

Book Reviews

Post-1800

CHARLES PATRICK NEIMEYER. *War in the Chesapeake: The British Campaigns to Control the Bay, 1813–14*. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2015. Pp. 244. \$44.95 (cloth).
doi: 10.1017/jbr.2016.58

This tight little book by Charles Neimeyer, *War in the Chesapeake: The British Campaigns to Control the Bay, 1813–14*, will be eminently useful to historians of the Napoleonic Wars generally and of the War of 1812 specifically, especially those concerned with the naval and maritime operations of the Royal Navy in the war's second season of campaigning. Neimeyer is the director of Marine Corps history and the Gray Research center at Marine Corps University in Quantico, Virginia. His previous books include *America Goes to War: A Social History of the Continental Army, 1775–1783* (1996), *The Revolutionary War* (Greenwood Press, 2007), and *The Chesapeake Campaign, 1813–1814* (2014), so we are dealing here with the work of a seasoned military historian of the revolutionary period and the early republic.

War in the Chesapeake is organized into seven chapters—"Prelude to War," "The War Begins," "The British Arrive—1813," "The Campaign to Take Norfolk," "The British Return—1814," "The Patuxent River and Bladensburg," and "The Battle for Baltimore"—and an epilogue. Neimeyer's analytical narrative is grounded in diaries and personal accounts, extensive reference to contemporary press coverage, papers from archives on both sides of the Atlantic, and an adroit interpretation of select secondary literature. In addition, the book offers twenty-seven images of key personnel and events, along with four maps. Altogether, a good deal on content in a small package.

In strategic terms, Neimeyer maintains that the British naval offensive in and beyond Chesapeake Bay was intended to compel a panicked Madison administration to redeploy some of its troops engaged in the war's northern theater, where they had recently burned the Upper Canadian capital of York, southward to meet a British threat to the Chesapeake, Washington, and Baltimore. Additionally, the appearance of Royal Navy men-of-war in the lower Chesapeake was intended to put an end to the predations of the American privateers who used the Chesapeake as a safe haven from which to raid British commercial shipping (57–58). Although the

latter was a secondary strategic goal, Neimeyer notes in his opening chapter that shipping—more precisely, British abuse of the rights of neutral shipping—along with the impressment of American sailors for service on Royal Navy ships was prominent among the reasons that the United States went to war with Britain in the first place (1–32).

Neimeyer acknowledges the gap between the strength of the moral outrage of the Jefferson and Madison administrations at Britain's attack on American trade and pride on the one hand and the lack of a blue-water navy to do much about it on the other. This was in part due to Jefferson's neglect of the navy built by his predecessor, John Adams, but Neimeyer is not nearly as hard on Jefferson for this legacy as are many other scholars, such as Samuel Watson, to whom Jefferson was "not simply optimistic, opportunistic, or overconfident, but vacillating, irresponsible, self-contradictory, and sometimes pollyannish" ("Trusting to the 'Chapter of Accidents'" *Journal of Military History*, 76, no. 4 [October 2012]: 973–1000, at 1000). Neimeyer is less concerned with assigning responsibility for the serial humiliations the Royal Navy inflicted upon the United States through the Chesapeake campaign than with placing the campaign within the overall trajectory of the war while offering the reader a lucid narrative of specific episodes and individual initiative. For this reviewer, therefore, the book really hits its stride with chapter 3, Neimeyer's treatment of the opening gambit of the Chesapeake campaign. Neimeyer stresses, for example, that the superior quality of American frigate design, also recently celebrated by Ian Toll in *Six Frigates: The Epic History of the Founding of the U.S. Navy* (2006), could not compensate for the Royal Navy's superior strength overall. Nevertheless, the success of British operations commanded by Vice Admiral Sir John Borlase Warren in the Chesapeake was in part serendipitous; the capture of American schooners designed for local conditions gave an entirely new quality to the maritime operations facilitated up and down the Chesapeake:

In reality, the capture of these fast-sailing, light-draught vessels proved to be a boon to the British cause in the Chesapeake. ... Even the smallest British frigate needed considerably more water under her keel than a Fells Point schooner. The capture of the *Lottery* and *Cora* via boarding not only served to reduce the privateer threat but also strengthened the ability of the British invasion force to attack farther inland than anyone on the American side thought possible. (65)

The climax of the book is Neimeyer's account of the Battle for Baltimore, 12–15 September 1814, in which the British failed to duplicate their earlier successes in the Chesapeake and Washington, above all due to resolute and skilled American resistance to land and sea operations against them, twenty-five hours of the "rockets' red glare" notwithstanding (174–200). Neimeyer's treatment of the Battle at North Point (187–191) is particularly skillful in demonstrating the influence of individual episodes on the larger struggle, in this instance the demoralizing impact of the death of Major General Robert Ross, who had previously routed the American militia at Bladensburg and torched Washington. The British never recovered from their failure at Baltimore, and American morale gained a boost from it that more than compensated for all previous setbacks.

Neimeyer's epilogue stresses that although the War of 1812 was an embarrassment for the Madison administration—an embarrassment richly deserved—the defense of Baltimore helped to strengthen the American hand at peace negotiations at Ghent. Moreover, for all their successes, the British "did not have much to show for their two-year investment in the region" (203), as the pressure applied by naval and maritime operations in the Chesapeake did not, as it turned out, move the United States to withdraw the forces it had committed against Canada. Although the war contributed mightily to patriotic fervor in the young republic, the irony of hundreds of slaves, liberated by the British presence from bondage on plantations in Maryland and Virginia, running into the open arms of the British Empire is not lost on

Neimeyer. *War in the Chesapeake* is a fine addition to the recent scholarship on this little war within a big one.

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TALINE TER MINASSIAN, *Most Secret Agent of Empire: Reginald Teague-Jones, Master Spy of the Great Game*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. Pp. 268. \$29.95 (cloth).
doi: 10.1017/jbr.2016.59

Taline Ter Minassian's *Most Secret Agent of Empire* is the first full-length biography of English Army officer Reginald Teague-Jones, whose exciting career was exposed to public attention after his death in a nursing home in Plymouth, England, in 1988 at the age of 99. At that time, Peter Hopkirk, journalist and author of several books on the Great Game—the Anglo-Russian rivalry in Asia—published Teague-Jones's diaries with a foreword. In fact, the diaries' author had long since abandoned his given name and had, of necessity, spent more than sixty-five years using an alias, Ronald Sinclair.

In many ways, Teague-Jones's career was reminiscent of a character drawn from a John Buchan thriller. He was an accomplished linguist who, as a boy, witnessed firsthand the 1905 revolution in St. Petersburg. Interestingly, that experience of Russia apparently did not lead him to question the negative interpretation of Russia's intentions that underpinned the Great Game. Before the First World War, he worked as a policeman in the North-West Frontier Province, and then, as an army officer during the war, he tried to apprehend the German spy William Wassmuss in Persia. Subsequently, he participated in the Malleon Mission, named after its leader, Sir Wilfrid Malleon, to Meshed in eastern Persia. He then passed into Transcaspia, to the north of Meshed, in disguise. His task was to disrupt the Transcaspian Railway, which was being used to transport cotton supplies to the West for use by Germany and its allies. More generally, the British and British Indian authorities wanted to ascertain the extent to which it might be possible to disrupt the passage of enemy forces across the Black Sea and towards the Indian frontier. An important related issue was the intention of Bolshevik forces. Teague-Jones was appointed Britain's political representative to the nascent Transcaspian authority and established a wide-ranging intelligence network centered on that region. Accused of having overseen the execution of twenty-six Bolshevik commissars in September 1918, several years later, after a spell as a political and liaison officer based at Constantinople but ranging across the Caucasus region and beyond, he changed his name and largely disappeared from the official British record. His life was deemed to be at risk from a vengeful Soviet government. He nonetheless traveled widely, made films, and wrote about his experiences. During the Second World War, Teague-Jones worked for the British Security Coordination, which had overarching responsibility for British intelligence operations in North America and beyond. Ter Minassian alleges that, as Ronald Sinclair, he spent much of his career working for the Indian Political Intelligence Service. In later life, Teague-Jones maintained a keen interest in matters pertaining to Central Asia and the Middle East and also preserved links with former colleagues in the intelligence services.

By virtue of determined research, Ter Minassian has added useful detail to the findings of Peter Hopkirk, as well as to my own work, *Gentleman Spies: Intelligence Agents in the British Empire and Beyond* (2002). In particular, she provides very interesting information about the Punjab Police Academy and Teague-Jones's training there. She points, more confidently than previous authors, to a subsequent and long-term attachment to the Indian Political Intelligence Service. There is also much detail on the complicated political constellation in Transcaspia at the end of the First World War. The context surrounding the execution of the