

themselves. The demise of *Halsewell* was recorded in more than one way in popular culture. Poems appeared on the subject and a composer wrote a music piece. In 1818, artist J.M.W. Turner painted “Loss of an East Indiaman.” In 1853 Charles Dickens authored a short story on the tragedy. Artists created aquatints, engravings, and oil paintings. Although it may not have been seen as a national disaster at the time, the attention drawn by the ordeal most certainly gives that impression. Two centuries later, the wreck still appeals to divers, treasure hunters, and Andrew Norman, who has written a gripping story.

Jacob Bart Hak
Leiden, Netherlands

Michal A. Piegzik. *The Darkest Hour. Volume 1: The Japanese Offensive in the Indian Ocean.* Havertown, PA: Helion & Co, Asia @War Series, www.casematepublishers.com, 2022. 80 pp., illustrations, maps, tables, appendices, notes, bibliography. US \$29.95, paper; ISBN 978-1-91507-061-6.

Overall, I was quite impressed with this eighty-four-page book detailing the opening moves of the Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) operations in the Indian Ocean during early 1942. Following the fall of Singapore, in February, the Imperial Japanese Navy continued to push southwards into the Netherlands East Indies and eastwards towards New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. To the west, they planned to secure a safe western flank to support their advance in Burma and towards the Indian border. Ultimately, the Japanese plan was to foment an anti-British uprising in India, which would prevent British forces from attempting to re-capture Burma, Malaya and Singapore. To secure the Burmese southern flank required the capture of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands (at the northern entrance to the Malacca Strait) and then, neutralisation of the Royal Navy base at Trincomalee in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) was required. An adjunct to this plan was the seizure of Christmas Island (south of Java) for its valuable phosphate supplies to enhance Japanese agricultural output, but this later action was a minor one.

Admiral Yamamoto continued to seek a decisive battle where he could destroy the US Navy aircraft carriers, which was only going to happen in the western Pacific, so he considered the Indian Ocean sorties a side show. The USN conducted offensive operations in the Pacific during March-April 1942, including the famous Dolittle raid on Tokyo, which reminded Yamamoto that the American navy was still an effective force to be reckoned with. Meanwhile, Japanese submarines were based at the Island of Penang (west coast of the Malayan Peninsula) and commenced offensive operations in the Bay of

Bengal. Following their successes in the early months of 1942, the Japanese also expected to be able to operate with impunity in the Indian Ocean and stifle trade, particularly the flow of oil from the Persian Gulf to Australia, which would restrict operations being conducted from Australia by Allied forces.

To counter the Japanese actions, the Royal Navy rushed forces to the eastern Indian Ocean. Vice Admiral Sommerville arrived in Ceylon on 24 March 1942 and set up his headquarters there. He also wisely established his main operational base at Addu Atoll (in the Maldives), thus creating a “fleet in being” but one that could protect the sea lines of communication in the Indian Ocean, particularly the flow of oil from the Persian Gulf. The Royal Air Force also began to move available aircraft from the Middle East to India and Ceylon, while any available Dutch or Australian aircraft were also sent to Ceylon. Thus, the stage was set for the Japanese naval operations against Ceylon, and other locations, in the Indian Ocean in April 1942. The second portion of the campaign is described in Volume 2 of this series and I look forward to reading it in due course.

Michal Piegzik has produced a very good analysis of the Japanese thrust westwards into the Indian Ocean. This campaign is often over-shadowed by the campaign in the Pacific, but the essential flow of logistics support to India, to support the British campaign in Burma, helped prevent a potential Indian uprising. Additionally, maintenance of the sea lines of communication to Australia meant that Allied forces could use the continent as a safe springboard to commence offensive operations in the Pacific.

While the book is extremely well illustrated with photographs and graphics of Japanese aircraft, it is quite light on maps which would enhance the narrative. That said, it is still highly recommended.

Greg Swinden
Canberra, Australia

Douglas Porch. *Defeat and Division: France at War, 1939-1942*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, www.cambridge.org, 2022. xvii+725 pp., illustrations, maps, endnotes, bibliography, index. US \$32.95, cloth; ISBN 978-1-107-04746-4. (E-book available.)

This book by Monterey’s Naval Postgraduate School professor emeritus, Douglas Porch, is the first of two volumes on France in the Cambridge University Press Armies of the Second World War monograph series. It follows up on Elizabeth Greenhalgh’s contribution on the French army in the well-received Armies of the Great War series. Military historians chosen for their expertise and knowledge of original sources and the latest scholarship