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From the Editor-in-Chief

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Failure may indeed be an orphan, as President John F. Kennedy observed, but it is also true that military disasters trigger a search for patrimony that can go on for decades. Certainly that is the case with the Canadian Army's bloody defeat at Hong Kong in December 1941 (and, no less, the raid on Dieppe in August 1942). The search, as Desmond Morton reminds his students and readers, is too frequently conducted with the assumption that our ancestors were fools or knaves. In fact, their principal sin was often to lack the 20/20 hindsight that we enjoy about how things turned out. The challenge for historians is to muster the facts – and imagination – to see the situation as it appeared to the historical actors before disaster began to unfold. The authors of the two pieces on Hong Kong that open this issue have taken on that challenge.

Terry Copp, the founding editor of this journal, investigates the diplomatic and strategic context of the Canadian decision to send two battalions to Hong Kong in the fall of 1941. Far from being a uniquely Canadian failure, the decision to reinforce Hong Kong was part of a larger western miscalculation that culminated in the destruction of the US fleet at Pearl Harbor, and the loss of Malaya, the Philippines and the Dutch East Indies as well as Hong Kong to the Japanese.

Tyler Wentzell, a veteran of recent operations in Afghanistan, and a graduate of the MA in War Studies Programme at the Royal Military College of Canada, has produced the first biographical treatment of Brigadier J.K. Lawson, commander of the Canadian force. Since 1940 Lawson had been director

of military training at National Defence Headquarters, and had visited the United Kingdom to learn the latest British developments in the wake of defeat at the hands of the German Army in the spring of 1940. An experienced regular soldier, he was possibly the best candidate among the Canadian Army's small cadre of professional officers to perfect the training of "C" Force and establish effective cooperation with the British at Hong Kong.

There is further material on Hong Kong in the features section. David Macri, who recently received his PhD from the University of Hong Kong, presents a scathing report on the British – and Canadian – defence of colony in December 1941 by a regular US Army officer on a diplomatic posting to the island who joined the garrison when the Japanese attacked.

Frank Maas, a PhD candidate at Wilfrid Laurier University, shifts the focus to the recent past with a success story: leadership in the development and production of wheeled armoured vehicles by General Dynamics Land Systems – Canada. This is a case where limited Canadian defence budgets since the 1970s have produced a creative response. The Canadian Forces made a pioneering commitment to wheeled combat vehicles as an alternative to more costly tracked types, and government agencies cooperated effectively with industry to promote international sales.

In the Canadian War Museum section, Eric Brown and Tim Cook team up again for a full account of the 6,200-strong pilgrimage by Canadian First World War veterans to attend the unveiling of the Vimy memorial in July 1936. The authors make the case that this large, profoundly moving event, and the spectacular nature of the memorial and its setting, did much to implant the idea that the Vimy battle was a benchmark in the growth of Canadian nationhood.

Andrew Burtch, another familiar contributor, introduces the museum's major summer temporary exhibition, War and Medicine. The storyline begins in the early 19th century, when little more could be done to treat battlefield casualties than to amputate damaged limbs, to the sophisticated techniques deployed in the present conflicts in Iran and Afghanistan. One of the objects in the creation of the new museum building was to provide the space and services for important changing exhibitions. Yet again the benefits of the new building can be seen in this absorbing production, the result of collaboration with major medical history institutions in Canada, the United States and Europe.

J.L. Granatstein, who did so much during his tour as director of the museum to strengthen the role of research as the core of all the institution's programs and activities, presents some research of his own. During the 1980s, Jack and Robert Bothwell conducted hundreds of interviews for their book *Pirouette* (Toronto, 1990) on Trudeau's foreign and defence policies, 1968-1984. Here Jack publishes the notes of his conversations with General Jacques Dextraze, and Sylvain Cloutier, who in their respective appointments as chief of the defence staff and deputy minister of national defence in the early 1970s grappled with the difficulties created for the forces and department by the unification of the armed services in the late 1960s. Dextraze and Cloutier, as the piece shows, inaugurated the principle of co-equal partnership between the CDS and DM – the *modus operandi* that continues to the present day

Roger Sarty
May 2011