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Ten Days to Destiny, The Battle for Crete, 1941

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new century, and weakest on the War of 1812. In his analysis of congressional debates and explanation of Federalist and Republican naval policy, the most sophisticated and concise in print, he tends to side with the Jeffersonians and to endorse their preference for *guerre de cours*. He sees the quasi-war as “outstanding [a] success” for the navy as its action in the American Revolution was a failure. Yet he believes that the US Navy came of age during the Barbary wars, not during the quasi-war as many historians believe.

It comes as no surprise that Fowler devotes more coverage to the “commodores” than to the “jack tars.” Nor is it surprising that he finds far more unity within the officer corps than Guttridge and Smith did in their *The Commodores* (1968). It would be difficult to image a group as faction ridden as the one described by Guttridge and Smith accomplishing anything. Fowler may even verge on the other extreme since he virtually ignores the Perry-Elliott controversy which arose out of the Battle of Lake Erie and spawned cliques which plagued the navy for a generation. Fowler includes civilian shipbuilders and administrators in his assessments. He judges two of the first four navy secretaries—Benjamin Stoddert and William Jones—to have been excellent and the other two—Robert Smith and Paul Hamilton—to have been near-failures.

Though he focuses on naval leaders, he does not totally neglect the life of the sailor. Nor does he glamorize it. He pictures conditions

on the lower deck as harsh, makes the point that few sailors served for many years, and reminds us that “the myth of the old salt is just that—a myth” but he concludes that “despite the unpleasantness associated with naval service, men did go to sea, and more important than that, they served well.”

This is clearly the best survey of the early US Navy yet written and thus provides an excellent introduction to the era. The tables are informative and the maps models of utility. Naval history specialists may find little new in this book, but Fowler writes so well that they will certainly enjoy reading it.

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Kiriakopoulos, G.C. *Ten Days to Destiny, The Battle for Crete, 1941*. New York: Franklin Watts, 1985. 408pp. \$18.95

In 1941 the invasion of Crete was another of a series of spectacular German victories over the British which began with Norway in the spring of 1940 and progressed through Dunkirk, Egypt and the Libyan desert, and just prior to Crete, the debacle in Greece. The myth of an invincible *Wehrmacht* supported by an all-conquering *Luftwaffe* captured the imagination of almost everyone. Crete was the first airborne invasion of an island in the history of warfare. Hitler, in defiance of the Royal Navy’s “control” of the Mediterranean had overflown that obstacle and snatched Crete with its Greek, British and Commonwealth defenders.

The capture of Crete was a tremendous propaganda victory for Hitler. As a sidelight, one of the ballyhooed heroes of the "Master Race" was trooper Max Schmeling who a few years before had been humbled in the ring at Madison Square Garden by Joe Louis. The plight of the Royal Navy was immortalized later by Noel Coward's *In Which We Serve*, a fictionalized film account of Lord Louis Mountbatten's loss of HMS *Kelly*.

There are kernels of truth to those 1941 myths. Schmeling did jump in Crete but was a malingerer and, Mountbatten's lost destroyer was only one of many British warships sent to the bottom attempting to evacuate the British forces; but as the author skillfully brings out, Crete was a Pyrrhic victory in the wrong place and at the wrong time for Germany. The victory was as much a disaster for the victors as for the vanquished, in the analysis of history.

Mr. Kiriakopoulos, a professor at Columbia University, has written much about World War II. This book is the result of his curiosity about the events that took place in 1941 in the land of his ancestors. His research was extensive and included interviews as well as archives.

Significantly, Crete was the graveyard of the German airborne concept. Never again did German paratroopers fight in the airborne mode. German casualties in the ten-day battle exceeded those suffered by the *Wehrmacht* during all campaigns up to that time. It took two days longer to take Crete than it did to topple

France in 1940.

In describing the events—the author uses narrative to lay the groundwork for subsequent analysis—Mr. Kiriakopoulos brings out that the Germans jumped into a hostile environment. The natives rose up to defend their soil and the tradition of individual and family defense of their homeland took a heavy toll among the troopers. There was little expectation among the assault troops of being speared by a farmer's pitchfork or shot while hanging in their harnesses. But this is what happened, what made the initial casualties so high, and delayed the eventual triumph.

The inevitability of a German victory comes through the pages even though the author implies a sentimental hope that the Allies could have snatched victory from defeat. The key is that only once does he mention the Royal Air Force. In that brief paragraph, he tells of ten Hurricanes being sent to Crete from Fighter Command in Egypt. Six were misidentified and shot down by friendly anti-aircraft fire and two aborted after seeing the fate of the six and headed back to sea. Low on fuel, they were never seen again. The other two landed only to be destroyed on the ground by the *Luftwaffe* the next day. So much for Allied air support.

It was also the *Luftwaffe* which defeated the Royal Navy and drove it back to port. Ashore, the Allied troops under New Zealander Victoria Cross holder, Gen. Bernard Freyberg, were plagued with a

complex command system aggravated by a lack of communications. Shortages of artillery and of all kinds of ammunition was a significant factor in tactical defeats. A British or Greek unit would obtain an objective and then be forced back for lack of ammunition to conduct a proper defense. Meanwhile, the key airfield was lost, opening it to a constant flow of German aerial resupply and troop buildup.

Recurring tactical defeats led to the decision to evacuate. Evacuees included the British and Commonwealth troops who could disengage and make their way over the mountains to the southern beaches. No provision was made for the evacuation of Greek troops, although the King and his entourage were rescued by the Royal Navy. The valiant civilians who had gallantly defended their soil were left to the "tender mercies" of German reprisals. The post-invasion toll was high and hardly a family was spared some loss. Age or sex were not a bar to German revenge.

The author points out that the tactical victory, which was less than the propaganda of the time would have us believe, was a strategic blunder for both sides. Although it was probably a mistake for the British to attempt to defend Crete at the time (another Churchillian whim), it paid off in the future. The German airborne capability was almost erased, both in the sense of manpower and of vital air transports. Another two-week delay was tacked on to Hitler's invasion of Russia. The

lack of air transport was later to prove critical in that campaign. But for the Germans, the strategic blunder was greater. First, as the author points out, Crete was not the key to control of the Mediterranean. Malta was. Crete, therefore, was not a vital objective. Further, the aforementioned losses and delays became critical in the invasion of Russia.

Thus, the title projects a double *entendre*. It surely portended destiny, but whose?

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Kotsch, William J. and Henderson, Richard. *Heavy Weather Guide*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1984. 399pp. \$21.95

She dipped into the hollow straight down, as if going over the edge of the world. The engine-room toppled forward menacingly, like the inside of a tower nodding in an earthquake. An awful racket, of iron things falling, came from the stokehold.

From the near hypnosis of Conrad's *Typhoon* to the near pedantry of some of the tables, Admiral Kotsch and Mr. Henderson have compiled and revised a fine second edition of this informative text. There is almost too much, at times, with instructive cases ranging from carrier task group operations, to merchant transits, to single-handed sailing. One wishes there were a ready reference section among the sea stories, to permit a shiphandler to find in short order the guidance applicable to his ship and situation. Paragraphs on staysails and