drive and not enough focus on the Soviet efforts to deny them victory. As a cliché goes from the current war against Al-Qaeda, the enemy gets a vote too – and here the enemy “vote” is downplayed perhaps a little too much. In addition, they underscore the political and military infighting among the different German commanders.

It is a well-executed book that neatly fills in gaps even within this period of the war that have been less emphasized. There is a surprising amount of new material. Moreover, the thirty-seven pages of appendices are a worthy read onto themselves. The book is well and freshly illustrated with many new and previously unused photographs. Although the book is primarily written from a German perspective, albeit not as one-sided as say *Hitler Moves East*, it is well written, well proofed and covers the critical aspects in a manner sure to appeal to even the jaded East Front aficionado.

ROBERT SMITH