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News from the Directorate of History

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News from the Directorate of History

Carl A. Christie

Regular *CMH* readers, as well as friends and patrons of D Hist, will note from the heading that the historical section's brief period as a director general has ended. Shortly after the retirement of Alec Douglas at the end of June, word came down that we were once again the Directorate of History.

The name change is the least of the recent developments affecting D Hist. The Department of National Defence is making severe cuts in many non-operational areas and this office has not escaped the cutbacks. In fact, we feel we are contributing more than our fair share to the "downsizing." The impact will be felt by everyone interested in the Canadian Armed Forces and their history.

By 1 April 1996, D Hist will have ten staff members, all civilian. In total the directorate will lose 22 highly qualified staff (a cut of almost 70 per cent, while National Defence Headquarters is going to shrink by 15 per cent overall). Five civilian and three military personnel will go at the end of March 1995; the bulk of those being cut will leave a year later. The new D Hist will consist of a director, an administrative assistant, two archivists and six historians.

Obviously, a leaner operation will not be able to continue work on all the projects previously planned. Volume IV of the official history of the RCAF (from the end of the Second World War to unification of the forces in 1968) is being moved to the back burner, as is the socio-military study of V Brigade of the Canadian Expeditionary Force. The emphasis will be on completing the new three-

volume official history of the Royal Canadian Navy and a history of the Canadian Forces' participation in peacekeeping operations.

The decision has already been made to dispose of as much as possible of our archival holdings as soon as possible. Basically, we shall retain chiefly those documents and files required for the RCN and peacekeeping histories. This will include the biographical files, the permanent reference files, copies of documents from the Public Record Office in London, and, we hope, the library. Negotiations have begun with the National Archives of Canada to ensure that the transfer of the material goes smoothly and that the "down" time for researchers is as brief as possible.

The period of inaccessibility, for a given range of files, will commence when the D Hist staff start to prepare it for shipment to the National Archives and will continue until the new custodians have proper control of the documents. The exact timetable has not been finalized, but it is hoped to begin the physical transfer next spring.

One plus for researchers is that the D Hist Kardex Collection will be together again. Parts of it have been sent to the National Archives in the past, thus divorcing some files from the lists at D Hist which provide access points. We hope that the Kardex drawers currently used by researchers in the D Hist Reading Room will be made available to the public in a convenient place at the National Archives. This should ease the process of identifying and ordering files for all concerned.

In order to facilitate the exercise, and to allow the Archival and Inquiries Staff to continue doing what they can for inquirers during the transition to the new D Hist, it has been decided to close the Reading Room three days a week. Beginning in January 1995, the Reading Room, in the Colonel Charles P. Stacey Building at 2429 Holly Lane in southeast Ottawa, will be open from 0830 to 1630 hours on Tuesdays and Wednesdays only. It is only the promise of a couple of university co-op students each term that allows us to try and maintain this limited service. We remind readers that, at the present time, the Reading Room is closed on Mondays and open to the public Tuesday through Friday.

Dr. Serge Bernier, the Acting Director of History, and all the staff regret any inconvenience that these developments may cause. However, we are endeavouring to minimize the disruption as much as possible, as we try to cope with the new reality.

Dr. Christie has been with the Directorate of History since April 1977 and, as Senior Research Officer, responsible for the inquiries service for the past seven years. This book, *Ocean Bridge: The History of RAF Ferry Command* is due to be published by University of Toronto Press in the Spring of 1995.

New Books from The Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies

The Breed of Manly Men: The History of the Cape Breton Highlanders by Alex Morrison and Ted Slaney. 450 pp, maps, photos, \$35.00. ISBN 0-919769-80-2. Distributed by Tanager Press.

The Cape Breton Highlanders distinguished itself in the Second World War with its brilliant exploits in Italy and North-West Europe. Its battle honours and decorations attest to the gallantry of its soldiers.

Featuring first-hand accounts by veterans, *The Breed of Manly Men* concentrates on this history of the CBH, as well as tracing the history of the regiment from its establishment as the Victoria Provisional Battalion of Infantry, to the 1920 establishment of the CBH at the subsequent renaming in the mid-1950s as the 2nd Battalion Nova Scotia Highlanders (Cape Breton).

The Persian Excursion: The Canadian Navy in the Gulf War by Commodore Dusty Miller and Sharon Hobson. 300 pp, maps, photos, \$29.95. ISBN 0-919769-78-0.

This is a first-hand account of the Canadian Navy action in the Gulf War. It is a story which describes the professionalism and ingenuity of the Canadian Navy with extensive recollections and anecdotes by those who served at the front. It will be of interest to professional military personnel as well as to the general public.

The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis: Canadian Involvement Reconsidered by Commander Peter Haydon, 300 pp, maps, photos, \$20.00. ISBN 0-919769-64-0.

In this long-awaited and revealing work on Canada and the Cuban Missile Crisis, Peter Haydon, a former officer in the Canadian Navy who took part in Canada's response to the crisis at sea, discusses and assesses the performance of Canadian political and military leaders during that crucial time in world history. Using newly-available government documents and interviews with many of the key participants, he has been able to provide insight into this fascinating episode. In particular, Haydon focuses on the threat to North America posed by Soviet submarines in October and November 1962.

Canada and International Peacekeeping by Joseph T. Jockel. 84 pp, \$15.50. ISBN 0-89206-245-2.

Canada is the only nation to have participated in virtually all UN peacekeeping operations, a role in world affairs of which most Canadians are aware and proud. But with the end of the Cold War, peacekeeping operations have increased dramatically in number, complexity, and even danger for peacekeepers, leaving Canada to deal with a series of challenges in providing trained and equipped peacekeeping forces even as the Canadian defence budget is being cut. This study focuses on three questions: why has peacekeeping become so important to Canada? Will Canada be able to maintain its role as a leading peacekeeper? Will Canada's focus on peacekeeping lead it, sooner or later, to curb or even suspend other military roles overseas?

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