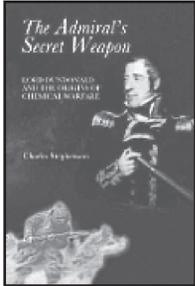


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# Book Reviews



By Mr. Reid Kirby



*The Admiral's Secret Weapon: Lord Dundonald and the Origins of Chemical Warfare*, Charles Stephenson, Boydell and Brewer, 2006.

It is a well-known fact that Thomas Cochrane (later known as Lord Dundonald) planned to use stink ships loaded with burning sulfur to reduce the fortifications at Sevastopol during the Crimean War (1853–1856). What is less known is how the agent idea developed and how the British government debated carrying out the attack. Charles Stephenson, using family archives, completes the missing historical facts.

Bold, courageous, and brash, Thomas Cochrane was a brilliant naval tactician. In the Napoleonic wars, he gained fame for setting French ships ablaze with fire ships. Cochrane devised the concept when the British Navy blockaded the bottled French fleet, embarking on a lifelong quest to gain acceptance for the use of this early form of chemical warfare.

*The Admiral's Secret Weapon* is well illustrated and details numerous proposals in history to use chemical warfare, including the War of 1812 and World War I (before Germany used chlorine in Ypres, Belgium, in 1915). This book is uniquely Anglocentric (written for a British audience). The revelations in this book show that the main limitations to the British initiating chemical warfare were the fear of other nations adopting similar techniques and a lack of scientific evidence to support chemical effectiveness. Far from a curiosity, the concept of warfare agents received serious consideration. This book details the difficulty of adopting a weapon before its time.

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