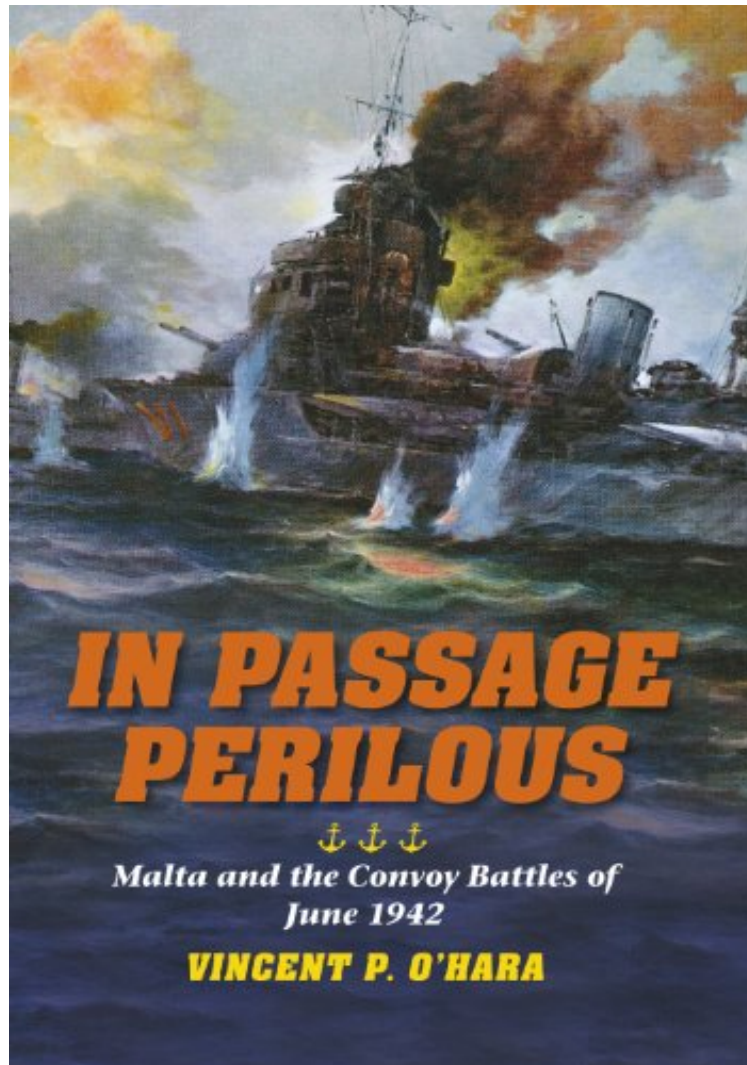


(Free pdf) In Passage Perilous: Malta and the Convoy Battles of June 1942 (Twentieth-Century Battles)

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Von Vincent P. O'Hara

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Von Vincent P. O'Hara : In Passage Perilous: Malta and the Convoy Battles of June 1942 (Twentieth-Century Battles) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised In Passage Perilous: Malta and the Convoy Battles of June 1942 (Twentieth-Century Battles):

KundenrezensionenHilfreichste Kundenrezensionen2 von 2 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Der unterschtzte GegnerVon J. RuppDer amerikanische Marinehistoriker Vincent P. O'Hara legt mit dieser Studie eine uerst gelungene Arbeit ber die Konvoi-Schlachten im Sommer des Jahres 1942 vor, in der die Royal Navy versuchte, Malta mit dringend bentigten Versorgungsgtern zu entsetzen. Der Autor, welcher sich bereits 2009 in seinem

hervorragenden Werk "Struggle for the Middle Sea intensiv mit dem Mittelmeerraum während des Zweiten Weltkrieges auseinandergesetzt hat, geht nun ausführlich auf die prekäre Situation von Malta ein. Die kleine Insel zwischen Nordafrika und Südeuropa wurde aufgrund ihrer geostrategischen Lage seit 1940 zur vorgeschobenen Operationsbasis des Britischen Reiches im Kampf gegen die Achsenmächte. Der maritime Hauptgegner war dabei Italien, der durch deutsche Luft- und Seestreitkräfte unterstützt wurde. O'Hara widmet diesem Sachverhalt eine große Aufmerksamkeit, indem er italienische Quellen stark berücksichtigt. Dies kommt der Objektivität seiner Analyse sehr zugute. Im Juni 1940 war Italien unter dem trügerischen Eindruck der deutschen Siege in den Krieg eingetreten. Obwohl das Land noch nicht kriegsbereit war, hoffte Mussolini, die Gunst der Stunde nutzen zu können, um ein eigenes Imperium zu errichten. Für Großbritannien stellte dies zunächst einen Glücksfall dar, schien Italien doch der einzige Gegner zu sein, den man relativ schnell und mühelos besiegen zu können glaubte. Nicht zuletzt mangels anderer Optionen wollte Churchill gerade hier in die Offensive gehen; meinte er doch so, die angeschlagene Moral an der Heimatfront stärken und Deutschland indirekt empfindlich treffen zu können. London wollte auf diesem Kriegsschauplatz zeigen, dass es auch ohne die Vereinigten Staaten im Stande war, selbstständige Siege zu erringen. Trotz einiger Anfangserfolge gelang es Großbritannien aber nicht, das Mittelmeer zu kontrollieren und die Landstreitkräfte der Achsenmächte in Nordafrika zu zerschlagen. Whitehall war gezwungen, immer größere Mittel bereitzustellen, um die militärischen Erfolgsaussichten gegenüber Rom und Berlin nicht gänzlich zu verspielen. Im Frühjahr und Sommer 1942 spitzte sich die Situation auf dem mediterranen Kriegsschauplatz in dramatischer Weise zu. Die Truppen von Erwin Rommel befanden sich in Richtung Ägypten auf dem Vormarsch und die britische Armee wurde zunehmend in die Defensive gedrängt. Die Versorgungslage auf Malta neigte sich einem kritischen Zustand, worauf die britische Führung im Juni mit der Entsendung von zwei Konvois reagierte. Aus östlicher Richtung wurde die Operation "Vigorous" gestartet, während sich aus westlicher Richtung ein weiterer Konvoi in Bewegung setzte (Operation "Harpoon"). Für O'Hara bilden diese beiden Operationen den Schwerpunkt seiner Arbeit. Er zeigt detailliert den Einsatz der See- und Luftstreitkräfte der Kontrahenten auf. Hierbei offenbarte sich die Lernfähigkeit der italienischen Seite, während sich die britische durch Stillstand und Berheblichkeit auszeichnete. So funktionierte die Funk- und Luftaufklärung der Achsenmächte dieses Mal besser als bei früheren Aktionen. Das gleiche gilt für die Kooperation zwischen Marine und Luftwaffe. Die Kommunikations- und Kommandostrukturen waren den Briten ebenfalls überlegen. Die See- und Luftgefechte resultierten dementsprechend in einer Doppelniederlage des Empire. Der östliche Konvoi sah sich gezwungen, unverrichteter Dinge nach Alexandria umzukehren. Vom westlichen Konvoi erreichten nur wenige Schiffe den Grand Harbour in Valletta. Die angespannte Versorgungslage konnte dadurch kaum verbessert werden, weshalb der militärische Aufwand in keinem vernünftigen Verhältnis zum erzielten Ertrag stand. Im August entsandte man dann erneut einen Konvoi nach Malta, der sich von Gibraltar aus auf den gefährlichen Weg machte. Das als Operation "Pedestal" in die Geschichte eingegangene Unternehmen verlief gleichfalls sehr verlustreich. Für einen hohen Preis, darunter der Verlust eines Flugzeugträgers, erreichten Teile des Verbandes die umkämpfte Insel. Im Herbst desselben Jahres wandte sich das Kriegsglück aber den Briten und ihren Verbündeten zu. Der 8. Armee gelang bei El Alamein ein beeindruckender Sieg und die Amerikaner landeten erfolgreich in Algerien und Marokko (Operation "Torch"). Mit dem direkten Eingreifen der USA veränderte sich die strategische Gesamtsituation grundlegend. Die Achsenmächte konnten der militärischen Stärke der Vereinigten Staaten nichts Vergleichbares entgegensetzen, weshalb sich ihr Schicksal in den kommenden Monaten besiegelte. O'Hara bewertet die britischen Aktivitäten im Mittelmeerraum durchaus differenziert. Von einer militärstrategischen Perspektive aus betrachtet, wären die begrenzten Ressourcen des Empire im Atlantik und im Pazifik besser eingesetzt gewesen. Politisch blieb Churchill aber keine andere Wahl, als zu versuchen, den "weichen Unterleib" der Achse anzugreifen und eine Entscheidung zu erzwingen. Das dies erst nach über drei Jahren und nur mit massiver amerikanischer Hilfe möglich wurde, war dem unerfreulichen Umstand geschuldet, dass man in London den italienischen Gegenspieler sträflich unterschätzt hatte. Hieran änderten auch die erheblichen Versorgungsprobleme der Achsenmächte kaum etwas. Diese waren weitgehend hausgemacht, da es Italien und Deutschland vor allem an der nötigen logistischen Infrastruktur mangelte. Malta spielte bei der Unterbindung des feindlichen Nachschubes meistens nur eine sekundäre Rolle. Das gilt auch für die viel gerühmte Funkaufklärung "Ultra", deren Einfluss auf den mediterranen Kriegsschauplatz nicht überschätzt werden darf. In dem bemerkenswerten Beitrag "The Other Ultra", welcher in der Sommer-Ausgabe 2013 der Fachzeitschrift "Naval War College Review" erschienen ist, hat der Autor zusammen mit seinem italienischen Kollegen Enrico Cernuschi diesen Punkt klar herausgearbeitet. Insgesamt gesehen ist das Buch von Vincent O'Hara ein Gewinn für die Geschichtsschreibung. Es ist in jeder Hinsicht lesenswert. Jürgen Rupp

Kurzbeschreibung By mid-1942 the Allies were losing the Mediterranean war: Malta was isolated and its civilian population faced starvation. In June 1942 the British Royal Navy made a stupendous effort to break the Axis stranglehold. The British dispatched armed convoys from Gibraltar and Egypt toward Malta. In a complex battle lasting more than a week, Italian and German forces defeated Operation Vigorous, the larger eastern effort, and ravaged the western convoy, Operation Harpoon, in a series of air, submarine, and surface attacks culminating in the

Battle of Pantelleria. Just two of seventeen merchant ships that set out for Malta reached their destination. In *Passage Perilous* presents a detailed description of the operations and assesses the actual impact Malta had on the fight to deny supplies to Rommel's army in North Africa. The book's discussion of the battle's operational aspects highlights the complex relationships between air and naval power and the influence of geography on littoral operations.

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