

## DON FERNANDO BALEN GARCIA

(1904-1966)

Rear Admiral, Spanish Navy  
Hydrographic Engineer  
Director of the Naval Hydrographic Institute

Gran Cruz del Mérito Naval  
Gran Cruz de la Orden de San Hermenegildo  
Encomienda de la Orden de Africa  
Medalla Naval de Servicios Distinguidos del Brasil  
Medalla del Mérito Militar  
Cruz de Guerra

Rear Admiral Don Fernando BALEN GARCIA, Director of the Hydrographic Institute of the Spanish Navy, died at the San Fernando Naval Hospital in Cadiz on 7 November 1966.



The hydrographic community at large has lost one of its most eminent figures of the last twenty-five years.

Born at Seville on 17 October 1904, Rear Admiral BALEN entered the Naval School on 17 December 1920, and was promoted to officer's rank on 15 September 1925.

On 12 September 1929 he entered the Hydrographic Training School at the Naval Observatory of San Fernando (Cadiz), and while there he carried out hydrographic surveys aboard the survey ship *Giralda* and took part in surveys of the Strait of Gibraltar and in the Gulf of Cadiz. He was nominated Hydrographic Officer in May 1931. On his promotion to the rank of Lieutenant, he was appointed Instructor at the Naval School in Astronomy and Navigation which he also taught on various other occasions later in his career.

In 1933 he carried out hydrographic surveys off the Moroccan coast, the Cape of Gata and in Mar Menor as surveyor on the hydrographic vessels *Giralda* and *Tofino*. Then in October 1934 he was given command of the Coast Guard vessel *Arcila*, attached to the Canary Islands Hydrographic Survey, for the surveying of these islands and of the Rio de Oro coast.

In August 1937 he was appointed Deputy Naval Attaché at the Spanish Embassy in Rome, a function he filled until January 1938 when he was recalled to become Instructor at the Naval School. Later, whilst a Lieutenant-Commander, he was appointed Chief Operations Officer for the Squadron Naval Staff, and in recognition of his innate qualities of leadership and his professional competence as an Instructor he was appointed Commanding Officer of the Minelayer *Vulcano* — the training ship for Midshipmen — a post he occupied for two years.

Previously, as the First Lieutenant of the survey ship *Malaspina*, he carried out hydrographic surveys at the River Guadalquivir mouth and off the west coast of southern Spain.

He was promoted Lieutenant-Commander in 1944, and during this time of technical expansion in the Spanish Navy when the Naval Hydrographic Institute was founded he was appointed the first Director of that Institute and was nominated Hydrographic Engineer.

During the 22 years that he was head of this institute he carried on the immense task of creating a model hydrographic centre, both from the technical and the scientific point of view.

One of his preoccupations as Director of the Hydrographic Institute was to promote modern methods and to adapt cartographic production to highly-developed techniques, continually striving his utmost to acquire the means necessary to the realization of this aim. During his office interrupted surveys were resumed and surveys of Spanish West Africa, Spanish Equatorial Guinea and the Canary Islands were carried out.

At the same time he took decisive steps regarding the creation of a permanent branch of officers specialising in hydrography.

In August 1963 he was promoted to the rank of Rear Admiral.

In his capacity of Director of the Spanish Naval Hydrographic Institute he was the official representative of Spain at the IHB and he attended the International Hydrographic Conferences of 1947, 1952, 1957 and 1962.

In the field of IHB activities he carried out a vast amount of cooperation with States Members, a task made easier by his comprehension of both human and technical problems and by his deep conviction of the necessity for cooperation between men and between states in order to solve in the best possible way the problems common to all.

In the domain of Spanish hydrography he made a point of developing hydrographic techniques and instrumentation and started the training of Naval Officers in oceanography and the application of this science to surveying.

In his own country as well as in international circles Rear Admiral BALEN had acquired great scientific prestige. In Spain he was Chairman of the Higher Council on Geography and of the National Committee on Geodesy and Geophysics, as well as the Interdepartmental Commission charged with the application of the regulations concerning the standardization of buoyage and the amendments to the 1930 Lisbon international agreement on buoyage.

In international relations, as the Spanish delegate he attended numerous congresses and meetings, amongst others the following: the Plenary Session of the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea, Copenhagen, 1948; the 9th General Assembly on Maritime Meteorology in London in 1952; the 2nd International Conference on Maritime Meteorology and the International Congress on Navigation and Depth Measurements using Radio and Radar held in Hamburg in 1956; the 6th General Assembly of the International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics in Toronto, 1957, visiting also the Hydrographic Office of the U.S.A.; the 13th General Assembly of the International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics in San Francisco, California, in 1963; and the Maritime Meteorology Commission of the World Meteorological Organization in January 1964.

He was a member of the Institute of Navigation of the University of California (U.S.A.) and of the Institute of Navigation in London, and a corresponding member for the World Meteorological Congress and for the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea.

The premature death of this eminent hydrographer will be felt as a great loss to the hydrographic world. All those who knew will remember his magnificent personal qualities, his capacity for friendship, the universality of his ideals, his enormous creative ability and his great courtesy. We are certain that we shall derive much gain by following his example in all the fields where he so assiduously exercised his profession.