

Soviet technical developments and warships. This Osprey offering provides readers with a basic summary of some technical aspects and operational histories of early Soviet cruisers, which can be placed in the context of wider naval developments before and during Admiral of the Fleet Nikolay Kuznetsov's tenure as People's Commissar of the Soviet Navy. Kuznetsov's main achievements were outlasting Stalin and sheltering the naval service from the worst ravages of the regime, thereby laying the basis for the remarkable reforms and expansion under Admiral of the Fleet Sergey Gorshkov at the height of the Cold War.

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Angus Konstam, illustrated by Adam Tooby. *British Lend-Lease Warships: The Royal Navy's American-built Destroyers and Frigates*. Oxford, Osprey Publishing, 2024. 48pp. New Vanguard Series no. 330. Photographs, maps, tables, charts, further reading.

This book is a concise, highly graphic account of the acquisition and modification of US-built destroyers and escort vessels under the US Lend-Lease Program and their operation in the British Navy in the Battle of the Atlantic in World War II. The book is built around a range of innovative graphics. The striking cover illustration is one of two artist's representations that dramatize important actions. It shows an onrushing destroyer at the instant a depth-charge pattern explodes in the defence of Convoy HG 76. The vessel is HMS *Stanley*, one of the 50 four-stack destroyers transferred in 1940 to become the Town class in British service. The second shows HMS *Trollope*, a Captain-class frigate, in action with E-boats in defence of shipping off the Normandy beachhead in 1944. The Captain-class frigate is the other major class covered, which was made up of ships of USN's Buckley and Evarts classes of destroyer escort.

The "Design and Development" section traces the history of the vessels. Most coverage is of the "Four-stackers" throughout their early history in the USN and mothballing following World War I to final disposal. There is a description of the development of specifications for modern escorts which had similar characteristics: 280 to 300 feet in length, 20 knots plus, and modern anti-submarine armament. This was the Destroyer Escort in USN classification and became the frigate in British service.

"Royal Naval Employment" details the modifications made to adapt the Four-stackers for convoy escort work and their disposition among escort groups. Full-paged, coloured diagrams show the evolution over time from fleet destroyers into escorts or, for a few, to long-range escorts. A full two-

page cutaway drawing shows HMS *Campbelltown*, the best-known of these due to its role in blowing up the dry dock gates at St Nazaire. There are detailed descriptions of the propulsion systems in the frigates and the evolution of armament and especially electronic systems, radar and sonar.

In “Escorts in Action,” the action of some major engagements is described. The approach produces a homogenized history. It omits consideration of one major group of vessels built to similar basic specifications: the Colony class of 21 frigates, constructed by Walsh-Kaiser in Providence, RI. The Colony class was a US “knock-off” of the specifications of the River class

It is galling when limited text space is used to advertise other books by the same publisher: writing of *Campbelltown*, “Her story has already been described in detail (See CAM 192...” (35), and of the battle surrounding Convoy HG-76, “the convoy battle that followed has already been described in detail in Osprey *The Convoy*” (35)). That in “Further Reading” all titles are shown as published in the UK is remarkable given that the Lend-Lease Act was American legislation. This story is told in a highly selective way, which cannot simply be ascribed to the compact format of the work. Use of a wider group of sources would give a less-biased result.

This work may appeal to younger, graphically oriented people. The physical product of the paperback volume is close to a magazine format, with high-gloss paper in a rugged “perfect” binding, which makes it durable. Photographs are mostly miniature and of varying quality; some are high resolution, which can be magnified. The lack of a bibliography and references makes following up and fact-checking difficult.

The author dismisses USN attempts to grapple with the questions of classification and nomenclature of the new vessel, the destroyer escort, that became a frigate in RN service, as a “disregard for the niceties of grammar” (16). By excluding the Colony class and at least mention of the River-class frigates, the author misses a big piece of the story of Allied shipbuilding interrelationships during World II in terms of tonnage and numbers of ships. The story misses the value of that effort and lessons for the future: that the effectiveness of the common naval strategy was based on a degree of interconnectedness among US, Canadian and British shipyards and that building and transferring escort vessels as needed among the Allies was dictated by strategic concerns.

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