

Naval War College Review

Volume 36
Number 5 *September-October*

Article 13

1983

"Buller's Guns," and "Buller's Dreadnought"

Frank N. Snyder

Richard Hough

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review>

Recommended Citation

Snyder, Frank N. and Hough, Richard (1983) ""Buller's Guns," and "Buller's Dreadnought"," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 36 : No. 5 , Article 13.

Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol36/iss5/13>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Naval War College Review by an authorized editor of U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. For more information, please contact repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu.

in weaponry have resulted in fewer forces but at much higher costs, e.g., the effect on the Royal Navy of modernizing the nuclear deterrent force with the Trident system. The European members of Nato have had greater difficulty in keeping up with technological trends than the United States and the Soviet Union. This has created the following stresses: (1) Nato's relative weakness in conventional forces relative to the Warsaw Pact, (2) an imbalance between Nato conventional and nuclear strength, and (3) strains on the Nato alliance created by the military balance and efforts to improve it. Downey argues that what is needed is a "grand strategy" to which deterrence and other military, political, and economic strategies can be related.

Space limitations prevent discussion of other chapters in these books. However, both volumes contain a number of papers which are worth reading such as Paul Buteux's "Theatre-Nuclear Forces" and Robert Friedlander's "United States Policy Toward Armed Rebellion," both in *The Year Book*. Although different in their objectives and structures, *Setting National Priorities* and *The Year Book of World Affairs* continue to make significant contributions to understanding factors affecting national security policy. On the strengths of the current offerings, both of these annual series should be continued.

John A. Walgreen
Wheaton College

Hough, Richard. *Buller's Guns*. New York: Morrow, 1981. 297pp. \$12.50

Hough, Richard. *Buller's Dreadnought*. New York: Morrow, 1982. 251pp. \$12.50

Archy Buller is a fictional Royal Navy officer somewhat in the mold of Horatio Hornblower a century earlier, but with fewer opportunities for naval action as a junior officer in the Victorian navy. These first two novels of a projected trilogy trace Buller's career during the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the first part of the twentieth, up to the early sea battles of the First World War.

The author, Richard Hough, has already written extensively as a historian about naval personalities and events during this same period (*The Mountbattens, Admirals in Collision, The Potemkin Mutiny, The Fleet That Had to Die, Dreadnought*). The career of Buller, a younger son in an upper class naval family, converges with that of Rod Maclewin, a Scot who comes up through the ranks as a gunner, to become the "Guns" of the first novel's title. In that book, the author places them at a variety of historical events. They witness two naval catastrophes—the sinkings of the *Euridice* and of the *Victoria*. They are in action twice—at the bombardment of Alexandria in 1882 and at the unsuccessful attempt to relieve Ladysmith in 1899 during the Boer War when naval guns were taken ashore to augment field artillery. They serve under the

commands of two dominant personalities—Beresford and Fisher—so we get an insight into the controversies arising from the various transitions that navies went through during the late nineteenth century.

In the second book, the action moves to sea. Our hero is present at Tsushima as an observer and at Dogger Bank in command of his battle cruiser *Incontestable* (which performs a role similar to that of the real *Indomitable*). He becomes involved in some of the deception and intrigue that accompanied the ship-building race that preceded World War I. The reader observes the consumption of a great deal of vintage champagne as well as the commitment of a predictable amount of upper class adultery (some of it even in line of duty). We can look forward to the final book of the trilogy in which our hero will undoubtedly see action at Jutland, perhaps as a flag officer and in command of his squadron.

These are interesting books about a navy that finds itself in an arms race—as it tries to cope with technological changes, many years after its most recent major fleet action. The author spins a good yard, one that you can feel is accurate historically.

Frank N. Snyder
Naval War College

Wolfe, Bertram D. *Revolution and Reality*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981. 401pp.

\$11

It is difficult to obtain a factual and useful political history of the

Soviet Union. Each successive Soviet leader has rewritten his nation's history since the revolution in 1917 (at least) in order to highlight his own part in it, thus consolidating his power. Under these circumstances, Bertram Wolfe's first-hand account is valuable. Wolfe was a proponent of socialism during and after the First World War, and during that period became acquainted with such leaders as Trotsky, Stalin, Bukharin, and Molotov. Thus he was in an excellent position to observe the growth of the communist regime during its early years of development without being subjected to the censorship that exists in that system.

The book consists of essays on four subjects: pre-revolutionary Russia, Leninism, Stalinism, and the future of totalitarianism. These span the time from the reign of Nicholas II to the rise of Khrushchev to General Secretary. In each area, Wolfe brings to bear his vast personal knowledge and thorough scholarly research, providing provocative insights into the workings of the Soviet political system. Through his eloquent and lucid style he leaves few loose ends in his historical analysis. He grapples with such important topics as succession in the Soviet system, Russia's influence in the world communist movement, and the future of the Soviet government. Considering that the last of these articles was originally written and published fifteen years ago, one must be impressed on how recent developments have borne out his predictions.

When reading Wolfe, however,