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Jutland: An Analysis of the Fighting

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Caribbean wanted to challenge the position of Britain and the United States in the Western Hemisphere. Venezuela or an island off its coast was to be the position from which to move against traffic sailing through the Isthmus of Panama. It was a vain hope. The German Government, cautious in spite of itself, permitted the navy no bases and allowed it only on occasion to meddle, which was all "world policy" added up to anyway.

The German blockade of Venezuela in 1902-03, however, was enough to stir up the United States. Undertaken for the sake of meaningless prestige, the German Navy was unable to stand alone once the British had withdrawn. Herwig found no evidence in the archives to sustain Theodore Roosevelt's claim that he threatened the emperor, but the President was worried. At the time of the blockade he told Admiral George Dewey to use an ongoing maneuver of fifty-four ships to get the emperor's attention. Dewey linked the way the Germans had fished in the troubled waters of Manila Bay in 1898 to their presence in the Caribbean four years later. Thus, War Plan Black against Germany became the Navy's primary concern. Relations were not helped by the fact that the emperor considered the Monroe Doctrine an "insolent dogma," and refused to recognize it. The refusal, like much of German policy, was pointless. Once the British had withdrawn, Germany, who was without means of independent action in the Western

Hemisphere, was never a threat to Venezuela's independence.

Despite some private gains in trade, Herwig shows that the "vision of empire" was an illusion. The main legacy of the inept, clamorous, and politically irresponsible visionaries was the resentment of the United States—a cost that no benefits from Venezuela could have ever offset.

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Campbell, N.J.M. *Jutland: An Analysis of the Fighting*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1986. 439pp. \$26.95

Jutland: An Analysis of the Fighting is a painstakingly detailed account of the most analyzed battle ever fought. Author John Campbell emphasizes the exchange of fire: the tactics and technologies of naval gunnery and the battleships and battle cruisers' ability—or lack of ability—to withstand punishment. Extensive data tables and diagrams chronicle the shell hits taken by capital ships of both sides. This is useful analysis, but the reader looking for a new or clearer understanding of the forces' maneuvers and the reasons for them will be left unsatisfied. H.H. Frost's *Battle of Jutland*, for the former, and Richard Hough's *The Great War At Sea 1914-1918*, for the latter, are better sources for those purposes.

I believe Campbell's emphasis is deliberate, and that he set out to state the facts of the gunfire only, leaving

any reinterpretation of the skills and deficiencies of the tactical commanders to others. There are a few hints as to where Campbell stands. He says: "Scheer was a better choice than either of his predecessors, and together with Jellicoe, Beatty and Hipper can be considered as sufficiently able, and though the spark of genius was lacking in all four, the conditions of Jutland were singularly unsuited to the display of this quality." The book, in fact, may be interpreted as a representation of the immensity of the unsuitable conditions. Campbell continues: "Dissatisfaction in Britain over the result of Jutland subsequently caused a virulent paper war between the supporters of Jellicoe and Beatty, but there was far less difference between the views of the two Admirals than Beatty's partisans were willing to believe. . . . Jellicoe was much keener to fight a battle with the High Seas Fleet than the foregoing [explanation of Jellicoe's strategic caution] might indicate. But it was impossible to tempt the Germans to an action with the whole Grand Fleet unless quite unacceptable risks were taken." Critics like Frost, who would have replaced Jellicoe for excessive caution and Beatty for a lack of tactical skill, give insufficient credit to the superior material quality and combat competence of the German Navy.

This book is not fun to read. I am on record that exercising the machines of war in tactical evolutions is the most exhilarating part of being a naval officer, even in

combat, within limits. Nevertheless, tactical competency has its pedestrian side. Understanding Jutland is hard work, but it is part of the preparation for war. For the action-oriented person, I liken historical study to a football coach studying old videos of Super Bowl games, frame by frame.

Campbell is more than willing to reach conclusions as to the gunnery effectiveness and staying power of the two sides. He corrects the erroneous impression that German gunnery was markedly superior to that of the British. Though the Germans were capable of a higher rate of fire, they rarely achieved it. Though their optical fire control system was justly admired, it resulted in about the same percentage of hits as the British.

The criticism of Jellicoe at Jutland has softened over the years. As appreciation has grown for the technical superiority of German ships and shells and the physical and informational fog of war he faced, most appraisals have become more charitable. Campbell cannot add a great deal to the record of this, the most closely analyzed battle ever fought, but he contributes something. For instance, representative of the early attacks on Jellicoe are a few sentences in the 12th edition (1922) of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, written by one Captain A.C. Dewar, RN (Retired): "The battle was not a decisive one, and the British battle fleet was never seriously under fire (its casualties were two men killed and five wounded). It must be

admitted that the British C.-in-C.'s [Jellicoe's] tactics were characterized by excessive caution." With the help of Campbell's data it is possible to put Dewar's caustic figure in a different light. During Beatty's run to the south and back again (1548-1815) his forces sustained 62 major caliber gun hits, while inflicting 36 on Hipper's scouting forces. When the fleets met and Jellicoe was in tactical command of his twilight duel with Scheer, the Germans were hit 68 times, while his forces were hit 23 times. Only two hits were against his battle line (causing the seven casualties recorded by Dewar), but it was his battle line that pounded the Germans, almost unopposed. There were a host of reasons for these results, but they boil down to the effective, if cautious, deployments by Jellicoe when he was in control of the fighting.

Jutland: An Analysis of the Fighting has two shortcomings of more than passing interest. One is the publisher's fault. Some of the diagrams of the battle damage (for example on pages 185, 186, 188, 193, 228, and 304) are an embarrassment to a publishing house as competent technically as the Naval Institute Press. This is a serious defect because Campbell's achievement is to draw together the detailed relationships between gun caliber, shell, target range, armor, and damage. That the publisher was uncharacteristically sloppy is evidenced by the omission of lists for the 140 or so tables, diagrams, and charts which are central to the book's objective.

The second deficiency lies with the author. It is his inadequate attention to scouting, screening, and the geometric relationships of the forces. Campbell is fine in communicating the inherent confusion of a battle involving 252 ships, but compared to his handsome reconstruction of shells fired, hits obtained, and damage inflicted, the charts of the action are paltry. They are no worse than many attempts, but they are no better in addressing this aspect of tactical analysis and tactical success, which had come to be as important as the delivery of firepower. World War I marked a watershed point in the new importance of scouting (early and timely detection, tracking, and reporting of the enemy). By 1916, naval commanders had come to invest many of their combat resources in their scouting forces, and *most* of their personal energy before and during battle.

But this reviewer is in danger of riding his scouting hobbyhorse. *Jutland* is a good technical book and an essential one for every student of naval history. Its strengths are in its objectivity and detail. To read it is to appreciate the literal fog (smoke) of battle and its massive effect; the awesome complexity of coordinating the movements of great fleets in opposition; and the importance of detail, both in engineering designs and operational evolutions. Campbell gives us facts: how many hits, where they landed, and what were the effects. Those who like their history summarized in majestic one-

liners should remember, only God sees all things in one, and the devil's in the details.

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Kemp, Paul. *The Russian Convoys 1941-1945*. England: Arms and Armour; dist. New York: Sterling, 1987. 64pp. \$7.95

Surface warfare officers and naval aviators who seek a preview of the conditions under which they might have to fight a world war III between NATO and the Soviet Union can get just that from a brief look at the photos in this thin paperback picture book.

"The Russian Convoys" were those that sailed, laden with the goods of war, from North America or Britain for the Soviet port of Murmansk. Those cargoes which survived the voyage were shipped down a long one-track railroad to Leningrad for redistribution thereafter to the fighting fronts.

At the time, Germany was the foe; the Soviet Union was a major ally; and northern Norway was in the hands, not of friends, but of enemies. Now West Germany, by far the larger of the two parts into which Germany is split, is a friend; Norway is healthy, reasonably well-armed, and in full possession of her territory; and the only potential foe in the far north is our former ally. While politics and political geography have changed since World War II, neither geography itself nor the weather

have changed at all since the end of that war, and neither is likely to.

This little book shows graphically what war in the far north is like for those who attempt to wage it with ships or with aircraft launched from ships. The ice-covered 14-inch guns of the battleship *Duke of York* shown at the top of page 14 and the view on the bottom of the page of the same ship, with water cascading off the forecastle as it rises from one wave, and cascading onto the fantail as it sinks into the next, should raise questions in the minds of those responsible for keeping a modern frigate's missile launcher ready for firing. How well can it be done?

Indeed, a view on page 40, taken from the bridge of a 10,000-ton cruiser, in which one has to look *up* to see the crest of the next wave, ought to raise some more questions in the minds of those who someday might find themselves there. So ought the caption, which tells us that soon thereafter, "one wave struck 'B' turret a terrific blow, removing the roof and hurling it over the side." B turret of that cruiser, shielding three 6-inch guns, was on the 02 level and the armored roof was, of course, higher than that.

Viewing the icy flight decks shown in several photos, naval aviators might wonder what it would be like to return to a ship pitching into seas such as removed that cruiser's turret roof. They might also wonder how many snow shovels or snow blowers are apt to be found in their carrier today.