

Tony Shaw. *SAS South Georgia Boating Club—an SAS Trooper's Memoir and Falklands War Diary*. Barnsley, S. Yorks: Pen & Sword Military, www.pen-and-sword.com, 2022. 236 pp., illustrations, maps, glossary. UK £25.00, hard-back; ISBN 978-1-39908-776-6.

With the Falklands War/Guerra del Malvinas having its fortieth anniversary in 2022, it is no wonder that there are number of new publications on the subject. One of the many elements of this conflict that is regularly overlooked is the fact that it was not limited to the Falklands/Islas Malvinas, but also affected South Georgia Island/Islas Georgia del Sur. While the occupation of the Falklands lasted for nearly two-and-a-half months, British control over South Georgia was restored after a little more than three weeks. In addition, the number of troops involved on both sides there was marginal compared to the main conflict and, finally, the uninhabited island was of basically no economic importance at all at this time, as the whaling industry had already left, and Antarctic tourism was yet to come. Therefore, it is no real wonder that most of the existing historiography on the Falkland War treats the events on the subantarctic island either with a few brief remarks or neglects them. This reviewer had extremely high hopes for this book, both as a maritime historian with some interest in Southern Ocean history, but also as someone familiar with the island, having been involved in small-boat operations in the area for roughly a decade, even if in a very different context.

After reading the book, I was disappointed that events on South Georgia are covered in so few pages, actually only a dozen, while the majority of the book deals with how the author was trained as a member of the British elite SAS, was selected to become a member of Operation Paraquet, the British recapture of South Georgia, what followed during the remainder of the conflict, and his career in the SAS after the return from the South Atlantic. In other words, the book is much more the professional autobiography of a member of the British special forces than anything else.

A second read tempered my opinion once I realized my disappointment was based on my own expectations and a somewhat misleading title rather than the book itself. Shaw's memoir covers his whole career in the British special forces and provides a most unique insight into how these troops were operating throughout a wide number of international conflicts, ranging from Northern Ireland via Cyprus to the South Atlantic and ultimately to the Middle East where Shaw was working for a contractor after retiring from the service. Furthermore, his in-depth descriptions of training methods and selection processes for certain specializations within the British special forces provide a rare insight into the real world of a normally most secretive part of the military. For the period dealing with the action on South Georgia and

the Falkland Islands, his autobiography, written after the events described, is supplemented by his personal diaries from this time, allowing him to compare the retrospective view with his contemporary impressions. For the professional historian this parallel of an autobiography and contemporary diary entries is especially interesting, allowing the reader to observe how perspective and interpretation have changed over time.

A selection of black and white photographs, mainly from the author's private collection, accompanies the text. Anybody already familiar with the South Georgia/ Falklands conflict, will not likely find any new images, but for readers dealing with the topic for the first time, the pictures will illustrate what it means to carry out military special operations under the extreme conditions to be found at the various South Atlantic islands.

Given the book's brief coverage of actual naval or maritime topics, this book might not be particularly relevant to a professional maritime historian or even a general reader interested in the history of South Georgia or the Falkland Island conflict, but it can be recommended without any doubt to every historian with an interest in the British SAS and military special operations at large. If there is one question that needs to be asked at the end of this review, it is the question of the title of the book.

Whether chosen by the author or the publisher, the title covers such a small portion of the book that it is somewhat misleading but was probably the result of a marketing decision linked to the fortieth anniversary of the Falklands War. The book is without any doubt an important contribution to British military history of the post-Second World War period. It provides authentic insight into the operations of special forces, although its contribution to the historiography of military conflict in the South Atlantic remains somewhat limited. The reasonable retail price of UK £25.00 for a high-quality hard-cover book of more than 200 pages will counter any dissatisfaction with the title, and readers will find the book worth the money and the time. Would I recommend the book to a colleague as an addition to his/her private bookshelf holding a collection of maritime or (sub-)Antarctic books? Probably not, but I am sure all maritime/ Antarctic historians will know a military historian who would appreciate it.

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Thomas Sheppard. *Commanding Petty Despots: The American Navy in the New Republic*. Annapolis, MD: US Naval Institute Press, www.usni.org, 2022. x+241 pp., illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. US \$46.00, hardback; ISBN 978-1-68247-755-7. (E-book available.)