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Review of *Anatomy of Campaign: The British Fiasco in Norway, 1940* by Jon Kiszely

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John Kiszely, *Anatomy of a Campaign: The British Fiasco in Norway, 1940*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019. Notes. Bibliography. Index. 370pp. ISBN 978-1316646421 (paperback). Price £16.55.

It is, perhaps, an interesting reflection on the nature of military history that this reader opened Kiszely's book expecting to find a new, but at the same time very traditional, assessment of the British campaign in Norway in 1940. That expectation was increased on reading that the author is a former senior officer in the British Army. It is to Kiszely's great credit that his book perfectly demonstrates the maxim that appearances and expectations can be highly deceptive. *Anatomy of a Campaign* is an extensive and deep inquiry into the reasons for the failure of the British intervention in Norway. It does not attempt to give a comprehensive account of the campaign and seeks to look beyond the obvious causes of failure which might be reduced down to 'poor strategy, intelligence blunders, German air superiority, the weak performance of the troops involved and serious errors of judgement by those responsible for the higher direction of the war' [p.viii.]. Instead, Kiszely wants to look at the deeper reasons for these problems: To the British way of war in the early part of the Second World War, and to the reasons why the decision makers took the decisions that they did. Kiszely's book is thus both an interesting fresh set of insights into the Norwegian campaign (overshadowed in popular memory and much of the writing about the Second World War by the German assault on the Low Countries and France), but also serves as an inquiry by case study into the higher political and military management of the British war effort.

Kiszely carefully charts the planning processes and structures by which the critical decisions on the Norway campaign were taken; the multiple layers through which the campaign was shaped from War Cabinet to the Military Coordination Committee and the Chiefs of Staff Committee. The picture which emerges is of a planning process into which structural delay, of fudged decisions and inter-departmental conflict was inbuilt and inevitable. Power to take vital action was not concentrated and checks rather than balances handicapped the speed at which Britain could wage war at the highest level. Britain was a country at war, but Whitehall still clung to much of the culture and practices of the pre-war period. Where reasonably possible, the risk of damage to private property was to be avoided in target planning for the early phases of the bombing campaign against Germany, and the Admiralty telephone switchboard closed down for the weekend at noon on Saturdays. In the War Office civil servants concluded departmental business at 17.00 hrs. prompt. For some, the war was a part time affair and gentlemanly standards were to be maintained come what may.

At the apex of the decision-making process stood a War Cabinet with 'a very limited understanding of strategy' [p.39.]. The image of Neville Chamberlain as a leader unable to provide strong leadership is confirmed and Kiszely charts the myriad rifts between ambitious ministers and service chiefs: between the glorious self-educated "expertise" of the politicians and the quieter professionalism of the service chiefs. In the Admiralty, the First Sea Lord, Dudley Pound busied himself in deflecting and defusing some of the more adventurous schemes of Winston Churchill. This was in preference to a more confrontational approach to the bold ideas on how to wage war by the civilian head of the department. Personal issues amplified the structural and cultural weaknesses in the senior management of the British war effort. Pound, for example, had perhaps been a less than stellar choice as First Sea Lord, and Churchill's behaviour and thinking on Norway was conditioned by the disaster of the Dardanelles in 1915. Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Cyril Newall comes across as rather diffident and reserved, while the appointment in September 1939 of General Sir Edmund Ironside as a Chief of the Imperial General Staff, came as a surprise to a professional soldier who had little experience in the War Office. The tensions within the departments of government, and the tensions between the services, made for inertia and compromise in war planning which, in the case of the Norway campaign, would prove fatal.

Instead of a key move as part of a coordinated grand strategy the Norwegian campaign broke down into a series of separate air, sea, and land operations. Desperate improvisation was no substitute for sound planning. The ways in which compromised decisions and processes in Whitehall played out on the battlefield for British forces, despite some tactical success in theatre, is ably charted by the author who concludes with a wide-ranging assessment of the significance of the Norwegian campaign including the fall of Neville Chamberlain as Prime Minister.

Kiszely's book is ground breaking and of considerable value in understanding British war making in the early stages of the Second World War. It is also written in an engaging and open style that should ensure wide readership. The depth of research is evident, and the text is well supported with supporting material. *Anatomy of a Campaign: The British Fiasco in Norway, 1940* well deserves the plaudits which have been heaped upon it with, no doubt, more to come in the future.

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