

A Conversation with Marc Gallicchio

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“This is really a Temple project,” Villanova University’s Dr. Marc Gallicchio said of *Implacable Foes: War in the Pacific, 1944-1945*, the Bancroft Prize winning 2017 book that he co-authored with mentor and long-time friend Waldo Heinrichs.

Considering the collaboration between Gallicchio and Heinrichs, combined with the inspiration from giants of Temple University and military history such as Russell Weigley, that assertion is not difficult to believe.

Through an ambitious reinterpretation of the United States’ political and military efforts in the final months of the Pacific War, Heinrichs and Gallicchio point out to the reader that, though a traditional invasion of Japan may not have been impossible, there were a great many logistical obstacles and domestic political constraints unhinging American strategy at the end of the war. After the end of the European War, Gallicchio explains, many in American business (big businesses, small business, and labor) began pushing for a reconversion toward a peacetime economy. The army, still fighting against a viable Japan in the Pacific, was vehemently opposed to reconversion, as it would draw out the war and play into Japan’s hopes. This economic reconversion, coupled with logistical concerns of redeployment to name a few factors, brought up questions to American leaders and germinated thoughts that maybe the United States would have to settle for something short of unconditional surrender.

While working on related projects such as the role of unconditional surrender in the American war plans and other issues that built upon his 2008 book *The Scramble for*

Asia, Gallicchio was approached by Heinrichs about collaborating on a project that would eventually become *Implacable Foes*. The two have exchanged ideas and writing projects going back to Gallicchio’s days as a graduate student of Heinrichs’s at Temple. So working together on a project such as this was a relatively organic transition. Gallicchio was delighted, honored, and just a bit scared to co-author a book with his mentor. He said that, at the outset, it “felt like I was back in grad school,” and that the test for his writing and arguments was “whether or not I could convince Waldo Heinrichs.”

However, working with Heinrichs proved to be a rewarding and productive process. The two were able to pull together several different threads in domestic and international affairs to produce a compelling account of the end of the Pacific War. The collaborative process, Gallicchio explains, was an incredibly rewarding one that proved both fruitful and enjoyable. It was not without its challenges however, as writing for a wider audience brought its own challenges. For example, Gallicchio and Heinrichs were instructed not to list other historians (save for a few big names) in their text, so as not to alienate the wider public. For the same reason, Gallicchio stated that his editor instructed him and his co-author to only quote directly from primary sources. Even if another historian articulated an idea perfectly for their purposes, Gallicchio and Heinrichs were tasked with paraphrasing. While it is certainly difficult to strike a balance between effective analysis and accessibility, this raises an important question for historians with respect to audience and the effectiveness of our writing.

Despite the challenges that accompanied the research for and writing of *Implacable Foes*, Gallicchio would have done few things differently. For instance, he would “try to make it a bit shorter, which it already is

compared to what it started as initially.” Looking forward, Gallicchio is returning to some of the ideas he had before Heinrichs approached him about collaborating on *Implacable Foes*. “I’m interested in writing a book on the politics of unconditional surrender during and after the war,” he states, while adding that he is also interested in writing a political biography of Albert Wedemeyer, a United States Army commander who served in Asia during and after the war. Regardless of the approach that Dr. Gallicchio takes in his upcoming project or projects, between his relationships, methodology, and influences, his work will inherently be of great interest to CENFAD and the Temple University history community.