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The First Sea Lords: From Fisher to Mountbatten

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squadron might round the Horn and do real damage to British shipping in the Atlantic. Winston Churchill and Jackie Fisher pulled *Invincible* and *Inflexible*—two of Fisher's prized heavy battle-cruisers—from their watch over the German navy in the North Sea and sent them to the Falklands under Vice Admiral Sir Doveton Sturdee. Both ships had greater guns, greater speed, and thicker armor than Spee's cruisers. When the two forces met off the Falklands on 8 December 1914 the outcome was foreordained: *Scharnhorst*, *Gneisenau*, *Nürnberg*, and *Leipzig* were sunk. Vice Admiral Graf Spee was lost with *Scharnhorst*, and his sons, lieutenants in *Gneisenau* and *Nürnberg*, were lost with their own ships. The *Dresden* did escape, however, only to run to ground and be destroyed off the Chilean coast not far from the site of the battle of Coronel.

Now only *Königsberg* was left to disturb British shipping between India and Europe. After some success, in October engine troubles had forced it into the Rufiji River delta of German East Africa. There it lay through the winter and into spring, a thorn in the lion's paw. A British squadron blocked the delta and, with aircraft spotting for gunfire by shallow-draft monitors, destroyed *Königsberg* in July 1915.

Beyond the pleasure of a good piece of naval history—Yates's book is uncommonly well done—the author's study of Spee's campaign dramatizes what an outnumbered yet well handled squadron might do.

Keith Yates is a retired professor of chemistry who has previously published in that field. Yet he writes on naval

warfare with rare style and insight. His history of this oft-forgotten campaign is well researched, perceptive, gracefully written, and a pleasure to read. The Naval Institute Press is to be congratulated for recognizing Yates's talent and introducing him to the wider naval audience. The book is a gem.

FRANK MAHNCKE
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Murfett, Malcolm H., ed. *The First Sea Lords: From Fisher to Mountbatten*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1995. 309pp. \$59.95

Taking the 1980 publication *The Chiefs of Naval Operations*, edited by Professor Robert Love of the U.S. Naval Academy, as an innovation and a model, Malcolm Murfett has assembled a survey of the professional heads of the Royal Navy of Great Britain during most of the twentieth century. There is a chapter on every First Sea Lord who served between 1904 and 1959: eighteen in all. Murfett hints that there may be a subsequent volume on more recent First Lords.

The contributors are international: from Britain are Bryan Ranft, Donald Schurman, Eric Grove, Geoffrey Till, and Nicholas Lambert; from America, John Hattendorf; from Australia, James Goldrick and Tom Frame; from Canada, Barry Gough; and Professor Murfett himself, of the National University, Singapore, who, in addition to editing the book, wrote the introduction and three essays. A select bibliography fills a dozen pages at the end, and each chapter concludes with footnotes, citing

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mostly primary sources from official and personal papers. The book has been dedicated to the memory of Barry Hunt, the great Canadian naval scholar.

Each essayist critically analyses his subject and reviews either the individual's noted contributions (e.g., John Fisher, David Beatty, Ernle Chatfield, and Louis Mountbatten) or failures—Arthur Knyvett-Wilson, Francis Bridgeman-Bridgeman, Henry Jackson, Frederick L. Field, and Roger Backhouse. (Gough is preparing a new biography of Fisher, but unfortunately no published biography of Chatfield is forthcoming.) There are also interesting related assessments of well known First Lords of the Admiralty, the political heads of the navy: Arthur Balfour, Winston Churchill (twice), Eric Geddes, and later, in an equivalent capacity, Duncan Sandys. Persistent interservice competition and occasional conflict are discussed, especially the process of decline of the Royal Navy as the senior service, superseded by the Royal Air Force.

Memorable episodes recounted in the essays include Beatty and the manipulation of the official historical record of the battle of Jutland and World War I; the "Main Fleet to Singapore" debacle, contributing to the alienation of Australia, among other problems; the role of Sir Roger Keyes as a "loose cannon" and failed First Sea Lord aspirant; the notorious intervention of Sir Dudley Pound ordering convoy PQ-17 to disperse; and Mountbatten's initiatives, which convinced Duncan Sandys to revise his negative assessment of the role of the Royal Navy.

This is not, as claimed, a unique book, however. In 1992 W.G.F. Jackson and Lord Bramall published *The Chiefs: The Story of the United Kingdom Chiefs of Staff*, which highlighted some of the same personalities, and in 1984 David Horner edited *The Commanders*, which was about twentieth-century Australian military leaders. In this very journal, John Gooch wrote an article ("The Chiefs of Staff and the Higher Organization for Defence in Britain, 1904-1984," *Naval War College Review*, January-February 1986, pp. 53-65) documenting the origins and development of the Chiefs of Staff and the role of the First Sea Lords, or lack of it, in matters of planning and intelligence.

In the present work, in his essay on Fisher, Barry Gough ignores the important Churchill-Fisher-Lionel Yexley nexus facilitating reforms and the beginnings of organizing in the lower deck, which was documented in 1981 by Anthony Carew in *The Lower Deck of the Royal Navy, 1900-1939*. Indeed there is no mention of the lower deck until after World War I. Failures there culminated in the Invergordon imbroglio (mutiny?) of 1931. Carew is not cited in that discussion either.

After the debilitating and ridiculous feud between Arthur Marder and Stephen Roskill, the writing of twentieth-century British naval history is progressing and experiencing significant revision. For example, N.A.M. Rodger of the National Maritime Museum is preparing a new, authoritative, multi-volume history of the Royal Navy. The volume under review rightly incorporates some of the latest and most important contributions of Jon Sumida, Nicholas

Lambert, G.A.H. Gordon, and Correlli Barnett. This book is recommended as yet another beneficial addition to the literature.

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Shulimson, Jack. *The Marine Corps' Search for a Mission, 1880-1898*.

Lawrence, Kans.: Univ. Press of Kansas, 1993. 274pp. \$35

A major turning point in U.S. Marine Corps history is dissected by Jack Shulimson, a veteran civilian historian at the Marine Corps Historical Center. In this study, which Shulimson originally prepared as a private piece of scholarship, he describes the Marine Corps' switch from supplying armed guards on wooden ships to projecting naval power from steel ships onto foreign shores.

However, to title the work a "search for a mission" is a bit off the mark. As Shulimson shows, the Marine leaders of the day cared most about preserving their status and pushing along their snail-like promotions. They feared, with good reason, that the Corps would be swallowed up by the Army or simply abolished. Such outside events as advancing naval technology and the United States becoming an imperial power forced the Corps to break out of its dead-end status and take the road leading to Guadalcanal, Tarawa, Iwo Jima, and Inchon.

The author peers through his microscope at a small piece of historical time. After the Civil War, the newly in-

dustrialized and prosperous nation began expanding its interests abroad. The U.S. quickly needed a modern navy centered on armored battleships that could control the seas, and eventually an expeditionary and amphibious role for its Marines.

In 1880 the Corps had only two thousand men and seventy-five officers, but by 1899 it was authorized six thousand enlisted men and 201 line officers. In those two decades it also stretched to improve its quality, started the School of Application, welcomed graduates from the Naval Academy, began promoting officers by examination, and sent a few officers to the Naval War College, which had been established in 1884 and was becoming "the intellectual core of the New Navy."

It was around the turn of the century that professional standards became slowly but firmly rooted in the Corps' culture. Shulimson traces how the basis of the appointment of officers changed from political influence to "professionalism," even though the change-over would never be absolute. He does not neglect the minuscule for the important, however, detailing the background of each of the fifty-two Annapolis graduates who became Marine officers between 1880 and 1898. Also, his text is backed up by forty-four pages of source notes that give it a fine scholarly patina.

More importantly, Shulimson celebrates the Corps' arrival at their future role: the Spanish-American War provided the need, and new colonial possessions encouraged the United States to look outward. In 1900 the Navy General Board assigned the