

Who Is This Man Nimitz?

by

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The entry of General of the Army MacArthur's troops into Manila is a cause for rejoicing, and great credit should go to him for his personal conduct of the campaign. MacArthur is a great general—there is none better in the Army—and today he deservedly basks in the sunlight of popular approval for the successes that have accompanied his various campaigns.

But never should it be forgotten that without the complete cooperation of Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz and the support the Navy has given, the occupation of Manila would still be a dream, an objective to be achieved and not an accomplished result. Nor would MacArthur's slogan "On to Tokyo" be more than empty words.

Who is this man Nimitz, the Commander-in-Chief of our Pacific Fleet, who in a quiet way has done so much and yet—by comparison—has been so little in the limelight? When the Japs were defeated at Midway, a battle which meant more to the security of America and the success of our Pacific advance than the occupation of Luzon, little was heard of Nimitz, though he was in full charge. He could have been put in the limelight then. Evidently he preferred to remain in the background, as most naval leaders do, and let the praise go to those serving under him.

When he entered the Pacific command, he was a comparatively young, untried man, not an experienced veteran like MacArthur. So, when he planned to move west in the Central Pacific there was much unfavorable comment on what was termed "the island-hopping strategy." But Nimitz fooled his critics. Instead of mopping up the various atolls first encountered in the Eastern Marshalls, he by-passed them and moved into Kwajalein, the best base for our purposes in the Marshalls.

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Then followed a series of long jumps west where important areas, which had to be occupied, were captured and others, whose occupation would have been costly in time and manpower, were by-passed, neutralized, and subjected to constant air bombing. Eniwetok, Saipan, Guam, Ulithi, and air bases in the Palau group were seized in the advances west, but Ponape, Truk, Yap, and most of the Palau group—hard nuts to crack—were by-passed.

The Japs had started two infiltrating moves south from their bases on the Marshalls and the Carolines. The eastern one was intended to progress from the Marshalls through the Gilberts and Ellice Islands to harass our convoy lanes then running south of the Fijis and Samoas to points west. This operation was interrupted by our occupation of the Ellices and finally was completely knocked out by the seizure of the Gilberts after much hard fighting.

The second and western Jap move south started from Truk and was charted through the Bismarck Archipelago, the Solomons, the New Hebrides, and New Caledonia, to outflank Australia and threaten New Zealand. This strategy was halted at Tulagi and Guadalcanal. The Jap sea threat to Port Moresby was eliminated in the Coral Sea battle. Regardless of what command—the Central Pacific or the Southwest Pacific—these operations fell under, it was the Navy and its accompanying forces which played the determining role.

Another sea activity about which little is said but which accomplishes much is our submarine warfare in Far Eastern waters. Its general direction falls to the organization headed by Nimitz. Our submarines have accomplished a remarkable piece of work.

Another aspect of the fighting which is plain drudgery and not in the least spectacular is the one called logistics. The sea end of it consists of transporting safely, from point of embarkation to that of debarkation, the many craft carrying reinforcements and supplies to our forces at the front. This activity is almost the most important in the entire Pacific campaign, and until Admiral Royal E. Ingersoll was appointed to take over the logistic problem much of its load was carried by the organization under Nimitz.

The various and successful tactical accomplishments of the task forces under competent naval leaders are too numerous to mention in detail. But, in the conduct of amphibious warfare, which has been the keynote to our Pacific successes and will remain so until we impinge upon the land masses of China and Japan, Fleet Admiral Nimitz has shown that he, too, is a master hand.

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