Eric Jay Dolin. *Rebels At Sea: Privateering in the American Revolution*. New York, NY: Liveright (imprint of W.W. Norton), www.wwnorton.com, 2022. 352 pp., illustrations, maps, bibliography, notes, index. US $32.50, paper; ISBN 978-1-324-04744-5.

During the American Revolution, the rebel fleet of privateers was a controversial maritime weapon, and there has been scholarly debate about its effectiveness since that time. *Rebels at Sea* explores the use of privateers, their abuse, shortcomings, and their tactical significance during the conflict for American national independence.

A privateer was a privately-owned armed vessel that operated in wartime against the trade of an enemy, and the term embraced both the ships and the men who sailed in them. Dolin notes two types. The first were heavily armed vessels with large crews whose purpose was to locate and capture enemy ships. The second, and most numerous, were merchant ships. These vessels were commissioned by letters of marque, a license that permitted them to take prizes and served both as official letters of reprisal and bonds of good behavior. These letters of marque were issued by the federal or, more commonly, individual state governments. When a privateer's prize was deemed legal by an admiralty court, the seized vessel and its contents were auctioned and sold, with the proceeds distributed amongst the privateer owners, captains, and crews according to a predetermined share agreement. Privateersmen killed or maimed in a battle were usually provided for by way of a reimbursement / health scheme somewhat reminiscent of a pirate classic pact.

The author pointedly reminds the reader that the American colonists were British citizens, and most were loyal to King George III. Their initial grievance was with Parliament's policy of taxation coupled with what they considered a harsh military occupation. At the time, Britain had the largest navy in the world and used it to control most of the world's oceans and seaborne trade. The nascent Continental Army was undertrained, poorly equipped, and dependent upon locally manufactured arms and munitions, those purchased in the West Indies, or weapons captured after battles. At sea, Congress cobbled together vessels, mostly converted merchantmen, that became the Continental Navy. These ships added up to roughly 60 during the war. All the colonies except Delaware and New Jersey created some sort of state navy, seaborne militia, or "sea fencibles" that patrolled and defended their coastal enclaves. Congress then decided that privateers harassing or interdicting British merchant shipping on America's east coast, in the West Indies, and around the British Isles could bring financial pain to Britain by damaging commerce.

As a result of American privateers, British merchant ships were essentially required to travel in convoy. Thus, part of the Royal Navy was forced into

escort duty, as well as serving its more traditional military role. An important side effect was that marine insurance rates dramatically increased, followed by inflation at home in Britain. This was the main impetus for the birth of the substantial American letter of marque fleet, which included whaleboats, sloops, cutters, brigs, and full-rigged ships. Numbering 66 ships in 1777 and swelling to 550 by 1781, the numbers had dwindled to 22 by the war's end. They constituted a major weapon.

Dolin leads his reader through a quick hindsight history of the Revolutionary War, mainly from a metaphorical privateer's point of view. In doing so, the author recounts the rebellion's origins, then presents arguments that the maritime enterprise of privateering was not only needed, but perhaps vital to the insurgency's success. The next few chapters deal with historical accounts of a privateersman's life at sea, often in some detail and through individual privateering adventure tales. This section was followed by a segment showing how this enterprise dovetailed with French strategies in its recurrent struggle against the British and how this was coordinated by envoys Benjamin Franklin and Silas Dean. Dolin's chapter titled "Hell Afloat," which is concerned with the experiences of seamen captured by the British, is exceptionally graphic and made especially emotive by his inclusion of verses from Philip Freneau's poem "The British Prison Ship" describing his ordeal as a captured privateer.

The author devotes a great portion of his book to discussing the efficacy of privateering. It was accused of degrading American morals by offering men the opportunity to place profit over patriotism. Also privateering was castigated for draining off manpower and ammunition from the Continental Navy and Army. However, privateering greatly affected British commerce and helped the rebels to persevere. It may not have been a decisive factor in the defeat of the British, but Dolin argues that the privateer fleet was an important cog in the martial machinery of the Revolutionary Wars.

Rebels at Sea is a worthwhile and thought-provoking addition to Eric Dolin's small library of works. But there were a few minor shortcomings. There is an extensive account of the Penobscot Expedition, but it was not a privateering mission. Conversely, he did not mention Lieutenant Henry Mowat, whose three British-armed vessels were considered a threat against landing American troops at Bagaduce (now Castine). The chapter on American mariners who became French privateers failed to cite Nathaniel Fanning, a former junior officer of the *Bon Homme Richard*, who was ultimately awarded a French naval commission. During the American Revolution privateers did not regularly capture slave ships or raid plantations, yet a small number of enslaved individuals found themselves as "prize cargo" during the conflict. The role privateers played in relation to the slave trade and its consequences in North America and Britain regrettably was also not addressed. Those points

noted, Dolin does not claim this work to be comprehensive.

In summary, *Rebels at Sea* is a broad and well-researched examination of the role of letter of marque vessels and privateering during the American Revolution. This new work should be welcomed by maritime history and Revolutionary War scholars.

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Mark L. Evans. *USS* Enterprise *(CVN-65): The First Nuclear Powered Aircraft Carrier.* Jefferson, NC: McFarland Publishing, www.mcfarlandbooks.com, 2022. 360 pp., illustrations, notes, appendices, index. US $49.95, paper; ISBN 978-1-47668-686-8. (E-book available.)

Mark Evans's book is not a typical academic publication. The author does not try to argue anything about the carrier, but provides a well-written, detailed account of the eighth USS *Enterprise* over the past decades. It also comes with 170 photographs related to the *Enterprise*.

Speaking of USS *Enterprise*, many naval historians or enthusiasts of Second World War history would probably think of the Yorktown-class carrier (CV-6) that bore the name and fought gallantly in the Pacific War. However, the next carrier to bear the name, CVN-65, may be more familiar for others. those who grew up in the late twentieth century. At first encountering the book, the first question for ordinary readers may be: why is it necessary to read the book?

As the title suggests, the ship's story is important: *Enterprise* was the first nuclear-powered aircraft carrier in the world. Even for a non-expert, Evans explains throughout the book how important the carrier was. After being commissioned in 1961, *Enterprise* would serve the USN for half a century. It would witness almost every major conflict and confrontation in the Cold War: the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, the Vietnam War, US bombing of Libya (Operation El Dorado Canyon), the Tanker War, the two Gulf Wars, and Operation Iraqi Freedom. The book describes *Enterprise*'s contributions during all these events and how important CVN-65 was to the US Armed Forces.

Writing a biography of a ship is a difficult challenge for any author, However, Evans handled the narrative in a rather wise way. Instead of dividing the contents according to major conflicts or events, he organized the book into fifty small chapters. Readers will find that the 50 years of the story become easy to handle under such arrangement; it is possible to simply read a chapter in leisure, put it down, and come back a little bit later. However, others may argue that this structure damages the continuity of the narrative. For myself, I found it easy to read.