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The Great Admirals: Command at Sea, 1587- 1945

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of the earth's surface—and the lack of resources, both of people and money.

There are, nevertheless, lessons to be found in this book for others than Australians or New Zealanders. *In Search of a Maritime Strategy* deserves careful study because of the insights it can give to those in other democracies with maritime interests and vulnerabilities who must decide the form and pattern of national strategy. In particular, it has much to teach those who are required to devise strategies in the absence of direct threats to the homeland but in situations in which threats to long-term national interests might well manifest themselves with little warning and in locations apparently far removed from one's own territory. Perhaps, for Australia, as well as for all other democracies intent on maintaining a secure and peaceful strategic environment, the problem is now not simply one of understanding the situation but of educating both the public at large and our elected and appointed policy makers. *In Search of a Maritime Strategy* contributes more than its mite to both processes.

JAMES GOLDRICK
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Sweetman, Jack, ed. *The Great Admirals: Command at Sea, 1587-1945*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1997. 535pp. \$49.95

Editor Jack Sweetman has created an interesting volume of collective and comparative biography, tying key figures from four hundred years of naval history to their conduct in battles at sea. Sweetman intends for the reader to

take his subtitle literally, hinting through it that the subjects in this book are the fighting admirals who fought the great fleet actions in naval history. Distinctly joining the followers of A. T. Mahan, Sweetman argues that in the period he has chosen to illustrate, "battle, in the form of fleet actions, is the crowning act of naval warfare and the supreme test of the naval profession."

Such battles have of course been rare, and Sweetman calculates that in all not more than 135 have occurred, and rarely more than three or four in each of the thirty wars he considered. Certainly there is a limited number of admirals who could qualify to be included in such a volume, but even so, Sweetman faced difficult choices in making his selection. Using the two criteria of an admiral's personal ability and the historical importance of the battle that he fought, Sweetman narrowed his list, while at the same time he sought to cover several centuries and to bring in figures not often found in the Anglo-American pantheon. The result is a volume that brings together article-length studies on nineteen different admirals. Accounting for more than half the book between them are the British with six names and the Americans with four. Nevertheless, Sweetman makes a distinct contribution by adding two Japanese and two Dutch admirals, along with one each from Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, and Greece. Looking at the selection from a chronological point of view, the twentieth century dominates with seven names, followed by the nineteenth century with five; the two of them make up two-thirds of the volume. These are followed by two

names from the eighteenth century, four from the seventeenth, and one from the sixteenth.

The editor asked each contributor to assess the combination of personal attributes and professional experience that shaped each subject's leadership and to analyze one of the admiral's battles that best illustrated these characteristics in action at sea. From the point of view of the available historical literature, this volume makes a valuable contribution by providing a summary of the most recent research on and understanding of such well known figures as Francis Drake, Horatio Nelson, David Farragut, George Dewey, William F. Halsey, John Jellicoe, Andrew Cunningham, and Raymond Spruance. Even more importantly, however, the volume offers studies of admirals that have not previously been readily available in English: Niels Juel, Pierre-André de Suffren, Andreas Vokos Miaoulis, Wilhelm von Tegetthoff, and Reinhard Scheer.

Each essay provides a separate and valuable contribution to naval literature, and each ends with an extremely useful note on further sources for reference. The first impression a reader has on going from one chapter to another is that of contrasts among individuals. The editor has eased the transitions by providing linking essays that summarize the main trends in naval history separating the central studies. Yet the book reveals a remarkable divergence in personalities and personal values, ranging from the reserved and thoughtful Spruance to the slovenly Suffren, the charismatic Nelson to the mild Dewey, the revolutionary Miaoulis to the conservative Tegetthoff. These

divergences in personality provide an important insight that is often overlooked in modern naval thinking and provide an antidote to those who assume that the successful "fighting admiral" fits only one mold.

While contrast is certainly the most valuable point here, comparisons among such different personalities, different cultures, different traditions, and different technological contexts can be as illuminating as they are difficult to make. There is perhaps much more to be done in this area than can be accomplished through the collective work of a score of authors; in this case, however, Sweetman has found some useful points to make. Most importantly, his study shows clearly that it is an admiral's ability to inspire confidence and to orchestrate all the tools of his trade, not technological superiority, that makes the difference. In each of the nineteen case studies, four common, basic characteristics among the admirals were revealed: technical competence, initiative, bold conception, and both physical and moral courage.

In general, Sweetman's selection of these great admirals makes a ready reference on important figures in naval history, while also providing useful historical insight for aspiring naval officers. Modern readers will clearly understand that although fleet battle has now become even more rare than in the preceding four centuries, the common characteristics of effective and successful leadership are equally applicable to today's navy, as well as to other areas of the modern world. These historical cases provide useful

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food for further thought and investigation.

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Tucker, Spencer C. *The Great War 1914-18*. Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1998. 272pp. \$16.95

Spencer Tucker has taken on the extraordinary task of chronicling the first Great War of this century in one short volume. Tucker is the John Biggs Professor of Military History at Virginia Military Institute and has to his credit the general editorship of *The European Powers in the First World War: An Encyclopedia*. His background is obvious in the structure of this book and the fashion in which he approaches the topic. The chapters are conveniently divided by year, starting with 1914 and progressing to the armistice of 1918. One advantage of addressing the war in this fashion is the linear progression of escalation on all sides, as the initial objectives and estimates became increasingly unattainable.

Tucker begins his study with background on the revolution in military affairs that occurred at the end of the nineteenth century and exploded during the first decade of the twentieth century. These developments in technology demonstrate the impact that technological strides have, not only on the way in which war is conducted, but also on the very decisions that would tempt states into pursuing war as a viable foreign policy option. In the background discussion Tucker focuses on the culpability of the Dual Monarchy and Germany in initiating this conflict.

He makes reference to prominent German historians such as Fritz Fischer, who places the blame on the unyielding attitudes of Austria-Hungary and Germany. Tucker chronicles the ambitious objectives that were designed by both the allied and Central powers. Once again the format that Tucker chooses demonstrates the digression of strategy in the first months of the war, as neither side was accomplishing the objectives of what they had seen as a war that would last only six weeks. In the next chapters Tucker goes to great length to describe the stalemate that ensued after the opening movements by the opposing land forces. What is striking in his account are the numbers of casualties sustained by all forces during the years 1915 and 1916. The account of battle of Verdun in 1916, followed by the battle of the Somme, is especially telling in the current environment of surgical strikes and minimal casualties. In the Somme the British suffered over fifty-seven thousand casualties in one day, with over nineteen thousand of those dying in battle or of their wounds. These facts are well known to all historians of this period, but Tucker has successfully woven these statistics with a readable narrative to give the reader a general overview of the conduct of the war on the battlefield.

The drawback to such a format is the exclusion of the political and societal dynamics that manifested themselves on the battlefield in the form of objectives and campaigns. Battlefield strategy is never developed in a vacuum, and progressing in a yearly format with the focus on developments in the field to the exclusion of concurrent foreign policy gives the reader only one