

2000

## Book Review Supplement Spring 2000

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### Recommended Citation

"Book Review Supplement Spring 2000." Canadian Military History 9, 2 (2000)

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# CANADIAN MILITARY HISTORY

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# BOOK REVIEW

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# SUPPLEMENT

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Spring 2000



Issue 11

*We are pleased to begin this issue of the Book Review Supplement with something a little different, in the form of an extended review essay by Professor Robert Martin of the Faculty of Law at the University of Western Ontario. Professor Martin, who was a gunner officer in the regular army and spent eighteen months with the Army Historical Section, will be familiar to readers of Canadian Military History for his eloquent essay, first published in the Globe & Mail, on the disappearance of military history from Canada's schools. We hope to publish longer review essays on an occasional basis in the future, and will also be adding a "Briefly Noted" section in the Fall 2000 issue, to provide readers with information on an even broader range of new publications in military history and strategic studies. As always, we welcome your comments and suggestions.*

*Jonathan F. Vance, Book Review Supplement, Editor*

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## The Great War and Canadian Memory<sup>1</sup>

Professor Robert Martin  
University of Western Ontario

### 1. The Great War

**"T**he history of the Great War is a subject of perennial fascination." So reads the first sentence of Jay Winter's remarkable book, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History*. This essay explores the "perennial fascination" with the Great War. It begins by discussing a number of books dealing with the war which have appeared since 1975 and moves on to look at recent and not-so-recent Canadian writing about the war.

My interest in the First World War was kindled by reading Barbara Tuchman's *The Guns of August* in 1962. From this well-written work of popular history it was almost inevitable to move to other popular First World War books of the 1960s – Alan Clark's *The Donkeys*, Alistair Horne's *The Price of Glory*, and Leon Wolff's *In Flanders Fields*. The next logical steps were the memoirs of Blunden, Graves, and Sassoon, the poetry of Owen and Sassoon, and the novels of Aldington, Barbusse, and Remarque. Once the fascination with the First World War has taken

root, it is slow to fade; the war continues to exert an irresistible pull.

Over the last twenty-five years the outpouring of books has continued unabated. Some extraordinarily creative and carefully constructed works have appeared. Pride of place amongst these books must be given to Paul Fussell's *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford: OUP, 1975). Like much of the recently published work, Fussell's book does not deal with the First World War as such. This is not a narrative of the events of the war, but a record and analysis of its cultural effects. Fussell is not an historian, but a Professor of English Literature whose knowledge of the literary works which emerged from the First World War is vast and profound. He describes the war as

a very literary war. Fussell writes elegantly and movingly, with a deep sympathy for what the soldiers on the Western Front endured. Fussell himself was an infantryman in the United States Army during the Second World War, so he has a real sense of what he is writing about.

There are, it seems, two broad perspectives from which one can view any historical event. The event can be seen as part of a process of change, or part of a process of continuity. Fussell sees the First World War as a cultural watershed, as the event which wrenched Europe out of traditional literary forms and into modernity. The cultural and intellectual worlds of 1920 and 1913 were utterly different. The war, in Fussell's view, shattered the social and emotional bases for traditional modes of thought and expression. Its main result was a cultural and intellectual transformation. Fussell is at pains to document the extent to which the Great War remains with us, still shaping our discourse and our rhetoric eighty years later. He calls the war "all-encompassing, all-pervading ... the essential condition of consciousness in the Twentieth Century" (3). The Great War is very likely the source of the endemic and empty cynicism which defines the response of contemporary journalism to most events. Fussell also notes the ways in which the rhetoric of war has become part of our everyday speech. Contemporary North American feminists would probably not wish to see themselves as cultural and intellectual heirs of the Great War, but their language often suggests a perception of themselves as being permanently at war.

Having for a time immersed myself in the literary war, I was fascinated to discover that Graves, Owen, and Sassoon had all known each other. Owen and Sassoon had spent some time in the care of a Dr. William Rivers at a hospital for shell-shocked officers. Shell-shock was described in the next war as battle fatigue, and denoted that point at which the stresses of battle pushed the human mind beyond the

limits of its endurance. In the First World War, shell-shocked soldiers were often shot, while shell-shocked officers, or lucky officers, might find themselves in the care of someone like Dr. Rivers. It occurred to me that it would be fascinating to explore what happened at Dr. Rivers' clinic and the friendship amongst these three extraordinary writers. This is precisely what Pat Barker set out to do in her three memorable novels, *Regeneration* (1992), *The Eye in The Door* (1993), and *The Ghost Road* (1995). She has had remarkable success at the task which she set herself.

An exceedingly original work by a Canadian which further elaborates the notion of the Great War as the cultural watershed of the century just past is Modris Eksteins' *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1989). The title suggests the direction of Eksteins' analysis. Much writing about the War, in Eksteins' view, prefigures post-modern historiography: "history becomes nothing but a tool of the present, with no integrity whatsoever of its own" (313). One of Eksteins' more original observations is the suggestion that one can find in the early expressions of cultural modernism the intellectual and artistic roots of fascism. He observes of the Nazis in Germany that "terror, like everything else, was turned into an art form" (316). Eksteins anticipated certain elements of late twentieth-century post-modernist politics when he described the "pursuit of authenticity" and observes, "what was important was constant confrontation, an unflinching adversarial posture and not the details of that posture" (317). The link between Nazism and post-modernism is made clear: "Nazism took as its point of departure the subjective self, feeling, experience, *Erlebnis*, and not reason and the objective world" (311).<sup>2</sup> I cannot leave Eksteins without noting the telling question a friend raised about *Rites of Spring*: "Isn't that the

book which suggests that Stravinsky caused the First World War?"

Another species of recent First World War books has been more anthropological in nature. Denis Winter's *Death's Men: Soldiers of the Great War* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979) is an engrossing and compellingly written exploration of the anthropology of British soldiers on the Western Front. This focus on ordinary soldiers is interesting; most of the literary works discussed by Fussell were written by and about officers. *Death's Men* is an outstanding piece of work but unfortunately the same cannot be said of Denis Winter's other First World War effort, *Haig's Command: A Reassessment* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992). I am no admirer of Haig, who was, next to Redvers Buller, surely the least able general ever to have commanded British troops, but *Haig's Command* is bizarre and scurrilous and, in the end, unconvincing.

A sub-genre of Great War books has sought to investigate both its memorials and the ways in which it has been remembered. Geoff Dyer's *The Missing of the Somme* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1995) is a moving essay in architectural and cultural history. The book's title is taken from Lutyens' memorial at Thiepval upon which are recorded the names of the 73,077 British, Empire, and French soldiers killed during the Battle of the Somme in 1916 who have no known graves. Lutyens was the great architectural figure of the British Empire (India is littered with his grand creations), and Dyer describes the style of the Thiepval memorial as "High Empire," noting further that it is "unphotographable" (126). Dyer has high praise for Walter Allward's Canadian memorial at Vimy Ridge, calling it "less a memorial to the dead, to the abstract ideal of Sacrifice, than to the reality of grief: a memorial not to the Unknown Soldier but to Unknown Mothers" (114).

Jay Winter's *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War*

in *European Cultural History* (Cambridge: CUP, 1995) is an extraordinary work, probably *sui generis* amongst First World War books. His subject is the different ways in which the bereaved in Britain, France, and Germany dealt with the “wrenching experience of loss” (224). If the work can be categorized, it may be best described as comparative cultural anthropology. Winter chooses to emphasize continuity rather than change, expressly rejecting the notion of the Great War as *the* cultural watershed. As he puts it, “the rupture of 1914-18 was much less complete than previous scholars have suggested” (3). In a criticism of Fussell, Winter asserts that “it is unacceptable to see the Great War as the moment when ‘modern memory’ replaced something else.” The central thesis of the work might be this: “Traditional modes of seeing the war, while at times less challenging intellectually or philosophically, provided a way of remembering which enabled the bereaved to live with their losses, and perhaps to leave them behind” (5).

Winter recounts in detail the manifold ways in which the people of the different combatant nations both buried and remembered their dead. As a result, the book ranges over architecture, movies, novels and poetry, painting and sculpture. He also, *pace* Dyer, includes a photograph of the Lutyens’ monument at Thiepval. Dyer was, I think, correct in asserting that this structure was unphotographable, since the small photograph which Winter provides makes the monument look both ugly and menacing. The richness of Winter’s book helps to explain the “perennial fascination” of the Great War. The war is evidently not, or even at all, the exclusive preserve of military historians. The war can be approached from a variety of perspectives, each of which, as I hope this essay may have demonstrated, can yield rich results.

The most original recent work on the First World War is Niall

Ferguson’s *The Pity of War* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 1999), a book which is more recognizable as history than many recent efforts. He writes about the war as a war, not as a cultural milestone. The author begins with a discussion of the war experiences of his paternal grandfather, John Gilmour Ferguson, an infantry soldier in the Seaforth Highlanders who managed to survive being shot and being gassed. It is to the author’s paternal and maternal grandfathers that the book is dedicated. Ferguson also describes the effects which the Great War had on him as a boy and as a young man: “Despite the fact that I was born some fifty years after it broke out, the First World War has ... had a profound influence on me” (xxiii). Ferguson senses a degree of urgency, since, with the passage of time, we may shortly lose “first-hand” contact with the First World War (xxii). His work is revisionist historiography at its best. Ferguson sets out, dissects, and then rejects every received notion about the First World War. A plausible sub-title for the book would be: *So you thought you understood something about the First World War?*

Ferguson first takes issue with received ideas about the origins of the war, such as the notion of the war’s inevitability. A common explanation of the outbreak of the war is that the assassination in Sarajevo set in motion an inexorable process which dragged all of Europe into war. Ferguson is not impressed with this idea of implacable, superhuman forces. He believes that there were still choices to be made by governments, especially the British government. He derides the notion that Britain went to war to protect “brave little Belgium” and adds that, had Germany not violated Belgian neutrality, Britain probably would have. He does not believe there was any overriding state interest which impelled Britain to send a large army across the Channel and suggests Britain might have served its own interests better by staying out of the land war. One of

Ferguson’s villains is Sir Edward Grey; he argues that Grey’s manipulations and machinations brought Britain into the war. Ferguson does not believe that a German victory would have been disastrous. He believes that the result on the continent might have been a kind of European Union in which Germany would have been dominant. Nor does he think that a victorious Germany could have done serious injury to the Empire, the preservation of which was Britain’s primary foreign policy goal.

Ferguson attacks the notion that it was an “evil” war, and seeks to dispel the image of a “bad, futile war” (xxxii). This image of the war is largely derived from the war poets and other writers, most of whom, according to Ferguson, were not particularly anti-war. Ferguson suggests that Sassoon, who was known as “Mad Jack” for his ferocity in battle, may have enjoyed fighting and killing (363). Both Sassoon and Owen were awarded the Military Cross for bravery in action, while Sassoon’s major anti-war act was the melodramatic one of ripping the mauve and white ribbon of the MC from his tunic and throwing it into a river. Ferguson does not believe that there was massive popular enthusiasm for the war in all of Europe in August 1914. He faults the mass media of all the belligerent nations (“the Press Gangs”) rather than laying the blame at the door of state propagandists; the media, more or less of their own volition, fanned the flames of hostility and hatred. He suggests a clear lesson for information ministries, expressly rejecting Hitler’s Big Lie theory: “the most effective propaganda was that which was based on truth” (247).

Ferguson believes that, throughout most of the war, the Germans consistently defeated the allies in battle. For this purpose Ferguson employs a measure which he calls “net body count” (294-97). Body count refers to the number of soldiers permanently incapacitated (killed, seriously

wounded or taken prisoner) in any battle. The net is determined by comparing the body counts for the opposing sides in a particular engagement. On this basis, Germany came out better for most of the course of the war. Ferguson notes that the only period of the campaign on the Western Front in which the net body count turned in favour of the Allies was August to October 1918, the period known as the Hundred Days, when the Canadian Corps was almost always on the offensive and made enormous gains (300). This strongly suggests that, at the end of the day, it was the Canadian Corps which defeated the German army. Another widely-held myth that Ferguson lays to rest is the notion that the United States won the war. He describes Pershing's substantial incompetence, an incompetence which led to vast American casualties as the AEF learned in 1918 the hard way the lessons which had earlier impressed themselves on the other belligerents. Ferguson also convincingly rebuts the "stab in the back" theory about the defeat of the Germany army, pointing out that Ludendorff submitted his resignation to the Kaiser on 10 August 1918 (two days after the major Canadian victory at Amiens) and urged the necessity of peace on 13 August. In Ferguson's view, "it was Ludendorff who administered the fatal stab, and it was in the German front, not the back" (314).

Part of the charm of Ferguson's book is its quirkiness. This is largely the result of a fascination with what he calls "counterfactuals," or historical "what-ifs." One of these is at the centre of his analysis. What if Britain had stayed on the sidelines and Germany had won the war? His broad answer, that very little would have been different, has recently led to controversy in Canada.<sup>3</sup>

One opinion about the aftermath of the Great War has acquired the status of immutable historical truth, primarily because it originated with no less a figure than Keynes: the notion that the post-war German economy was

doomed by the burden of reparations imposed at Versailles and that these reparations caused economic collapse and, therefore, Nazism. In Ferguson's view, "the Weimar economy was not wrecked by reparations; it wrecked itself" (439). He remains steadfastly revisionist to the end, releasing this parting shot: "The First World War ... was something worse than a tragedy, which is something we are taught by the theatre to regard as ultimately unavoidable. It was nothing less than the greatest error of modern history" (462).

So, Ferguson is original, revisionist, and even provocative. But, at the end of the day, is he convincing? Ferguson is clearly a serious historian. He has a real understanding of the First World War. His bibliography is vast. But, if he is right, he also contradicts himself. Ferguson, as I have noted, argued that the war was not futile. But, if his overall analysis is correct, then for all those British soldiers who died, the war was, undeniably, futile. If it was all an error, what was the point of the suffering and the dying? Ferguson ends up by affirming one of the many preconceptions which he attacks.

## 2. Canadian Memory

A discussion of the way Canadians have remembered the Great War should begin with the official history. The major combatants produced vast official histories, and Canada's official history, or the absence thereof, came close to being a national scandal. Colonel Archer Fortescue Duguid, DSO, Director of the Historical Section, announced plans after the war for an eight-volume official history. One volume, which took the story up to 1915, appeared in 1938, and a volume on the medical services, by Andrew Macphail, was published in 1924. At the close of the Second World War, Duguid's project was abandoned, to be replaced by a substantial one-volume official history, G.W.L. Nicholson's

*Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1914-1919* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1962). This very traditional narrative military history contains little in the way of critical comment or analysis, but is a superb source of factual information and contains many outstanding maps. By far the most interesting official document is the *Report of the Ministry of Overseas Military Forces of Canada*, published in 1918. This ministry was established to exert Canadian political control over the CEF and, as a result, much of the Report is devoted to a discussion of politics. Sam Hughes is not my favourite figure in Canadian history. He does not come off well in this volume.

Much of the non-official Canadian writing about the Great War has consisted largely of traditional narrative military history, but an interesting exception to the pattern is Desmond Morton's *When Your Number's Up: The Canadian Soldier in the First World War* (Toronto: Random House, 1993). This engagingly written work does for the Canadian soldier what Denis Winter did for the British soldier in *Death's Men*.

Another recent and interesting, although rather more traditional, work by a Canadian is Bill Rawling's *Surviving Trench Warfare: Technology and the Canadian Corps* (Toronto: UTP, 1992). In a very original piece of military history, Rawling adopts an unusual perspective. His focus is on tactics and, more particularly, on the continuing dialectic between military technology and tactics. This dialectic has two aspects: first, armies must learn to accommodate their tactics to the enemy's weapons, in order to devise effective means of defeating them; and second, armies must learn to accommodate their tactics to their own weapons, in order to make the most effective use of these weapons. Niall Ferguson expressed the view that many of the failures of the British Army on the Western Front could be explained by its failure to develop "any real doctrine of warfare" and the obstacles which its

organizational culture placed in the path of its developing effective approaches to the battlefield of the Western Front (303). The most plausible explanation for the tactical failures of the British and French armies is that their main experience of fighting in the forty years preceding the Great War had been colonial wars in Asia and Africa. In these wars the British and French had little difficulty defeating armies to which they were technologically vastly superior. The clearest example of this phenomenon was the battle of Omdurman in 1898, where a British force equipped with Maxim guns and quick-firing artillery slaughtered its Sudanese opponents by the tens of thousands. An exception to the general rule was the battle of Isandhlwana in 1879, in which a Zulu force not armed with firearms defeated a British force armed with Martini-Henry rifles.<sup>4</sup> My reading of accounts of the disasters of 1915 and 1916 has left me with the impression that British attack doctrine consisted of little more than ordering infantry divisions to "Go that way"

Rawling describes the Canadian Corps' first encounters with the dialectic of technology and tactics as "The Learning Process Begins." The Canadians paid a heavy price for deficiencies in British tactical thinking but, over the years, lessons were learned and the Canadians evolved tactical approaches which allowed them both to more effectively use their own weapons and to defeat the German weapons. By the time of the Hundred Days (August to November 1918) the Canadians had made enormous tactical strides. The first step lay in accepting and implementing the tactical precept — fire and movement.<sup>5</sup> Rawling's book, in its later chapters, reinforces the notion, suggested by Ferguson, that it was the Canadians who eventually defeated the German Army on the Western front. He states that "from 26 August to 11 October, the Canadian Corps advanced twenty-three miles against the elements of thirty-one German

divisions" (220). Rawling describes in detail the way the Canadian Corps developed techniques for utilizing artillery fire, tanks, close air support, and loosely organized "half-platoons" specially armed with rifle grenades and light machine guns. Indeed, the way the Canadian Corps fought in 1918 seems to anticipate *blitzkrieg*. The most significant Canadian innovations had to do with the utilization and organization of artillery in the attack; gunners A.G.L. McNaughton and E. W. B. Morrison emerge from Rawling's account as highly-skilled and creative generals.

Canada's contribution to the First World War was extraordinary, particularly when we remember that in 1914 the country had a population under eight million. Close to 620,000 served in the Canadian Expeditionary Force, of whom more than 60,000 lost their lives. If Ferguson is correct that there was no overriding state interest which impelled Britain to involve itself in the land war, then, *a fortiori*, it is difficult to see what national interest brought Canada into the war.

It is astonishing to see the First World War memorials in small towns in southern Ontario. When I try to come to terms with the number of names on one of these memorials, I inevitably ask myself, "How many males between the ages of 18 and 45 could there possibly have been here in 1914?" Ferguson notes that of the Canadian population of males aged 15 to 49, 2.6% was killed, while 0.8% of the entire population was killed.<sup>6</sup> The ways in which Canada sought to deal with this staggering loss are the subject of a remarkable book by Jonathan Vance, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning and the First World War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997).

Vance describes the "particular conception" of the Great War which Canadians developed as a "myth." The myth saw the war as a Great Crusade, "pure, unambiguous, and simple" (8). In this myth the war was a just one against a wicked and cruel enemy, and all Canadian

soldiers were brave, noble, and pure. This myth sprang from "the grief, the hope, and the search for meaning of a thousand Canadian communities" (267). The social function of the myth was that it "offered real consolation to Canadians" (264). The bulk of Vance's book is devoted to a description of the ways the myth was elaborated, given form in memorials, and defended against all criticism, whether express or implied. Vance notes a widespread Canadian hostility to the flood of anti-war books which began to appear in 1929 (contrary to Ferguson, he describes both Graves's and Sassoon's memoirs as anti-war). Vance also explains the negative response to Charles Yale Harrison's *Generals Die in Bed* (first published in London in 1930), a book that appeared to contradict the myth because it described Canadian soldiers engaging in drunkenness and debauchery and shooting prisoners.<sup>7</sup> Such deviation from the strict terms of the myth was unacceptable because it appeared to tarnish the reputation of the 60,000 dead Canadians. Vance is partial to John McCrae's poem "In Flanders Fields", seeing in it another affirmation of the Great Crusade. As he put it, "in the name of keeping faith with the dead, no effort was too great" (199). Fussell, the literary critic, did not like the poem. He thought it was shot through with "vulgarity" and "recruiting-poster rhetoric," and asserted that the two concluding stanzas of the poem were "a propaganda argument — words like *vicious* and *stupid* would not seem to go too far — against a negotiated peace" (249-50). Perhaps the most extraordinary act in defence of the myth was the 1928 Currie libel trial in Port Hope, Ontario. The *Port Hope Evening Guide* published an editorial in 1927 which alleged that Sir Arthur Currie had ordered the Canadian Corps to capture Mons on 11 November 1918 primarily to boost his own reputation. The sting of the alleged libel was that Currie had sacrificed Canadian soldiers on the very last day of the war for

squalid and selfish reasons. The trial became a huge national event. While Currie was eventually successful, the ordeal likely contributed to his death in 1933.<sup>8</sup>

Vance's conclusions attribute substantial nation-building power to the myth, arguing that it would create a new nation, "pure in its essence and secure from internal divisions" (266). Vance further believes that "a shared memory is one of the cornerstones of a society as we understand it"(9). This observation could be of great value in helping Canadians understand many of our current discontents. As we have both forgotten and abolished our own history, we have consciously destroyed a cornerstone of our society. It is difficult to see a positive future for a country with little or no knowledge of its past. Historians, or people who call themselves historians, have played an important role in getting us to our current position of historical ignorance. The most egregious example of this pseudo-history is Margaret Conrad and Alvin Finkel with Veronica Strong-Boag, *History of the Canadian Peoples* (Mississauga: Copp Clark Pitman, 1993). The authors purport to discuss the origins of the Conscription Crisis of 1917. The generally accepted explanation for the crisis, one which seems intuitively correct and by no means counterfactual, is that the combination of a large force in the field and heavy casualties made it impossible for Canada to maintain this force solely on the basis, as it had been up to 1917, of voluntary enlistment. Our historians offer this extraordinary explanation: "The shortage of soldiers for the war effort was compounded by the exclusionary policies practised by the Canadian military. Despite the eagerness of some women to serve overseas, they were unwelcome on the front lines" (II - 299). I can only assume that the three writers made that up, since no reference is provided to support their assertion. It is the authors' total disregard for

the methodological imperatives of history-writing which leads me to characterise their work as pseudo-history.<sup>9</sup> This abuse of our past led J.L. Granatstein to publish a counterattack entitled *Who Killed Canadian History?* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 1998). He described the efforts of Conrad, Finkel, and Strong-Boag as "grossly misinterpreting history" (121).

Why do Canadians find it so difficult to deal with our military history? The most laughable example of this difficulty is the series *The Valour and the Horror* produced by the brothers McKenna for the CBC. This series is a gross calumny of every Canadian who served in the Second World War. Canadians are characterised as either incompetent or war criminals. Why?

We live today in a society which promotes tolerance and sensitivity as the highest human virtues. Killing one's enemy in wartime is an act which is neither sensitive nor tolerant. We seem to have great difficulty accepting that there were times in the past when Canadians engaged in such intolerant and insensitive behaviour or, even more difficult to accept, that they actually got to be quite good at it.

### Notes

1. The title for this essay is, of course, borrowed from Paul Fussell's masterpiece, *The Great War and Modern Memory*. There is a further borrowing from Declan Kiberd whose *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1995) contains a chapter called "The Great War and Irish Memory."
2. The fascist well-springs of certain post-modern intellectual fashions are elucidated in David Lehman, *Signs of the Times: Deconstruction and the Fall of Paul de Man* (New York: Poseidon Press, 1991).
3. See the exchange between Robert Fulford, David Bercuson, and Jonathan F. Vance in *National Post*, 11, 12 and 14 February 2000.
4. A lucid account can be found in John Laband and Ian Knight, *The Anglo-Zulu War* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1996).

5. I can personally attest that this remained Canadian Army doctrine until the 1960s
6. Ferguson, *op. cit.*, p.299.
7. This, in my view, is the most interesting Canadian literary work to emerge from the war. It is noteworthy that Harrison was American.
8. Robert J. Sharpe's *The Last Day, The Last Hour: The Currie Libel Trial* (Toronto: Carswell, 1988) is an engrossing, well-informed and rivetting account of the trial. This is a serious work of history which manages to maintain the pace and fascination of a newspaper account. It could form the basis for a wonderful screenplay.
9. See Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt, and Margaret Jacob, *Telling the Truth About History* (New York: Norton, 1994) and Gertrude Himmelfarb, "Where Have All the Footnotes Gone?", *On Looking into the Abyss: Untimely Thoughts on Culture and Society* (New York: Knopf, 1995), p.122.

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### Book Reviews

John F. Williams, **Anzacs, the Media and the Great War** (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press [distributed in North America by International Specialized Book Services], 1999), \$35.00 Aus paper, 302 pages, ISBN 0-86840569-8.

In our wired world, we have become accustomed to seeing wars fought on our television screens. The NATO intervention in Kosovo is only the most recent example; we have also witnessed the Gulf War, brought to you by CNN, and the Vietnam War, the first war of the television age. But war and the news media have a much longer relationship, dating back to the Crimean War (and the invention of the war correspondent) and the Spanish-American War (arguably the first media-created war). The First World War lies firmly in this tradition. The operation of the British propaganda machine is legendary, and many scholars have written of the control over

information that was exerted by governments in various countries.

Williams' book is, in many ways, an examination of the mixed success enjoyed by the press in wartime. The Australian media, represented most notably by C.E.W. Bean, the legendary Anzac myth-maker, and Keith Murdoch, father of media mogul Rupert Murdoch, laboured long and hard to trumpet the achievements of soldiers of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps. Their efforts produced two outcomes. In the first place, they succeeded in fixing in the public mind a vision of the Anzac soldier as a gallant nation-builder, a figure on whom postwar Australian nationalism would be based. Secondly, he argues, they succeeded in lowering the esteem of the press in the public mind, for journalists wrote and published an almost unbroken stream of "bumph," to use a contemporary term for lies and misinformation.

But the book's real interest lies in the contrast with Canada. The Australians were fully aware of the wealth and power of the Canadian propaganda machine, headed by Lord Beaverbrook, but they almost never succeeded in stealing Canada's thunder. They found themselves constantly playing catch up, and watched miserably as Beaverbrook grabbed headline after headline for Canada. So while Canadian and Australian troops were widely regarded as being, in equal measure, the finest fighting forces on the Western Front, Williams' book makes it clear that Canada won the press war.

DR

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Robert P. Davis, **Where a Man Can Go: Major General William Phillips, British Royal Artillery, 1731-1781** (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), \$59.95 US, 240 pages, ISBN 0-313-31020-3.

**B**iographies of gunners are relatively rare amongst the studies dealing with eighteenth-century British officers, so this work devoted to William Phillips

is most welcome. Not only can one follow the life of Phillips but, to a certain extent, one follows the path taken by many an officer in Britain's Royal Regiment of Artillery. Up to 1740, artillery sciences were acquired individually but from that date, future artillery officers were expected to attend the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich. In August 1746, young William Phillips arrived at the academy where he seems to have been a better-than-average cadet. After only six months, he was commissioned as a lieutenant-fireworker in January 1747. Promotion was strictly by seniority in the Royal Artillery, so the next promotion came only in 1755. However, he had obvious talents as he was also appointed to the daunting task of quartermaster of the Royal Artillery which he performed to complete satisfaction; by 1756, he had been appreciated by no less than the Master General of Ordnance, Lord Ligonier, who named Phillips his Aide de Camp. His good fortune in high places held and, in 1758, he was appointed to command the Royal Artillery brigade sent with the British expeditionary corps to Germany. His first battle found him commanding the British artillery at Minden, one of the most glorious actions in British military annals. This was followed by distinguished participation at the battle of Warburg. Further promotions followed, and the Seven Years' War ended with Phillips' career looking bright. He had also made some valuable friends in Germany, such as Clinton, Von Reidesel, and Cornwallis. The following years saw Phillips organizing the first band of the Royal Artillery and getting involved in some complicated amorous affairs; it is obvious from this biography that he certainly loved women.

By the middle of the 1770s, Phillips' good fortune continued and he was made brevet brigadier general to serve with Sir John Burgoyne's powerful army that would invade the rebellious American colonies from Canada. But in 1777, everybody's luck ran

out with Burgoyne's as his army, almost incredibly, surrendered at Saratoga. Even in captivity, Phillips seems to have been more fortunate than most as he was quartered at Monticello, Thomas Jefferson's estate in Virginia, where both men came to know each other well and often played cards together. Once exchanged, Phillips continued to serve in America as a very competent field commander. In 1781, he beat the Americans at Petersburg, Virginia, a battle which is fully examined in this work. With his friend General Cornwallis, he also wished to change British strategy in the South but all this was ended by Phillips' unexpected death from sickness on 13 May. Whether Cornwallis would not have let himself be trapped in Yorktown by the Franco-American armies, as the author of this biography affirms, seems debatable. However there is no doubt that the loss of such a talented officer could only have had a negative effect on British arms. Hence the importance of this fine biography of a talented gunner in the history of the American War of Independence.

The inventory of Phillips' belongings in 1781 is reproduced and will prove most interesting for students of material culture and lifestyles, as it is believed to be the only extensive and detailed document of this type known for a senior British officer of the period. The illustrations are uneven: the most interesting being Phillips' fine 1761 portrait which is unfortunately not reproduced in colour (almost inexplicably for a book of this price); the most quaint being the authors' rendition of the American retreat from Petersburg; and the most intriguing being a purported portrait of Phillips later in life. This illustration, again in black and white, is said to show Phillips in the uniform of the Royal Artillery in "the style of a much later period" and, confusingly, appearing to have been "over-painted some years later." What it appears to be, in fact, is a miniature of an officer of the Royal Navy wearing the uniform (introduced on 1 June 1795 and



replaced in 1812) for a captain of three years' post. But these are minor comments to a fine biography that gives a welcome and useful insight into British military institutions of the eighteenth century via the talented but, ultimately, unlucky General William Phillips.

RC

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William L. Shea and Earl J. Hess, **Pea Ridge: Civil War Campaign in the West** (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press [distributed in Canada by Scholarly Book Services], 1992), \$16.95 US paper, 417 pages, ISBN 0-8078-4669-4.

Shea and Hess have crafted a superb contribution to the burgeoning historiography of the American Civil War's western campaigns. The battle of Pea Ridge, fought 6-8 March 1862 in the remote wilds of Northwest Arkansas, was the largest battle fought west of the Mississippi River. The engagement, notable for the first and only large-scale employment of native American troops by the South, pitted the Confederate Army of the West under General Earl Van Dorn against Samuel R. Curtis' Union Army of the Southwest: at stake was nothing less than the fate of the Trans-Mississippi theatre. The two armies clashed for three bloody and brutal days in weather conditions that were by turns freezing, rainy, and foggy. In the end, Curtis' Union forces stood victorious. The threat of a large-scale Confederate invasion of Missouri was neutralized, and the contested lands beyond the Mississippi effectively fell under Union control for the remainder of the war.

However, despite its significance Civil War historians have largely overlooked Pea Ridge. With this impressive work, Shea and Hess have done much to give the battle its proper due. The analysis is highly detailed, often describing events at the company and battery level, but does not ignore the strategic context of the

battle. The book is meticulously researched, utilizing sources ranging from personal accounts to newspaper accounts to official reports, and is supported with a comprehensive set of secondary works. Of particular interest is the authors' use of modern photographs of the battlefield. Pea Ridge is perhaps the best-preserved Civil War battle site in the United States, with the surrounding communities and terrain little changed since the 1860s, and effective visual use has been made of this remarkable quality throughout the book.

This fascinating volume has set a new standard for the comprehensive study of Civil War battles and further establishes the foundation upon which Civil War campaigning in America's west can be understood.

BJD

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David O'Brien, **HX72: The First Convoy to Die** (Halifax: Nimbus Publishing, 1999), \$17.95, 170 pages, ISBN 1-55109-273-5.

One Second World War saying sums up the tensions involved in crossing the North Atlantic: "Happy is the convoy with no history." HX72 had a tragic history, and David O'Brien has done a masterful job of recalling it. His father served as fifth engineer on the tanker *Frederick S. Fales*, which left Halifax on 9 September 1940, in the company of forty-one other cargo ships and with a small escort, including the merchant cruiser HMS *Jervis Bay*. On the night of 20-21 September, five U-boats, one of the first wolf packs, attacked the convoy, sinking eleven vessels. The author recaptures the terror and triumph of that night, provides a comprehensive background on the convoy, and outlines the coming of the wolf packs, an idea fostered by Admiral Dönitz, the submarine fleet commander: "With the destruction of HX72, Karl Dönitz at last had a clear-cut victory over convoy."

O'Brien presents the men of the convoys and the U-boat crews and commanders as human beings. He does not demonize the enemy or make heroes out of allied seamen. HX72 conveys the feel of war at sea. The description of a storm will make your stomach lurch. In the sections of life in a U-boat, you can almost smell the diesel oil. And, since his father suffered this fate, the author tells what it is like to be on a torpedoed ship.

Until HX72 lost a quarter of its ships, the British admirals had been fixated on a "big ship" war, ignoring the submarine threat and the need to develop ways of countering it. The first convoy to die changed their minds. The book has a few typos – "there" for "their," "heroes" instead of "hero's," and *Schwerpunkt* is misspelled. But the well-illustrated book offers an engrossing read about a forgotten incident that changed the face of warfare in the Atlantic. David O'Brien has done his father, and those who sailed with him, proud.

JL

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Brian Leigh Dunnigan, **The Necessity of Regularity in Quartering Soldiers: The Organization, Material Culture and Quartering of the British Soldier at Michilimackinac** (Mackinac Island, MI: Mackinac State Historic Park, 1999), \$15.95 US paper, 80 pages, no ISBN.

This study humbly purports to be about the British army barracks at Fort Michilimackinac during 1774-75, just as the American Revolution was breaking out on the eastern seaboard. While using Fort Michilimackinac, which was then the most westerly British outpost to have a garrison in North America, as its focus subject, this book in fact reveals how soldiers were housed, and to a certain extent, fed and clothed in the last third of the eighteenth century. The work is divided into several parts, starting with a really fine description of the organization of

the British army with emphasis on North America in general and the Great Lakes area and Michilimackinac in particular. The supply system for food, clothing, and equipment follows, then the quartering details with an explanation of barracks administration, the duties of barrack masters, the capacity of barracks, and notice of the women and children living in these quarters. The most extensive chapter is devoted to the barracks built at Michilimackinac in 1769 (and reconstructed in the 1960s). With considerable comparative data from other forts built in North America, the appearance of the men's barracks with its furnishings is presented in great detail. This study is superbly documented and the author's expertise is manifest in his discussion. It thus is a pity that the publisher did not give it more generous visual support. Such a subject would warrant many illustrations but, while well chosen, they are relatively few and those presented are reproduced in a rather small format. However, while this small flaw could have enhanced this otherwise excellent study, it takes nothing away from a book which will be a valuable reference regarding British army administration and quartering at the time of the American Revolution.

RC

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Mark Zuehlke, **Ortona: Canada's Epic World War II Battle** (Toronto: Stoddart, 1999), \$32.95, 320 pages, ISBN 0-7737-31989.

Public furor over the Canadian government's 1998 refusal to assist veterans wishing to attend a Christmas reunion in the Italian port of Ortona generated significant interest in the battle fought there fifty-five years earlier. Mark Zuehlke, a free-lance author and non-fiction writing instructor from Vancouver, indulges that interest in his new book. To do so he went where no professional military historian dared, into the homes of

those left behind after this country's bloody victory in the streets of Ortona. Zuehlke combines dozens of interviews with Canadian and German survivors together with official records and published accounts to produce a richly detailed, accurate, and highly readable story of an important chapter in Canadian history.

Until now, Canadian historical writing on Ortona either concentrated on individual units (such as Shaun Brown's work on the Loyal Edmonton Regiment) or integrated the battle into a broader campaign history (as in Bill McAndrew's *Canadians and the Italian Campaign*). Zuehlke tells the story of 1st Canadian Infantry Division and 1st Canadian Armoured Brigade from the crossing of the Moro River, through repeated bloody assaults on "The Gully," to desperate flanking actions at Casa Berardi and Cider Crossroads, as well as the close-quarter fighting in Ortona itself. Zuehlke's book is thus the first comprehensive narrative devoted entirely to Canada's role in the Allied drive on Rome in December 1943.

Zuehlke's work is not exactly academic history, although it does draw extensively on the large body of scholarship available, including official histories and more recent works by McAndrew, Brown, Reginald Roy, and Brereton Greenhous. Zuehlke's work, much like Daniel Dancocks' *The D-Day Dodgers*, occupies a literary no-man's-land lying between often inaccessible scholarly writing, and the mass of popular "coffee table" military history.

Zuehlke's greatest contribution comes from his vivid descriptions of the horrific conditions endured by Canadian soldiers in and around Ortona. Arguably, one cannot appreciate the significance of Canada's costly victory there unless they understand the difficulties faced by unmanned units whose remaining troops were constantly cold, wet, exhausted, hungry, and caked with mud and gore. Around

his theme of individual hardship, Zuehlke walks the reader through each phase of battle, reconstructing key decisions taken by senior Canadian officers and subsequent effects on the action.

The author adds his opinion to a lively historical debate over the performance of 1st Canadian Division's commander, Major-General Chris Vokes. Zuehlke comes to Vokes' defence regarding his decision to carry the fighting through the streets of Ortona. He argues that prevailing doctrine dictated that enemy units would abandon the town once the outskirts were penetrated. However, German paratroopers did not abide by their own doctrine and chose to stay. "Once the battle had been joined, for the Canadians to break off was impracticable." When the international media entered the scene, describing unfolding events as a little Stalingrad, breaking off became impossible.

Echoing the views of a majority of soldiers and historians, the author is not so forgiving when assessing Vokes' handling of his division earlier in December. "Standing on the southern edge of The Gully, it is unthinkable to me that Vokes failed to see the folly of frontal assaults." It is difficult to dispute this widely accepted assessment of Vokes' failure to outflank the Gully or to properly coordinate a divisional attack until much blood was already spilled in poorly supported battalion-sized efforts. Unfortunately the critique earned the engineer general a label that has yet to be overcome in the pages of history, despite much better showings in the Liri Valley and the Gothic Line.

In closing, readers should be careful not to judge this book beyond what it is: a narrative of battle. Those searching for answers to questions about Allied military effectiveness in late 1943, Canadian innovation in urban battle doctrine, or the peculiarities of armoured engagements in Italy may find useful tidbits in this story, but they will likely have to keep searching for

Ortona's place in military history. Nevertheless, *Ortona* stands out as an important contribution to the Canadian public's knowledge of what this nation endured during the great trial of the Second World War.

LW

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David J. Eicher, **Mystic Chords of Memory: Civil War Battlefields and Historic Sites Recaptured** (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press [distributed in Canada by Scholarly Book Services], 1998), \$39.95 US, 167 pages, ISBN 0-8071-2309-9.

The battlefields of the American Civil War are some of the most popular military sites in the United States. Eicher's book is not so much a tour guide as a tribute; it will not help you find your way around the battlefields, but it will be a wonderful souvenir of a tour, or a great substitute for people who are unable to make the trip. It is a large-format, coffee-table-style book that combines a concise, straightforward text with beautiful colour photographs of the battlefields (and a number of contemporary black-and-white shots). Eicher, who produces the very popular *Civil War Journeys* calendars, has amassed some 10,000 photographs of sites relating to this terrible conflict, and has chosen the very best for this book. With arresting and evocative photos and very high production values, *Mystic Chords of Memory* is definitely one of the best of the genre.

CA

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Bonnie Thornhill and W. James MacDonald, eds., **In the Morning: Veterans of Victoria County, Cape Breton** (Sydney: UCCB Press, 1999), \$29.95, 567 pages, ISBN 0-920336-79-5.

At first glance, this volume of short biographies of veterans from Cape Breton looks about as interesting as a phone book. Yet, as you read your way through it, the

short pieces begin to work on you, intrigue you, and make you want to know more about the 1,600 men and women whose lives are sketched here. About 600 served in the First World War and 1000 in the Second, and most came from rural areas.

The idea for the book began when Bonnie Thornhill, who grew up in Victoria County, noticed that the war memorial in Baddeck, its capital, carried no names. Gathering together a corps of volunteers (including four veterans) and securing funding from thirty-eight different sources – neither the federal nor provincial government provided money – Thornhill and Jim MacDonald put together a remarkable record of the contributions made by Victoria County veterans.

Alexander MacLeod, aged fourteen, served overseas with the 185<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Cape Breton Highlanders, survived the war, and became an Ontario MPP. His photo – one of a thousand in the book – shows a child in uniform. William Hardy left the merchant navy after a sinus operation, enlisted in the West Novas, and died in action in Italy on 13 December 1944. The cover photo shows the two Anderson brothers and their sister Blanche, who served as a nursing sister in the First World War. She sits, and her brothers gaze directly at the camera. Major Percy won the Military Cross, and died commanding D Company of the 85<sup>th</sup> Nova Scotia Highlanders at Passchendaele. James, his brother and also a major who won the MC, survived the war, dying in 1964. His biography notes: "He married, but had no issue."

The numerous MacLeans, MacLeods, MacNeils, and MacDonalds in the book indicate the Scottish origin of the people of the area, as do the place names. Some of the biographies consist of a single line, others are quite detailed. The tragedies of war leap out from some of them. Every farm along the northern shore of the Bras d'Or between New Campbelltown and New Harris sent at least one

young man to serve in the First World War; only one returned. The very ordinariness of these lives is striking. After war service, they returned to take up jobs as farmers, teachers, fishermen, bakers, accountants, civil servants. Quite a few became lighthouse keepers, and a startling number died unmarried. Behind each of these entries lies a life story, and one wonders how war service affected the lives of these people? Most of those who survived the Second World War died in the 1980s and 1990s.

*In the Morning* has quite a few typos, and some of the entries are incomplete, providing no sources for newspaper accounts. But this book offers a remarkable tribute to Canada's veterans. It is an excellent beginning for a more detailed volume as now the unnamed veterans of Victoria County have names. The book also should inspire others, for it shows how local commitment and initiative can record the stories of Canada's ever-diminishing band of veterans.

JL

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George B. Clark, **Devil Dogs: Fighting Marines in World War I** (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1999), \$39.95 US, 463 pages, ISBN 0-89141-653-6.

At the time of the Armistice in November 1918, the US Marine Corps comprised some 73,000 all ranks. The majority of them served away from the Western Front, and their story remains to be told. The experiences of the 25,000 which served with the American Expeditionary Forces in France are related in *Devil Dogs*. It is an idiosyncratic account. It is written in a very informal style, at times so much so that one wonders if Clark was well served by his editor. It is certainly exhaustive. The Marines' action at Belleau Wood in June 1918, perhaps its most famous engagement of the Great War, occupies a full 160 pages of the book – it is a real blow-by-blow account. And Clark makes little effort at scholarly restraint. Before

April 1917, he writes, “the U.S. military and industrial complex wasn’t worth the powder to blow it to hell” (xix). In fact, it is refreshing to read a historian who refuses to equivocate. In his conclusion, Clark offers devastating indictments of parts of the Marine Corps leadership, particularly Brigadier General James G. Harbord, who led the 4th Marine Brigade at Belleau Wood. This is done with perfect hindsight to be sure, but on grounds which seem eminently reasonable.

The maps in the book, though plentiful, are not especially good, so readers would be advised to equip themselves with detailed trench maps of the various sectors in which the Marines fought. With these in hand, *Devil Dogs* can be a rewarding and fascinating read.

JFV

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Kai Bird, **The Color of Truth: McGeorge Bundy and William Bundy, Brothers in Arms** (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998), \$39.95, 496 pages, ISBN 0-684-80970-2.

Kai Bird first encountered the Bundys as a student, when McGeorge Bundy visited Carleton College to defend the Johnson administration policy in Vietnam. A quarter century later he learned to respect the Bundys for the integrity of their vision of statesmanship while disparaging the consequences of that statesmanship in Cuba and Vietnam.

Although Boston Brahmins, the Bundy patriarch, was born in Grand Rapids, Michigan – which the author wrongfully disparages as “a glorified sawmill on the Grand River” – he moved back east to study law at Harvard. Bill and McGeorge Bundy were born during the First World War and came of age during the age of appeasement. They attended Social Register schools, where they met young John Kennedy, then went off to Yale, which they found to be “a terrible waste of time.” When their father moved to Washington to work for

Secretary of War Stimson, the boys were exposed to the man who shaped the American Establishment’s world view for the rest of the century. The Manchurian crisis of 1931 focused an entire generation of policymakers around Stimson’s view that the US should assume Britain’s former role as globocop and intervene wherever necessary to make the rest of the world behave like Americans.

The tragedy of Cold War America is that the decision of one Democratic administration to play the anti-communist card to win support for its liberal interventionist policy in Europe (the Marshall Plan) without taking anti-communism seriously backfired when the “fall” of China was blamed on the Democrats, who spent eight gray years in the political wilderness. The China syndrome scarred an entire generation of Cold War liberals, and dictated much of the response of the Kennedy team to the world they inherited.

*The Color of Truth* is based on exhaustive reading of the relevant scholarship of the Cold War era, on interviews with key participants including the Bundys, and on access to newly declassified documents on the pivotal events of the Cold War. It tells us much about the Bundys and the Cold War. What makes the book especially important is that the Bundys typified the Establishment mindset throughout the Cold War, where technocratic *realpolitik* replaced statesmanship and vision.

They worked with Truman and Stimson to use the A-bomb to scare Russia away, not to defeat Japan, which had offered to surrender in May. Their estimate of one million casualties for an invasion was plucked out of thin air because it was a nice round number. They worked with JFK and the CIA for the Bay of Pigs invasion, which included plans for exiles to attack Guantanamo and provoke US retaliation. Throughout 1962 JFK worked towards a full-scale invasion, and ordered a naval blockade two weeks before he had any hint of Russian missiles in Cuba.

They backed the CIA-inspired assassination of Diem to keep America in Vietnam, and prepared the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution months before the CIA raids on the North which led to the attack on the *Maddox* that gave Johnson his war. The whole array of escalation, bombing, and search-and-destroy was a series of tactics for political prestige; the administration never expected to “win” in Vietnam. When Johnson bowed out in 1968 (after most of his team had already deserted the sinking ship they helped create), Nixon sabotaged the peace talks so he could have his war too.

In the author’s view, the *raison d’être* of US policy throughout the Cold War was to show the flag, to show that America was the global power that would not desert its allies – and would not know when to reason, compromise, or bow out. Everyone thought this way and acted this way. As the author shows, the whole Cold War in Europe could have been settled in 1961 but for Kennedy’s fear of not looking tough against the enemy. The same mindset gave us Desert Storm, and perpetuates America’s self-styled role as globocop.

JW

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Flavel C. Barber, **Holding the Line: The Third Tennessee Infantry, 1861-1864**, edited by Robert H. Ferrell (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1994), \$28.00, 281 pages, ISBN 0-87338-504-7.

Flavel C. Barber served as an officer in the Third Tennessee Infantry Regiment from the unit’s formation in 1861 until his death in 1864. Throughout these years, Barber, a highly literate school-teacher from Bryson, Tennessee, compiled a journal of his experiences. Those interested in the battles of the Civil War will find Barber’s eyewitness accounts of greatest interest, for the Third Tennessee participated in some of the most intense fighting in the west. Most notably, Barber recounts in

vivid detail the regiment's surrender at Fort Donelson and its subsequent parole; its role in the defence of Vicksburg and Port Hudson along the Mississippi River; and the unit's climactic repulse of William T. Sherman's assault on Chickasaw Bayou in December 1862. The unit was finally moved in 1864 to Georgia where, near Resaca, Barber died of wounds inflicted in battle, on 15 May 1864. To provide the historical context in which Barber and his regiment operated, the work is fully indexed and appended by Robert H. Ferrell, Distinguished Professor Emeritus of History at Indiana University, and contains an entire roster list for the 3rd Tennessee Volunteers from 1861 to 1864.

The sheer breadth of Barber's recorded experiences opens a window into Civil War life far beyond that of the battlefield. The reader shares in Barber's frustration in a prisoner of war camp in Ohio, his concern for a wife left behind in Union-controlled Tennessee, and the pure and simple joy of spending time with the men of his command. In sum, the work stands as an eloquent testimony to the homespun humour, backbreaking hardship, mind-numbing boredom, and sheer terror that were so much a part of the Civil War. *Holding the Line*, at once comic, poignant and heart-wrenching, is an unforgettable volume that will appeal to those readers not only interested in the American Civil War, but to all those seeking to gain greater insight into the manifold experiences of men at war.

BJD

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William B. Breuer, **Top Secret Tales of World War II** (Toronto: John Wiley & Sons, 2000), \$34.95, 256 pages, ISBN 0-471-53582-5.

Following on his earlier books *Unexplained Mysteries of World War II* and *Undercover Tales of World War II*, Breuer presents another collection of odd and unusual incidents from recent

military history. They range from the inspirational (the two boys, age ten and thirteen, who used a sailboat to escape from occupied France to England in the hopes that they would be permitted to join the Free French forces) to the desperate (the Luftwaffe's last-ditch plan to bomb New York City using giant flying boats that would be refuelled from U-Boats across the Atlantic) to the bizarre (a plan to set Tokyo ablaze by bombing it with bats loaded with tiny napalm charges). The title is a bit of a misnomer. Though these stories were top secret during the war, they have not been secret for years; indeed, almost all of these incidents have already been documented in previously published accounts and so will be familiar to the serious student of military history. Nevertheless, the short, snappy chapters make excellent light reading, and the book is a fine way to pass some idle moments.

SL

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Cecil French, **A History of the Canadian Army Veterinary Corps in the Great World War, 1914-1919**, ed. C.A.V. Barker and Ian K. Barker (Guelph, ON: Crest Books, 1999), \$32.00 paper, 302 pages, ISBN 0-88955-472-2.

Seeing the title of this book, one might be tempted to pass it by as a trivial account of a tangential subject. After all, it calls to mind D.S. Tamblyn's *The Horse in War* (1932), an odd mixture of hagiography and a Boy's Own adventure. French's book, however, is a remarkable history of a subject that has been neglected for far too long. It is not that horses were insignificant, either in numerical or practical terms, during the First World War; quite the contrary. At the outbreak of war, the British Army had 19,000 horses; after mobilization, it purchased over 1.1 million more, in Britain, Canada, the United States, and elsewhere. Like most armies of the time, the Canadian Expeditionary Force relied heavily on horses, and it was

up to the CAVC to ensure that those animals were well cared for. Battlefield wounds from shrapnel or bullets were not their only concern; perhaps more significant, in terms of the total number of cases treated, were infectious diseases, gas poisoning, lice, overwork and exhaustion, skin ulcers, accidental injuries (including kicks from other horses), and countless other less serious ailments which affected animals. The personnel of the CAVC were fully aware of the magnitude of their task. Indeed, without their efforts, the work of the cavalry, the artillery, and the service corps would have been all but impossible.

The manuscript was originally written shortly after the war but was never published; the interesting story of its 'suppression' is told in the preface. It is to the Barkers' great credit that they have taken the initiative to get it into print now, and that they have gone to such trouble to produce a high-quality volume, complete with many illustrations, diagrams, nominal rolls, and a full-colour cover.

JFV

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Doris V. Carter, **Never Leave Your Head Uncovered: A Canadian Nursing Sister in World War II** (Waterdown, ON: Potlach Publications, 1999), \$19.95 paper, 155 pages, ISBN 0-919676-5-9.

Doris Carter was one of the longest-serving Canadian nursing sisters during the Second World War, serving from October 1940 to August 1945. She divided her time between hospitals in England and Italy, and her service in Sicily, Rome, and elsewhere in Italy provides the most interesting sections of this short memoir. She provides quite a shocking picture of Rome after the liberation. For much of her time there, it was unwise to leave the hospital without an escort; on one of the few occasions that she did, she was thrust into the centre of a mob that murdered a civilian in the middle of a downtown piazza. Allied soldiers were frequently brought

into her hospital after being attacked or murdered by civilians, and bodies of various ages and sexes were often seen floating in the Tiber River. In these passages, Carter gives us a fascinating glimpse of what it was like to live in a city with deep social schisms and little apparent goodwill at having been liberated from fascism. Faced with an indefinite period of relative inactivity back in Canada in 1945, she pulled some strings to get herself demobilized; she had taken the government at its word regarding the "first in, first out" demobilization policy, and decided to take the initiative herself rather than wait for something to happen.

There are a few minor glitches in the book that an astute military editor would have caught – NAFFI instead of NAAFI; repatriot instead of repatriate; the name of the stage show "Chu Chin Chow" is incorrectly rendered two different ways – but these do not really impair the reader's enjoyment of the book. There were over 3500 Canadian nursing sisters in service during the Second World War. Very few of them have left their memoirs, so this is a most welcome addition to the historiography.

SL

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Andrew B. Cox, **Our Spirit Unbroken: Memoirs of a Prisoner of War** (Port Elgin, ON: Brucedale Press, 1999), \$16.95 paper, 125 pages, ISBN 1-896922-11-2.

Les Morrison, **Of Luck and War: From Squeegie Kid to Bomber Pilot in World War II** (Burnstown, ON: General Store Publishing House, 1999), \$19.95 paper, 151 pages, ISBN 1-89463-16-2.

In many ways, Andrew Cox and Les Morrison are a study in contrasts. When Cox was shot down on 8 September 1940 on a raid against Hamburg, he had already flown 44 operations. At this time, Morrison was still more than two years away from joining the RCAF. When Morrison did begin flying ops in the spring of 1945, Cox had

already spent nearly five years in German captivity.

Cox's memoir describes only a few of his bombing operations, focusing instead on his experiences behind barbed wire. It is well organized and well written, and nicely captures the challenges faced by POWs in German hands. Readers who are familiar with escape literature will recognize many of the names and personalities discussed, including people like the legendary "Dixie" Deans and persistent escaper George Grimson. Morrison's book, in contrast, is a little more jaunty and jovial; it is clear from the narrative that he was a little younger than Cox when the events occurred. He certainly does seem to have had more than his fair share of good luck, and came through a number of very close shaves.

One significant difference between the books is the editing. Cox's book has been edited by William S. Carter (presumably the historian of 6 Group RCAF), and he has done an excellent job. The text is virtually error-free, which allows the reader to fully enjoy the fascinating narrative. Morrison's book, unfortunately, is less satisfactory. Clearly, the manuscript was not carefully proof-read, for there are far too many spelling errors, particularly in place names. Was there no gazetteer on hand, and is it so difficult to spell Adolf Hitler correctly? These may seem like picayune objections, but such elementary mistakes do undermine the reader's enjoyment of what is otherwise a very entertaining tale.

DG

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Neil G. Carey, ed., **Fighting the Bolsheviks: The Russian War Memoir of Private First Class Donald E. Carey, U.S. Army, 1918-1919** (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1998), \$24.95 US, 240 pages, ISBN 0-89141-631-5.

The Siberian campaign in the closing days of the First World War remains one of the least studied campaigns of the twentieth century.

Canada's involvement was not inconsiderable, and yet there is no solid account of the operation; a few unit histories were published immediately after the war and the odd diary or memoir has made it into print, but this has not elicited any sustained interest on the part of historians. Carey's book gives us another reason why that interest should grow. It has a number of Canadian angles. Donald Carey's son, the book's editor, lives in British Columbia, and Carey had some contact with Canadian artillery batteries when he was in the lines in Siberia in 1918 and 1919. On a more general level, the book offers fascinating insight into the lives of the men who were called upon to serve in a grim environment, in a campaign that was ultimately pointless. In western Europe, soldiers in the lines at least had passing contact with civilians who appreciated their presence; in northern Russia, the populace seemed generally indifferent to the Allied soldiers, and in some cases civilians were downright hostile. This fact, understandably, made Carey occasionally wonder what the men of the North Russian Expeditionary Force were giving their lives for. Carey's comments on the organization of the force are also interesting. The American units were under British command, used Russian and British weapons, and were fed British rations. This unhappy situation can only have decreased their effectiveness, but nevertheless they got the best of their Bolshevik enemies in a number of engagements. One wonders how the Siberian intervention might have been different had the expeditionary force been adequately supplied and supported.

Carey was a school teacher in Michigan before he was drafted, and he writes with clarity, humour, and pungency. *Fighting the Bolsheviks* is a fascinating memoir that is among the best of the handful of books dealing with the campaign.

DR

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R. Thomas Campbell, **The CSS H.L. Hunley: Confederate Submarine** (Shippensburg, PA: Burd Street Press, 2000), \$14.95 US paper, 173 pages, ISBN 1-57249-175-2.

Robert Gannon, **Hellions of the Deep: The Development of American Torpedoes in World War II** (University Park, PA: Penn State Press, 1996), \$28.50 US, 241 pages, ISBN 0-271-01508-X.

The *Hunley* was the first submarine in the world to sink a warship, but it didn't do it with an early version of one of the torpedoes which were perfected during the Second World War. Instead, it used a latter-day version of a battering ram to destroy the USS *Housatonic*, a Union frigate, in 1864. The *Hunley* was occasionally known as the Peripatetic Coffin because it sank on three separate occasions, killing most of its crew members. After the first two disasters, Confederate divers located the wreck and raised it from the bottom; new crew members were easily found, and the submarine was ready to cruise again. On the third occasion, however, the *Hunley* slammed its twelve-foot-long bow ram into the *Housatonic*, burying an explosive charge deep in the frigate's hull. The submarine then backed away, paying out a lanyard attached to the charge as it went. But the lanyard snagged on something and detonated the charge before the *Hunley* had reached a safe distance; the *Housatonic* sank shortly after the explosion, but the submarine was also mortally wounded, and carried her crew to the bottom of Charleston Harbour.

The limitations of the *Hunley's* main armament were obvious, just as obvious as the limitations of American torpedoes in the early years of the Second World War. Submarine commanders reported that many missed their targets, and many of those which hit their targets failed to explode. This situation was bad enough, but was compounded by the fact that Germany and Japan

both had torpedoes which were far superior in performance and reliability. The US Navy's solution was to gather together the best scientists and graduate students in the field and put them into a torpedo research centre, in a requisitioned gymnasium at Harvard University. They did indeed develop torpedoes which were reliable and effective, and which were eventually put into service in the Pacific theatre (the new torpedoes were rarely used in the Atlantic war). Ironically, however, they were never used as widely as they might have been. The reason, according to Gannon, is simple. By the time the US developed high-quality torpedoes, there was a shortage of targets in the Pacific theatre, so American factories were producing far more torpedoes than the submarine fleet was firing; they manufactured more than 57,000 over the course of the war, but only 15,000 were used. Japanese shipping losses were immense, but the US Navy had at its disposal enough torpedoes to sink two or three times as many ships. As unlikely as it may seem, the crews of the *Hunley* probably played some small part in that success.

LF

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Brooks D. Simpson and Jean V. Berlin, eds., **Sherman's Civil War: Selected Correspondence of William T. Sherman, 1860-1865** (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press [distributed in Canada by Scholarly Book Services], 1999), \$74.25, 948 pages, ISBN 0-8078-2440-2.

William T. Sherman is responsible for some of the greatest quotations in the annals of military history; any number of subjects can be enlivened with reference to a witty riposte from Sherman. His correspondence has been published before, but not for many years and never in such an appealing format. Previous editors were notorious for tidying up his prose, removing objectionable

comments, and generally bowdlerizing the letters, but Simpson and Berlin have remained true to the original texts, only doing editing where it was absolutely necessary for the sake of clarity. The result is a collection of letters that shows Sherman in his many moods. Chapter introductions put the letters into context and footnotes identify individuals mentioned in passing, but for the most part the letters are allowed to speak for themselves. So it is possible to read the history of the Civil War as Sherman experienced it, and as he evaluated the situation on an ongoing basis. He was certainly not always right, but he always had an opinion, and the strength of that opinion makes for fascinating reading.

The volume closes with Sherman's Special Field Order No. 76 of 30 May 1865 which stood down the armies of Tennessee and Georgia and which could serve as an epitaph for many an army in many a time: "The Genl. now bids you all farewell, with the full belief that as in war, you have been good soldiers so in Peace you will make good citizens and if unfortunately *new war* should arise in our country, "Shermans army" will be the first to buckle on its old arms and come forth to defend & maintain the Government of our inheritance & choice."

CA

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Allen Andrews, **Brave Soldiers, Proud Regiments: Canada's Military Heritage** (Vancouver: Ronsdale Press, 1997), \$19.95 paper, 512 pages, ISBN 0-921870-50-7.

As with other publications by Ronsdale Press, the Vancouver-based publisher makes available to the general reader in *Brave Soldiers, Proud Regiments* the work of a college instructor, in this instance, Allen Andrews of Vancouver Community College. Such a work is a valuable extension of the classroom into the community, to those interested in Canadian history.

*Brave Soldiers, Proud Regiments* is a collection of essays based on secondary sources. In this manner, the reader is introduced to the biographies of military figures and groups throughout the entire history of Canada, as well as to many additional and easily available sources for further reading. It became the author's task to decide whose biographies should be included, and to synthesize the material into essays. The result is an introduction to such names as Sir Isaac Brock, Sir Arthur Currie, and Lieutenant-General Guy Simonds, and such groups as Canada's Indian warriors and Canadian Chinese soldiers of the Second World War. Contemporary in scope, *Brave Soldiers, Proud Regiments* includes a section on peacekeepers, and "the world's best-known peacekeeper," Major-General Lewis Mackenzie. Mackenzie has also written an introduction to the book, and checked the manuscript on the United Nations Protection Force in Yugoslavia.

Canadians are generally laypeople about military subjects. The value of *Brave Soldiers, Proud Regiments* is that it introduces the civilian to the men and women of our military history. Andrews does not assess the relationship of Canadian citizens to its military in the way other historians have, especially the concept of citizen-soldier. He does, however, present Canadian military history from the perspective of individuals who became the soldiers, generals, and nursing sisters. His concern for the individuals and the roles they came to play in the larger history of the wars they fought is encouraged by the sources to which the author turns for photographs and information. Andrews has received a great deal of help from the archives of *Esprit de Corps*, including its series, "Canadian Military Then and Now." One source curiously absent is the work published by such historians as Terry Copp, *Canadian Military History*, and the Laurier Centre for

Military Strategic and Disarmament Studies.

While *Esprit de Corps* has made a reputation for criticizing the present military command structure, Andrews does not adopt the same approach in his assessment of Canadian military history. For example, the caption accompanying a photo in *Brave Soldiers, Proud Regiments* of a Canadian peacekeeper reads, "Captain Jim DeCoste 2PPCLI epitomized the four virtues of a soldier: loyalty, integrity, truth, and courage. He died on UN duty in Croatia in 1993." The same photo in Scott Taylor's *Tarnished Brass: Crime and Corruption in the Canadian Military* is used for a different purpose. That caption reads, "Captain Jim DeCoste was killed in a jeep accident on September 18, 1993, in the former Yugoslavia. His body was robbed by the Serbian soldiers in the truck that collided with his vehicle. The Canadian military concluded DeCoste's driver was at fault and compensated the Serbs, who had also looted guns and ammunition from the jeep. DeCoste was known as 'the soldier's soldier.'"

Apart from little changes, the book is very strong. For example, while the essay on Canada's Nursing Sisters includes a photograph of a nurse from the Second World War, the chapter only considers the history of the nursing sisters up to the end of the First World War. The caption under a photograph from the First World War should read "August 1918" rather than "1914," since there were no Canadians in Amiens in 1914 nor were there tanks until later in the war. Given that the book was written in Vancouver, it would have been nice to see a section on Bert Hoffmeister of the Seaforth Highlanders of Canada or on George Kitching, although this might not have been possible given the space available.

If I am a typical example of a person who becomes interested in Canadian military history, the chain of events would look something like this: a civilian begins to read

Canadian military history because his or her father, uncle, or grandfather served in the Second World War, or perhaps First World War. This personal search for one's roots becomes the starting point. Books on regiments and the history of those wars become the first sources of interest. Then it becomes evident, as is the premise of *Brave Soldiers, Proud Regiments*, that Canada has a military history which extends much further back in time than the First World War, and much beyond the end of the Second World War. The book's value lay in its biographical essays and introducing Canadians to the many topics of military value.

JS

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Tim Cook, **No Place to Run: The Canadian Corps and Gas Warfare in the First World War** (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999), \$85.00 (softcover, \$24.95), 296 pages, ISBN 0-7748-0739-3.

One of the most compelling pieces of art to emerge from the First World War is John Singer Sargent's *Gassed*, a haunting canvas showing a line of gas victims, their eyes bandaged and each with a hand on the shoulder of the man in front. In this, the first full-length study of Canadian gas warfare, Tim Cook contextualizes these casualties, and dispels much of the mythology and misinformation concerning the use of gas. Not long after the Second Battle of Ypres, he argues, the development of respirators meant that gas casualties were largely preventable (at least until the advent of mustard gas). Provided that the troops were sufficiently trained (in the use of respirators and in the recognition of the presence of gas) and disciplined (so that they kept their respirators close and serviceable at all times), casualties could be reduced to levels significantly below those caused by other weapons. At the same time, the Canadian Corps developed a workable gas doctrine involving a mixture of high-explosive and gas



shells used in counter-battery fire; its aim was less to kill enemy gunners than to keep them off balance by constantly changing the type of shells they were facing. It should come as no surprise that in both of these areas, training and discipline, and tactics, the Canadian Corps did better than most other Allied armies.

Equally interesting is Cook's description of the gas environment. Gas was most useful when it forced the troops to keep their respirators on. Hot, uncomfortable, and not always completely effective, respirators severely reduced the soldiers' ability to fight. Trench warfare was confusing enough under the best of circumstances; when viewed through the clouded eyepieces of a primitive respirator, it took on a whole new aura of terror and other-worldliness. By the same token, as Cook nicely explains, gas altered the appearance of war by substituting the sinister and futuristic respirator for the human face. Gas may have caused fewer casualties than many other weapons, but it had a psychological and cultural impact out of all proportion to its battlefield utility.

JFV

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Frances Martin Day, Phyllis Spence, and Barbara Ladouceur, eds., **Women Overseas: Memoirs of the Canadian Red Cross Corps (Overseas Detachment)** (Vancouver: Ronsdale Press, 1998), \$18.95 paper, 300 pages, ISBN 0-921870-61-2.

**W**omen Overseas is a collection of memoirs of 31 women who volunteered to work with the Canadian Red Cross Corps overseas during the Second World War. Included here are also stories of Canadian Red Cross Corps personnel who served in the Korean War.

The individual stories are based on recollections many years after the war, notes from diaries and letters, and archives of the Red Cross Overseas clubs of Victoria

and Vancouver. As some of the contributors have since passed away, the book becomes a legacy of the sort that many relatives of veterans might wish they had. For example, we have the contribution of Audrey C. Kitching, who became the wife of Major-General George Kitching after returning home. The reader is presented with the lives of these volunteers in their various wartime phases, including civilian life prior to joining the Red Cross, training in Canada, awaiting transport overseas, and experiences in France, Italy, or Korea.

If a reader's first interest is the military history of the Second World War, this book offers much information about such topics as the build-up to D-Day in June 1944, and the extent of civilian casualties in post-invasion Normandy, where an estimated 40,000 civilians were killed. There are narratives of meetings between the Red Cross staff and wounded soldiers being evacuated, with the mud of the battlefield, as one author describes, still permeating their clothing and boots. In such encounters, the women in the field hospitals expressed surprise at how much the soldiers felt a need to talk about their battle experiences and the circumstances in which they were wounded.

While other books provide more structured accounts of how the hospitals and evacuation routes were established, the reader does learn much from *Women Overseas* about the workings of General Hospitals, field hospitals, and Casualty Clearing Stations. And much is presented about the work of the Canadian Red Cross overseas members as ambulance drivers, escort officers, food administrators, and handicrafts officers working with such groups as blind veterans. The organization was clearly successful in its work in Great Britain and on the continent with soldiers and civilians, as well as in its liaison duties with its counterparts among the other allies.

The dangers of the work are also described in the memoirs. For example, in her account "Sunny Italy wasn't warm or sunny," Dorothy Falkner Burgoyne Doolittle, from St. Catharines, Ontario, recalls learning of the fate that had befallen No. 14 General Hospital that had been sent to Italy before her group: they were on a convoy that was bombed in the Mediterranean in early November 1943. "No lives had been lost, but they had lost all their possessions, and word had got back to London that the Red Cross girls at No. 14 needed anything and everything."

*Women Overseas* accomplishes much more than was perhaps intended as a collection of personal accounts of the Canadian Red Cross Corps (Overseas Detachment). The reader is presented with a work that educates through narratives by women who were part of the support structure for soldiers and civilians in Great Britain, France, Belgium, Italy, and Korea. Such a book offers great ideas for further research. On a personal note, Helen M. Egan's chapter, "We found the drivers very protective of us," contains a reference to Jean Lamb, who "had already worked in Italy with the Canadian offensive which had pushed up from Sicily, but she had returned when the order came through that all married girls had to return to London." My father was a batman to a Captain Lamb in Italy, until his death. It is these little aspects of the vast and complicated story of Canadians in war that motivate a person to learn more and more.

JS

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Christabel Bielenberg, **When I Was a German: An Englishwoman in Nazi Germany** (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), \$15.00 US paper, 285 pages, ISBN 0-8032-6151-9.

**C**hristabel Bielenberg's memoirs were first published in 1968 under the title *The Past is Myself*;

they appeared in the US under the title *Ride Out the Dark*, and were also made into a television movie recently. It remains one of the most remarkable accounts of everyday life in Nazi Germany, although the Bielenbergs were hardly ordinary. Christabel (an Englishwoman and relative of press barons Northcliffe and Rothermere) and Peter (a German law student) Bielenberg married in September 1934 and soon moved to Germany. They contemplated emigrating to Ireland before the war, but were dissuaded by friends who realized that reasonable voices would be in short supply in Nazi Germany. The friend was right, but neither the Bielenbergs nor any of their anti-Nazi resister friends were able to exert any discernable influence on the course of events. Peter himself ended up in Ravensbrück concentration camp when he was suspected of involvement in the July 1944 plot on Hitler's life. He survived his imprisonment, and the Bielenbergs emigrated to Ireland after the war.

Bielenberg is a lucid and trenchant observer, and is able to shed interesting light on many of the key events of the history of the Third Reich, from *Kristallnacht* to the July Plot. For these reasons, her autobiography has justifiably become a classic.

LF

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Donald M. McKale, **War by Revolution: Germany and Great Britain in the Middle East in the Era of World War I** (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1998), \$39.00 US, 332 page, ISBN 0-87338-60-7.

The attempts to break free of the deadlock of the Western Front remain some of the most intriguing episodes of the First World War, and nowhere moreso than in the Middle East. The operation in the Dardanelles, Allenby's campaign in Palestine, the rising led by Lawrence of Arabia, the disaster that befell the British at Kut-al-

Amara in 1916 – all of these were fascinating products of the desire to find a way to win the war without having to slog through the mud of Flanders. Indeed, as McKale writes in this most interesting book, both the British and German governments believed they could use the Middle East as a way to gain the upper hand in the war. The Germans, for their part, believed they could capitalize on Islamic militance to foment rebellions against British imperialism from Egypt to India. The British, on the other hand, saw Turkey as the weak link in the Central Powers, and hoped to use the Arab Revolt of 1916 to bring about the collapse of the Turkish empire. McKale calls this novel strategy war by revolution – destabilize the enemy by encouraging native peoples to rebellion. It is a story of short-term victory for the British (Turkey was indeed knocked out of the war and the Ottoman Empire carved up as spoils) but long-term victory for the Germans (the British Empire was, in global terms, much weakened by the war in the Middle East).

Just as importantly, it is a story that continued past 1918. As McKale argues persuasively in the epilogue, anyone seeking to understand the tortured road towards peace in the Middle East and the place of Islamic fundamentalism in world geopolitics today could do worse than to begin with the west's first significant experience with pan-Islamism in this century.

CT

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Sandra Oancia, **Remember: Helen's Story** (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises, 1997), \$14.95 paper, 115 pages, ISBN 1-55059-145-2.

When Poland was partitioned in September 1939, civilians in the German-occupied western sector and the Russian-occupied eastern sector were equally at risk. In the Russian one, military personnel were especially targeted, but countless other people were picked up on lesser grounds.

Sixteen-year-old Helena Kordas was one such victim, arrested by Russian soldiers in February 1940, presumably because her father had fought against the Russians during the First World War. With this, she began a long odyssey that took her first to a Siberian labour camp. Freed with her family after her father agreed to join the Soviet army in the wake of Operation Barbarossa (he was reported killed in action shortly after), she went first to Kuibyshev, and then on to an orphanage in Quetta, Pakistan. While there, she learned that her father was still alive; he had been transferred to the British forces, and was fighting in Italy. The survivors of the family were reunited in England after the war; Helen eventually ended up in Canada.

Though it is much less polished, the book shares certain similarities with Modris Eksteins' *Walking Since Daybreak* in that it puts a very personal face on the war in eastern Europe.

CT

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Henri A. van der Zee, **The Hunger Winter: Occupied Holland, 1944-1945** (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998 [1982]), \$16.95 US paper, 331 pages, ISBN 0-803-9618-5.

It is difficult to appreciate fully the joy felt by the Dutch when they were liberated by Canadian troops in 1945 without first understanding what they went through in the nine months before their deliverance. Henri van der Zee was ten years old that winter, and writes of the experience with both the sense of attachment of a participant, and the objectivity of an historian. That winter shows the stark contrasts of the Dutch war experience in high relief. Some of the fiercest resisters came from the Netherlands, but van der Zee also reminds us that 25,000 Dutchmen served in the German armies, and that more Dutch soldiers were killed fighting for Adolf Hitler than were killed

fighting for the Allied cause. Furthermore, the Netherlands had historically been a wealthy and prosperous nation, but it was driven to the depths of despair by the Nazi occupation. The German policy of flooding the land, coupled with the insistence that foodstuffs be made available to the occupiers, meant a subsistence crisis for the people. As many as 18,000 Dutch died of starvation that winter, and many others succumbed to epidemics of typhoid and diphtheria that swept through the weakened population. The scenes he describes are nightmarish in the extreme, and it is no wonder that the Dutch have felt such deep and enduring gratitude to the Canadian troops who were their deliverers in the spring of 1945.

DR

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David R. Woodward, **Field Marshal Sir William Robertson, Chief of the Imperial General Staff in the Great War** (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1998), \$59.95 US, 248 pages, ISBN 0-275-95422-6.

Robertson is well known as the most upwardly mobile of British soldiers, the first person to rise from the lowest ranks of the British Army to the highest. He did it by dint of a number of characteristics, not the least of which was a remarkable work ethic (in India, he worked to acquire a facility in six native languages, because there were cash awards available for soldiers who learned local dialects) and an exceptionally stubborn nature. That stubbornness, however, was also partly responsible for his ultimate fall from grace.

This is not a full biography, but rather a detailed examination of Robertson's time as CIGS. He was an inveterate Westerner, steadfastly refusing to release troops for other theatres because he was convinced that the war could only be won on the Western Front. Although he worked hard to shield Sir Douglas

Haig from the politicians in England who disagreed with his style of generalship, Robertson came to disagree with Haig in one fundamental area: where Haig was constantly looking for the one big breakthrough that would knock Germany out of the war, Robertson believed that the best strategy was to fight battles of attrition, limited offensives designed to wear down the enemy. This was scarcely less palatable to his political masters, particularly the prime minister, David Lloyd George, who was an Easterner and a strategic gadfly, constantly hopping from scheme to scheme in the hopes of finding one that would lead Britain out of the morass of the Western Front. It was inevitable that Robertson and Lloyd George would clash, and when the final battle came, Robertson's stubbornness had driven most of his allies away from him; not even Haig, whose job he had probably saved on more than on occasion, was willing to come to his defence.

Woodward crafts a fascinating tale of intrigue within the highest echelons of the Allied command, and cannot resist implying that Robertson may have had the last laugh. Shortly after he was replaced as CIGS by Sir Henry Wilson, the German Spring Offensive of 1918 opened, inflicting greater losses on the British than any other period of the war. Wilson had predicted the offensive would be no more than a large trench raid, and that the War Cabinet should turn its attention to the possibility of German advances in Asia. The crusty and curmudgeonly Robertson (whose last words were reputedly "Where's the damn tea?") would have been delighted to learn how wrong his successor was.

JFV

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David Syrett, **The Battle of the Atlantic and Signals Intelligence: U-Boat Situations and Trends, 1941-1945** (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 1998), \$131.95 US, 628 pages, ISBN 1-84014-95-2.

It would be difficult to overestimate the impact of signals intelligence on the Battle of the Atlantic during the Second World War. Unbeknownst to the Germans (and this is clearly a serious intelligence failure on their behalf), the Allies were able to intercept and decode messages to and from German U-boats operating in the North Atlantic. This made available a tremendous range of information about undersea activity, including the fact that the Germans had broken a major Allied code that was used in convoy operations. As Syrett points out, the number of decoded transmissions was staggering; the US Navy alone intercepted and deciphered more than 49,000 messages. The decrypts then had to be analyzed, evaluated, and placed in context to produce a picture of German submarine activity around the world.

The documents reproduced in this book were part of the process of evaluating and utilizing that signals intelligence. *U-Boat Situation* was first printed in December 1941, and appeared on a weekly basis for most of the war; it provided a statistical summary of U-boat deployment, and described in general terms their activities, and the Allied anti-submarine activities. The report of 6 March 1944, for example, gives the numbers and actions of U-boats in Norway, the north and south Atlantic, the Indian Ocean, the Mediterranean, and the Black Sea, as well as Italian and Japanese submarine activity. *U-Boat Trends* began later, in November 1942, and was intended to provide an overview of technological developments and strategic and tactical trends as they emerged. So, for example, the issue of 17 May 1943 reveals that convoy SC 130 had been intercepted by four or five U-boats, and that as many as twenty more were on their way to join the fray; at the same time, U-boats were attempting to open a new theatre of operations off the South African coast.

In all, the book reproduces 333 documents, right up to the 21 May 1945 issue of *U-Boat Trends*, which reports that ten or twelve U-boats were unaccounted for and should be regarded as potentially dangerous. Excellent explanatory footnotes and a comprehensive index make this fine volume particularly user-friendly. It is a fascinating collection that will become essential to the specialist in naval or intelligence history. Even the armchair strategist will find it an excellent addition, for it allows them to follow the evolution of naval warfare in the Atlantic using the same information that Allied commanders at the time had on hand.

AF

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Pedro de Brito, José Alberto da Costa Matos, and Maria Alexandra D.L.S. Anjos, **Os Soldadinhos do Porto/Les petits soldats de Porto/Oporto's Tiny Soldiers** (Porto: Lello Editores, 1999), 50 Euros 212 pages, ISBN 972-48-1750-4.

The city of Porto, or Oporto as the British long called it, is home to a military museum which has a very fine and extensive collection of small soldiers. As will be seen by this work, this collection, which has been largely unknown outside Portugal until now, turns out to be quite an important one. It gathers thousands of 54mm soldiers from the major European makers of the last century. This amazing and huge collection, which occupies nearly a whole floor of the museum, was largely gathered by Mr. Sousa Brenadao (1905-82) and Mr. Campos Gondim (1919-91) who also made figurines.

The work begins with an outline of the military history of the city of Porto, its military museum, and short biographies of the collection's donors. The main part of the book features hundreds of colour illustrations, with the text giving information on the makers and the subject shown. The authors were

careful not to show the same figures as James Opie's book on Britain's Soldiers or Cristian Blondiau's work on Mignot. The figures shown from those firms are usually the rarer sets. All the figures in the collection from the French firm of Segom are shown and this forms, for the first time in print, virtually the entire catalogue of that firm's production. Besides French army figures, it includes, suprisingly, US troops of the American Revolution. The historical personalities of Gustave Vertunni (1884-1953) are also given in full. The German makers Heyde, Lineol, and some Spanish makers are also represented and include 1930s figures of Nazi personalities which are rarely seen. Portuguese producers of figures were few but all are presented, including Gondim's attractive colour bearers. A bibliography and a good index round out this book which is arguably one of the best and most attractive catalogues on figurines yet produced.

RC

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Chris Madsen, **Another Kind of Justice: Canadian Military Law from Confederation to Somalia** (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999) \$75.00 (softcover, \$25.95), 236 pages, ISBN 0-7748-0718-0.

The peacekeeping debacle in Somalia and the series of sexual discrimination cases that have surfaced within the Canadian Army in the past few years have recently raised the profile of discipline and law in the Armed Forces of Canada. Madsen has placed these ignominious events within the context of the Canadian military jurisprudence since 1867, and in doing so provides a history of the development, structure, and function of that institution. The author argues that since Confederation, the legal branch of the armed forces has not developed as part of a systematic process of "Canadianization" – that is, into an apparatus specifically suited to

Canadian law, politics, and military tradition. Instead, it has grown by expediency and necessity, borrowing from the British model or developing by improvisation. Furthermore, Canadian military law has, to its detriment, traditionally sought to differentiate itself from mainstream civilian practice, eschewing any outside influence or assistance.

This *ad hoc* developmental process, with its emphasis upon exclusivity, has meant that since Confederation, Canada's officers and men have consistently failed to receive the necessary education in military law concomitant with their position. With the exception of the two world wars, Canadian soldiers, sailors, and airmen have often been largely unfamiliar with even the most basic tenets of military law and discipline: as a result of this deficiency, such tragic events as Somalia have occurred. Madsen therefore concludes that improved legal training for the members of the armed forces coupled with better organization and integration of the military legal infrastructure itself are needed. The author has convincingly demonstrated the weaknesses of the Canadian military legal system: his recommendations are logical and should be taken into account by the Canadian Armed Forces should they wish to avoid the public disgrace of another Somalia.

BJD

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Trevor Pidgeon, **The Tanks at Flers: An Account of the First Use of Tanks in War at the Battle of Flers-Courcelette, The Somme, 15th September 1916** (Surrey, UK: Fairmile Books [Distributed in the US by Articles of War], 1995), \$64.95 US, Published in 2 Volumes, Vol.1, 247 pp, Vol.2, 12 maps. ISBN 0-9525175-2-3 (for the set).

In the early morning of 15 September 1916, the harbinger of a new way of warfare creaked forward amid the shell craters and barbed wire of the Somme.

Ungainly, loud, and capable of only a slow, grinding movement, the tank made its debut and sparked a revolution in how warfare was conducted.

Combining exhaustive research and unbridled enthusiasm for his subject, Trevor Pidgeon has produced a truly remarkable history of, and guide to, the first use of tanks in battle. *The Tanks at Flers* features many colour

photographs including aerial shots and detailed studies of surviving tanks. The twelve fold-out maps allow the reader to chart the course of the armoured attack throughout the entire battle. In fact, this two book set also serves as tour guide, making it an indispensable companion to any battlefield tour of the Somme.

The text is supplemented with numerous illustrations, diagrams

and reproduced primary documents such as telegrams and message logs, imparting the closest feeling possible of 'being there.' Of special note is the attention paid to the role of tanks with the Canadian 2nd Infantry Division.

If armoured warfare is one of your interests, you owe it to yourself to pick up *The Tanks at Flers*.

CE

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