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## Duel of Eagles

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In summary, *Churchill's Generals* is the most comprehensive examination of the army commanders who helped Churchill win World War II. Written predominantly from a British perspective and reflecting a strong national bias, the book provides an intimate portrait of Britain's senior military commanders during the most devastating war of the twentieth century.

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Townsend, Peter. *Duel of Eagles*.  
Novato, Calif.: Presidio Press,  
1991. 455pp. \$24.95

This is one of the best histories written about the Battle of Britain. It was crafted from the experiences of Peter Townsend, commander of Britain's 85 Fighter Squadron and a participant in that battle. Despite his emphasis on air power, the author has provided a remarkable blend of history, technology, ideology, and personality. Townsend's love of flying emerges throughout the work, which is punctuated with humor, horror, determination, despair, professionalism, and pragmatism. He has managed to capture the spirit of both the war and the warrior.

Townsend believes that though the war was fought by brave and courageous men, it was an unnecessary continuation of World War I, brought on by the debacle at Ver-

One of the unique things about this book is the German viewpoint provided through interviews of former German pilots, war documents, and letters. The author leaves no doubt about why the Germans lost the Battle of Britain. First and foremost, he blames poor leadership. He contrasts the visionaries in the German air force with their incompetent leaders and the leadership's failure to match doctrine to technology. As an example he refers to the German order for Me 109s to escort bombers, despite the fact that they did not have the combat range to be effective in that role. A combination of poor intelligence and competing wartime priorities led to inconsistent guidance and the failure to identify the Royal Air Force fighter squadrons and their ground control network. Ultimately, it was incongruent strategy and uncoordinated efforts that led to the downfall of the Germans.

Townsend excels in his discussion of the Royal Air Force. His fascinating narratives about men like Trenchard and Churchill provide the reader with clues about what the author believes to be the key to victory in the Battle of Britain. Included are discussions about the morality of bombing, the efficacy of air power, and interservice cooperation, which are dynamic excursions along the road to the battle. Indeed, reading about the buildup phase is so compelling that the battle itself is a bit anticlimactic.

Readers who enjoy firsthand accounts of dogfights (sadly, without the accompanying hand gestures) will

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revel in the taut depiction of man and machine engaged in a contest of wills, but the most richly rewarded will be those looking for insights and analysis.

Every military professional should read this book. It includes issues such as joint operations, doctrine, fog of war, women in combat, and the importance of leadership. This reader found it difficult to remember that the author was referring to the 1940s. For example, the similarities between Hitler's strategic objectives for the Battle of Britain and General Schwartzkopf's strategic objectives in the Gulf are uncanny.

Finally, should there be any lingering doubt about this book's applicability, consider the following Trenchard quote: "How much easier our task . . . would be if the older services had always said, 'How can we help you?' instead of . . . 'How can we destroy you?'"

Townsend has provided us with lessons as timeless as they are timely.

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Miller, Nathan. *The Naval Air War, 1939-1945*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1991. 175pp. \$24.95

Despite the title, this is primarily an overview of the employment of aircraft carriers, rather than of naval aviation as a whole, during the Second World War. Miller offers a readable account of the carrier operations in all theaters but makes only occasional

references to shore-based naval aviation, and there is little background information about why the major powers entered the war with the types of naval aviation they had.

Miller makes clear that during World War II the aircraft carrier reached a degree of maturity that surprised all but its most ardent supporters. Unfortunately, he does not fully discuss the development of carriers during the inter-war years. Although carriers were the subject of intense development in the United States and Japan, that was not the case in the United Kingdom, Germany, France, and Italy. The varying degrees of interest and support in these countries had a dramatic and direct impact on the naval campaigns of the Second World War.

Despite a few annoying errors—for example, the biplanes were *not* canvas-covered—his coverage of British fleet carrier operations is extensive and generally good. The 1945 operations of British escort carriers in the Atlantic and the British Pacific Fleet carriers are also mentioned, but in both cases one might have hoped for more detail.

The United States and Japan entered the war with large, well trained carrier forces, which became their primary striking arms—particularly for the United States after the loss of the majority of its battleships to Japanese carrier aircraft at Pearl Harbor. Miller offers a thorough account of the operations of the Japanese and American carrier forces, with an emphasis on fast carriers and only a brief discussion of the escort carriers, which,