

CANADA'S NAVY: THE FIRST CENTURY

by Marc Milner

Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999. 359 pages, \$45.00

Reviewed by Captain(N) (Ret'd) Robert H. Thomas

Marc Milner has written the second comprehensive history of Canada's Navy, following Tony German's *The Sea is at Our Gates*. It is a balanced work, concentrating on policy themes as well as operations and thus provides a new perspective on the evolution of the Navy through its many challenges. The author has built effectively on his earlier studies of the Battle of the Atlantic to create an important analysis of the Navy as an instrument of national security and foreign policy throughout its existence. Early struggles over fisheries (to be repeated in the 1990s), the value of the wartime contribution in establishing Canada as a player on the world stage and the shift in focus to anti-submarine warfare to satisfy NATO requirements exemplify this role.

The RCN fought for survival for its first three decades. The uncertainty surrounding the composition of the fleet and its marginal role in the Great War led to crisis after crisis in the inter-war period. The advances made prior to World War II were meagre and failed to provide the type of fleet that was going to be needed in the battles to come. Milner describes how, throughout the War, the RCN dreamed and planned for a big-ship navy to complement the Royal Navy while necessity forced the rapid creation of a large escort fleet, largely manned by untrained Reservists. The discussion of the wartime experience concentrates on policy issues, noting the difficulties encountered through poor ship design, lagging technology and the training problems resulting from the explosive expansion of the Navy. The fight for command autonomy by the Navy (which continued throughout the War) is shown to parallel Mackenzie King's fight for an independent role in the Alliance.

The greatest contribution of the book is its discussion of the development of the post-Second World War RCN and how the dreams of a big-ship navy gave way to the demands of a Cold War alliance. Milner lays out the challenges faced by the Navy as the societal changes made retention of trained personnel difficult with the consequent over-working of an undermanned fleet. The subsequent mutinies highlighted problems that had already been recognized by the Navy and accelerated the process of change. The new focus was on anti-submarine warfare — the wartime task of the RCNVR. Milner accurately describes the significance of this

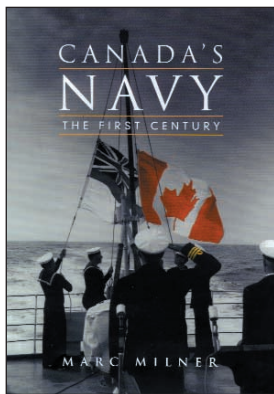
shift, noting that the regular force had represented less than five per cent of the total wartime Navy and few had served in the escort forces. This shift is described as the move to a "Made in Canada" Navy, comprising the design and building of the *St. Laurent* and follow-on classes, the development of closer ties with the United States Navy and the education and training of officers in Canada.

The unification crisis is dealt with extensively and fairly. Milner has accurately captured the anguish in the Navy and the feelings surrounding the firing of Admiral Landymore and the early retirement of most of the Flag Officers. The description of the acrimonious meeting of the Navy's officers with Paul Hellyer raises vivid memories of the feelings of rage that permeated the hall. Milner argues that it was unification that ultimately crushed the "Britishness" of the Canadian Navy. The crisis and the resulting run-down of the fleet that followed for two decades is described against the political backdrop of the sixties. The long-awaited modernization of the fleet after the dark post-unification years was finally under way when the Gulf War occurred. The Navy responded quickly and effectively, confounding its many critics in the media. Since then, the modern, capable fleet has been active around the globe, contributing to peace and stability in crisis after crisis.

In Milner's thesis of a "Canadianization" of its Navy, a continuing theme is the challenge faced by Francophones. Milner accurately describes difficulties faced in coping with the requirement to live, train and operate in an English-only environment and the impact this had on the perspective of the Navy in Quebec. The changes that have occurred in the past two decades to improve the situation are described in some detail.

This book is required reading for those who wish to understand the Canadian Navy in its many roles and in its function as a key player in Canadian foreign and defence policy.

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THE CANADIAN FORCES : HARD CHOICES, SOFT POWER

by Joseph T. Jockel

Toronto: Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies, 1999. 132 pages, \$30.50

Reviewed by Lieutenant-General (Ret'd) R. J. Evraire

Books on the Canadian Forces and on Canadian defence policy are few in number. Joseph Jockel's offering is therefore a very welcome event for those of us who have an interest in these subjects. Not a particularly long or exhaustive treatment of the problems that continue to plague the Canadian Forces, the book does provide a detached factual assessment of some of the events that, over the past decade, have left the Forces depleted in personnel and up-to-date equipment, with a widely accepted defence policy the government will not fund, and an uncertain future. More specifically, the author takes us through an examination of the CF's combat-capable forces; what is needed to keep them; and what hard choices must be made if the CF is to maintain its overseas combat capabilities.

What ails the Canadian Forces, according to Dr. Jockel, is a malady he defines as "stress of strategic dislocation". He suggests that the long standing military alliance orientation of the Navy, Army and the Air Force (organization, equipment and training with a largely NATO, NORAD and UN focus) continues to make it difficult for the CF to re-orient itself to the 1994 White Paper provisions that call for them to be able to deploy Main Contingency Forces and Task Forces as contributions to international peace and security. Stating that "...Canadians have never been very interested in the military, largely allowing the government a free hand in setting defence policy...", he in effect suggests that a remedy for the aforementioned malady is not in the offing. In fact, his treatment of the DFAIT "Soft Power" approach to foreign and defence policy put forth by Minister Axworthy clearly points to his belief that it will exacerbate the difficulties the CF are currently experiencing.

The author's detailed review of the combat capabilities of the three services will enlighten most readers. It will also puzzle those who are not very familiar with military terminology. Talking at length about Battle Groups at the start of the chapter on the Army, and then defining the term near the end of the chapter, is one such example. Some readers might also fail to understand how it is that the Engineers are defined as a combat support arm and the communicators aren't. But these, and a few punctuation and sentence structure clangers, do not, in the final analysis, detract from the book's clear and accurate recounting of a tale of woe. The composition and missions of Main Contingency Forces, Naval and Air Task Forces, etc., are clearly explained in the context of the 1994 Defence White Paper. Jockel also provides considerable detail about the numerous missions/deployments very successfully undertaken by the CF in the last decade. He does however leave us with a pessimistic view of the CF's ability to fulfil a number of the provisions of the White Paper.

In support of his pessimistic view, the author summons the comments of the Auditor General who, in a recent report, states that the money currently provided for the Canadian Forces is simply inadequate to fully modernize the Canadian Forces. What is available, he states, is \$6.5 billion in 5 years. What is needed is \$11 billion in five years. According to Jockel, such a state of affairs leaves the government with only two choices — increasing the Defence budget or further cutting the Forces.

Public apathy, as previously noted, is one reason for the current state of disrepair of the Canadian Forces. Jockel further suggests that a weak government opposition, a ruthless Prime Minister, and the broad prerogatives of the Canadian Finance Minister in setting a budget also add to the difficulties. What then is there to do?

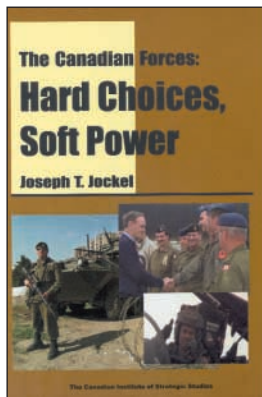
The author suggests that the assessment of the Kosovo War "...may turn out to be decisive". In putting forth his argument, he states that if it is judged that the use of military force (an air campaign alone, as we know) restored human security in Kosovo at an acceptable cost, the case for increasing defence spending and thereby saving the CF's overseas combat capability might be bolstered. It would therefore appear that the fate of the CF is sealed, since many currently share the view that the air campaign

was very ineffective, human security was not restored (the presence of 10,000 UN Peacekeepers is required for an indefinite period), and the cost to the civilian population (in deaths, injuries, displacements and infrastructure devastation) was unimaginably high.

Jockel does not fail to mention the internal professional failings that led to the CF's tattered image in the 1990s, an image that, through recent and continuing serious and concerted efforts from within the Forces, has been greatly improved. He nevertheless does place the responsibility for the depleted state of the Canadian Forces (and any hope of an improvement) exactly where it belongs — at the feet of the Federal Government. Inadequate funding will allow the CF's capabilities to further dwindle, and more Defence White Paper promises to go unfulfilled.

The Canadian Forces: Hard Choices, Soft Power is an extremely worthwhile read for anyone even moderately interested in defence policy, the Canadian Forces, and national sovereignty.

Lieutenant-General Richard Evraire, *ret'd*, resides in Ottawa. Among his last appointments in the Canadian Forces, he was the Canadian Military Representative to the NATO Military Committee in Brussels, and Commandant of the NATO Defense College in Rome.



BLOOD ON THE HILLS: THE CANADIAN ARMY IN THE KOREAN WAR

by David J. Bercuson

Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999. 269 pages, \$35.00

Reviewed by Brereton Greenhous

The *third* sentence of Professor Bercuson's preface tells us that the Korean War 'was the first war in which Canadian soldiers fought under U.S. corps and army command.' Canadians who served in the Second World War's First Special Service Force will be particularly interested to learn that. He adds that 'it was the first time the Canadian government knowingly sent ground troops to a land war in Asia.' Apparently the existence of the Siberian Expeditionary Force of 1918-19 has escaped his attention. And was that ill-fated expedition to Hong Kong in 1941 not part of a land war in Asia?

Even on the core topic there is still much carelessness to be found. The Strathconas were never the '12th Canadian Armoured Regiment', nor was the squadron that went to Korea with the Special Force an 'anti-tank squadron' (p. 40). In Korea, 2 RCHA had three batteries of eight guns each, not four batteries of six guns. (p. 148). Several pictures are mis-captioned.

There were three major rotations to Korea. The Canadian Army Special Force (CASF) included a hastily recruited infantry component designated as 2nd Battalions of the RCR, PPCLI and R22eR; in due course they were replaced by the 'regular' 1st Battalions of the same three regiments, while the third rotation, labeled as 3rd Battalions, was an amalgam of original Special Force volunteers, more regulars, and new recruits.

Bercuson claims that the Permanent Force units (1st Battalions) of the second rotation, under Brigadier M.P. Bogert, 'were far better prepared to fight' than Brigadier John Rockingham's 2nd Battalions had been when they reached Korea. Hmmm! No doubt Bogert's men got in more training before they reached Korea, and perhaps that training benefited from the experiences of their predecessors; but the Special Force was much the better led, with two excellent infantry commanders, Stone and Dextraze, brought back from civilian life (like Rockingham himself), and the one regular among them, Keane of the RCR, more than competent. All four had been awarded DSOs for their Second World War leadership, and their hand-picked field officers and many of their junior officers and senior NCOs were also decorated veterans. A fair proportion of the other ranks had Second World War combat experience, and those that did not were keen to learn. They may have been short on training — their

leaders admitted as much — but they were well qualified to fight once the misfits (there in the first place through the MND's personal faulty decision) had been weeded out.

In distinct contrast, Bogert was adequate but not of Rockingham's calibre, and none of his infantry commanders had particularly distinguished themselves in that earlier war. One had been strictly a staff officer, another had spent much of his time commanding reinforcement units, while the third's final assessment had been that he lacked the grip to command a battalion on active operations.

At one point Bercuson describes the attack on 'D' Company, 1 PPCLI on the night of 5/6 November 1951, chalking up part of their success in repelling it to 'intense training, regimental pride and professionalism'. They did fight well, with a veteran of the Special Force as their company commander and some good junior officers. However before leaving Canada, the battalion had to be brought up to strength by transferring some 500 men from 3 PPCLI, since 150 Permanent Force types had volunteered for para training rather than go to Korea, and a further 150 managed, one way or another, to get themselves categorized as 'non-effectives'.

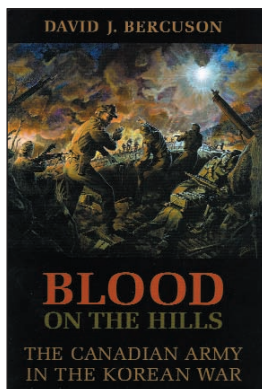
Regimental pride there may well have been, but there had not been that much 'intense training', nor was there an awful lot of 'professionalism' to be found in its ranks.

Something more on the gunners, sappers and signallers would have been nice.

Turning to the strategic perspective, Bercuson thinks that the 'policy to hold the whole line while talking to the Communists was a recipe for high and probably unnecessary casualties' — a totally ridiculous suggestion. Holding the line limited casualties: attempting any significant offensive, even with air supremacy, would inevitably have brought much heavier losses. With the Chinese now firmly committed to the North Korean cause, there was no prospect of repeating MacArthur's advance to the Yalu, so rudely repulsed in December 1950.

How long, O Lord, how long must we wait for a good account of the Canadian role in Korea?

Brereton Greenhous is a former member of the staff of the Directorate of History at National Defence Headquarters. Among his many books, he is the author of Volume III of the Official History of the RCAF.



FIELD OF GLORY: THE BATTLE OF CRYSLER'S FARM, 1813

by Donald E. Graves

Toronto: Robin Brass Studio, 1999. 426 pages, \$22.95

THE INCREDIBLE WAR OF 1812: A MILITARY HISTORY

by J. Mackay Hitsman, Updated by Donald E. Graves

Toronto: Robin Brass Studio, 1999. 398 pages, \$22.95 Canada

THE WAR OF 1812

by Victor Suthern

Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1999. 288 pages, \$60.00

Reviewed by Captain John R. Grodzinski

For some reason interest in the War of 1812 has blossomed over the last several years, and the number of new books has increased steadily. Recent titles have included campaign and battle studies, an examination of British leadership, the role of natives in the war, guidebooks, naval studies and biographies. There are several web sites devoted to the war and, recently, a four part television documentary was produced depicting the events from 1812 to 1815. Fortunately, many of the new books offer new research and fresh interpretations.

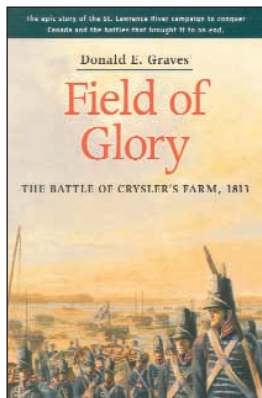
The Second American War as it is sometimes called, has revealed itself as something more than a minor contest between a handful of British regulars, Canadian militia and Kentucky riflemen. It was a complex diplomatic and military conflict between Great Britain and the United States. The cockpit was the border region from the Niagara River area to the Quebec – New York / Vermont border. Like other wars, it could not be decided on fringe engagements. The combatants were mainly two regular armies, achieving unparalleled intensity along the Niagara frontier in 1814.

For military personnel, the War of 1812 offers valuable lessons in the relationship between the strategic, operational and tactical levels of war. For example, the huge American manpower advantage was of little strategic significance as their communication system did not allow the concentration of combat power in the interior and in the Niagara region. By the end of the war, roughly 30,000 regulars opposed each other. Each army achieved a number of tactical victories, but only a few

offered any operational advantages and none had lasting strategic implications. Despite the huge area of operations (like Russia, how does one physically defeat a large country like Canada or the United States?), communication was quite rapid and the British proved adept at quickly concentrating their forces in the right area based upon minimal, but critical, information. Try that in a modern ISTAR environment! Relationships between sea power and land strategy are undeniably linked and there were some spectacular amphibious operations. Logistics was always important.

J. Mackay Hitsman's *The Incredible War of 1812* was first published in 1965 and was acknowledged at the time as one of the finest books on the war written in Canada. Written while Hitsman's health and personal life was crumbling, original editions of the book are difficult to find. Fortunately, this excellent study is available again, with many new features. Donald E. Graves, perhaps the most knowledgeable writer on the war today, has taken the original text, cited the sources consulted (the original appeared without any endnotes), added dozens of illustrations, and included several new appendices. A great book has been made even better.

Victor Suthern's *The War of 1812* was produced as a companion to the four part television documentary by Brian and Terence McKenna. Packaged as a popular history, Suthern's book is a visual delight, and the text is well written and provides a good general overview of the war and some of its historiographical problems. Most of the images are in colour, and by themselves tell



an interesting story. Unfortunately, a few are poorly reproduced. Most of the maps come from the *Pictorial Field-book of the War of 1812* by Benson J. Lossing, published in 1869. Fortunately the layout designer did not place many of these wonderful illustrations across two pages and destroy their value. Some publishers fail to understand that images are not simply decoration and should not be placed across the spine of the book. This is particularly true for military readers, who often study images as much as the text. What confounds this reviewer is the CD-ROM that accompanies the book. It proved difficult to load and the “in-depth” information promised on the jewel case is simplistic and of little use.

Don Graves, responsible for the re-release of *Incredible War*, is a former historian at the Directorate of History. Now an author and historical consultant, he has written a number of excellent books, such as *Where Right and Glory Lead: The Battle of Lundy's Lane, 1814*; *Grey Coats and Red Jackets: The Battle of Chippawa, 1814*; and a history of the South Alberta Regiment in the Second World War.

Believing that history can only be created and not re-created, Graves makes extensive use of all source material: manuals, primary source documents and a surprisingly large number of personal accounts to bring events to life. His studies are often the first serious re-examination since the early twentieth century and as a result always bring new interpretations and revelations. As such, his books are an important addition to the literature and written with the intelligent general reader in mind. No armchair general, Graves has a pragmatic, common sense approach to soldiering and analysis of military problems.

His latest campaign study, *Field of Glory*, is a detailed account of the largest American operation of the war and

an attempt to win it in 1813. The objective was Montreal. While one army marched for this objective from Lake Champlain, a second sailed down the St Lawrence. Graves examines American difficulties in formulating effective strategy, the personal rivalries between the various general officers, the mixed quality of officers and soldiers and where mistakes were made. What is striking is the relative youth (about 35) of seven key British and Canadian army and navy officers who won the day, and the considerable experience they had by 1813. The chapter on tactics and doctrine during the War of 1812 is the best Graves has written on this subject.

At the end, the reader understands why the largest American offensive of the war failed and a smaller but more aggressive opponent defeated them. The Americans set out in the spring of 1813 to wrest control of the St Lawrence from the British. By the late fall it was more secure than when they started.

Included are detailed orders of battle, weapons characteristics and a fascinating appendix on the military heritage of the campaign. The fate of the battlefields, and in particular Crysler's Farm, now largely underwater due to the creation of the St Lawrence Seaway, is also told. Filled with many illustrations and superb maps, *Field of Glory* is an important book that will make any reader look at the Thousand Islands and the St. Lawrence River differently, as well as appreciate the rich and professionally useful military history we have in Canada.

For anyone with even a slight interest in the War of 1812, this is an unprecedented time to obtain quality books on the subject.

Captain John R. Grodzinski is *Managing Editor of the Army Doctrine and Training Bulletin* and regularly conducts *War of 1812 battlefield tours for army units and other interested groups.*

ORTONA: CANADA'S EPIC WORLD WAR II BATTLE

by Mark Zuehlke

Toronto: Stoddart, 1999. 443 pages, \$35.00.

Reviewed by Lieutenant-Colonel Michael Cessford

The title notwithstanding, Mark Zuehlke's book is much more than a study of the comparatively minor battle for the southern Italian port of Ortona. The real focus of his work is the 1st Canadian Infantry Division's month-long fight to clear the German defences between the Moro and Riccio Rivers. This struggle, which culminated with the fall of Ortona, was the first extended engagement by a Canadian division in the Second World War. It was a bitter and protracted fight

that pitted the Canadian division, in conditions that mirrored the Somme and Passchendaele, against some of the finest units of the *Wehrmacht*. The story is an important one.

By November 1943, the Allied drive into central Italy had stalled before the German main defensive line. In an effort to break this operational paralysis, Montgomery ordered his Eighth Army to attack north along the Adriatic Coast in an effort to break through the German

defensive line. Success would be followed by exploitation west, through the Avezzano Valley, to seize Rome. It was a spectacular misreading of German strength and the limitations imposed by weather and terrain. In a result that was all but pre-ordained, the Eighth Army failed to achieve a decisive penetration of the German line. The best that could be achieved was the establishment and slow expansion of a British lodgement across the Sangro River, the main German defensive line. The German defenders, pushed off the Sangro River, sullenly withdrew a few kilometers to new positions along the Moro River. The cost to the British was the better part of the fighting strength of the attacking Corps.

With no real reserves left, Montgomery shifted the 1st Canadian Division from the Army's flank with orders to continue the main attack along the Adriatic Coast. Montgomery must have known that his plan to take Rome had failed but was nonetheless determined to continue the fight. Attrition replaced manoeuvre as he sought to bleed the German Army, inflicting losses they could ill-afford to replace. Ortona may have been the Canadian objective but the real target was the German Army. And it fell to the 1st Canadian Infantry Division, supported by the tanks of the 1st Canadian Armoured Brigade, to bear the brunt of this combat.

Zuehlke provides only the briefest historical overview to the Canadian fight at the Moro River. Little analysis is given to the ebb and flow of national politics and Allied strategy that committed a Canadian division and armoured brigade to the invasion of Sicily in July 1943, and the subsequent continuation of the campaign on the Italian mainland. The movements and engagements of the British Eighth Army are sketched only as necessary to provide context for the story of the Canadians at the Moro River and Ortona.

But this is not what this book is about. It lays no claims to be a study of the conduct of the war or the campaign. Zuehlke leaves no doubt that this work is an act of remembrance, a testament to the courage and sacrifice of young men engaged in a bitter and protracted fight for a few muddy kilometers of nondescript countryside and a modest, sleepy Italian port. Within this work, the experiences of the individual soldier are of first importance and in this aim he makes little distinction between German and Canadian. In addition, and for the first time, we gain an understanding of the trials of the Italian civilians caught up in the fighting, victims in their own homes and fields. This is very human history, in the style of Daniel Dancocks and Pierre Berton.



The strength of this book is the understanding it conveys of the brutal realities of combat in the Italian theatre. Zuehlke paints a grim picture of the fight in which battalions, battered and weak, remain locked in combat for weeks on end. The effect on the men and units of the 1st Canadian Infantry Division is well portrayed. By the end of the fight, the Division was all but incapable of offensive action. The account of the Carleton and York Regiment at Point 59, the last engagement of the battle, illustrates just how quickly skill and spirit can wither away. Other accounts are equally compelling; not one battalion in the Division escaped the fight unscarred.

While Zuehlke has provided a very good understanding of *what* happened, his analysis of why this happened is neither as comprehensive nor as polished. The Canadian division commander, Major General Chris Vokes is severely criticised for his conduct of the battle. In particular, Vokes is taken to task for his failure to flank the German fortifications of the “gully”, preferring instead to throw his battalions piecemeal into the teeth of the enemy defences. Much of this criticism is merited, but Vokes should not stand alone in the prisoner’s dock. His brigade commanders were equally guilty of under-estimating the strength of the German line, failing to commit the resources necessary to either flank or force the enemy positions. Room in the dock should also be made for Montgomery. His refusal to shut down the offensive, in the face of all evidence that it had failed, broke the offensive edge of his Army — all for the gain of a few muddy kilometers of sodden countryside. In addition, much could also be said of British (and by extension Canadian) training and doctrine. With an emphasis on firepower, rigid control and precise advances with limited tactical objectives, British doctrine often served to constrain commanders, precluding the type of bold, flanking manoeuvre that might have broken the German defences at comparatively modest cost. Zuehlke hints at the weakness of Allied tactical command and doctrine but has not provided the depth of analysis that these inter-related aspects of the battle deserve.

These criticisms aside, Mark Zuehlke has written a compassionate and compelling study of the one of the most difficult battles fought by the Canadian Army in the Second World War. For those who wish to gain a real understanding of the Canadian infantryman’s war, I would strongly recommend they begin by reading *Ortona*. Indeed, it deserves a place in the library of any reader wishing to understand tactical ground combat in the Second World War.

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