



Mission: History

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1797: 'Westminster Abbey or Glorious Victory'



"CLOSE QUARTERS AT ST. VINCENT" is the title of this contemporary print. By ordering his ship, *Captain*, out of the English line, Nelson was contravening Jervis' order to "form a line ahead and astern of *Victory*," but by doing so he assured the English a decisive victory.

Nelson's 'Disobedience' Seals Spaniards' Fate, Earns Him Knighthood

Cape St. Vincent is the goatee jutting from Portugal's chin into the Atlantic, and is the promontory mariners sailing between western Europe and the Mediterranean Sea must pass. Around Cape St. Vincent, too, must sail any French ships bound from Toulon to Brest, or any of their Spanish allies following from Cartagena or Cadiz.

Spain had joined France in war against England on 4 October 1796, adding her 79 ships of the line to Napoleon's fleet and forcing the English out of the Mediterranean. Admiral Sir John Jervis moved his base of operations to Lisbon, from where he hoped to prevent the Spanish fleet from joining the French fleet in Brest and threatening the British Western Approaches. The ultimate objective of Bonaparte was an invasion of England, and he thought he could pull it off if he controlled local waters for just a few days.

The French were not waiting idly for the Spanish. In December 1796 they launched an invasion of Ireland, only to be driven back by the weather on Christmas Day. The effect on England was one

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1945: Navy Secretary Sees Suribachi Flag: 'That Flag Means There Will Be a Marine Corps for 500 Years'

We met Joe Rosenthal in 1949 when we were a \$37.50-per-week cub reporter on the *San Francisco Chronicle*. That \$37.50 was for a 44-hour week, by the way, and convinced us that newspapering was not to be our career.

Rosenthal was the most famous news photographer in the world at the time and worked for the Associated Press. AP had its San Francisco Bureau in the Chronicle Building at Fifth and Mission Streets. He liked journalists and spent a little of his time visiting in the *Chronicle* news room on the third floor.

The reason Rosenthal was the most famous news photographer in the world is, he was the one who took the picture of the U.S. Marines raising the American

flag on top of Mount Suribachi on the island of Iwo Jima on 23 February 1945. He didn't mind talking about the picture because he enjoyed talking about Marines, but you heard a lot more about the Marines than the picture. He did say he thought he had missed the shot and was surprised he hadn't. Here's how that came about.

Rosenthal was near the bottom of Suribachi at 1000 that Friday when four or five Marines put up a pole with a small American flag on it, and it was photographed by Technical Sergeant Louis Lowery, a Marine cameraman. But still he clambered to the top carrying his big press camera, a musette bag full of

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'Enough, Sir! No More of That. The Die is Cast. If There are Fifty Sail, I Will Go Through Them!'

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of profound shock and there was a real possibility that the public would clamor for an appalling "peace" if a combined French and Spanish fleet controlled the Western Approaches.

In Paris, the Directory laid plans to do just that. It requested the Spanish to move their fleet from Cartagena to Brest, where it would join with the French fleet commanded by Admiral Morard de Galles. The combined fleet would then cover the invasion of England by the French Army. A Spanish squadron, consisting of 27 ships of the line and a dozen frigates under Don Juan de Cordova, departed Cartagena on 1 February 1797, bound for Cadiz.

Commodore Horatio Nelson of the Royal Navy was one of the last Englishmen to leave the Mediterranean. He sailed from Elba in *Minerve* and, as he passed Cartagena, noted with concern that the harbor was empty. Nelson departed Gibraltar on 11 February, to join Jervis who was patrolling off the southern coast of Portugal.

On 5 February, hidden by a gale, Cordova had passed through the Straits of Gibraltar, but easterly winds had blown his force out into the Atlantic; the winds shifted to the normal westerlies on 11 February. On a foggy 12 February, Cordova was heading back to Cadiz and Nelson was groping his way to Jervis. That night, *Minerve* passed through the Spanish fleet, the dim outlines of the ships visible to the English but Nelson's ship unseen by inattentive Spanish lookouts. Nelson found Jervis on 13 February and immediately went on board *Victory* to tell him of the Spaniards' whereabouts. Jervis was between Cordova and Cadiz.

At 0250 on 14 February the Spanish fleet was sighted about 15 miles distant. As the morning dawned cold and foggy, Jervis looked at his 15 ships of the line and five frigates formed into two battle lines and turned to Captain Robert Calder. "A victory is very essential to England at the moment," he observed.

At 0630, *Culloden* signalled from the van that she could see five enemy sail, and then six and seven and more. On the quarterdeck of *Victory*, the news was relayed to Jervis:

"There are eight sail of the line, Sir John," and so on, and each time he responded "Very well, sir." Eventually he heard "There are twenty-seven sail of the line, Sir John."

"Enough sir, no more of that! The die is cast, and if there are fifty sail, I will go through them."

At 1100, Jervis signalled his fleet "Form a line of battle ahead and astern of *Victory* as most convenient." Twelve



minutes later, he made the signal "Engage the enemy" and, at 1130, "Admiral intends to pass through enemy lines." Also at 1130, *Culloden* opened fire on the Spaniards as her guns came to bear. Her captain, Thomas Troubridge described her firing "as if by a seconds watch, and in the silence of a port admiral's inspection."

As they reached the end of the Spanish column, Jervis signalled *Culloden*, followed by *Blenheim* and *Prince George* and the others to come about in line. The Spanish, seeking to break through the English line at the point where the ships were tacking, came onto a port tack of their own, but as a Spanish three-decker closed *Victory*, she received a raking broadside from the English flagship.

In coming about, the English ships placed themselves astern of the main Spanish column of 17 ships, which made an effort to join the smaller column to windward. At 1305, Jervis signalled

"Take suitable stations for mutual support and engage the enemy as coming up in succession."

Nelson, who had hoisted his broad pennant in *Captain*, had not yet tacked and saw that if the Spanish columns united the battle would give way to a chase to Cadiz, with no victory gained for the English. He interpreted this latest signal loosely and ignored entirely the earlier "form battle line" order, wore his ship out of line and set off to intercept the Spanish ship, *Santissima Trinidad*.

By bringing *Captain* across the bows of the ships in the center of the Spanish windward division, Nelson slowed its progress. This was at about 1330, just as *Culloden* was overhauling the Spanish rear, which had been slowed by Nelson's audacity.

By 1400 or thereabouts, *Culloden* had reached *Captain* and *Santissima Trinidad* and brought her broadsides to bear, offering Nelson's ship some respite, which was put to use patching up rigging and replenishing shot. While *Culloden* and *Blenheim* took over the fight with *Santissima Trinidad* and her consorts, Nelson took on the 112-gun flagship *San Josef* and *San Nicholas* (80) at the same time.

While these fights were taking place, Jervis ordered the 74-gun *Excellent*, Captain Cuthbert Collingwood, to move through the Spanish rear, where she fell in with the 112-gun *Salvador del Mundo*. Collingwood was the Royal Navy's gunnery expert, and his rapid broadsides forced the superior enemy ship to strike her colors. He then turned on *San Ysidro*, a ship equal to his own, and she struck her colors. *Salvador del Mundo*, had rehoisted her colors and begun firing, but

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How to Get in Touch

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Submissions are not encouraged because of constraints on the time available for editing. If such are sent, they should be sent as e-mail attachments in Microsoft Word 6.0 or as typewritten copy, double-spaced, accompanied by a 3½-inch diskette containing the submission in MS Word 6.0 for Windows.

Quite welcome, however, are suggestions of events for coverage. Please offer suggestions two months ahead of the anniversary of an event.

Rosenthal Shoots from Hip;



THE FIRST FLAG— Jim Michaels and his .30 cal. M-1 carbine form a one-man perimeter of defense for Hank Hansen, Boots Thomas, Lt. Harold Schrier and Chuck Lindberg.



JOE ROSENTHAL'S 'GUNG HO SHOT' — The AP photographer took a second photo with all the Marines he could find on Suribachi. From left: Ira Hayes, Lt. Schrier, Frank Sously, Sgt. Mike Strank, John Bradley, Clarence Garrett, Graydon Dyce, Howard Snyder, Hank Hansen, Phil Ward, Fred Walzak, Harry Schultz, Del Fowler, Tom Hernandez, John Schmitt, Chet Flegel.

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gear and a couple extra pairs of glasses. He couldn't see without the glasses, and his weak eyes had kept him out of the Marines, Army and Navy when he had tried every recruiting station in town.

When Rosenthal got to the top of Suribachi, he learned that the Marines were going to take the flag down and preserve it, and that a second, larger flag was to be raised in its place. That flag, rumor had it, was the battle ensign of a ship sunk by the Japs at Pearl Harbor. Whether it was or not, it would be seen through the fog of battle.

Rosenthal wanted to get a good picture of the raising of the second flag, but he was a little guy — five-three or five-four, so he started piling some sandbags to stand on. While he was constructing his pedestal, he saw out of the corner of his eye, that a handful of Marines were raising the flag. He grabbed his Speed Graphic, spun around, aimed over the top of the camera and pulled the trigger. As he said, he thought he had missed the shot.

Just to make sure he didn't descend from the mountain empty handed, Rosenthal lined up all the Marines who were on top of Suribachi and took a picture of them around the flag pole. That picture got the nickname of "the gung ho shot."

Rosenthal sent the film on to Guam where it was developed and flown to New York. He arrived in Guam eight days after the film and saw the picture for the first time, and that was six days after the rest of the world saw it.

Joe Rosenthal's photo of the raising of the flag on Suribachi appeared on the front page of almost every newspaper in the United States on Sunday, 25 February 1945, and those papers without a Sunday edition printed it on Monday. It became, and remains, the photo for which the most copies have been requested — ever.

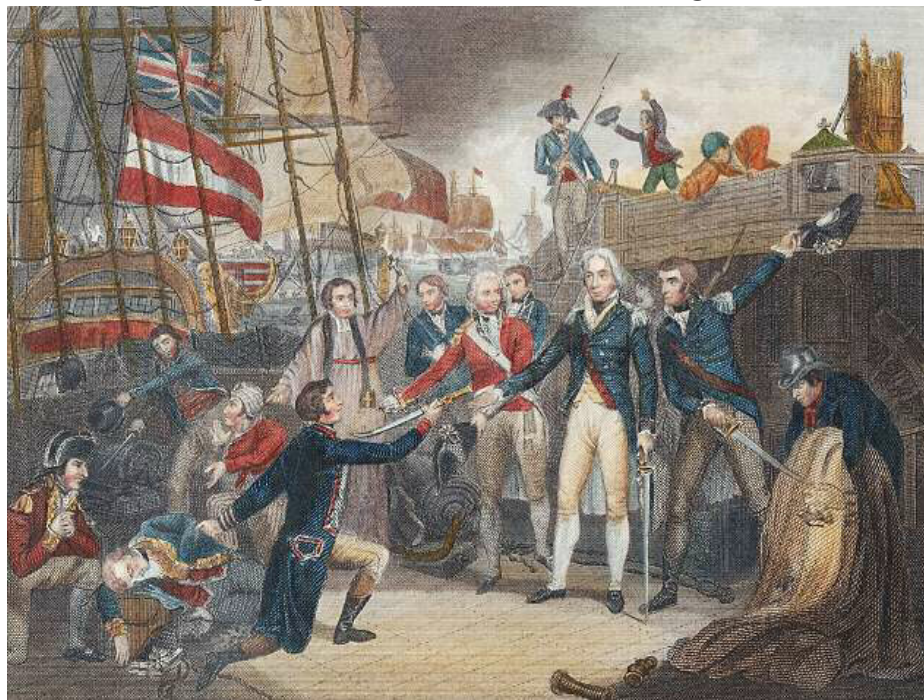
That second flag meant more than Rosenthal's famous

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THE MOST REPRINTED PHOTOGRAPH IN HISTORY — It almost wasn't taken. Photographer Joe Rosenthal, a little guy, was stacking sand bags to stand on when he saw the flag going up out of the corner of his eye. He didn't know he had a photo until eight days later — six days after his photograph had appeared on the front page of every newspaper in the U.S.

Jervis Was Made a Baron and the First Earl St. Vincent; Nelson Was Knighted And Soon Rose to Flag Rank



THE SPANISH ADMIRAL Don Juan de Cordova offers his sword to Commodore Nelson on board *San Josef*. Nelson had boarded *San Nicolas* and, with Cordova's ship fouled fast to *San Nicolas*, continued across and secured two prizes with one boarding.

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re-surrendered as soon as *Victory's* guns came to bear.

Captain and *San Nicholas* were in close action when *Excellent* bore up on the other side of the Spanish ship and opened fire. *San Nicholas* luffed up and ran afoul of *San Josef*. With her foretop mast gone and almost out of control, Nelson ordered *Captain's* captain to take his ship alongside *San Nicholas*. As the ship was locked to *San Nicholas's* starboard quarter, Nelson ordered "Borders away."

Nelson led the borders, calling out "Westminster Abbey or glorious victory!" Nelson, his men and officers and those of the 69th Marine Regiment hurried through *San Nicholas* amid sporadic gunfire, accepting the swords of Spanish officers as they went, and then from her boarded *San Josef*, still held fast on her port beam. There, Nelson accepted the sword of the Spanish admiral. With the surrender of these two ships, the Battle of (or off) Cape St. Vincent was ended. Outnumbered almost two to one, the English had won a decisive victory, capturing four ships and about 3,000 prisoners. The Royal Navy suffered 74 dead and 227 wounded seriously. Though details on Spanish casualties were not

tabulated, they were appalling. On board *San Nicholas* alone, 144 were killed.

By taking his ship out of line, Nelson had probably prevented the Spaniards escaping to Cadiz, but he had risked his career. As a junior commander, he had no business ignoring the "form line ahead and astern of *Victory*" order and, had he failed, his loose interpretation of the second order would not have stood up in a court-martial. But Nelson was to show that he had "the touch" over and again.

The victory was the one Jervis said England needed. While the combined French and Spanish fleet was just as formidable as before, having lost only four ships, that fleet was demoralized. The English fleet, on the other hand, now felt that no odds were too long to be overcome. That feeling was to bear fruit later in 1797 at Camperdown, and then again at the Nile and Trafalgar.

Word of the victory reached England in early March. Admiral Sir John Jervis was created Baron Jervis of Meaford, the First Earl St. Vincent, and he was known thereafter as St. Vincent. Commodore Nelson became Sir Horatio Nelson, KB, and shortly thereafter Rear Admiral Sir Horatio Nelson, KB.

A gold medal was struck for the flag officers and captains, but Collingwood refused his, saying he had been denied a medal when other captains received one for actions at the Glorious First of June in 1794. He received both, and a letter of apology.

Colonel Orders Up a Flag Visible to All on Iwo Jima

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photo, though. The first flag was only 54 inches by 28 inches. When it was to be taken down for preservation, Lt. Col. Chandler Johnson, a Marine battalion commander, ordered up the big flag, which was the size of the spread on a king-size bed. A flag, Colonel Johnson said "large enough so the men at the other end of the island can see it. It will lift their spirits."

That it did. T. M. Hughes who had landed with the 5th Marines said the sight of the Stars and Stripes, stiff in the wind, "was a great feeling." Navy corpsman Eugene Pena was on Iwo and was no stranger to danger — he would come home with two Purple Hearts and a Silver Star. "We knew we had the island when that flag went up," he said.

They had the island, but it would not be declared secure for another full month, and at terrible cost to the Marines with nearly 6,000 killed and another 20,000 wounded.

Other eyes saw the flag raising and the reaction was always the same. Navy Secretary James V. Forrestal was coming ashore with Lieutenant General Holland M. Smith just as the flag was raised. Smith said "It was one of the proudest moments of my life."

Forrestal said "Holland, the raising of that flag on Suribachi means a Marine Corps for the next 500 years."

Rosenthal's photo preserved that inspirational moment and it continues to inspire in the form of the bronze Marine Corps monument by Felix de Welden, overlooking the Potomac near Arlington National Cemetery.

The image has also appeared on a U.S. postage stamp and, according to the Associated Press, the picture has been reprinted more than any other in the news service's history.

According to AP's Patricia Lantis, director of AP/Wide World Photos, the original 4x5 negative is locked in a vault, and is taken out "only for extremely important uses."