

1983

The History of Dive Bombing

Richard K. Smith

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review>

Recommended Citation

Smith, Richard K. (1983) "The History of Dive Bombing," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 36 : No. 2 , Article 20.
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol36/iss2/20>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Naval War College Review by an authorized editor of U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. For more information, please contact repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu.

event of war. Some of the photographs are splendid.

The text, though short and perhaps—given the June 1981 White Paper on Britain's defense program—a bit too optimistic about the future of the surface forces, is nonetheless clear and informative. However, Admiral Hill does not deal candidly with the issues which force themselves on any reader who plows through *The Decline of British Seapower*. He can be forgiven for being over-optimistic. As Wettern's book shows, however, the issues which have dogged the Royal Navy since 1945 cannot be avoided or taken as "standard" ones for which a solution will inevitably be found.

THOMAS C. HONE
Arlington, Virginia

Moore, Captain John, RN, ed. *Jane's Naval Review*. London: Janes' Publishing Company Limited, 1982. 160pp.

This set of essays is the second in what should be a long and useful series of annual publications. As stated in the publisher's note, "The first compilation in this series, published in October 1981, was issued under the title *Jane's Naval Annual 1981-82*." No reason for the change is offered.

Those familiar with Captain John Moore's unique perspective on world politics and naval hardware will find much to enjoy in this thin, glossy and photo-filled book. In the articles he wrote and, to a lesser extent, in the rest that he edited, one finds the expected supranational idealism. The cover, a photograph of one Royal Navy frigate burning in Falkland Sound, acts as a headline for three of these 22 collected essays which deal with the Royal Navy's and Royal Marines' demanding tasks in the summer of 1982. Regrettably, the articles are superficial, reflecting the urgency with which they must have been

rushed into print for this volume. Of most interest to readers who have studied the tactical interactions is an article entitled "Conflict and Commerce" by Andrew Ambrose. This lists the seventy-one merchant ships which took part in the Falklands campaign and describes some of the modifications made to major contributors.

There are three essays by US Navy authors, two of them previously published, one on "The Law of the Sea" by Secretary Lehman and the other "The Case for Big Carriers" by ex-CNO Admiral T.B. Hayward; the third is a thorough sitrep on the balance of power in the Mediterranean by Admiral W.J. Crowe, CinCSouth. Beyond these, the essays move about the world's oceans, examining navies by region. Others look at naval and possible future platforms in several warfare areas. The reader is given a pictorial and verbal survey of such topics as: "Coastguards of the World"; "Sea-Skimmer, Ship-Killer"; "Airships in the Naval Role"; "The Chinese Navy: The Race for Modernisation"; "Japan: A Naval Giant Stirs"; "French Naval Deployment in the 1980s"; "NATO's Destroyer and Frigate Programmes"; and so forth.

This is a glossy little sampler of material from volumes of Jane's publications and from other sources. There is not much original and little that is thought-provoking, but its convenient size, colorful cover, and editor's fame will probably make it an addition to many bookshelves or coffee tables this year.

D.G. CLARK
Captain, US Navy

Smith, Peter C. *The History of Dive Bombing*. Annapolis, Md.: Nautical & Aviation Publishing Company of America, 1982. 253pp. \$17.95

This is less a history of dive bombing

as a technique to achieve a special purpose than it is a chronicle of dive bomber types and operations spread across a timeline of 1920-1960. The author makes an effort to transcend the parochialism of "nuts & bolts" but it is not successful. The scene is filled with airplanes; superficial technology befogs technique; form tends to obscure function. The result is an interesting package of quasi-vignettes which fail to attain focus.

The author is English, has performed intensive research in British archives, and most interesting is his illumination of the British Air Ministry's iron-headed resistance to the dive bomber and the guerrilla war waged against it within Britain's aviation bureaucracy. The Air Marshals preferred to devote resources to building aerial battleships for the waging of war against cities to an instrument that would clear the way for the advance of ground forces—those "lesser breeds without the Law." However, the author fails to perceive this same ideology of a "Chosen People" acting according to the Holy Writ of "Air-power" at work within the US Army Air Forces.

Although there were ephemeral "firsts" during World War I the US Navy and Marines are duly credited with developing dive bombing. But the account given here is rather thin, superficial, and not without errors. The late Felix Stump (1894-1968; Naval Academy class of 1917) would be surprised to know that he made vice admiral as early as 1926.

The book's most serious flaw is typical of most books which treat with such a romantic machine as the military airplane: there is no substantial discussion of the ordnance used. Here is a book about dive bombing which is all about dive bombers which does practically nothing to

enlighten the reader about the bomb. And this is one case in which we know that the egg came before the chicken; it was the limitations of the contemporary bomb and the unsatisfactory results of other forms of bombing which inspired the diving delivery.

The text is served by some thirty photos but there are no maps and a book which treats with this subject cries out for them. This is a nice book; it is filled with useful information, all documented by way of providing further references, and it has undisputed utility for anyone interested in the subject. But the reader is left to the labor of pulling together these diverse data to determine what their sum may be worth, and on this point it falls short of being the good book it should have been.

RICHARD K. SMITH
Washington, D.C.

Bamford, James. *The Puzzle Palace: A Report on NSA, America's Most Secret Agency*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1982. 465pp. \$16.95

Within the past year there has been a rash of "docudramas" on TV which have drawn mixed reviews. These shows are the TV equivalent of the historical novel. They provide a fictionalized version of a famous person's life or a historical event, combining enough fiction with fact to keep the viewers' attention for the time allotted. This format, which leaves it to the viewer to sort out the facts from the fiction, has drawn substantial criticism, especially from the persons depicted in the shows.

Mr. Bamford's book is very reminiscent of those shows. It is interesting but one strongly suspects it bears only passing resemblance to the truth. The one advantage the author enjoys over the TV docudramas' writers is NSA's strict policy of "No comment." Indeed NSA's