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SIEGE: Malta 1940-1943

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antiaircraft gunners, assisted by the screen and fighters, cut to pieces one air group. So while the Japanese had undamaged carriers at the ensuing Battle of Guadalcanal, they had no carrier air power.

Having said all that, I heartily recommend this book to all historians and World War II buffs.

ELIAS B. MOTT
Captain, U.S. Navy (Ret.)

Bradford, Ernie. *SIEGE: Malta 1940-1943*. New York: Morrow, 1985. 320pp. \$19.95

Over the centuries, some of the greatest military epics have involved the tiny Mediterranean archipelago, Malta. *SIEGE* narrates the most recent of these momentous events. Bradford draws the reader into World War II through a quick recount of Maltese history, impressing upon the reader the strategic importance of Malta through the centuries. His work begins with a quote from Queen Elizabeth I on the 1565 siege: "If the Turks should prevail against the Isle of Malta, it is uncertain what further peril might follow to the rest of Christendom."

Prior to the outbreak of the war in the Mediterranean, both the British and the Italians realized the strategic value of the island. However, the British failed even to take measures for the defense of the islands. According to Bradford, there were just four antiquated Gloster Gladiators available to meet the initial Italian strikes on Malta, and these were expro-

priated Fleet Air Arm property that had been sitting in crates on the island.

Though Rommel wrote that "Without Malta, the Axis will end by losing North Africa," he seemed to forget his prophetic words when a choice had to be made between Operation Hercules, (the oft-planned and canceled Axis invasion of Malta) and the continuation of offensive operations against Egypt. Also, as Bradford explains, Malta is a forbidding place for amphibious actions—there are few suitable sites and at the time of the siege these were all heavily defended, and the terrain did not lend itself to a repeat of the Crete operation. Certainly, Hitler did not want to be distracted further from the Eastern campaign, nor did he especially trust the ability of the Italians to successfully handle their part of the operation. However, perhaps the greatest obstacle was the *Luftwaffe* and *Regia Aeronautica* overconfidence in strategic bombing. While Malta was almost totally neutralized during the heaviest bombing, the bombing was stopped just at the point when neutralization was achieved. The British were then able to rebuild the island garrison's strength and renew attacks from Malta on the Axis' SLOCs to North Africa.

In an attempt to be both social and military historian, Bradford fails to do justice to either role. Further, the work is lacking in charts that would clarify details of the siege, a "lessons learned" or epilogue section, and parallels drawn with other campaigns in the war. Especially

grievous to this reviewer are Bradford's flaws as a naval historian. For example, the author clearly lacks knowledge of the Pacific naval war, otherwise, the Battle of Sirte (a March 1942 battle to defend a Malta resupply convoy) would not be considered "what was tactically the most brilliant naval action of the Second World War." As a popular history, *SIEGE: Malta 1940-1943* is a worthwhile introduction to the trials and tribulations of the World War II siege of Malta for the generalist, but fails to satisfy the serious historian or naval buff.

ADAM B. SIEGEL
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Bookman, John T. and Powers, Stephen. *The March to Victory: A Guide to World War II Battles and Battlefields from London to the Rhine*. New York: Harper & Row, 1986. 340pp. \$9.95

The authors have produced a useful, general guide to the battlefields of northern Europe. They begin with the Battle of Britain and the bomber offensive and then go on to D day and the Invasion of Normandy, the breakout from Normandy, the pursuit across France, Operation Market Garden, the Battle of the Bulge and, finally, from the "West Wall" to the Rhine. This last chapter includes the Huertgen Forest, Lorraine campaign, and Rhine crossings. Each chapter begins with a 6 to 26-page encapsulated history of the subject. The authors then provide

practical information for touring battlefield sites, supplemented by maps and diagrams. The book ends with an appendix listing museums of special interest in Great Britain and on the Continent and another appendix containing a highly select bibliography.

Guidance for touring battlefield sites is the main feature of the book and the real purpose for its publication and, therefore, the basis for judging its success or failure. How effective is the book as a guide to visiting the historic sites of the Second World War? While helpful as an introduction, the text could have been far more thorough. Where dealing with places to visit in major cities, notably London and Paris, the book is quite up-to-date, including, for example, the recently opened underground Cabinet war rooms, with very clear and complete information. For touring outside of London or Paris, the book is directed almost exclusively toward people with automobiles available to them. There is virtually no information on alternate means of transportation, such as the nearest rail station or bus, even when, as in the case of Churchill's home, "Chartwell," those means are available.

The list is also somewhat incomplete. The entry under Portsmouth lists the D-Day Museum, but not the Royal Navy Museum or the nearby museum of the Royal Marines at Eastney. Both are likely to be of great interest. On the other hand, the relatively hard to reach Fleet Air Arm Museum at Yeovilton is listed in