

NHHC, on 8 January 1907, President Theodore Roosevelt issued Executive Order 549 stating that all US Navy ships were to be referred to as “The name of such vessel, preceded by the words, United States Ship, or the letters USS, and by no other words or letters.”

In summary, *Black Sailors in the Civil War* is a well written history of a topic which is rarely discussed and one which is important in today’s American political climate. The author has put forth many thought-provoking images and historical accounts. The book, although relatively brief, is full of worthwhile information. I recommend this to all maritime historians, especially those whose interest is the American Civil War and those who fought in its opposing navies.

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Alex Buchner (Janice W. Ancker, trans.). *Narvik: The Struggle of Battle Group Dietl in the Spring of 1940*. Oxford, UK: Casemate Publishers, www.casematepublishers.com, 2020. xxi+218 pp., maps, appendices, notes, bibliography, index. UK £35.00, US \$45.00, cloth; ISBN 978-1-61200-917-9. (Casemate - Die Wehrmacht im Kampf series.)

Buchner’s book was originally written in 1958 and has now been translated into English by Janice W. Ancker. Buchner joined the German Army in 1939 (aged 19) and served throughout the war in various mountain troop formations, rising to the rank of lieutenant, and serving as a company commander by 1945. This was one of many similar volumes written by various authors at the time that focused exclusively on operational and tactical matters. As such, it reflects its origins and certainly does not delve into the political or ethical questions that rightly predominate today. German veterans, their families, and survivors of the Nazi regime in general largely failed to confront their history and their responsibilities in the decade and a half after the war. Although perceptions certainly changed over time, this volume serves as both a signpost for attitudes in the immediate post-war period, as well as some specifics of this fascinating campaign.

Readers familiar with the Allied perspective on the defeat suffered in Norway, will be interested in examining the views of those on the other side of the hill. There existed at the time, and continues to this day, an abiding respect for the operational and tactical capacity of the Wehrmacht that did not desert the German forces until the final months of the war. At the time of the Norwegian Campaign (April to May 1940), however, this superiority was in the early stages, overshadowed by the German conquest of France in May and

June of 1940. There is no doubt that the Wehrmacht's boldness of conception, combined with the high level of skill in execution, was more than sufficient to overmatch their Norwegian, British, and French opponents. Buchner's account of the most fraught element of that campaign from the German perspective is, therefore, of great interest and value to modern audiences.

The account is a straightforward narrative of the assault on Narvik—the most northerly objective of the campaign. The ad hoc nature of the arrangements for the invasion demonstrated that the Germans were no more equipped for amphibious operations than the Allies at this early stage of the war. The assault was entrusted to the troops of the 139th Mountain Infantry Regiment, with some minor additions for artillery and special weapons of various kinds (specifics provided in various appendices). The infantry was loaded onto ten destroyers that ultimately met their end in the Narvik fiords, with supply vessels to follow later. To state that it was a threadbare effort completely dependent on the shock of surprise is no exaggeration. The Commander was Lieutenant-General Eduard Dietl, perhaps over ranked for the scale of the assault, and hence the nomenclature for the battlegroup. The perilous voyage from Wilhelmshaven to Narvik was successfully accomplished over a four-day period (6-9 April) with troops landing virtually unopposed. As is well known, the German thrust beat the Allies by hours, thanks, at least in part, to the very bad weather that hindered visibility along with dithering by uncertain Allied leadership. Surprise was total: the astonished Norwegian garrison offering no resistance. This changed quickly with the arrival of significant Allied forces after the Royal Navy annihilated the German destroyers that had transported the invasion force. The German position suddenly turned dire.

The book is organized into eight chronologically ordered chapters, written as a spare, taut narrative that unemotionally describes the campaign from its launch on 9 April to its conclusion on 8 June with the evacuation of the Allied troops that had sought to reverse the initial German seizure of Narvik. Without question, the Allied evacuation was due to the more portentous events in France, with the Dunkirk operation well underway at the same time. There is little doubt that the German forces had succeeded against very long odds, which had lengthened as April turned into May. Sound leadership, determination at all levels, and a little luck falling Germany's way resulted in a notable victory and consequent Allied humiliation. The foundation of the Wehrmacht's "victory disease" was laid with episodes such as this.

Buchner's account includes nine useful sketch maps that retain their German labels, as well as eleven appendices that provide helpful detail, including Hitler's instructions to Dietl at the point when defeat by the Allies seemed probable. There are no photographs included. A brief bibliography is provided which has relied on resources available in German archives. Unsurprisingly,

given when it was written, Buchner uses relatively few secondary sources although he does include Churchill's *Their Finest Hour*.

This is an important account in the historiography of the campaign which provides the perspective of a knowledgeable German army veteran. It is entirely focused on the military problems faced and overcome with relatively little on the naval side of the equation. The German navy's role was critical in terms effecting the landing at Narvik and elsewhere in the Norwegian Campaign, but it has a small profile here.

Almost entirely absent is any analysis of Germany's campaign strategy and objectives. Narvik's strategic value was as the terminus of the railway from the Swedish iron ore mines, which were crucial for shipping that essential raw material to Germany during the winter. The Allied thinking was to deny Germany these resources. Almost none of this is touched on. Consequently, the book lacks a comprehensive examination of the campaign from multiple points of view. That noted, the real value of the book is the window it offers into the perspectives of the German participants and the nature of the "near run thing" that characterised their assault on Narvik. I would recommend it.

Readers interested in similar books on other battles and campaigns written in the ten to fifteen years after the war should explore the publisher's website. The University of Plymouth has also published a series of reprints of Naval Staff Histories which includes *Fight for the Fjords: The Battle for Norway 1940* (Battle Summary No. 17, Naval Operations of the Campaign in Norway (1942) as well as the official German account, *The German Campaign in Norway* (nd).

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Christopher M. Buckley. *Genesis of the Grand Fleet: The Admiralty, Germany, and the Home Fleet, 1896–1914*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, www.usni.org, 2021. xii+360 pp., notes, bibliography, index. US \$44.95, hardback; ISBN 978-1-68247-581-2. (E-book available.)

Historian Christopher Buckley's focus on the British Royal Navy before the First World War explores how the Royal Navy prepared for naval conflict with Imperial Germany and, in particular, the origins and the ongoing development of Britain's Home Fleet.

Buckley sets the stage for the genesis of the Grand Fleet by describing the rough waters the Royal Navy had sailed into by the end of the nineteenth century. Before then, Britain's Royal Navy had been the indisputable ruler of the waves, operating since 1889 by "the two-power standard," meaning its