

[Download] Trafalgar: Countdown to Battle, 1803-1805

Trafalgar: Countdown to Battle, 1803-1805

Alan Schom

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Alan Schom : Trafalgar: Countdown to Battle, 1803-1805 before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Trafalgar: Countdown to Battle, 1803-1805:

Early on the morning of October 21st, 1805, the British Fleet, commanded by Admiral Lord Nelson, encountered the French navy a few miles off the Spanish coast near Cape Trafalgar. As it became clear that a fight was inevitable, the French and English ships drew into battle formation. Aboard his flagship Victory, Nelson offered his famous laconic signal to his seamen--"England expects that every man will do his duty"--and gave the order to fire. After over six hours of bloody exchanges the British had achieved an overwhelming victory, Nelson--his fame assured for the ages--lay dead from a sniper's bullet, and Napoleon's dreams of an invasion of England were forever dashed. Because of its dramatic nature--the one-sidedness of the British victory, Nelson's death at the very moment of triumph--Trafalgar has often been viewed as an isolated feat on the part of the great English commander, or at best the result of a naval campaign begun only months earlier. But as Alan Schom shows in his widely-acclaimed book Trafalgar: Countdown to Battle 1803-1805, this apocalyptic showdown was actually the result of a strategy laid out by the British Admiralty two years earlier, when Napoleon issued orders for the creation of what would have become the largest army flotilla ever before assembled. The Emperor's aim was to invade the British Isles with a force of over 167,000 men conveyed aboard nearly 2,400 vessels--his plan was successfully thwarted not because of the tactical genius of Lord Nelson on a

single day of battle, but rather because of the brilliant strategy and remarkable perseverance of the hitherto unsung hero Admiral Sir William Cornwallis. Until now the facts surrounding this unprecedented military buildup have been largely ignored or misinterpreted by historians. In fashioning his brilliant and gripping reinterpretation of the events leading to the famous battle, Alan Schom has mined the rich and previously unexplored archives of England and France to place Trafalgar in its true historical scope and context. He shows convincingly how Cornwallis (brother of Lord Cornwallis who surrendered to Washington at Yorktown) conducted a brilliant blockade of the French fleet both at Brest and off Spain, effectively ruining Napoleon's invasion plans. He also demonstrates the importance of Prime Minister William Pitt who mustered a powerful army to defend England's shores, while reinvigorating a run-down and demoralized Royal Navy. And by letting them speak across the years from the journals and memoirs they left behind, Schom brings a rich and varied cast of characters to life--from politicians, admirals, and generals, to the common soldiers and sailors of both sides. This book is far more than just a naval history. It tells the compelling story of the centuries-old French-British rivalry as it approached its culmination at the dawn of the nineteenth century. Marvelously written, Trafalgar brings a freshness to an episode often recounted but never before fully understood.