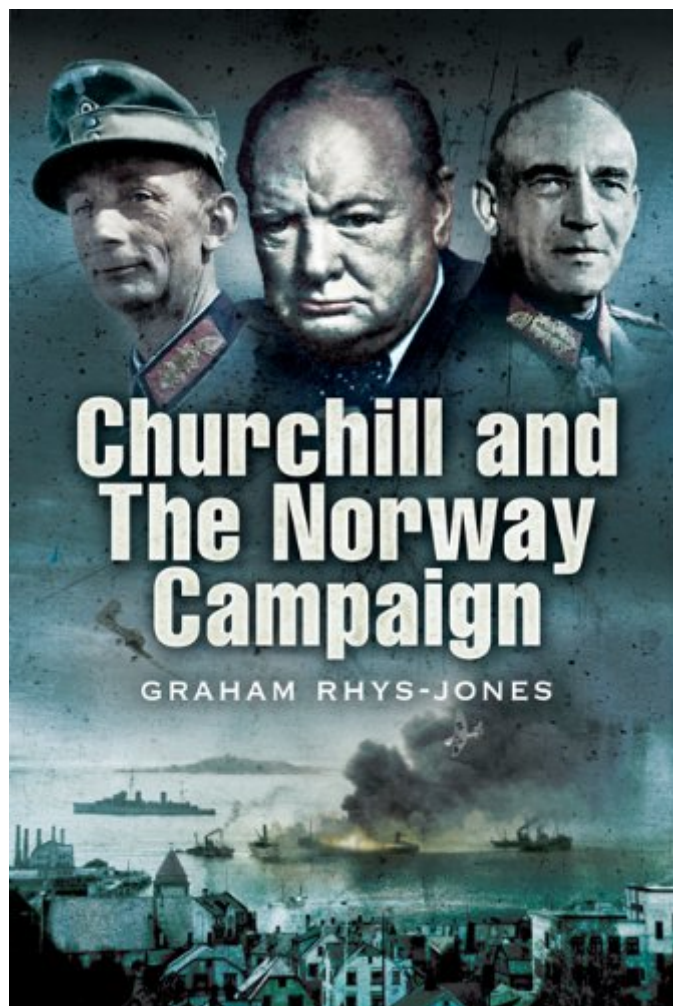


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Churchill And The Norway Campaign 1940



Synopsis

On 9 April 1940, the German Armed Forces seized Norway and Denmark in an operation remarkable for its precision and boldness. The Chamberlain War Cabinet was caught on the hop and responded with ineptitude. While this book examines the making of grand strategy it is first and foremost the story of this ill-fated campaign. It describes the attempts of naval and military commanders to respond to daily shifts in government policy and to grasp the methods of a new kind of enemy – one which seemed willing to take extraordinary risks and which had regained a level of tactical mobility not seen since Napoleonic times. Norway has been eclipsed by the larger disasters which followed shortly after notably the evacuation from Dunkirk and the fall of France. Although there is a substantial body of printed material touching on the subject, few accounts provide a clear view of the campaign as a whole and fewer still are easy to read. While the book concentrates on the higher levels of decision-making (War Cabinets, Chiefs of Staff, and Theater Commanders), it gives equal emphasis to land, sea and air operations and the men who undertook them and provides, as far as possible, an even balance between British and German perspectives.

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Customer Reviews

The first chapters were great -- a concise and interesting review of the thinking and planning behind the German decision to invade Norway and the English dithering over whether or not to. But once the invasion happened the book bogged down into detailed troop movements and it really lost my attention. Plus you need to read the second two-thirds with a detailed map. The first section is worth 5 stars and the last two-thirds about 1, so 3 stars is a generous compromise.

CHURCHILL AND THE NORWAY CAMPAIGN Graham Rhys-Jones Pen and Sword, 2008 Hardcover, \$39.95, 240 Pages, Photographs, Maps, Abbreviations, Bibliography

When German military units invaded Norway in the early hours of 9 April 1940, Norway's long-term strategic policy of rigorous neutrality was shattered. The assault also meant that the uneasy quiet in Europe, the so-called Phony War following the invasion of Poland the previous fall, was coming to an end with the German armed forces seizing the initiative and the momentum in the conflict. As a military operation, the German occupation of Norway was a complete success and provided important strategic gains. Well planned and skillfully executed in the face of superior British sea power, the operation demonstrated the capabilities of the German military. After the war broke out in September, 1939, Norway's strategic position gained additional importance for the British. First Lord of the Admiralty Winston S. Churchill had already proposed on 19 September 1939 that action be taken to prevent the transport of Swedish ore from Narvik in northern Norway to Germany. He called for a blockade of the Norwegian coast, proposing that a minefield be laid across Norwegian territorial waters to force German transport ships into the open sea, past waiting British warships. At that time, however, the issue wasn't of great urgency and the proposal was shelved until late November. The mining issue was again delayed until 12 January 1940, when the British Cabinet decided no action would be taken against Narvik. In February, 1940, the War Cabinet revived plans for an occupation of Norway to be carried out by the middle of March, before the ice in the North Sea thawed and Germany could resume the transport of iron ore. Code named OPERATION AVONMOUTH, it called for a joint British and French occupation of Narvik and then all of Norway. A British combat force was assembled, but the end of the Finnish Winter War in mid-March forced the abandonment of these plans. This was only a temporary delay, however. On 29 March 1940, the British War Cabinet decided to strike as soon as "the Germans set foot on Norwegian soil, or there is clear evidence that they intend to do so." On April 9, 1940, the German military attacked Norway in an operation remarkable for its precision and boldness. The Chamberlain War Cabinet, which had agonized over its Scandinavian policy since the turn of the year, was caught on the hop and

responded with a series of moves that became a byword for ineptitude. The parliamentary outcry that followed forced Chamberlain's resignation; but Churchill, as deeply implicated as any of his Cabinet colleagues, survived to lead the nation through great trials still to come. This new study of the Norway Campaign tells the story of the first great test for British leaders and fighting men in the Second World War. It examines the making of grand strategy in a Cabinet of reluctant warriors, and contrasts their painfully deliberate methods with the ruthless efficiency of the German High Command. It shows an irrepressible Churchill trying to grasp the levers of British strategy and, at the same time, to micro-manage the succession of military crises that followed the German initiative. His judgement and his methods both come under the microscope. In parallel, it enters the minds of naval and military commanders as they grappled with daily shifts in British Government policy and attempted to grasp the methods of a new kind of enemy-one which seemed willing to take extraordinary risks and which had regained a level of tactical mobility not seen since Napoleonic times. CHURCHILL AND THE NORWAY CAMPAIGN draws primarily on British sources, German and Norwegian perspectives are covered in all necessary detail. An even balance is preserved between land, sea, and air operations. This is an impressive study of combined arms and grand strategy that will appeal to both scholars and general readers. Lt. Colonel Robert A. Lynn, Florida Guard Orlando, Florida

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