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Code-Name Downfall: The Secret Plan to aede Japan and Why Truman Dropped the Bomb

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He emphasizes that the Italian fleet's operations were restricted geographically to within the Mediterranean and were tied completely to maintaining the essential flow of supplies to North Africa. Its difficulties were further exacerbated by limited dock facilities in Libyan ports and inability to gain access to French North African harbors. The British, on the other hand, could readily reinforce the Mediterranean Fleet and their ground and air forces through exterior lines secure from Italian attack, and they could amass overwhelming force to support the resupply of Malta.

In general, Sadkovich considers the RMI to have acquitted itself well in combat. He emphasizes the readiness of the Royal Navy to disengage whenever it lost the tactical advantage, and also the success, for much of the war, of the Italian fleet in convoying supplies and troops, both Italian and German, to North Africa without excessive casualties while inflicting considerable losses on British forces. He notes that major Italian combat losses occurred only during actions for which the RMI was ill equipped, untrained, or outnumbered. Sadkovich also highlights the refusal of the Germans to cooperate fully with the Italians and the disastrous consequences of the Italian adoption of German coding machines, which allowed the British from mid-1942 to use ULTRA to devastate Axis naval operations.

Sadkovich presents a strong case. However, he displays a tendency to overreact and attempts to rebut every earlier accusation against the RMI's war record. He also has not been well served by his editors—his text is riddled with

typographical and grammatical errors. This monograph argues that Italy would have been well advised to avoid involvement in World War II, yet that the Italian fleet nevertheless fought creditably with its inadequate tools.

PAUL E. FONTENOY
Beaufort, North Carolina

Allen, Thomas B. and Polmar, Norman.
Code-Name Downfall: The Secret Plan to Invade Japan and Why Truman Dropped the Bomb. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995. 351pp. \$25

Thomas B. Allen and Norman Polmar have once again demonstrated their impeccable timing when writing on controversial subjects. Previous topics tackled by this team include Admiral Rickover (shortly before his retirement), the Walker spy ring (not long after it had been exposed), and the first history of the Gulf war (written for CNN). In *Code-Name Downfall*, Allen and Polmar examine President Truman's decision to use the atomic bomb in the overall context of Allied planning for the invasion of the home islands of Japan.

Code-Name Downfall begins with a brief depiction of the Doolittle Raid, the Allies' first attempt to strike back at the Japanese homeland. The authors then proceed to an analysis of War Plan Orange, the prewar American assessment of a potential war with Japan. The main difference between plan and reality was the importance and effectiveness of naval and ground-based airpower. Yet as the authors demonstrate, the new tool of strategic bombing simply did not

achieve all that its proponents claimed—until the destructiveness of atomic weapons was demonstrated. Without the atomic bomb, amphibious invasion seemed the only sure way to end a conflict characterized by suicidal Japanese defenses.

On the surface, the debate concerning President Truman's decision should have ended years ago. Ninety-nine percent of the key decision makers—both American and Japanese—agreed that it took the shock of the "absolute weapon" to cause Japan's surrender. Most official assessments credit the bomb with being a critical (if not the *most* critical) factor in convincing Emperor Hirohito to sue for peace. The testimonial evidence is overwhelming. Japan knew that the war was lost yet planned to fight on until it achieved a more favorable treaty than unconditional surrender. In fact, many Japanese military leaders were determined to fight to the death in the "decisive battle" that would fix their immortality as true samurai.

Most confusing are the parochial claims of airpower and seapower advocates that the war could have ended without bomb or invasion. These revisionist scholars, determined to prove the evils of atomic weapons, capitalism, or American foreign policy in general, have seized upon the few contradictory sources to "prove" that the atomic bombing was immoral. Allen and Polmar cut through this confusion in a nonpolemic fashion, by simply laying out the American plans for invasion and estimates of its cost, the Japanese military commitment to a "decisive battle," and the face-saving excuse which atomic destruction provided to the

Emperor of Japan. They also detail the attempted military coup that nearly prevented the surrender.

In a final assessment, the authors recount the words of a billboard outside the atomic components factory at Oak Ridge, Tennessee: "Whose son will die in the last minutes of the war?" Many died in World War II, but the final invasion and occupation of Japan (Operation *DOWNFALL*) began with the stroke of a pen and not the crash of a kamikaze. If you still need convincing, reading *Code-Name Downfall* should prove decisive. And if you are already convinced but want a clearer picture of the decision-making process of Allied and Japanese leaders, this is the best single-volume source currently in print.

SAM J. TANGREDI
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Isenberg, Michael T. *Shield of the Republic, 1945–1962*. Vol. 1. New York: St. Martin's, 1993. 948pp. \$35
Shield of the Republic is an epic account of the U.S. Navy during the stormy years following the end of the Second World War. Its comprehensive sweep ranges from highbrow issues of national security strategy to the relentless technological advances that drove institutional change, down to detailed portrayals of the lives and problems of sailors during the postwar period. Along the way, the author intersperses numerous vignettes and character sketches, which keep the narrative moving smartly.

The scene opens in Tokyo Bay on the morning of the Japanese surrender,