

BOOKS



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SEA POWER: A Naval History, Second Edition. By E.B. Potter (Ed.). U.S. Naval Institute, Annapolis, 1981, 386 pp., \$23.95. (Member \$21.55)

reviewed by Maj Kenneth W. Estes

The reissue of *Sea Power* in condensed, not revised, form over 20 years since its last publication strikes the reader and student as both good and bad news. The good news comes with the renewed availability of a standard survey text in naval history to support the Naval Academy and NROTC courses which have been virtually in irons since the first edition disappeared in 1978. The bad news is that the field of naval history grows ever flaccid as no synthesis of the last generation of monographs and studies in naval history has emerged. Clark Reynold's *Command of the Sea* (1974) foundered in its broad exuberance and Paolo Coletta's *American Naval Heritage in Brief* (1980) proved dry, encyclopedic and inadequate by its American focus. Thus, *Sea Power* continues to hold the field by default.

The 885 pages of the old Prentice-Hall edition—that old war horse so familiar to Marine officers commissioned prior to 1979 from NROTC and the Naval Academy—have become 386 pages of text in this edition. The authors (12 of the 14 repeat their earlier contributions) cut their chapters nearly in half, and chapters covering the major modern wars were reduced in number: Napoleonic (from 3 to 2), U.S. Civil War (5 to 3), World War I (4 to 3), and World War II (17 to 8). The result is a readable survey, still well balanced in that only half the text relates to the 20th century. At the same time, virtually no attempt has been made to update the material in light of the last 20 years' research in naval history. Even *Ultra* receives only two mentions: a footnote to the Battle of Britain and a description of how the Royal Navy captured a German naval Enigma machine. There appears no sense of *Ultra*'s contributions to the Atlantic

convoy battles of 1942-43, tenaciously illuminated by Jurgen Rohwer in the 1970s, or the crucial impact of this intelligence on the amphibious assault on Fortress Europe. Equally disappointing are the final three chapters on the post-World War II era. Apparently, postwar naval history consists of Cold War diplomacy, defense of containment by limited wars and demonstrations, and the introduction of weapons systems into the fleet. Much more could have been done in these pages to illuminate the rise of the missile and nuclear navy while the carrier navy basked on its World War II laurels, producing the organizational, tactical, and fiscal tumult of the 1970s, where the U.S. Navy was revealed as four navies grouped under loose departmental direction. Foreign navies other than the big, bad blue-water bear (U.S.S.R.) remain conspicuously absent.

At the heart of the first edition, however, stood the study of continuity and change in naval tactics, and this concept cannot be discovered in the present gutted edition. Too much tactical detail has been removed and what remains may prove taxing to the student's imagination. This condition doubtlessly stems from the disfavor battle study evinced from the younger professors at the Naval Academy's History Department, where this edition's commercial success depends. Thus, while the U.S. World War II submarine operations chapter—never defensible in emphasis—is retained, the thorough and lucid analysis of the U.S. Navy's tactical development in the Solomons Campaign—by trial, error, and improvisation—ends up on the cutting room floor.

Yes, *Sea Power* still lives through this condensation. It reminds us of editor Potter's supreme accomplishment in mobilizing the talents and knowledge of his colleagues in the 1950s Naval Academy in a great collaborative effort to produce the first and only textbook on the subject. A new effort seems no longer possible. With William Belote's retirement next year none of the Old Guard will

remain at the Naval Academy. Yet their successors, who largely jeered the Guardsmen's love of tactics and battle studies, display none of the cohesion, dedication, and unity of purpose required to chart a new course on the fertile research of the last generation. Does *Sea Power*, (or, "Son of *Sea Power*") as it is derisively termed at the Academy represent the swan song of naval history? Perhaps, and that observation only raises the stock of Ned Potter and his cohort of teachers.

BY SHIPS ALONE: Churchill and the Dardenelles. By Jeffrey D. Wallin. Carolina Academic Press. Durham, N.C., 1981, 216 pp., \$12.95. (Member \$11.65)

reviewed by Capt B.P. Babin

For many years, detractors of Winston S. Churchill's wartime leadership skills have criticized his decision during World War I to conduct a naval assault through the Dardenelles by ships alone. Professor Jeffrey D. Wallin presents a chronological narrative of events and decisions surrounding the attempt to force a passage through the heavily guarded straits in March of 1915. His plainly stated historical view focuses on the pertinent details and arguments of the period. His work results in a vindication of Churchill, effectively defending Churchill's actions and his ability to conceptualize and then formulate winning wartime strategy.

Professor Wallin opens his study with a few comments concerning the political relationships and hegemonies as well as the military situation during the initial stages of World War I. By setting the stage with the "slogging match," as Winston Churchill characterized the static nature of the war effort, he establishes firm foundation for the need of a new strategy. He then presents the two major concepts developed by Churchill and the British War Cabinet. The choices involved opening a new theater of war on either the northern or southern German flank. The political situations affecting each proposed course, combined with the military capabilities of the Allies, are carefully explained. The available facts provide reasonable rationale favoring the ultimate selection of a southern strategy in the Balkans over a north-