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Forgotten Battles: Italy's War of Liberation, 1943-1945

(review)

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harassing operations in Burma, India, and Okinawa, among other combat zones, and inflicted generally heavier casualties on the Allies than they themselves suffered. However, everywhere the Allies grew stronger and Nakano operatives found themselves training guerrilla units for the defense of Kyushu and Tokyo. A particularly informative chapter is titled "Ending the War, Finding New Allies" (pp. 165–99). Here the author offers a rich description of how the chief of Japanese military intelligence, Lieutenant General Arisue Seizo, used his information about the Soviet Union as a bargaining chip with MacArthur's intelligence forces. The result was a special intelligence partnership that had considerable relevance during the early rounds of the Cold War. In all likelihood, this particular Japanese-American cooperation was much more admissible than the initial affair American authorities had with Japanese biological warfare specialists. Many were granted immunity from prosecution in exchange for their biological warfare data and equipment removed from the death factories on the Asian continent to Japan in August 1945.

This is an effectively written account. For instance, the author is adept at producing succinct biographical sketches of Nakano operatives before recounting their work in combat. The story of the postwar activities of Nakano veterans, particularly Lieutenant Onoda Hiroo, who did not emerge from the jungles of the Philippines to surrender until March 1974, is skillfully painted along a time line from the late 1940s when some of the veterans helped retrain the army of Chiang Kai-shek to when Onoda returned to the Philippines in the late 1990s as a most honored and welcomed guest. In sum, this is a fascinating and distinctive contribution to the literature on Japan and the Second World War.

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***Forgotten Battles: Italy's War of Liberation, 1943–1945.*** By Charles T. O'Reilly. Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2001. ISBN 0-7391-0195-1. Maps. Tables. Appendixes. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Pp. 364. \$90.00.

This history of Italian military assistance to the Allies, 1943–45, presents contradictions. O'Reilly brings strengths to his book. He served as an interpreter with Italian Service Units (ISUs) in the conflict. He perfected his Italian studying and teaching in Italy. O'Reilly saw duty as a reserve counterintelligence officer during the Korean War. He has read widely in Italian-language military history. He conducted research using captured Italian military records in the National Archives and endured the frustrations attendant on utilizing the Italian army's *Ufficio Storico*.

Thus the book's rich detail and deep passion. One feels O'Reilly's fury toward denigrators of Italian efforts for the Allies. Over 90,000 died, 26,000 in organized units and 65–70,000 as partisans in Italy, the Balkans, and

France. This compares with 45,500 British Commonwealth and 35,400 American deaths during the advance to the Alps. Another 75–80,000 Italian soldiers died in German captivity rather than fight for Hitler. By war's end, 99,000 Italians had been incorporated into the British Eighth Army as combatants, 66,000 were performing security duties, and 196,000 working in ISU labor units. 100,000 more served as sailors and airmen. Over 40 percent of Allied troops in Italy at war's end were uniformed members of the Italian military. Including civilian partisan losses, over half of the Allied fatalities in Italy between September 1943 and April 1945 were Italian. *Forgotten Battles* tells this story, also providing chapters on the Italian Resistance and another episode largely unmentioned in English-language sources: the 500,000 to 750,000 Italians who served in Axis Italian or *Wehrmacht* units.

Yet serious flaws mar this work, a labor of love bereft of editorial and professional historical support. Errors, typos, and misspellings abound. Large sections present irate views of sources, better placed in endnotes or omitted. The book seems to be O'Reilly's repository for opinions on many irrelevancies, including civil-military relations under Mussolini, Allied code-breaking, Italian anti-Semitism, British policy toward Yugoslav partisans, punishment of Italian Fascists, American-British differences over Italian politicians, the Cold War's origins, and Polish forces in the Italian campaign. Worse, the author quotes misleadingly. In one egregious example, he states: "John Gooch . . . said 'the Italians can not and will not fight'" (p. 89). But the full quotation from an article by Christie Davies reads: "Andreski and Gooch are correct in saying that Italians can not, or will not, fight." Furthermore, Christie's statement not only distorts what Stanislav Andreski and Gooch wrote but reflects her poor translation of her article's title: "Itali Sunt Imbelles," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 2 (1982): 266–69, better rendered as "Italians are unwarlike" than her "Italians do not fight." Of all this, Gooch is innocent.

Even at one-quarter its excessive price, this book would be a poor investment.

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***"Die Schwarzen waren unsere Freunde": Deutsche Kriegsgefangene in der amerikanischen Gesellschaft 1942–1946.*** By Matthias Reiss. *Krieg in der Geschichte*, ed. Förster, Kroener, Wegner, vol. 11. Paderborn, Germany: Schöningh, 2002. ISBN 3-506-74479-8. Maps. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Pp. 371. DM 40,90.

Historians and World War II buffs have become increasingly aware of the presence, more than half a century ago, of more than 371,000 German (and 53,000 Italian and 5,000 Japanese) prisoners of war held in camps across wartime America. State and local studies are exploring the experiences of the prisoners who worked, lived, and escaped in their areas.