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Review of "Heavy and Continuous Sacrifice: New Zealand, Her Allies, and the Second World War" edited by Peter Cooke and John Crawford

Brian Bertosa

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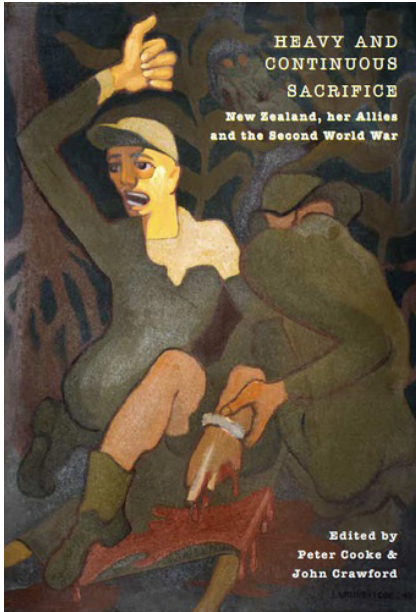
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Peter Cooke and John Crawford, eds. *Heavy and Continuous Sacrifice: New Zealand, Her Allies, and the Second World War*. Wellington: New Zealand Military History Committee, 2024. Pp. 486.

“Heavy and continuous sacrifice” was the cheerless prospect presented to his country by New Zealand Prime Minister John Savage in a radio address announcing the state of war with Germany on 5 September 1939. Such prescient words would have done credit to any of the Commonwealth prime ministers on that occasion. Well remembered the phrase must be, for it provides the title not only of the 2020 conference of the New Zealand Military History Committee, which was devoted to the Second World War, but also of the voluminous collection of papers that resulted, comprising the book under review here.

In addition to the ten-page introduction, there are twenty-three article-length contributions included in this volume, which is quite large for the genre. Although the book’s table of contents does not appear to be consultable online, space considerations prevent a full list of the individual chapters from being featured in this review. Nevertheless, certain impressions come to the fore. The range of material presented is very broad, and the book is all the better for it. Certain contributions are likely to gain attention outside the field of so-called “core” military history; for example, those dealing with the country’s intelligence apparatus, New Zealand’s diplomatic relations with Australia and Vichy France in the Pacific, Jewish refugees in New Zealand, the attitudes of New Zealand military personnel to the peoples of the Middle East, and representations in popular culture of Americans, Britons and Japanese—not all of which were unflattering.

Other than some connection to the Second World War—even if arguably a little tenuous in one or two cases—it is unreasonable to expect an overarching theme to connect this many papers, and in fact the range of subject matter examined is gratifyingly diverse. Even a real connection to New Zealand did not appear to be insisted upon rigorously. The chapter on Erwin Rommel and *Panzerarmee Afrika* has none. Members of the New Zealand Medical Corps are only some of the participants in Robert Engen’s surprisingly engaging paper on the battle against malarial mosquitoes on Crete. The sobering examination by Claire Cookson-Hills of sexual violence on the part of occupying forces is divided equally between the New Zealand contingent in Japan and Canadian troops in Germany.



Taken as a whole, the collection does, though, provide a valuable snapshot of the kinds of subjects that serious scholars in the field, both in New Zealand and elsewhere, are studying and researching.

None of the individual contributors, even in the introduction, have provided what could be seen as a quick overview of New Zealand's participation in the Second World War. By no means does this imply that readers with no prior exposure to the subject would be advised to avoid this book—far from it. After reading the equivalent of twenty-three journal articles (each of which has its own set of endnotes), the reader will inevitably have formed a good idea of (most of) the key places,

campaigns, and personalities.

Those that appreciate a bit of biography with their history will probably not be disappointed by the analysis of Rommel's command abilities in the desert war, as well as two pieces devoted to New Zealand's Lieutenant-General Bernard Freyberg, of which one examines at length his disagreements with Eighth Army commander General Claude Auchinleck. In a more personal vein are two pieces by New Zealanders offering retrospectives on their veteran parents: the first, a revered battalion commander and the second, a decorated officer of the Long Range Desert Group married to an army nursing sister. There is also a chapter devoted to a collective biography of the initial group of senior officers of the 2nd New Zealand Expeditionary Force.

Campaigns and battles, more traditional material of military history, are included here too, but it must be recognised that after eighty years these chapters approach their subject from novel angles. From the land war, there are two such chapters, one dealing with Operation Crusader in North Africa and one with 3rd NZ Division in the Pacific. The latter, which focuses on relations with the Americans, thereby does the better job of examining something relatively original. One of the two naval papers offers compelling accounts of the escape

from Singapore, which also forms, in part, the subject matter of the lone paper on the Royal New Zealand Air Force. The volume is clearly army-centric, which as a collection of conference papers, reflects the research interests of the presenters.

In keeping with the recent historiographical trend recognising that Allied soldiers were no angels are Cookson-Hills's previously mentioned chapter about sexual violence and two about military discipline and mutiny. Peter Wood offers a detailed case study of a New Zealand platoon that refused to go into action one morning in Italy, and Jonathan Fennell looks at the socioeconomic backgrounds of the men involved in the far more serious "furlough mutiny" of 1943/44. The latter was arguably the most serious case of indiscipline among Commonwealth troops during the war, which saw a large number of men simply refuse to go back to Europe after extended leave in New Zealand.

Due account taken of the perhaps inevitable gaps in the coverage, *Heavy and Continuous Sacrifice* addresses what is arguably most important in New Zealand's experiences of the Second World War while simultaneously providing the reader with recent scholarship of very high quality.

BRIAN BERTOSA, *INDEPENDENT RESEARCHER*