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Operation Corporate: The Story of the Falklands War, 1982

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Soviet Union and the Gulf States—especially Iraq—during the 1970s, while Soviet influence in such peripheral nations as India, Afghanistan, and Somalia also increased. As a result, the United States cannot ignore the Soviet threat to the oil-tanker routes in the Gulf or the Soviet naval presence in the Indian Ocean, thus necessitating the maintenance of American bases in such strategic outposts as Bahrain and Diego Garcia. Fortunately, U.S. shortcomings in its Gulf policy are partially corrected through its transfer of modern technology which the Gulf States require for both trade and defense. As illustrated, the value of American exports to the Gulf States increased tenfold from 1971 until 1977, while the value of Gulf exports to the United States increased even more significantly during the same period.

Although his narration often reads like a *Who's Who* in the Federal Government, Sirriyeh's effort is a concise account of the events concerning the origins of American policy in the Gulf. The author exhibits a sound background in both the strategic and economic considerations contained in this particular policy, and he displays a masterful comprehension of the issues and events dealing with the "Oil Crisis" of 1973-74. Sirriyeh provides new insight into Arab-U.S. petroleum politics and concludes that the West—especially the United States—must readily fulfill the various technological needs of the Gulf States if it intends to assure its own strategic interests in this geopolitical region.

Middlebrook, Martin. *Operation Corporate: The Story of the Falklands War, 1982*. London, England: Viking Penguin Books Ltd., 1985. 430pp. \$18.95

Field Marshall Earl Wavell is credited with having advised a class at the British Staff College on the eve of World War II that, "the real way to get value out of the study of military history is to take particular situations and, as far as possible, get inside the skin of the man who made a decision and then see in what way you could have improved upon it." With this idea in mind, the Operations Department at the Naval War College had its students examine, in some depth, the 1982 Falklands war between Argentina and the United Kingdom.

Martin Middlebrook's history of this war was selected as the principal book for students to read as background for their seminar discussions. The relatively small scale of the forces involved, the nature of the weapons used, the bounded geography of the theater of operations, and the clear differences in the way each side laid out their plans and made their operational decisions, all helped to make this an excellent maritime case study.

In the introduction Middlebrook provides another key reason for using *Operation Corporate* as a text for studying the operations of the war. "I do not care to write about politics and diplomacy, but war—where decent young men of both sides die for patriotism, principle and the failure of politics. . . ." While the

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author lays out the issues and the politics and the diplomacy that led to this unfortunate war, his emphasis is on developing the operational course of the war from the opening moves of the Argentine forces in March 1982 to the final battle for Port Stanley 3 months later. The reader is able to examine the initial Argentine tactical moves as they transport their forces to the Falklands and capture Port Stanley. Middlebrook then creates a clear picture of the British strategic decisions, their initial operational moves, and the campaign plans they developed as it became increasingly evident that neither diplomacy nor mere forward deployment of military force would be sufficient to dislodge the Argentines.

A student of maritime operations can study and assess the appropriateness of the various British decisions and force moves from reading this book. Of particular value is the concise outline of the military campaign plan in chapter four. The plan's four basic phases of sea blockade, repossession of South Georgia, gaining of sea and air supremacy around the Falklands, and the repossession of the Falklands are clearly outlined. Subsequent chapters present, in considerable detail, the progress of each key maritime operation, its major battles and the crucial decision points. The reader can examine in depth the Argentine naval moves which led to the British decision to sink the Argentine cruiser *General Belgrano*. The effect on the military leaders of the sinking of *HMCS Sheffield* shortly after the

Belgrano sinking is fully developed. Middlebrook's presentation enables the reader to examine the options available to the operational commanders of both sides at this crucial point in the war.

One of the key decisions in any maritime campaign is where, when and how the landing of ground forces will be conducted. Middlebrook thoroughly reviews the plans, preparation, and subsequent execution of the landing operation. Every element of this most complex of maritime operations is laid out in detail. The reader can review the key decisions, the wisdom of the command and control arrangements, whether the operational deception practiced by the British was successful, and whether various ships and forces were correctly employed. The detail enables the reader to see alternative options available to each side. One option on which the reader is certain to reflect is whether the Argentines could have prevented the British landing with a more carefully integrated use of their air, ground and sea assets.

Throughout the book Middlebrook intersperses his detailed narrative with extensive extracts from interviews with commanders, soldiers, and sailors on-scene. On occasion even the civilians present at a battle are quoted. This technique provides a very vivid sense that this war, like all wars, is ultimately a matter of men fighting, hurting, and dying. No historian's narrative can carry the impact of words such as those that Middlebrook quotes from one of the

helicopter crewmembers who arrived on-scene shortly after three bombs hit the destroyer H.M.S. *Coventry*. "*Coventry* had her hull upturned and was on fire. I was horrified. I had been in the Navy eighteen years and had never seen anything like that before." Nor have any of the students currently at the Naval War College. It is important that they be reminded that a war at sea is more than skillfully planned ship maneuvers, aircraft operations and moving symbols on cathode ray tubes. Ships get sunk, even fighting ships that have been handled with skill for days or weeks, as had *Coventry*.

The final third of *Operation Corporate* is taken up with the details of the ground campaign that led to the surrender of the Argentines at Port Stanley to a force of British Royal Marines and Army forces numbering about one-half their size. Middlebrook's careful and very thorough presentation of every aspect of this ground operation emphasizes that the successful conduct of the land phase of maritime campaign is crucial to achieving strategic objectives. In today's world of integrated warfare, seagoing officers must understand every aspect of a maritime campaign, including the plan for maneuver ashore.

Middlebrook concedes in his introduction that "a fuller description of the Argentinian side may one day be possible," but he was not given the access he needed to provide it in the first edition of this book. There are other books on the Falklands war

which discuss more fully such specific aspects of the war as the initial crisis, the political/diplomatic maneuvers, and the air war. But for the reader who wants to gain a complete, reasonably balanced picture of the conduct of all of the military operations, this book is a very useful start.

TIM SOMES
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Milner, Marc. *North Atlantic Run: The Royal Canadian Navy and the Battle for the Convoys*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1985, 326pp. \$21.95

During World War II the Royal Canadian Navy became a convoy-escort force and did the job poorly, so Marc Milner tells us. The Canadians consistently lost their destroyers, corvettes, and frigates, as well as the merchantmen, their crews and the critical supplies they carried. They continued to lose men, ships, and cargoes until after the critical months of the Battle of the Atlantic, April and May of 1943.

Relying heavily on primary sources, Milner, perhaps unknowingly, reveals four reasons for the Canadians' failure to achieve what had to be a miracle. First, they were subservient, poor cousins to the Royal Navy of Great Britain. This condition seeped into all of the crevices and crannies in the miniscule RCN establishment. Its worst effects were psychological.

The psychological reason for the Canadians' failure was their subservience to the "gun club" mentality of