

1992

Engage the Enemy More Closely: The Royal Navy in the Second World War,

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Recommended Citation

Grove, Eric (1992) "Engage the Enemy More Closely: The Royal Navy in the Second World War," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 45 : No. 3 , Article 18.

Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol45/iss3/18>

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Since television reporting is the *raison d'être* for *War in the Gulf*, it is unfortunate that the controversy of live coverage is not explored more fully. Acknowledging that live coverage was used to advantage by both sides, this work fails to bring the discussion of television's proper role to a reasoned conclusion. This is particularly unfortunate with regard to the much-debated role played by Peter Arnett. There is much to be said for and against Mr. Arnett's actions, as the authors suggest. Had they pursued the issue beyond the superficial, they might well have contributed something meaningful to the debate over the media's role in modern war. Instead, the readers are left with little more than a weak apologia.

As a picture book, *War in the Gulf* is excellent. Never intended to be definitive or profound, it upholds the authors' assertions that the image is the strength of television news. The book runs into trouble, however, when it distorts these images with shallow and hurried attempts to document, analyze, and explain. Rather than "fleetingness," it is the substitution of images for facts which marks the most serious weakness of this work and, by implication, of television news, which it serves to promote.

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Barnett, Correlli. *Engage the Enemy More Closely: The Royal Navy in the*

Second World War. New York: Norton, 1991. 1052pp. \$35

Barnett has offered a substantial, comprehensive account of the Royal Navy's strategy and operations in the Second World War. Divided into four parts, it discusses the background of the Royal Navy, with a summary of the interwar period and an account of operations up to Dunkirk; the crisis period of 1940-41, from the successful defense against invasion in 1940 to the disasters in the Mediterranean and the Far East; the victory in the convoy battles in the Atlantic, the Arctic, and the Mediterranean; the invasion of northwest Europe; and the return to the Far East.

Barnett argues that through shortsighted policies Britannia had "let the trident slip" in the interwar period and that the Royal Navy had neglected important new forms of naval warfare. Nevertheless, the Royal Navy improved its fighting performance sufficiently to win the vital naval battles required to maintain sea communications so that Anglo-American military power could be reinserted into Europe.

The author argues that much effort was wasted in fruitless Mediterranean diversions. However, the Royal Navy's major achievement was in laying the groundwork for and masterminding Operation Neptune, the naval side of the Normandy landings. Victory against Germany was, however, accompanied by a very subordinate role in the American victory against Japan.

Correlli Barnett is a well-known military historian who has shown some hostility to the Royal Navy. It is notable therefore that he has produced a work that reveals real admiration for the service's fighting qualities and the vital maritime foundations of Allied victory ashore. His military origins also have given him insight into the vital interaction of sea power and events on land. Clearly, Barnett is most comfortable when discussing amphibious operations, and this work probably includes the best available modern account of the major European amphibious operations of 1943-45.

Since Barnett's attack on Montgomery in *The Desert Generals*, he has revelled in controversy. This book is no exception. American readers will perhaps be shocked by the author's stern but just criticism of Churchill, whose relationship with the navy was always an uneasy one. (The famous signal "Winston is Back" had a double meaning that was forgotten subsequently.) He is also right to be highly critical of Churchill's giving in to the Royal Air Force in its doctrinaire opposition to allocating long-range aircraft to an effort to plug the mid-Atlantic gap. Perhaps Barnett's strongest revisionist feature is his critical analysis of the Mediterranean strategy, of which Churchill was the major architect. Here Barnett produces a convincing and brilliant case; his description of Malta as "The Verdun of the Naval War" is especially telling. The huge resources put into a forward naval policy in the

Mediterranean might have been used elsewhere to better effect.

It can be argued that it is unrealistic to analyse the Mediterranean campaign in terms of cold profit and loss. History always appears clearer if read after the political and emotional pressures of the time have faded in importance. The author does indeed display a tendency to criticize decision makers in terms of subsequent attitudes and contexts. He argues that Britain should have realized that her empire was a burden, cut her losses, and then concentrated on Europe. At the time however, this was not on the agenda—the British Empire was what the navy and its leaders were employed to defend. What is clear in this work is that less "cigar butt strategy" might have provided sounder imperial defence.

Barnett has produced a well written text that is easy, interesting reading. Its major flaw is the author's treatment of naval technology. There are persistent and significant errors of technical detail throughout that cannot be dismissed as mere annoyances for antiquarians. First, the book may be used as a college text and source of facts—students be warned! Second, naval specialists might be encouraged to dismiss the work because of its unreliability—that would be a tragedy. Finally, the author's historical conclusions about British technological decisions are based on flawed or partial data.

Barnett clearly wanted to add to his well known indictment of British technological deficiencies and

management, but there is another side to the story, to be found in the specialist literature. It is especially surprising and regrettable that Dr. Andrew Gordon's recent work on British naval procurement in the interwar period does not appear in the bibliography. Barnett's first two chapters on interwar policy, and all subsequent sections where technology is discussed, must be treated with considerable care and reserve and should not be regarded as the last word on the subject.

This said, *Engage the Enemy More Closely* is the most significant study of the British war at sea from 1939-45 to appear since Roskill's standard accounts. It is indeed a direct descendant of Roskill's works, since the great man's archive at Churchill College is kept by none other than Correlli Barnett. He has fully exploited the opportunities of his professional situation to add to his predecessor's work and has given the national security community a stimulating and timely reassertion of the fundamental importance of maritime power to a nation's overall war-making capacity. Admiral of the Fleet Lord Lewin's quote on the dust-jacket says that Barnett's "analysis clearly shows how vital it was for the war at sea to be won before land and air campaigns could bring final victory." That a military historian not regarded as a special friend of the Royal Navy has made this point so clearly is of special significance in today's debates over

national strategy on both sides of the Atlantic.

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Kersaudy, Francois. *Norway 1940*.
New York: St. Martin's, 1991.
272pp. \$19.95

Kersaudy has produced a work that reads fast and is full of lessons, but his interpretations should not always be trusted. For example, he refers to Winston Churchill as physically massive, when in fact Churchill was a diminutive person, and he assails Neville Chamberlain as militarily incompetent and lacking backbone. Yet the former Chancellor of the Exchequer knew more than most government members of Britain's defence establishment and its needs. Moreover, Chamberlain's act of appeasement at Munich in 1938 was absolutely necessary given the totally impotent state of the British air defences at that time. In addition, there is a curious misidentification of "the cruiser *Warspite*" (she was a battleship) beneath a photo of an H-class destroyer in Narvik fjord.

The Norwegian campaign of 1940 was a classic case of British intellectual arrogance—it wanted to run before it could crawl. The British started to organize an expeditionary force, ostensibly to aid the Finns against the Soviets. That concept, however, got muddled with closing the German access to Swedish iron ore, which was shipped during the winter from the