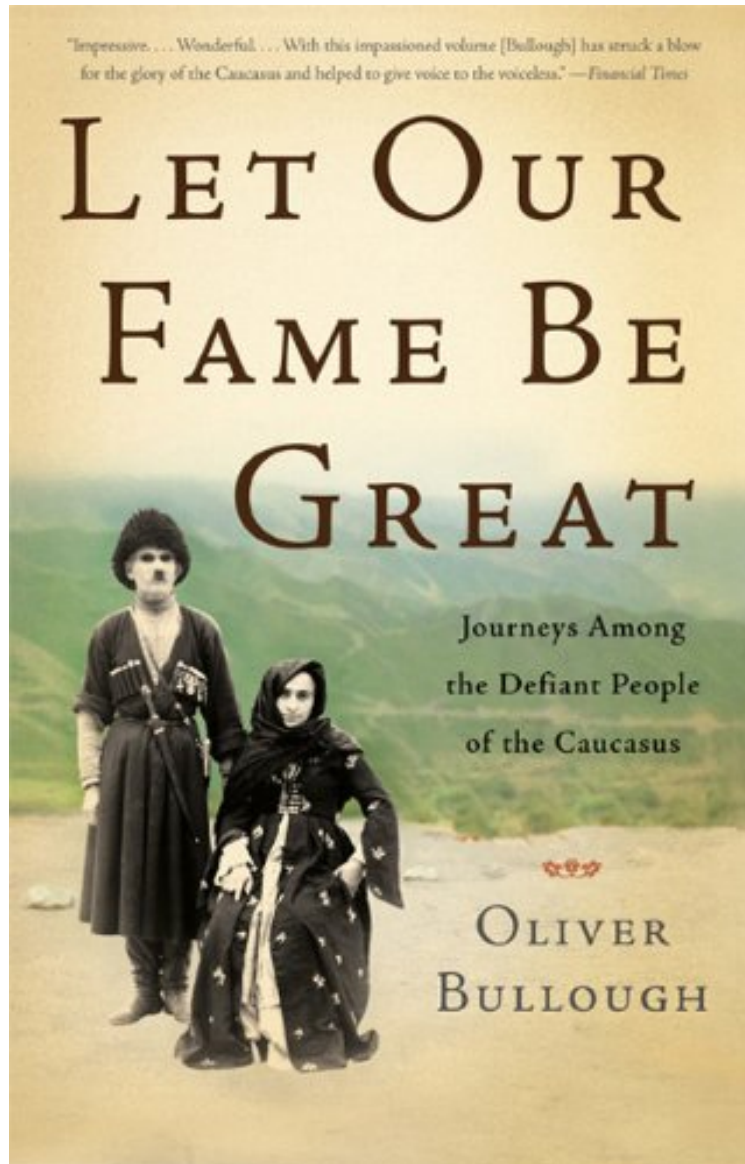


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# Let Our Fame Be Great: Journeys Among the Defiant People of the Caucasus

*Oliver Bullough*

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**Oliver Bullough : Let Our Fame Be Great: Journeys Among the Defiant People of the Caucasus** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Let Our Fame Be Great: Journeys Among the Defiant People of the Caucasus:

11 of 12 people found the following review helpful. How NOT to Conduct a War on Terror; Heartbreaking,

Educational, RecommendedBy Danusha V. GoskaIn the afternoon of April 15, 2013, I was listening to the radio. An announcer interrupted the broadcast to report that there had been a blast at the Boston Marathon. He was careful not to attribute the bombing to any one group - because we are all afraid of appearing to stereotype one group as terrorists. Indeed, he insisted, the Boston blast might have been caused by a ruptured gas pipe. After Chechen refugees Dzhokhar and Tamerlan Tsarnaev were identified as the Boston Marathon bombers, one of my students said to me, "See? Everyone thought it was Muslim terrorists. But now it turns out it was Russians!" My student should read Oliver Bullough's "Let Our Fame Be Great: Journeys Among the Defiant People of the Caucasus." So should many people. "Let Our Fame Be Great" is a heartbreaking, informative, recommended book. I was often in tears while reading it. I'm very glad I learned what Bullough had to teach. LOFBG is a travelogue through the history, literature, and current events of the Caucasus. This little-known corner of the world should be better known. I have Circassian and Armenian friends. I've been to Romania, Bulgaria, and Turkey, three countries bordering the Black Sea. I remember reading about the Russian destruction of Grozny, the capital of Chechnya, in the New York Times. Even so, I knew virtually nothing about the material Bullough introduces in his book. The Caucasus is a spit of land between the Black and the Caspian Seas, between Russia to the north and Turkey and Iran to the south. When Turkey was Europe's "sick man" and its power was declining, Russia moved south to fill the vacuum. Russia wanted access to the Black Sea, because its own ports freeze over in winter. Through brute force, Russia attempted to control or even eliminate the scattered Muslim ethnic groups living in the Caucasus. Russia did this as a czarist empire, as the Soviet Union, and as post-Soviet Russia. Bullough depicts the Russians in the Caucasus behaving, more or less, as American settlers behaved toward the Native Americans. We want your land, and we will do what we have to do to you to get your land. Another comparison: historian Anne Applebaum compared what the Russians did to the Caucasus to what the Nazis did to Poland. Bullough divides his book up into chapters devoted to various Caucasus ethnic groups: Circassians, Mountain Turks, and Chechens. For each group, he works through literature going back hundreds of years, historical accounts, travelogues, state documents, and contemporary accounts. This is a massive amount of material, reduced to brief excerpts. With the Circassians, for example, Bullough quotes literature written by Russian authors like Ivan Turgenev, travel accounts by British representatives toying with the idea of aiding the Circassians against the Russians, quotes from Russian military leaders attacking the Circassians, and encounters with modern-day Circassians living in diaspora in Israel. Bullough has a gift for selecting particularly heart-rending quotes, and he uses many of these quotes as chapter titles: "The Caucasus Mountains are sacred to me," "Extermination alone would keep them quiet," "The Circassians do not appear on this list," "Liquidate the bandit group," "It was all for nothing," and "I have become no one." One anecdote Bullough recounts tells of one Caucasus woman, Khozemat Khabilayeva, who, as a child, was part of a Soviet-ordered mass deportation of her homeland. Her dog, Khola, tried to save her family, and he met with a sad fate that Khabilayeva, an old woman now, wept over, decades after his death. There are many such stories in this book, the individual droplets that add up to an ocean wave of history. Because I was so unfamiliar with this history, I did question if Bullough was too sympathetic to the Caucasus peoples, and too hard on the Russians. Bullough, though, includes actual quotes by Russian leaders voicing genocidal intent toward Caucasus people. He cites one Russian leader who decorated his home with the decapitated heads of Circassians. Too, Bullough does report on unappealing aspects of Caucasus culture. Circassians, for example, had the custom of selling their own children into slavery. So many Circassian daughters were sold into sex slavery that the reputation of the beautiful Circassian spread all the way to PT Barnum's sideshow. Bullough describes the 2004 Belsan hostage crisis as a complete horror. I compared what I know of Russian behavior to my own ethnic group, Poles. In Poland, czarist Russia and Soviet Russia deported massive numbers of people, redrew maps, criminalized the identity of oppressed people, executed large numbers of people in order to terrorize populations. Russia, it seems, did to the Caucasus what it did to the Poles. Bullough's account is all too believable. Russia plans to hold the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, one site of its genocide against the Circassians. A Caucasus terrorist leader, Doku Umarov, issued a threat against these games. Terrorism is wrong. The Sochi games should be protested, in peaceful, educational, and solidarity-building ways. Bullough includes photos of the bones of Circassian refugees found lying in the dirt in Akchakale, Turkey. Circassian activists should take these bones from Turkey, by boat across the Black Sea, retracing the route their ancestors took, and bury them in Sochi, with the stated goal of building a genocide monument in Sochi. They should film the entire trip. No doubt the Russians would attempt to stop them. Their peaceful protest would educate the world about their history. I wonder, after reading LOFBG, why no one seems to care about Russia's human rights abuses against Caucasus Muslims. Bullough writes of Khasan Bibulatov, a Chechen man who was horribly tortured by Russians. Zarema Muzhakhoyeva is one of the most pathetic human beings I've ever read about - her life story is right out of an over-the-top Dickens orphanage. She gave up her suicide bomb mission, cooperated with the Russian police, and was still jailed for twenty years. I wonder if so little attention is paid to victims of Russian oppression in the Caucasus because Russia committed many of these crimes as a communist government, and leftists don't want to remind the world that communists were the last century's most prolific murderers. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. excellent history of fascinating regionBy JohnExcellent history covering the 19th Century through to the present of the peoples of the Caucasus Mountains. The author has done thorough research of the 19th Century and

World War experiences of this fascinating region by studying the few and often biased traveler accounts from those periods. And, the author has traveled through the region in recent decades and was on the scene during some of the important recent events. The main groups covered are the Circassians, Balkars, Chechens, and Dagestanis, plus of course Russians who have been mainly working to stamp out the other groups. The author brings the history to life through extensive interviews with people from the region, some of whom are in exile communities outside of the Caucasus. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. SadBy Kindle CustomerEngrossing and tragic, this book puts a whole new perspective on the struggles of the Muslims in Chechnya and other mountain regions that battle Russia. Terrorism and involving civilians is never acceptable, but neither is the actions of larger countries, as the author does a very good job of pointing out in this fascinating book which combines current events and history flawlessly.

Part travelogue, part history, *Let Our Fame Be Great* tells the stories of the forgotten peoples of the Caucasus region, an incredible cultural crossroads where Eastern Europe, Central Asia, Turkey and the Middle East meet. The area was once the home of the Golden Fleece and Prometheus' place of exile, and later inspired Pushkin and Lermontov, but its rich history has been overshadowed by decades of guerrilla warfare. Now, it is better known to us for the struggle in Chechnya and the 2008 war between Georgia and Russia. Traveling through history and throughout this tumultuous region, journalist and Russia expert Oliver Bullough details the major events from nineteenth-century Tsarist expansionism to the modern day struggles in Chechnya and South Ossetia that have shaped this fascinating land and its people: the Chechens, Nogais, Circassians, mountain Turks, and Ingush who have been consistently besieged and woefully overlooked for nearly two hundred years.

From Publishers Weekly In this grim exploration of some of history's less publicized tragedies, Bullough, who has reported for Reuters from the Caucasus, covers two centuries of conflict between a remorseless Russian military machine and the proud, warlike, anarchic peoples of the Caucasus Mountains. The crimes he chronicles are vast--the 1864 expulsion of a million Circassians; Stalin's deportations of "Mountain Turks" to Central Asia; Putin's "war of complete savagery" in Chechnya. Bullough tries to convey both their epic scale and their impact on individual victims. His firsthand reporting of the Chechnya conflict is especially evocative, and he adds softer interludes that humanize the material: a survey of Russian Romantic writings about the Caucasus, a vivid profile of 19th-century Chechen guerrilla leader Imam Shamil, visits with Caucasian expatriates. Nevertheless, this overstuffed saga of suffering and injustice can grow dreary. The brutality of Russia's army and officialdom is eternal, while the many ethnicities they oppress blur together, and we get no vivid sense of the cultures that inspire their dogged resistance and nonconformity. 16 pages of photos, maps. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. Financial Times "[An] impressive debut.... Wonderful travel history.... With this impassioned volume [Bullough] has struck a blow for the glory of the Caucasus and helped to give voice to the voiceless." New Statesman Bullough should be congratulated on his brave and tireless investigations into an under-reported region of the world. Sunday Times(UK) "The Caucasus is a frontier land of high, jagged snow peaks, ruined flint fortresses and pine forests that have hidden centuries of bare-rock rebellion by warrior nations. Waves of uprising, conquest, deportation, exile and resettlement have pitted the peoples of the north Caucasus against Russia for hundreds of years and continue to do so still. Oliver Bullough's book is a painstaking, sensitively reported effort to knit together their lost history." Times(UK) "How much do you want or need to understand about a far-off place of which we know little? More than you would think, to judge by the enthusiasm of Oliver Bullough, who brings us exciting news, presented as short, gripping stories that tell of the terrible things that happen to people caught up in constant warfare, who have long struggled for survival and suffered not only diaspora but enforced deportation. The history of their resistance and resilience has been largely unknown for two centuries. Now their stories are sung by a champion and will resound beyond their boundaries." Norman Stone, Director of the Center for Russian Studies at Bilkent University, and author of *The Atlantic and Its Enemies* and *World War One* This wonderful, moving book flashes backwards and forwards over a terrain almost impossible to survey, and manages the feat. Orlando Figes, author of *The Whisperers: Private Life in Stalin's Russia* and *A People's Tragedy: The Russian Revolution: 1891-1924* Lively and impassioned a tragically neglected corner of our world. Spectator(UK) *Let Our Fame Be Great* is a treat. It is finely bound, with excellent maps, and Bullough draws you irresistibly into his narrative, fusing reportage, history and travelogue in colourful, absorbing prose..... He tells a brilliant story, interweaving personal reportage with impressive reading, both in the Caucasus and its far-flung diaspora. Kirkus (Starred ) A gripping, often sanguinary account of the history, culture and current status of the people for whom the Caucasus has been home, battleground and slaughterhouse this is a fearless examination of a brutal place A remarkably illuminating window into a world of neglected people and deleted history.