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## Fatal Decison: Anzio and the Battle for Rome, by Carlo D'Este

Cole C. Kingseed

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northern Norwegian port of Narvik. The logic of that idea was that Sweden could be persuaded to close its mines to the Germans; to assist them a couple of battalions were to be sent across Norway into Sweden. Naturally, the Scandinavians were not enthusiastic. None of these plans took into account the pacifist nature of the Norwegian government, or, more importantly, the likelihood of a stiff German reaction. So hypnotized were the British by their own planning that they failed to heed the warning signals from Europe regarding German intentions against Norway.

The muddle in London was compounded by the lack of a central direction of the war. Although a Military Coordination Committee was established, chaired by the prime minister, the leadership was usually delegated to Winston Churchill, then First Lord of the Admiralty. Moreover, London had little knowledge of the army's lack of strength, or the distances over which the navy and the air force would have to operate, or any appreciation of the necessities for a winter campaign in Norway. In addition, the British forces were not yet well acquainted with the Luftwaffe and the consequent need for both large numbers of anti-aircraft guns and to disperse ships and stores in restricted anchorages.

In addition to all this, the story involved not merely Britain but also Norway and France. The Norwegians faced the immediate need to mobilize their forces under German invasion. But the language used by the general staff was not the language heard by the government. To the Norwegian

army, partial mobilization meant sending notices by mail for assembly within two days; the government understood it to mean that only those troops in the south would be called to the colors. The pacifist government did not have available the necessary stores of munitions and other supplies for the troops that did assemble. As if that was not enough, the Germans seized some of their ports with "Trojan horses," while others were destroyed by bombs. Since no one spoke the same language, communication was replaced by rampant suspicion, to such an extent British and the French were attacking when in fact they were evacuating.

Politically, the French government badly needed a victory. It sent Chasseurs Alpins to obtain one, and lectured the British government about how to run a war only weeks before France fell ignominiously.

Kersaudy tells his story with great insight, and discusses what was happening in Berlin as well. He tells a tale whose lessons should not be lost. Anything that can go wrong, will, if no one has planned ahead, no one knows the political and physical situation, and direction is from afar.

ROBIN HIGHAM  
Kansas State University

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D'Este, Carlo. *Fatal Decision: Anzio and the Battle for Rome*. New York: Harper Collins, 1991. 566pp. \$35  
Carlo d'Este has made, with *Fatal Decision*, another significant contribution to our understanding of the war

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in Europe. It is meticulously researched and presents a complete account of one of the war's bloodiest campaigns.

Anzio tested and often exceeded the limits of human endurance. It was, for Ernie Pyle, a place where after a few hours "you wish you were back on the boat...this is a new kind of warfare...the whole beachhead is the front line...it ain't no picnic feeling." Martin Blumenson characterized Anzio as "a gamble conceived in impatience and carried out in haste, the result of a large measure of resentment and conflict between allies."

The author is critical of Sir Harold Alexander (who commanded 15th Army Group), Fifth Army commander Lieutenant General Mark Clark, and is particularly harsh with Churchill, on whose insistence Operation Shingle was launched. All contributed to the execution of a campaign characterized by severe operational and logistical problems, poor coordination between Allied forces, and changing tactical objectives. Churchill dismissed the objections of key military leaders, including Major General John P. Lucas (the designated Shingle force commander), as the usual negative thinking of military planners whom he referred to as "masters of negation." The result was a hastily planned operation that was unsupportable by the remainder of the U.S. Fifth Army, who were battling the Germans along the Gustav Line anchored on Monte Cassino.

The original plan called for Lucas's VI Corps to assault Anzio on 22 January 1944. If successful in establishing a beachhead, Lucas could then advance to the Alban Hills or march to seize Rome, thus severing German communications to the south. According to d'Este, there was nothing wrong with the basic concept of Shingle. If Lucas had had sufficient force he could have coerced Field Marshall Kesselring (German commander in Italy) to abandon the Cassino front. The main flaw of Shingle was its logistical restrictions which kept the size of the landing force too small to achieve its aim.

Unfortunately for the Allies, Kesselring did not react according to their plan. When Lucas hesitated to advance and consolidate the beachhead, Kesselring rapidly deployed elements of thirteen German divisions to Anzio in an effort to eliminate the beachhead. The result was four months of bloody stalemate in which Allied artillery and naval gunfire saved the beachhead from destruction. In the interim Clark replaced Lucas with Lucian Truscott.

Only when substantial reinforcements were received in May were Clark and Alexander able to penetrate the Gustav defenses. They then advanced and eventually joined hands with the beleaguered VI Corps at Anzio. Within a few weeks Rome fell, but only after Clark had allowed the majority of German forces to escape the Allied pincers.

More significant than failed leadership was the operational flaw in the Anzio planning. The distance between the main Allied forces at Cassino and the Anzio beachhead was too great to allow for mutual support. Both the author and Martin Blumensohn (in the army's official history) point out that neither sector could influence the other. In short, the operation had been doomed from the beginning.

In the final analysis Anzio was a campaign marked by ineffective leadership at the highest levels. Too few forces allocated to Shingle jeopardized the attainment of even limited objectives. Moreover, the Allied operational and tactical commanders failed to exert the proper supervision and battlefield audacity that was required to ensure military success. The author claims that only the enemy leader possessed the ability to choose instinctively the right course of action on the field of battle.

Perhaps d'Este makes his greatest contribution in assessing the Anzio campaign as part of the overall Allied strategy in the Mediterranean. Was it worth 85,000 Allied battle and non-battle casualties? The author leaves such judgments to us.

COLE C. KINGSEED  
Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Army  
Naval War College

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Honan, William H. *Visions of Infamy: The Untold Story of How Journalist Hector C. Bywater Devised the Plan*

*that Led to Pearl Harbor*. New York: St. Martin's, 1991. 346pp. \$22.95

Bywater, Hector C. *The Great Pacific War: A History of the American Japanese Campaign of 1931-33*. New York: St. Martin's, 1991. 321pp. \$22.95

Hector C. Bywater was a journalist for thirty-six years during which time he contributed to, or was employed by, leading newspapers on both sides of the Atlantic. After writing for James Gordon Bennett's *New York World* on the Russo-Japanese War between 1904-1905, Bywater shifted to Europe where he reported on the rising German navy even as he spied for British naval intelligence. Living mostly in Britain after 1919, Bywater wrote on the naval rivalry between the United States and Japan in the Pacific. His first major volume, *Sea Power in the Pacific*, assessed the situation in the Pacific at the time of the famed Washington conference of 1921-1922 for the limitation of arms. Four years later, when relations between the United States and Japan had passed through an acute crisis over immigration, Bywater produced his fictional account of *The Great Pacific War* of an American-Japanese war between 1931 and 1933.

William M. Honan, a gifted journalist and newsman, has searched in Britain, Japan, and the United States for clues that would indicate that Hector C. Bywater helped to shape Japanese and possibly American war planning before World War II. Honan wishes to convince his readers that Bywater, in *The Great Pacific War*