

## Sins of Omission

by Roger D. McGrath

### "Scratch One Flattop"

It was America's first naval battle of World War II, Japan's first loss at sea in the war, the battle that saved Australia from a Japanese invasion, the greatest naval battle in Australian waters, the first carrier battle, and the first battle in which the opposing fleets never came within sight of each other or fired at each other, ship to ship. Rarely mentioned in American textbooks today and unknown to most students, the Battle of the Coral Sea not only was one of the war's most important battles but marked the opening of a new age in naval warfare and demonstrated that American sailors and naval aviators were more than a match for their Japanese counterparts.

Lying off Australia's northeast coast, the Coral Sea is a stunningly beautiful body of water. Its bright sunshine, clean air, and translucent water, which varies from the deepest to the lightest blues and greens, made the Coral Sea an ironic site for the deadly game of war.

Early in May 1942, Japan launched Operation Mo, designed to capture Port Moresby, on New Guinea's southeast coast. Control of Port Moresby would give Japan a base that would make the Coral Sea a Japanese lake and a base that could be used as a staging area for an invasion of Australia. The latter idea was not far-fetched. Japan had three times as many men in her army and navy as Australia had people. In March 1942, Japan's prime minister, Gen. Hideki Tojo, had warned, "Australia and New Zealand are now threatened by the might of the Imperial forces, and both of them should know that any resistance is futile."

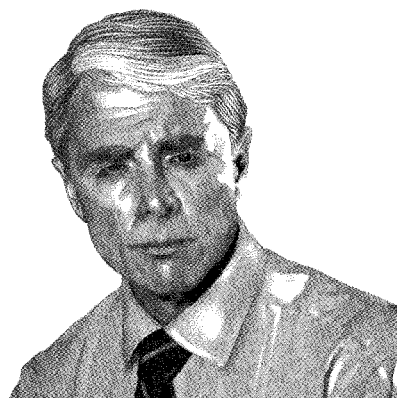
Because Navy cryptanalysts had broken the Japanese fleet code, Adm. Chester Nimitz knew enough of Operation Mo to dispatch Rear Adm. Frank Jack Fletcher and Task Force 17 with her 2 carriers, 8 cruisers, 11 destroyers, and support craft to the Coral Sea.

Although scattered and far-flung actions began on May 4, the real battle started three days later when Japanese scout planes spotted the American oiler *Neosho* (although the name sounds Japanese, it comes from an Osage Indian name) and her escort, the destroyer *Sims*. Reported by the scout planes as a "carrier and a cruiser," the Japanese launched dozens

of planes in two waves to attack these putative high-value targets. *Sims* was sunk with heavy casualties; *Neosho* was so badly damaged that she became a drifting wreck and was later abandoned.

In the meantime, an American scout plane spotted the Japanese carrier *Shoho* and her four accompanying cruisers. Carriers *Yorktown* and *Lexington* launched more than 90 planes that found *Shoho* 160 miles away. Leading the attack was Lt. John J. Powers, a New York City-born graduate of the Naval Academy. Through enemy fighters and intense antiaircraft fire, he dove nearly into the deck of *Shoho* before releasing his bomb. A tremendous explosion rocked the carrier. Static interfered with radio transmissions to *Yorktown* and *Lexington*, but suddenly, the voice of another pilot, Lt. Cmdr. Robert Dixon, came through loud and clear: "Scratch one flattop. Dixon to carrier. Scratch one flattop." Late in the day, the Japanese launched some 30 planes to search for the American carriers. Most of the planes were intercepted and shot down by American fighters or lost while trying to find their own carriers in the dark. A few made their way back to their carriers only to crash when attempting night landings. Mistaking an American carrier for a Japanese, one enemy pilot joined American planes in the landing pattern. He must have been shocked when he began to set down on the deck only to be blasted overboard in a hail of gunfire.

Early the next morning, the opposing forces began launching planes again. Powers told his pilots in the ready room, "Remember the folks back home are counting on us. I'm going to get a hit if I have to lay it right on their flight deck." By late morning, Powers and others from *Yorktown* and *Lexington* were pounding the Japanese carrier *Shokaku*. Powers again flew nearly into the carrier's deck before releasing his bomb and scoring a direct hit. He was last seen trying to pull up through a cloud of fire, smoke, debris, and exploding shells. He and others had left *Shokaku* so heavily damaged that all she could do was limp northward in retreat. Her sister carrier, *Zuikaku*, steaming behind a squall line, went undetected by American planes.



While American pilots were pounding *Shokaku*, Japanese carrier planes were reaching *Yorktown* and *Lexington*, both sailing under bright, clear skies. Torpedoes and bombs hit "Lady Lex," but fast action by her crew brought the resulting fires under control—for a time. Then, a spark from an unshielded electric fan caused secondary explosions and fires erupted everywhere. Capt. Frederick Sherman finally gave the order to abandon ship. Unlike how it would be misrepresented by some hysterical movie director today, the sailors calmly lined up on the flight deck and climbed down lines dangling into the sea. Some sailors had the good sense to raid the galley and deliver ice cream to their shipmates waiting a turn to go overboard. Sherman was the last to leave the ship. Hours later, a U.S. destroyer put four torpedoes into *Lexington* and sank her, lest she miraculously survive the fires and explosions and fall into enemy hands. Meanwhile, *Yorktown* was badly damaged by a bomb hit but was still fully operational.

By the afternoon of May 8, the battle was over. The United States had lost a carrier, a destroyer, and an oiler, 66 planes, and some 550 men. We also had a carrier badly damaged. Japan had lost a carrier, a destroyer, and three smaller ships, 77 planes, and nearly 1,100 men. She also had a carrier badly damaged. Tactically, the battle could be called a draw; strategically, it was a great American (and Australian—she had ships participate as well) victory. The Japanese would never again threaten Port Moresby, let alone Australia. Every year since 1946, Australia has commemorated the Battle of the Coral Sea and has honored such American heroes as John J. Powers, who was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor. Australia has not forgotten, but it seems that America has. <img alt="A small decorative symbol, possibly a stylized 'C' or a similar mark." data-bbox="875 890 890 900"/>

# Eurabian Nights

## A Horror Travelogue

by Srdja Trifkovic

**T**housands of young Muslims, armed with clubs and sticks and shouting, “*Allahu akbar!*” riot and force the police to retreat. Windows are smashed; stores are looted; cars are torched. Europeans unlucky or careless enough to be trapped by the mob are viciously attacked, and some are killed.

The scene could be Mogadishu in the aftermath of Pope Benedict’s Regensburg address; or Tripoli during the Danish-cartoons fury; or Karachi, Kabul, Gaza, and countless other cities in *Dar al-Islam*’s heartland, on any number of occasions. Yet a year ago, such scenes were unfolding, for weeks on end, in places with such names as Clichy-sous-Bois, Argenteuil, and La Courneuve. The trouble in the *banlieus* finally ended, as various Muslim “community leaders” had claimed it would, only when various levels of French officialdom quietly accepted that there were *de facto* no-go areas within the country, mini-Islamistans run by the dominant local majority. “*Mon Clichy à moi, c’est ça!*” just about sums it up, on the official website of Clichy-sous-Bois, whose population is 80-percent Muslim.

In practice, this means that local groceries refrain from selling wine, and young Muslim men feel emboldened to use violence against “sluts”—women who do not follow Islamic ways. Many more French-born Arab girls wear the *hijab* today than did so a year ago: It is their protection against mutilation and gang rape. Failing to do so makes them fair game for both: A knife slash across the scarless girl’s cheek from the lip to the ear is especially common and known as a “smile.”

The demand for communal self-rule is not new, and it will be made with increasing frequency in the years to come. Of some 25 million Muslims in Western Europe, the majority already consider themselves autonomous, a community justifiably opposed to the decadent host society of infidels. This demand is but the first step: It will lead to the clamoring for the adoption of *sharia* within segregated Muslim communities and, finally, for the imposition of *sharia* on the society as a whole.

Europe’s elite class is prepared for this challenge. Dutch Justice Minister Piet Hein Donner—a Christian Democrat—sees the demand as perfectly legitimate and argues that *sharia* could be introduced “by democratic means.” Muslims have a right to follow the commands of their religion, even if that included some “dissenting rules of behavior”: “It is a sure certainty for me: if two thirds of all Netherlands tomorrow would want to introduce Sharia, then this possibility must exist. Could you block this legally? It would also be a scandal to say ‘this isn’t allowed!’ The majority counts. That is the essence of democracy.”

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The same “essence” was reiterated in similar terms last July by Jens Orback, the Swedish Integration [*sic*] Minister, who declared in a radio debate, “We must be open and tolerant towards Islam and Muslims because when we become a minority, they will be so towards us.” Yes, *when we become a minority*; the fact that, four months later, both Orback and his Social Democratic government remain in power aptly illustrates Sweden’s political and cultural scene.

Until a generation ago, Sweden used to be one of the safest and most law-abiding countries in the world. Today, in the southern city of Malmö, the authorities are no longer able to deal with the problem of crime among Muslim immigrants, 90 percent of whom are on welfare. They make up one third of the city’s 300,000 people; at the city’s Rosengrad School, of 1,000 students, only 2 were Swedes last year. “If we park our car it will be smashed—so we have to go very often in two vehicles, one just to protect the other,” says policeman Rolf Landgren. Both vehicles are needed to escort Swedish ambulance drivers into certain neighborhoods. Robberies of all sorts increased by 50 percent in 2004 alone, with gangs of young Muslims specializing in mugging old people visiting the graves of relatives. Thomas Anderberg, head of statistics for the Malmö police, reported a doubling of “rapes by ambush” in 2004. Almost all of the increase is attributable to Muslim men raping Swedish women.

Next door in Norway and Denmark, two thirds of all men arrested for rape are “of non-western ethnic origin”—the preferred euphemism for Middle Eastern and North African Muslims—although they account for under five percent of their residents. The number of rapes in Oslo in the summer of 2006 was twice that of the previous summer. All “gang rapes” in Denmark in 2004 were committed by immigrants and “refugees.”

The victims are overwhelmingly Scandinavian women, yet only one in twenty young Muslim men say they would marry one. Their reluctance is explained by an Islamic scholar, Mufti Shahid Mehdi, who told an audience in Copenhagen that European women who do not wear a headscarf were “asking to be raped.” His view is shared by Unni Wikan, a professor of social anthropology at the University of Oslo and a self-described feminist; she holds that “Norwegian women must take their share of responsibility for these rapes” because Muslim men found their manner of dress provocative: “Norwegian women must realize that we live in a multicultural society and they must adapt themselves to it.”

Swedish courts are adapting by introducing *sharia* principles into civil cases. An Iranian man divorcing his Iranian wife was ordered by the high court in the city of Halmestad to pay *Mahr*, Islamic dowry ordained by the Koran as part of the Islamic marriage contract.