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Last Call for HMS Edinburgh

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He suggests a way to eliminate the fiction of a national US policy for the oceans, arguing that to have sea power we must have marine science, marine technology and ocean engineering, economic viability, and public policy and ocean politics—the last being the harmonious accommodation of diverse interests for the greater public good.

The first three are largely achievable in the present public context. The fourth, however, remains elusive and, unless this country achieves it on a unified, national level, we will find effective uses of the sea impossible. Rather, the United States will continue in what Walsh views as its decline as a first-rate sea power.

Dr. Walsh calls for us to begin planning the development of a national ocean policy framework and an executive mechanism—a Cabinet-level Department of the Oceans, perhaps?—to ensure that present policy decisions are carried out swiftly by the responsible agencies of government and that inter-agency conflicts are resolved quickly and fairly.

Given the fragmented nature of US decision making for the oceans; the separations of that policy-making process at the local, state, national, and international levels of government; and the diverse forms in which ocean interests are manifested; it is a gargantuan task. Nevertheless, as a long-time student of US and international marine policies, this reviewer concurs with the goal. Reaching it will be an interesting, but certainly tortuous, process.

SCOTT C. TRUVER
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Pearce, Frank. *Last Call for HMS Edinburgh*. New York: Atheneum, 1982. 199pp. \$14.95

"It's going to be a bad trip, sir, this is Russian gold dripping with blood." This

somewhat melodramatic statement, attributed to a crewman of HMS *Edinburgh*, a modified *Southampton* class cruiser assigned to the Arctic convoys, holds promise of intrigue, adventure and suspense. However, the anticipation generated by such a quotation is not completely fulfilled in this occasionally disorganized account of convoy action in the Arctic. Perhaps it is fitting, for combat conditions on the Murmansk run, although heroic in the ultimate sense of this overused word, were hardly pleasant or intriguing. Drudgery, boredom, fear, intense physical discomfort and a sense of hopelessness are the stark realities which faced Allied and German seamen and which are vividly described by the author. After a slow, somewhat laborious beginning Pearce adequately depicts the conditions which obstructed allied efforts to push convoys through to the beleaguered Soviets.

The author's personal connection with the story was as a crewmember in HMS *Trinidad*, which was lost in the series of engagements described in the book. That action is emphasized to such an extent that it would seem that Pearce might more appropriately have entitled his work *Last Call for HMS Trinidad*. Despite his disclaimer in the epilogue that this work was completed before the location of the *Edinburgh* wreck in 1981, it appears that the book was rushed to print to capitalize on the popular interest created by the recovery of a portion of the gold lost with *Edinburgh* when she went down to U-boat and surface attack.

Nevertheless, Pearce generates considerable interest through his description of the ordeal and conditions facing convoy survivors as they awaited transportation home from the Murmansk area. Pearce suggests that the often presented argument that Russian treatment of these survivors was an insidious Soviet plot to

make life miserable for their more fortunate allies is inaccurate. With Leningrad starving and Russian backs against the wall of a long front, as much as possible was done to share the meager resources available. Yet the incredible bureaucracy which hampered these efforts is adequately and objectively portrayed.

The description of the cruiser actions involving *Edinburgh* and *Trinidad* and their effort to fight off submarines, air and surface attacks in the perpetual Arctic daylight is well done and fully involves the reader. The heroics attributed to the British skippers and individuals of their commands, the mishandling of German destroyers, the threat of the *Tirpitz*, the *Niger* tragedy and many other incidents all combine to overcome some shortcomings and make this a book to be recommended.

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Boutilier, James A., ed. *RCN in Retrospect, 1910-1968*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1982. 451pp. \$28

MacPherson, Ken and Burgess, John. *The Ships of Canada's Naval Forces, 1910-1981*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1981. 240pp. \$42.95

On 6 October 1973, at a conference on the North Atlantic Strategic Pivot, Commander R.T.E. Bowler, Jr. of the US Naval Institute, spoke on the one-hundredth anniversary of his organization. Bowler's remarks deserve mention here because they are part of a process which led to the publication of these volumes, one of them by the Naval Institute. These books are directly, or

indirectly, the results of four conferences attended by scholars of North American oceanic history.

These conferences have minor historical significance. Two were held at the University of Maine in Orono in 1971 and 1973. Bowler spoke at the latter. One conference convened at the University of Western Ontario in 1972. Each of these gatherings produced a volume containing the addresses delivered at the conferences. Several things came out of the meetings and publications. The first was excellent hospitality and outstanding scholarship by the Canadians. Outstanding is used in the sense it is used on an officer's fitness report. The second product of these activities was a realization by the Americans that there are outstanding naval scholars and scholarship in Canada. Then, the North American Society for Oceanic History was born as a direct result of these conferences.

Primarily a Canadian-American organization "NASOH" has global membership. Many of NASOH's members attended the fourth conference at Royal Roads Military College in Vancouver, British Columbia during 1980. That conference produced the material which Boutilier has ably edited in *RCN in Retrospect*. Barry M. Gough, Barry D. Hunt and Commander W.A.B. Douglas contributed to *RCN in Retrospect*, spoke at most of the conferences, and have helped make the last dozen years a luminous era in Canadian naval thought.

Two amateur historians have helped nurture this thought and produced the second book reviewed here. They are Ken MacPherson and John Burgess. MacPherson wrote *Canada's Fighting Ships* and is an associate editor of *Warship International*. In their *Ships of Canada's Naval Forces, 1910-1981*, they have given us a coffee-table tome whose data and