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Review of *General Hastings 'Pug' Ismay: Soldier, Statesman, Diplomat. A New Biography* by John Kiszely

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recommended for Great War historians, psychiatrists, graduate students, and anyone passionate about military history. Linden's book makes a great contribution to the historiography of shell shock as most of the current literature examines the relationship between combat and shell shock. While other shell-shock scholars examined charitable organizations or lunatic asylums in the post-war years, Linden's book is a great new addition to the historiography due to her extensive analysis of the medical records at the National Hospital and Charite as well as her insight into the politics and cultural aspects of shell shock in Britain and Germany. With the end of the Great War over 100 years ago, the legacies of shell shock have not completely faded from history. While it is used to represent the emotional and psychological suffering of the Great War, the symptoms of shell shock still remain and anyone can become shell-shocked, whether traumatized by war or their everyday lives.

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John Kiszely, *General Hastings 'Pug' Ismay: Soldier, Statesman, Diplomat. A New Biography*. London: Hurst, 2024. xix + 421 pp. 28 B&W illustrations, 4 maps. ISBN 978-1911723202 (hardback). Price £35.

John Kiszely's previous book on the 1940 Norway campaign was a case study into British management of grand strategy and its operational consequences. This fine biography of General Hastings Ismay – he acquired the nickname 'Pug' early in his military career – examines the same subject through a different lens.

For a crisp summary of why Ismay was an important historical figure before, during and after the Second World War, just read the second paragraph of Kiszely's Preface. If Ismay is known at all nowadays, it is for his role in the Second World War as principal military aide to Churchill, particularly acting as intermediary between Churchill as Minister of Defence and the Chiefs of Staff. But Kiszely devotes under half his main text to the war. This is important, because it gives him the space to explore other aspects of Ismay's life and career, as suggested in his subtitle. In particular, he shows how Ismay's early experience – his 'apprenticeship', to quote one of the chapter headings – and successive appointments in the interwar period fitted him almost uniquely for the job he did for Churchill. Two phases of his post-war career were also especially important: his short but significant role in the partition of India in 1947, which he came to see as a shameful failure; and his much more successful time as

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Secretary General of NATO from 1952 to 1957. Even after that he was called in twice to advise on the higher-level organisation of defence.

Shining through Kiszely's account is the role of personality and personal relationships in government and command at the highest levels at which Ismay was involved. His post-First World War career was shaped at certain turning points by personal relationships with senior officers. His wife Darry was not only half-American, which must have been a factor in his sympathy for and successful dealings with senior US personalities, but also inherited wealth which gave Ismay considerable independence (as well as an affluent lifestyle). Kiszely sums up his character very thoroughly in his epilogue.

The effect of Ismay's warm and engaging personality appears in many different ways. The most important was his ability to reduce friction between Churchill and the British Chiefs of Staff, and between the British and US Chiefs, which could in both cases be intense because of the appalling and lasting strain on such senior figures (and indeed on Ismay himself). As 'the man with the oil can', he was open to accusations that he was simply brushing difficulties aside. This charge was on occasion justified but certainly not always. In a particularly revealing quote, the American Lieutenant Colonel (later Lieutenant General) Al Wedemeyer wrote that his initial view of Ismay as superficial and insincere did him a grave injustice: he came to see that Ismay used his 'charming personality' for constructive purposes and undoubtedly exercised moral courage when required.

So Ismay had more than just charm. He was intelligent, hard-working, devoted to his duty and an efficient administrator. Before the war, he had updated the Government War Book and instituted a lessons-learned study after Munich, both of which measures fully proved their value when war broke out. He was responsible for the administrative aspects of many of the international conferences which became such a feature of Allied grand strategy. He improved the structure of intelligence handling and, rather less expectedly, also took a hand in the control of strategic deception, including Operations Mincemeat ('the man who never was') and Bodyguard relating to the Sicily and Normandy invasions respectively.

Entirely properly, Kiszely is sympathetic to Ismay and admires his achievements. This can sometimes lead him to give Ismay too much benefit of the doubt, but the book is by no means a hagiography. Through detailed research in both primary and secondary sources – note the extensive acknowledgements, footnotes and bibliography – he frequently challenges Ismay's version of events, particularly in the memoirs. Kiszely makes effective use of Ismay's own papers, including earlier and often franker drafts of the memoirs as well as other eyewitness and family accounts. He is well aware of where Ismay got it wrong – an outstanding example being the 1942 Dieppe operation,

detailed in a special appendix. Discussing Ismay's positive views about future relations with the Soviet Union, which lasted a surprisingly long time, Kiszely even comments at one point that 'It could have been Chamberlain talking about Germany in 1938'.

Kiszely generally wears his research lightly. He is good at summarising complex events without getting bogged down in detail, and he writes in a clear, readable and engaging style. This book will therefore appeal to readers with an interest in the Second World War in particular, as well as to specialists and modern-day practitioners. Kiszely retired as a senior officer after a career in the British Army and ends with a heartfelt plea to view Ismay as a role model for serving officers, given his marked ability to 'act in the interests of defence as a whole, to view defence within the context of national and international interests, and to act as an exemplar in politico-military cooperation'.

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Tim Cook, *The Good Allies: How Canada and the United States Fought Together to Defeat Fascism During the Second World War*. Toronto: Allen Lane, 2024. 569 pp. (ebook). Price £10.99.

As Canada's leading military historian and Director of Research at the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa, Ontario, Tim Cook has undertaken his most ambitious task in describing Canadian-American relations during the Second World War. In this work, Cook argues that Canada, under the leadership of Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King, became a significant partner to the United States, led by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, as both countries formed an alliance to protect North America from the Axis powers. With threats on both the East and West Coasts, King and Roosevelt sought to protect their countries' respective coasts. By defending both coasts with the Royal Canadian Navy, participating in the Kiska campaign to oust Japanese forces, sending military units to Alaska, and creating a continental sphere of defence against the Nazis by placing Canadian forces in Newfoundland, Iceland, and Greenland, Canada proved itself to its southern neighbour as a reliable ally in continental defence amid the war with the Axis forces.

As Cook demonstrates, once North America was secured from the fascist threats aboard, Canada mobilized its industries and armed forces to take the fight overseas. As Canada was rich in mineral resources, the nation greatly supplied Britain with food