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## Unauthorized Action: Mountbatten and the Dieppe Raid

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and Pentagon offices as well. Ships, including warships, were lost due to a lack of vigilance or even routine precautions such as zigzagging in known submarine waters. There is a hauntingly familiar ring to Admiral Andrews' initial theory that enough ASW ships patrolling the East Coast shipping lanes (while the merchantmen conducted independent transits) could defeat the submarine threat. Though the requisite number of ASW ships called for in the analysis did show up, the ASW campaign still faltered. Only when convoys were formed and escorted with the ships, while aircraft did the area patrolling, did the tide turn. I do not so much wish to remake the argument for convoys, but to raise caution over the lure of the siren of technology and *a priori* analysis of the next ASW campaign. It's never easy to predict this sort of thing; if it were, many wars probably would not have been fought. (But maybe others would have.) *Torpedo Junction* is a firm reminder that in spite of the best analysis we should be ready for some unpleasant surprises.

In summary, I would recommend this book to a wide audience—from those who simply enjoy a gripping story of life at sea in wartime to the serious student of naval history. This is truly a book to satisfy all interests.

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Villa, Brian Loring. *Unauthorized Action: MOUNTBATTEN AND THE DIEPPE RAID*. Toronto; Oxford; New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1989. 314pp. \$27.50

The Dieppe raid took place on 19 August 1942. It involved about 5,000 Canadians, of whom about 1,000 seem never to have landed and of whom 3,367 became casualties. The Canadian army lost more prisoners (1,946) than it did in the eleven-month North-West Europe campaign or the twenty-month Italian campaign. British army and Royal Marine casualties were high as well. There were serious naval losses, especially in landing craft, and the air force (RAF and RCAF units took part) suffered its heaviest one-day loss of the war. It was a humiliating defeat.

Defeats, according to the cliché, are more instructive than victories. The claim has been made for nearly fifty years that Dieppe was an important—some have suggested indispensable—prelude to Normandy. Churchill once wrote in the draft of a letter to Lord Mountbatten: "and I said to Stalin at Moscow, 'It will be like putting one's hand in a bath before getting in to feel how hot the water is,' or words to that effect." Professor Villa argues that Dieppe in fact taught no lessons that had not already been learned in 1942, but that Dieppe tells us a lot about why governments do what they should not do. He even devotes an appendix to the subject.

Nineteen forty-two was a bad year for the Allies. Villa's assertion

that they were losing the war is debatable, but they certainly appeared to be losing. Apart from Midway, and some successes in the Pacific later in the year, defeats like Hong Kong (at the end of 1941 but, still, another Canadian tragedy) and Singapore, were the order of the day. Perhaps most significant to the decision makers responsible for Dieppe was the cancellation of convoys to Russia following the losses suffered by PQ-17 (24 of 35 ships) when the First Sea Lord ordered it to scatter on the 4th of July.

Churchill badly needed a success. Without a Second Front he was hard pressed to convince his U.S. allies that Britain merited American aid, and to persuade Stalin that something would be done to take pressure off the Soviet army. His Chiefs of Staff gave him cold comfort. The efforts of Bomber Command were not enough. Lord Louis Mountbatten, the newly promoted head of Combined Operations Headquarters and a brilliant apologist for Britain in the American camp, proposed bold raiding operations. Churchill grasped at the idea. All of Mountbatten's plans, however, were coming to naught. When weather forced the cancellation of Operation *Rutter*, the raid on Dieppe, nothing remained. In the view of Professor Villa it was principally to serve his own ambitions that Mountbatten secretly engineered the revival of the raid under the new code name *Jubilee*.

The evidence for Mountbatten's scheming is impressive. Villa has

seen a wider range of documents than any previous historian of these events, and he shows that there was never any formal approval for the revived raid. After the event, to have acknowledged such a situation would have compromised the Chiefs of Staff and the Prime Minister, led to even worse recriminations than actually took place, and placed unacceptable strains on the alliance.

The scapegoat for Dieppe was Major General J.H. Roberts, commanding the 2nd Canadian Division, who Villa rather charitably suggests questioned the merit of the plan but loyally attempted to carry it out anyway. The villain of the piece was not Mountbatten, as the title of the book might lead one to believe. Villa goes out of his way to praise Mountbatten's qualities, and seems to excuse his overweening ambition. His principle explanation for Mountbatten's actions is immaturity. At the age of 41, suddenly to be elevated from the rank of captain to vice admiral, and to have Churchill envisioning a decisive role for him in the Chiefs of Staff Committee, forced him to propose operations beyond his capacity. Villa apportions blame to Churchill, each of the Chiefs of Staff, Prime Minister Mackenzie King of Canada and the Canadian generals Harry Crerar and A.G.L. McNaughton.

This is a very good book. It is often brilliant. It suffers from some unfortunate howlers that sailors in particular will notice, but these do not detract seriously from the substance of the argument. Villa

gives other historians, especially the Canadian official historian C.P. Stacey, their due. I have to say, nevertheless, that he has not always done justice to Stacey.

In demonstrating that Canadian authorities had previously refused to send their forces to the Middle East, and thus had a morale problem on their hands, Villa has not apparently recognised the centrality of Stacey's argument that McNaughton, above all else, resisted piecemeal commitments of Canadian troops and that this was a clear political requirement established by the experience of the First World War. Villa wonders if Stacey's affection for General McNaughton has led him to underplay the part played by that officer in involving the Canadian army in Dieppe. This is a charge that Stacey, who read the manuscript shortly before his death in November 1989, would not have allowed to go unanswered. Stacey played no favourites, and he was scrupulous in his use of evidence.

In one instance Villa takes Stacey out of context, suggesting that he thought the Russian situation had no bearing on the Dieppe decision. Stacey actually says that at Combined Operations Headquarters, which worked mainly at the tactical level, he could find no evidence that the Russian situation was a large direct factor. He then points out that Churchill welcomed the prospect of a large raid in view of his forthcoming talks with Stalin. When Churchill decided not to include in his letter to Mountbatten

the passage quoted in the second paragraph of this review, it was evidence that, like Mountbatten, he did not want to acknowledge such influence on his war policies. Villa has verified that aspect of Stacey's argument. He has thereby made a contribution of the first importance to the historiography of the Second World War.

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Barnhart, Michael. *Japan Prepares for Total War*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell Univ. Press, 1987. 290pp. Paperback \$9.95

According to conventional wisdom, the prewar breaking of Japanese diplomatic ciphers ("Magic") by the U.S. government was an unqualified blessing. It is said to have made President Roosevelt and his aides aware of at least the broad intentions and purposes of the Japanese leaders in the years and months preceding the outbreak of war. Using both Japanese and U.S. sources, Michael Barnhart has written a detailed account of the events leading up to Pearl Harbor, discussing the successes and failures of the crypto effort. Misreading of Japanese intentions because of incomplete information must be acknowledged as one of the failures.

The author argues that there were other intelligence lapses, particularly the failure to see and exploit the