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A Ship to Remember: The Maine and the Spanish-American War

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Kaufman shows how arms control, either by formal limits or self-imposed reduction in spending, adversely influenced U.S. foreign policy when statesmen let a gap open between ends and means. The commitment in 1922 to the Open Door was vitiated by the naval treaties that made it impossible to enforce the policy.

Success depended on the self-restraint of the key Asian states, on moderates remaining in power in Tokyo, and on China remaining politically stable. When the moderates were replaced and China descended into chaos, the naval settlement collapsed.

High hopes were not enough. Nor were the agreements, which were mere instruments. What was required for arms limitation in the 1920s and 1930s was a supporting international environment, based on domestic approval. That, not words on parchment or even verification procedures, was on what the treaties depended on, and by 1936 it was gone. Ships sunk at the table had to be rebuilt, so an arms race began again.

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Blow, Michael. *A Ship to Remember: The Maine and the Spanish-American War*. New York: William Morrow, 1992. 496pp. \$28

Michael Blow offers a general history of the war with Spain in 1898, emphasizing the history of the battleship *Maine*. His grandfather served

in the ill-fated man-of-war. He relies on a selection of well known published sources and authorities. The result is a general history that provides a stimulating narrative of interest primarily to those with little prior knowledge of the subject. Curiously, the author largely ignores interpretations that have come to the fore in recent years, which revise the story considerably. The international context of the war and its diplomacy, recently explored definitively in John Offner's *An Unwanted War: The Diplomacy of the United States & Spain over Cuba, 1895-1898* (1992), received little attention. Nothing of importance is added to the story of the *Maine*. The author considers the Hanson-Price study, which was commissioned by Admiral Hyman Rickover and concluded that an accidental explosion of internal origin sank the vessel, as "conjectural and inconclusive." He seems inclined toward the old view that a mine may have been exploded under the keel, although he does not specify the culprit. He approvingly quotes Theodore Roosevelt's observation that the perpetrators might never be identified.

Popular histories are indispensable, but only if they present their subjects attractively and reflect the best scholarship available. Blow writes well, but he fails to reflect the extensive recent literature, which suggests a much different descriptive and causal analysis than is to be found in *A Ship to Remember*. A better popular account

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is G.J.A. O'Toole's *The Spanish War: An American Epic* (1984).

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Honan, William H., ed. *Fire When Ready, Gridley! Great Naval Stories from Manila Bay to Vietnam*. New York: St. Martin's, 1993. 364pp. \$27.95

The chief cultural correspondent of *The New York Times*, William Honan writes frequently about the navy and naval affairs. In his latest book, he has used his keen eye for a well written story to select the very best descriptions of naval battles. In this nicely printed and well designed volume, Honan has assembled twenty-six stories. All of them are designed to illustrate the unique quality of heroism that one finds in battles at sea—qualities that appear in the arduous conditions beyond the frame of ordinary experience.

Honan's choice is superb. Some of the chapters are well known, including Sir Roger Keyes's reminiscences of the attack on Zeebrugge in 1918, Samuel Eliot Morison's dramatic account of the attack on Pearl Harbor, C.S. Forester's vivid description of the sinking of the battleship *Bismarck*, Winston Churchill's speech explaining why the Royal Navy sank the French fleet at Oran in 1940, and Admiral Sandy Woodward's recently published account of the sinking of *Sheffield*. Others are forgotten descriptions, but written by well known

authors such as Hector Bywater and Rudyard Kipling.

The collection includes some first-hand accounts that are important documents for historians. Among them are Semenoff's account of Tsushima and Georg van Hase's description of the sinking of HMS *Queen Mary*. American naval history is documented by Marine Corps aviator Tom Moore in his account of dive-bombing a Japanese carrier at the battle of the Coral Sea, and by Marilyn Elkin's account of the search for her husband who was missing in action in Vietnam.

As one would expect, newspaper journalists are not forgotten. Joseph Stickney's account of Manila Bay, Hanson Baldwin's portrayal of Leyte Gulf, and Stanley Johnson's *Chicago Tribune* article that recounts the battle of the Coral Sea represent the very best in naval journalism. Equal to them are Honan's own historical account of the Japanese attack on Port Arthur in the Russo-Japanese War and his 1970 first-hand report for *The New York Times* on U.S.-Soviet naval operations in the Mediterranean.

Honan's collection is a tribute to the Navy. Each contribution, in its own way, adds to our understanding of naval battle. Taken together, they lead us to reflect and to ask deeper questions about human character, the nature of battle, the role of naval power, and the usefulness of naval history. Such philosophizing lies beyond the scope of the book, as Honan is quick to point out: "This book is not about