

1989

The Great Chinese Revolution, 1800-1985

J.K. Holloway

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

Recommended Citation

Holloway, J.K. (1989) "The Great Chinese Revolution, 1800-1985," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 42 : No. 3 , Article 18.
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol42/iss3/18>

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.

high point of the Admiral's career), Pack is careful to take a balanced view. Indeed, in his description and analysis of the "burning" of the capital, Pack provides a long overdue corrective to the distortions of that event so often found on this side of the Atlantic.

Most naval historians will find little that is new in Pack's description of the wars with France and America. The detailed account of affairs in the Chesapeake provides some insight, from the British viewpoint, of that part of the War of 1812. By far, however, the most interesting portion of the biography are the two chapters detailing Cockburn's role as "Napoleon's Keeper." To Cockburn fell the honor and burden of transporting the fallen emperor (a title by which he could not be addressed—he was called General) to his exile at St. Helena, remaining with him until his relief arrived. Oftentimes sullen, moody and petulant, Napoleon could on the other hand be a most fascinating dinner companion and raconteur. Nevertheless, whatever the pleasure of his company might have been, it soon wore thin and Cockburn was delighted when he was able to put St. Helena over his stern.

If the plot resembles Hornblower, the prose does not. Pack's style relies heavily on quotes, and unfortunately the publisher elected to print them; some of them are quite long. One needs to read carefully to discern between Pack and a quoted source.

Perhaps Cockburn was as good as the author makes him out to be. He did have a distinguished career and

his accomplishments speak for themselves, but this sort of biographical approach verges on hagiography. Instead of a human being, Pack has presented us with an icon.

WILLIAM M. FOWLER, JR.
The New England Quarterly

Fairbank, John King. *The Great Chinese Revolution, 1800-1985*. New York: Harper & Row, 1986. 396pp. \$19.95

John King Fairbank has been the dean of American China scholars since World War II. Now 80 years old and emeritus at Harvard, he has turned out this book as an "exp-professor who is not up for tenure and who doesn't care about reputation." The book has neither footnotes nor bibliography, and it is written in a style neither stuffy nor unsophisticated. Hence, Professor Fairbank has irritated scholars and pedants in much the fashion that his learned but practical advice has irritated national administrations for over four decades.

This may possibly be the best book on China since the establishment of the People's Republic in 1949. Certainly, if an American had only one book with which to brief himself on the Chinese revolution, this is that book.

Fairbank recounts the dramatic history of China over 185 years. Each event he describes might as justly be considered the real beginning of the Chinese revolution as 1 October 1949, when Mao announced that

China had "stood up": the first Opium War of 1839-42; the Taiping Rebellion (1850-64), with its emphasis on land reform, women's rights and anti-Confucianism; the shock of defeat in the Sino-Japanese War of 1895; the 1898 Hundred Days of reform; the reaction to the Boxers' failure in 1900; the abolition of the Civil Service examinations in 1905 (the basis of both Chinese government and literate society); the abolition of the empire in 1911; and unification under the Kuomintang in 1927.

All of these and other mileposts are described by Professor Fairbank with detachment, wit, and yet, sympathy. He acknowledges that his job has been made easier by the many learned contributions his colleagues made to the six-volume *Cambridge History of China* of which he was coeditor.

Aside from academic noses out of joint, there has been criticism of Fairbank's book because in some instances he seems to strain to demonstrate analogies that may not be complete between present day and historical China.

One point, however, is beyond argument. After reading this book one may be amazed, baffled or discomfited by events in China, but no one will be fooled, particularly by politicians or propagandists. This alone would put us deep in Professor Fairbank's debt.

J. K. HOLLOWAY
Naval War College

Rapoport, Vitaly and Alexeev, Yuri. *High Treason: Essays on the History of the Red Army, 1918-1938*. Trembl, Vladimir G. and Adams, Bruce, eds. Translated by Bruce Adams. Durham, N.C.: Duke Univ. Press, 1985. 436pp. \$35

The enormous struggle between the Soviet Union and Germany has long fascinated historians and professional students of World War II. Perhaps no phase of this conflict has received more attention in the West than this campaign's opening; the deep German penetration, the massive Soviet losses, and the great battles at the gates of Moscow. One of the most interesting questions concerning these operations relates to the performance of the Red Army. Why was it caught so unprepared and savaged so mercilessly by the Wehrmacht?

High Treason is one of the first books to explore this tragic episode in detail. What emerges from this riveting account is a portrait of the destruction of the "old" Red Army by Stalin and his regime on such a scale that, as the text notes, by 1938 "all that was left of the Red Army was its name." This episode was all the more ironic because it followed a brief, but intense period of intellectual ferment and openness that could have moved the army into the forefront of interwar tactical innovation, and almost certainly could have precluded the disasters of 1941. Instead, Stalin and his party bureaucracy struck. Sixteen pages of tables are needed to list the principal victims. In addition to its detailed, if