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In Bitter Tempest: Bio/Fletcher-94

Stephen D. Regan

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Think of World War II naval commanders in the Pacific and certain names come to mind: Chester Nimitz, Raymond Spruance, William "Bull" Halsey. Their accomplishments have been well documented by historians and filmmakers. Yet there is another, more controversial commander among their ranks who has been largely overlooked - until now. In Bitter Tempest tells the story of Admiral Frank Jack Fletcher, who led U.S. forces at Wake, Coral Sea, Guadalcanal, and the Eastern Solomons. It is the first book to be written specifically to give Fletcher's perspective, using previously unreviewed personal papers along with numerous naval documents and records, some of which were formerly classified material. Fletcher's time at sea during World War II is set forth in vivid detail, from exciting victories to communications foul-ups to the tragic sinking of his command vessel, the U.S.S. Yorktown. Did Fletcher make errors in judgment, as some of his critics have claimed, or was he primarily a victim of internal politics within the military? This volume helps clarify the issue. The biography chronicles Fletcher's life as a loyal career naval officer, starting with his childhood as scion of a locally prominent family in Marshalltown, Iowa, and including his attendance at the U.S. Naval Academy, where Nimitz, Spruance, and Halsey were among his classmates; his exemplary service at Vera Cruz and in World War I; and his assignments in Asia and in Washington, D.C., throughout the 1920s and 1930s, which allowed him to see firsthand the rise of Japan that brought the nation into World War II. The author also offers insights into the wartime U.S.-Russia Lend-Lease program in which Fletcher played unheralded butimportant roles as diplomat and supervisor. As Commander of North Pacific Forces, Fletcher efficiently ran army, navy, and army-airforce operations against the Japanese, while training Russian forces to take over U.S. ships. Japanese forces in the northern islands of Japan surrende

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