



ALLIES AGAINST THE RISING SUN: THE UNITED STATES, THE BRITISH NATIONS, AND THE DEFEAT OF IMPERIAL JAPAN

Bibliographical Information:

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Reviewed by Mr. Richard Palimaka

A common perception of the Pacific War is that its prosecution was largely an American affair. Historians have examined early Commonwealth disasters in Singapore and Hong Kong and the campaign in Burma, but less has been written about their role in the closing chapters in the Pacific. By 1945 Britain and the Commonwealth were heavily engaged in

N.W. Europe and the Mediterranean and were wrestling with manpower issues, yet they pressed to take part in the final defeat of Japan. *Allies Against the Rising Sun* examines why and how these nations came to their respective decisions. Perhaps more interesting is why the United States, likely capable of defeating Japan alone, chose to include them in the final operations and the planning for the invasion of Japan. The result is a fresh and balanced history which details the challenges and capabilities, motives and personalities of the participants, and skilfully tells a complex and multi-layered tale of coalition warfare.

Sarantakes is an associate professor at the U.S. Naval War College and is the author of two books dealing with the Okinawa campaign as well as several articles on the British Pacific Fleet. His background is reflected in the amount of space devoted to Okinawa and the performance of the Royal Navy while attached to the U.S. 3rd Fleet. That is not a criticism; in fact the story of the British Pacific Fleet alone is worth the price of the book, as it serves as a case study for the challenges, strains and successes of the Allied effort. Sarantakes makes extensive use of primary source material in each of the countries involved, and he has included memoirs, diaries and correspondence, and a well-selected list of secondary source histories. What emerges is not only a very competent treatment of the manoeuvring involved in the formation of a strategy and coalition, but also the strong influence of the character and personalities of the players at the highest levels. Churchill's insistence on a strategy that would regain lost colonial influence and territory rather than help the Americans end the war almost caused his COS to resign. Admiral Ernest King, Chief of Naval Operations for the U.S. Navy, continually attempted to put barriers in the way of Commonwealth participation.

Much attention is devoted to the unique interests and concerns of Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Sarantakes describes Mackenzie King's difficulties in accepting the need for Canadian participation in the Pacific and his mistrust of his Service Chiefs, especially the Navy. Each of the Services had a vested interest in how their particular contribution would impact the influence they would carry post-war, and how that shaped what they would bring to an invasion of Japan. That ran the gamut from a mature Army plan which would see an infantry division under Bert Hoffmeister serve with the Americans (and not the British) to substantial RCAF participation in a 22-squadron Commonwealth Tiger Force which the Americans had no capacity to base. Decisions were made about equipment, logistics, training, how and where our troops would be used, and whether that fit into the plans of the coalition—it brings recent events to mind.

This is a well-researched and highly readable introduction to Commonwealth participation in a campaign where Canada's last Victoria Cross was earned. Canada, Australia and New Zealand were willing to support Britain but were not interested in helping her regain an empire. It is fascinating to compare their respective efforts to assert their own hard-won influence and independence while improving relations with the new superpower, the United States. 🍁



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Canadian Army Pacific Force Patch.