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Charts of War: The Maps and Charts That Have Informed and Illustrated War at Sea

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“Final Solution” and how a nation so seemingly advanced could have carried out such monstrous crimes. The crux of Kershaw’s argument is that the führer’s “charismatic domination” of the German people through a potent mix of ideological zeal coupled with his great skills in the art of propaganda paved the way for the “Final Solution.”

On 30 January 1939, Hitler delivered a lengthy speech in the Reichstag in which he threatened the “annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe” should the Jews “succeed in plunging the nations once more into a world war.” As Kershaw notes, Hitler and his underlings would repeatedly cite that “prophecy” over the course of the next three years, as planning for the “Final Solution” intensified. (Interestingly, as the war dragged on, the date of the “prophecy” speech was deliberately altered by the regime in its propaganda broadcasts to 1 September 1939, to link it with the onset of the war.) In 1942 alone, Hitler referred to his “prophecy” in four nationally broadcast radio addresses designed to, as Kershaw puts it, “condition the general population against humanitarian sympathy for the Jews” and, most disturbingly, signal to the regime’s insiders Hitler’s “knowledge and approval of the genocide.”

Kershaw believes that one of the major milestones on the road to a “comprehensive solution” of the “Jewish question” was Hitler’s declaration of war against the United States on 11 December 1941. The propaganda minister, Joseph Goebbels, noted in his diary on 13 December that “the Führer is determined to make a clean sweep. . . . The world war is here. The annihilation of the Jews must be the necessary

consequence.” A little over five weeks later, the infamous Wannsee Conference convened to plan, as SS-*Obergruppenführer* Reinhard Heydrich put it, “the coming final solution of the Jewish question.” What had until that point been a localized and somewhat “inefficient” extermination effort was transformed into a Reich-wide, comprehensive genocide. None of this, as Goebbels noted in March 1942, was possible without the führer’s presence as the “unswerving champion and spokesman of a radical solution” to the “Jewish question.”

Kershaw is to be commended for this collection of essays, which, coupled with a reading of his two-volume biography of Hitler, should be required reading for any serious student of Nazi Germany and the Holocaust. We owe a debt to Kershaw for the unpleasant but essential enterprise of helping future generations grapple with one of the most squalid episodes in the history of mankind.

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Blake, John. *Charts of War: The Maps and Charts That Have Informed and Illustrated War at Sea*. London: Conway Maritime, 2006. 160pp. \$50

John Blake’s book is a masterful short course on the maritime history of Western civilization and chart making as it has evolved through time. It traces the history of sea charts from thirteenth-century portolan wind charts to the diagrammatic charts used to describe pivotal phases of the sea operations during the first Gulf war, in 1991. The sea chart was particularly important to

the maritime countries as they emerged into national states. The objective of this book is to study not war but the development of charts and their use in warfare.

The book is written for the general public, not for the specialist. Although laid out in chronological order, it does not provide an index of the charts, which makes it difficult to locate a specific one. The charts are in a large format, and their reproduction is of high quality; however, it is often necessary to resort to a magnifying glass to see details.

Blake has selected a series of original and printed charts seldom seen by the public; they are highly appealing and are considered secondary art in their own right. Blake states that they were chosen to show “how the chart can illustrate, inform and comment on maritime history.” Each has a description that sets it in its historical context, the specific objective for which it was constructed, its originator (when known), and its current location.

There are over 185 charts, maps, and sketches, covering the development of sea charts from the beginning, as well as their design and content, with the overall intent of showing their importance to the planning and execution of sea

battles. Very few sea charts, however, have survived that show the actual planning or progress of a sea battle. Most sea charts of war are illustrations of past events.

The selection came from fifteen major archives in the United Kingdom, Europe, and the United States. Blake’s research was extensive and goes into great detail. The book covers eight specific areas of chart making: ancient world; the Renaissance; the Spanish and Portuguese empires; seventeenth-century European, American, and Asian wars; American independence; the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars; the American Civil War; and modern warfare.

John Blake has written two other excellent books on sea charts. He was an officer in the Royal Navy for seventeen years, with twelve years’ active service. In 1996 he and his wife initiated the licensing of maritime cartography in the United Kingdom Hydrographic Office. He was educated at Brighton and Britannia Royal Naval College, Dartmouth, and is a fellow of the Royal Institute of Navigators.

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