

## REVIEWS

acquitted themselves admirably in the climactic siege of Yorktown, where some of them were at the point of the spear in attacking a key British redoubt.

Though far from comprehensive, this book extends our understanding of the First Regiment by tracing the lives of some of the long-suffering veterans who survived the war. Three appendices list whites, blacks, and indigenous Rhode Islanders who fought in the war along with a list of slaves who fled to the British and survived to be evacuated by the British ships carrying them from New York to Halifax, Nova Scotia in 1783.

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**Geert van Uythoven, *The Secret Expedition: the Anglo–Russian Invasion of North Holland, 1799*. Warwick: Helion and Company, 2018. 448pp. ISBN 978-1-912390-20-5 (hardback). Price £29.99.**

The British military campaigns of the French Revolutionary War (1793–1802) are notoriously under-studied, and the invasion of Holland in 1799 is particularly so. The assault was Britain’s major contribution to the European theatre during the Second Coalition. While Austria and Russia challenged French incursions into Italy and Switzerland, a joint Anglo–Russian force composed of around 40,000 men landed at the Helder in North Holland and marched on Amsterdam. The immediate aim was to overthrow the French satellite state known as the ‘Batavian Republic’ and restore the hereditary Stadtholderate under Willem V. The invasion did not succeed: every retreat pushed the Franco–Dutch forces closer to their supply base in Amsterdam; the British and Russians rapidly fell out; and with the autumn rains approaching and no chance of a decisive battle, the Allies signed an armistice and evacuated. Anglo–Russian diplomatic relations were badly shaken by the debacle. Within months, Tsar Paul I pulled Russia out of the Second Coalition and founded an ‘Armed Neutrality’ of northern maritime powers in an attempt to undermine Britain’s naval supremacy.

The campaign’s failure helps explain why it has not been studied as much as it should have been, given its impact on British continental relations at a critical stage of the wars with France. A.B. Rodger’s *The Second Coalition: a Strategic Commentary* (Oxford: University Press, 1964) and Piers Mackesy’s *Statesmen at War: the Strategy of Overthrow* (London: Longmans, 1974) were for a long time the only major texts on the topic. A

## REVIEWS

new interpretation of the campaign that takes recent historiography into account has thus been long overdue. Philip Ball's *A Waste of Blood and Treasure: the Anglo-Russian Invasion of the Netherlands, 1799* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword Books, 2017) partially filled that niche from the British perspective. Geert van Uythoven's *The Secret Expedition* follows hard on the heels of Ball's monograph and aims to give 'a balanced, detailed, and complete account of the events taking place during the invasion ... based on source material from all participating countries'.

In this it is reasonably successful, and its major strength lies in its international quality. Uythoven is no stranger to the campaign, having already published a Dutch monograph on the subject, *Voorwaarts, Bataven!* (Zaltbommel: Europese Bibliotheek, 1999). *The Secret Expedition* builds and expands on his original research to present the French and Dutch side of the campaign on an equal footing with the British and Russian perspective. Uythoven uses a number of German and French sources to round out his story, and some of the book's most interesting passages deal with the impact of the French occupation (and of the Anglo-Russian attempt to overturn it) on the existing conflict that had already been going on for decades between 'Patriots' and 'Orangists'. The chapter on the abortive attempt to provoke an Orangist rising to coincide with the British invasion is particularly fascinating, and covers an aspect rarely explored by existing English-language sources. The author is obviously very familiar with the terrain and has walked the ground. The battles are minutely described and matched with several useful maps, as well as modern photographs of important sites.

These are undeniable advantages that should recommend this book to any scholar of military operations during the wars with revolutionary France. Despite this, Uythoven's book is not perfect. He is over-fond of immensely long quotations from primary sources (some as much as two pages in length) and rarely interrogates them in much depth. When he does, the accompanying commentary does not always square with the contents of the quotation. One source (pp. 55–6) was cited as a description of 'the state the British military was in at this time' (1799), but turned out to be a retrospective written in 1836 describing the British army in peacetime. Uythoven also makes at least one serious misattribution: a quotation credited to Lord Cornwallis, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland (p. 349), in fact came from the pen of a late 19<sup>th</sup> century local historian from Jersey. Finally, and slightly worryingly for a book on such a thinly-covered topic, the text is lacking in broader historiographical context. Of the items in the 111-page bibliography, fewer than 30 were published in the last 100 years, and only six appeared since the year 2000. There are some odd omissions – no Roger Knight on the British war effort; no Paul Schroeder on the international context; and A.B. Rodger's book on the Second Coalition is inexplicably absent. This does not detract from the quality of the book's analyses of the battles, but the result is nevertheless slightly claustrophobic.

## REVIEWS

Taken altogether, Uythoven has produced a solid contribution to the neglected field of French Revolutionary War history, and a much-needed corrective to an overly British view of the struggle. It is by no means the last word, but Uythoven's book will make it much more difficult for English-speaking historians to ignore the Dutch aspect of one of Britain's most significant continental campaigns during the 1790s.

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**Charles J. Esdaile, *Napoleon, France and Waterloo: The Eagle Rejected*. Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2017. 257pp. ISBN 9781473870826 (hardback). £25.**

Those who have any interest in history, from the novice to the professional historian, at some point inevitably ponder the alternative outcomes of a specific historical event. The first chapter of Professor Charles Esdaile's *Napoleon, France and Waterloo: The Eagle Rejected* is very much in this genre. Although Esdaile utilizes accounts from French and Anglo-Dutch participants to paint the picture of Napoleon's victory at Waterloo, his point of divergence with history comes when Wellington, rather than Uxbridge, was escorted from the field to have his leg amputated. In the aftermath of Wellington's departure, an overwhelmed Uxbridge issued orders for the Anglo-Dutch army to retreat. Napoleon had won. In this somewhat unorthodox book, Professor Esdaile tells us that while this alternative ending is purely 'fantasy', it was "by no means implausible" (16). The question of what if Napoleon had won at Waterloo lingers throughout this relatively short book.

In accordance with what appears to be his life-long professional mission, if not obsession, Professor Esdaile seeks in this work to cast another harpoon into his white whale: the Napoleonic Legend and, by extension, Napoleon himself. The opening line of his Preface states: 'Two hundred years on from the fall of Napoleon, one thing is certain, and that is that the Napoleonic Legend is as strong today as it ever was' (viii). It may as well be 'to the last I grapple with thee; from hell's heart I stab at thee; for hate's sake I spit my last breath at thee', so seethed Herman Melville's Captain Ahab. Esdaile ever strives to deconstruct the Legend and to reject the notion that Napoleon stood for anything that may be interpreted as progressive or commendable. Many of the eyewitness accounts that Esdaile cites are British rather than French; the few French contemporaries that he does cite are well-known for their hatred of Napoleon; and most of the French historians he cites are likewise anti-Bonaparte. He chastises