

It might be added that these volumes under review are not such a catalogue—they are merely signposts pointing to the large depositories of federal documents. Detailed inventories of many of these records, particularly of those already transferred to the National Archives, do exist, at least in type-script, and they will carry the researcher with confidence and accuracy to his final goal.

In spite of minor faults, (the fact that much of the data, representing as it does the situation as of 1949, was obsolete before it appeared in print—the references in the index to entry rather than page numbers—a tendency toward somewhat ambiguous generalization in the descriptions of records) these volumes add immeasurably to the debt which librarians, historians, government officials, and scholars in all fields owe to the staff of the National Archives.

Indiana University

Lynn W. Turner

The Army Air Forces in World War II. Edited by Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate. Volume IV, *The Pacific: Guadalcanal to Saipan, August 1942 to July 1944.* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1950, pp. xxxii, 825. Illustrations, maps, tables, glossary, and index. \$6.00.)

Following their surprise attack at Pearl Harbor the Japanese rapidly thrust outward from the home islands. Global planning-board strategy of the Allies called for major concentration and emphasis against the European efforts of the Rome-Berlin-Tokyo axis. The seriousness of the Japanese advance was brought home to the Allied high commands, however, as their forces were constantly defeated and forced to retreat in the Asiatic-Pacific theater. Not only were such prizes as the Netherlands East Indies, the Philippines, Burma, and Singapore in enemy control, but China, Australia, and New Zealand were in imminent danger.

In mid-1942 Japanese forces established themselves in New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. The present volume is concerned with the story of the Pacific war from this twin threat to the Marianas campaign which set the stage for the Twentieth Air Force and its B-29 offensive on industrial Japan.

As in Europe, the air forces in the Asiatic-Pacific theater were engaged in a wide variety of activities. Reconnaissance,

supply, maintenance, softening of islands marked for assault, continued neutralization of islands which were by-passed, direct support of ground troops, interference with the enemy's air and naval counter-attacks, antishipping strikes, troop transport, reduction of enemy air power, and successive elimination or capture of Japanese positions partially tell the story of the multitudinous activities of the air arm. The imbalance between Japanese and Allied air forces was gradually reversed and preponderant air superiority belonged to the latter by mid-1944.

If the enemy were to be halted short of a point where he could break the Allied life-line between the United States and Australia, Guadalcanal Island of the Solomon group offered the last possible opportunity. More than this, global strategy depended on stopping the Japanese offensive. Allied commitment in the Pacific, nevertheless, was to entail "no more than the maintenance of constant pressure on the Japanese foe and retention of the initiative in operations designed to win positions from which a full-scale offensive might be launched immediately after the defeat of Germany" (p. 131).

Progress made in evicting the enemy was over "a long and painful road" (p. 204). The battle for Guadalcanal; the victory in the Bismarck Sea action which General MacArthur described after the war as "the decisive aerial engagement" in his theater of operations (p. 146); the successful assault and capture of Bougainville, the largest island in the Solomons; and the acquisition of strategic atolls and islands in the Gilbert and Marshall groups prepared the way for destruction of the center of activities at Rabaul, the "keystone of the Bismarck Archipelago." Rather than a costly assault, attainment of air superiority made it possible to effectively neutralize by air attack and then by-pass this long-feared center of enemy power.

Harry L. Coles' account of the north Pacific campaign clears up the popular misconceptions about the war in that theater. The crucial area was the Aleutian chain of islands, not the mainland of Alaska. Further, the Japanese as well as the American objective in that area was essentially defensive in nature. After a dramatic beginning at Dutch Harbor, activities in that theater tapered off into anticlimax. In the last analysis, "perhaps it was the weather . . . that relegated the Alaska-Aleutians area to the place of a relatively inactive theater" (p. 363).

The capture of Singapore by the enemy in the early stages of the war and his conquest of Burma, endangered India on the east and virtually reduced China to a state of siege. The China-Burma-India theater of operations, although of recognized political and military significance to the Allied cause, was subordinated to the accomplishment of more immediate objectives both in Europe and the Pacific. Air power in the Burma campaign was certainly the deciding factor in Allied success. Renewed activities of the Japanese were to prove China weak in spite of efforts of the Allies to the contrary.

The Pacific goal of the war was to deliver a knockout blow to the Japanese homeland. Although competing strategies of the various theater commanders and chiefs of staff planners seemed at times to be irreconcilable, progress was made. With the seizure of the Admiralty Islands north of New Guinea, the Hollandia area in Netherlands New Guinea, and other important bases on the northern coast of New Guinea, initiative was wrested from the enemy. The capture of the Marianas (Saipan, Tinian, and Guam) marked the end of one phase of the Pacific war. These islands were to become great bases from which B-29's would bombard the Japanese homeland.

Although, generally, the present volume measures favorably with the previous ones in *The Army Air Forces in World War II* series in uniformity of style and objectivity of presentation, there are differences worthy of note. There is a noticeable change of style in the chapter on "The Gilberts and Marshalls." In describing the war in the Solomons and New Guinea areas and vicinity, Richard L. Watson and Kramer J. Rohfleisch give one of the most readable and comprehensible accounts yet to appear in the series. On the other hand the discussion of "The Pattern of India-Burma Operations, 1943" is one of the most difficult to follow. In the account entitled "Rabaul and Cape Gloucester," the reader easily confuses the description of the Japanese units with American units.

As a whole the maps in the present volume are of great improvement and more utility, but in some portions of the text one is easily lost because of a lack or inadequacy of the maps. It is hoped that the future numbers in the series will continue the trend of more useful maps. The employment of symbols has been reduced to a commendable minimum.

The Ohio State University

Dwight L. Smith