

CANADIANS AND DEFENCE

The Department of National Defence has developed an understandable penchant for trumpeting the results of its annual national survey. According to the Fall 1999 poll, 95 percent of Canadians agree that it is important for Canada to maintain a modern, combat-capable military establishment, 94 percent agree that peacekeeping requires combat-ready forces, and 92 percent believe that it is important for the Canadian Forces to be able to protect human rights in fragile democracies. In a similar vein, 90 percent of Canadians expect the Forces to be called upon to do more in the next decade, 90 percent support Canada's participation in NORAD, and 88 percent agree that a strong military is important to Canada's international standing. With pluralities such as these, can a thoroughgoing, tri-service re-capitalization of the Canadian Forces, replete with a full array of RMA-based technologies, be far behind?

Unfortunately for DND, seemingly stellar polling numbers are no guarantee of fiscal largesse from Canadians or their governments. A decidedly fickle lot — some of our allies would no doubt offer pithier character assessments — many Canadians seem to aspire to a global security and human security role for their country and their armed forces, but are prone to terminal writer's cramp when it comes to signing the cheques for a credible defence establishment. It would, moreover, be imprudent — given the inherent vagaries of public opinion polling — to read too much into any one poll. Still, the sheer magnitude of such numbers may lead some to conclude that Canadian defence is poised to cross a public opinion Rubicon.

The Chrétien government's February 2000 budget, for example, was notable for its pledge of \$1.7 billion in additional defence spending over the next three years, but equally noteworthy was the dearth of public, media or parliamentary opposition to increased defence spending. Also intriguing — particularly after the deluge which engulfed the Tory plan for a fleet of EH101 search and rescue and maritime helicopters — was the deafening silence which greeted the Liberals' major capital acquisitions (i.e., 651 Light Armoured Vehicles (LAVs), 15 *Cormorant* SAR helicopters, and four Victoria-class submarines). The lack of criticism of the LAV 3s was not surprising, but most political and defence analysts had expected at least a modest reaction to the submarines and to the EH101 roots of the *Cormorant*.

Some might posit, too, that the frenetic operational tempo of the 1990s — embracing a quite remarkable

collection of peacekeeping, peacebuilding, peace-enforcement, disaster relief and other missions — has reminded forgetful Canadians of the professionalism of their armed forces and re-sensitized the citizenry to the value, be it for military, quasi-military or non-military pursuits, of a multi-purpose, combat-capable defence establishment. Those who discern a shift in public attitudes to defence also point to a reawakening of interest in Canada's military history and heritage, as typified by the decision to provide new quarters for the Canadian War Museum, by the creation of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, by the reinvigoration of Remembrance Day, by concern over the structural integrity of the Vimy Memorial and, most importantly, by an enhanced empathy with our veterans.

Other polls, however, provide a sobering counterpoint. As Brian MacDonald noted at a recent CISS seminar, a February 1998 poll conducted for the *Globe and Mail* using a zero-sum game model “found that public support for increased capital spending on defence equipment lost against every other alternative offered, including the subsidization of film production.” Losing out to child care benefits is one thing, but losing out to film production is quite another. Defence fares just as poorly in Angus Reid and Compas surveys utilizing different polling techniques. Such weakness is in part a manifestation of long-standing Canadian tradition, but it also reflects the poignant and still extant fallout from the Somalia, sexual harassment and sexual abuse, fiscal impropriety, and other scandals of the 1990s.

It is impossible to conclude that Canadian attitudes on defence have undergone a fundamental transformation. There is, to be sure, evidence of a heightened interest in things military, an increased sensitivity to some of the operational tempo, burn-out and quality of life issues which confront the Canadian Forces, and of an awareness that sweeping institutional reform cannot be accomplished overnight. On the other hand, there is little evidence that Canadians have grasped the full magnitude or the unsettling repercussions — either in financial terms or in terms of Canada's diminishing ability to play an active role in promoting international peace, stability and human security — of manpower limitations, equipment rust out and infrastructure decay. In this context, the additional funds provided or projected by Budget 2000 were but a modest down payment.

These realities — and the heartbreaking but inexorable demise of a wartime generation which could perhaps more readily accept the proffered rationales for a

“multi-purpose, combat-capable” defence establishment — demand innovative outreach, constituency-building and constituency re-building measures by the Department of National Defence. Many components of DND have outreach or outreach-related mandates, but is the Department’s approach sufficiently holistic? Are

imaginative, meaningful and *sustained* measures in place to connect (or reconnect) the Canadian Forces with the professional and managerial classes, with young Canadians, and with new Canadians? Failure can only serve to hasten the conversion of the Canadian Forces into some form of glorified constabulary.

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extends best wishes to
members of the Armour Branch
on the occasion of

**THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE FOUNDING OF
THE ROYAL CANADIAN ARMoured CORPS**

on
13 August 1940

THE KINDER, GENTLER MILITARY: CAN AMERICA'S GENDER-NEUTRAL FIGHTING FORCE STILL WIN WARS?

By Stephanie Gutmann

New York: Scribner, 2000. \$36.00

Reviewed by Major (ret'd) The Reverend Arthur E. Gans

Stephanie Gutmann is a freelance journalist who specializes in the area of sexual politics. She has written for many well-known publications including the *New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The New Republic*.

In this book she uses all her skill as an investigative journalist to look at the sexual politics of the gender-neutral United States military. And sexual politics is the best description that I can find for what she places before the reader in *The Kinder, Gentler Military*. She looks into the events that have created the US military at the end of the century, the 'Tailhook' scandal and the events that took place at Aberdeen Proving Grounds. She shows how decisions have been made by civilian groups with little or no real knowledge of the military which have lowered combat readiness by lowering standards.

The problem is not totally a result of sexual politics. Much of it relates to the changeover to a volunteer force at a time when job creation in the economy was swinging into high gear. The US military was in a difficult position because of its inability to attract high quality recruits at a time when the military budget was being reduced to enable tax cuts to be given to the general population. At this same

moment there were strong pressures to increase the opportunities for women in the service, and every loss of a female was regarded as a particular failure.

The combination of pressures from scandal, low recruiting, and political decisions brought about what Gutmann regards as a serious crisis in the US military. This includes a general lowering of physical standards, along with a very substantial lowering of general morale which only exacerbated the problem of the retention of the best people. Her end analysis is that if the US finds itself in a major conflict any time soon, it is likely to have real difficulties in prosecuting it successfully.

I think this is an important book because it is not written by an insider, and it has a lot to offer in its final chapter of conclusions. I think that anyone interested in the question of gender in the military ought to read it, as well as those who hold positions of responsibility in the areas of personnel, recruiting and training. Gutmann has made a serious effort to provide a clear analysis and, frankly, the result is more than a little scary. Whether you agree with her conclusions or not, you will certainly have been well introduced to a new form of military which is the result of a large number of decisions that were more political than military in their origins.

No Place To Run: The Canadian Corps and Gas Warfare in the First World War

by Tim Cook

Vancouver and Toronto: UBC Press, 1999. 296 pages, \$24.95.

Reviewed by Brereton Greenhous

The first significant gas attack in history was launched against French and French Algerian troops in April 1915. The Canadian 1st Division, on their left flank, also got a good dose of it, accompanied by the usual storm of artillery, machine gun and rifle fire as the Germans advanced. The gas used was chlorine, and there were no gas masks.

No accurate count of gas casualties could be made at the time, partly because the enemy ended in control of

the battlefield, partly because many men were victims of both gas and conventional weapons, and partly because the reporting system was not organized to deal with gas casualties. In the post-war era, the author tells us, "The Army Historical Section went through every 1st Division War Diary and noted every man listed as gassed. The figures list three dead (an unreasonably small figure — B.G.), 248 non-fatal, and an additional 55 gassed men captured as prisoners of war." One hundred and twenty-two were admitted to hospital.

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Anecdotal evidence suggests much heavier casualties, but is scarcely a reliable source in a case involving all the shock and horror of a new and peculiarly unpleasant (perhaps chiefly because it was new) weapon.

Gas masks and anti-gas doctrines were soon devised, but wearing them greatly reduced a soldier's fighting efficiency. At the same time, more sophisticated gases were also being devised. The most lethal gas of the war, phosgene, was introduced by the Germans against the British in December 1915. A thousand men became gas casualties on that occasion and 120 of them died. However, the great advantage of gas as a weapon was that, like the 'schu' mines of later wars, it incapacitated far more than it killed. Dead men put little stress on the medical and supply services, while vast numbers of sick and injured men were a major strain. And, cold-bloodedly, men who could not be restored to fighting fitness were simply a waste of resources.

Eventually, mustard gas became the gas of choice, both by the *Entente* and the Germans, although it was often mixed with phosgene derivatives. Chlorine, phosgene, and their several variants were non-persistent gases, soon negated by rain and/or wind, but mustard hung around for days, weeks, even months after it had been distributed, continuing to do its remote work without actually killing. Within three weeks of its introduction, British casualties due to this gas totalled some 14,000 (although fatalities were only about 500), and "By 1918, all soldiers on the Western Front lived in an environment where gas was a daily fact of life." By the end of the war, more than a million men may have been gas casualties.

Tim Cook has turned his MA thesis — it certainly warranted a PhD — into a masterly and very readable account of the progress of gas measures and counter-measures, particularly as they affected the Canadian Corps. Other books have been written on the topic by British, Canadian and American authors, but in my opinion none as good as this. And he rightly points out that:

In no general history has there ever been an attempt to integrate poison gas into the larger

perspective of the war. As a result, when reading the history of the Great War, one is left with the perception that gas was barely used after its initial battlefield experiments. Yet by the last half of the war, gas was used in every engagement — from company-sized raids to planned advances involving corps — and was delivered in intricate artillery fire plans to accomplish a variety of tactical purposes. When gas was stigmatized as an immoral weapon during and after the war, the official historians, writing in the anti-war climate of the 1920s and 1930s, conveniently relegated gas to an unimportant role. The nuanced role of gas as a psychologically and physically debilitating agent was ignored in favour of the uncomplicated but commonly held view that chemical agents were contained and beaten by issuing respirators.



Nearly all battle narratives by unofficial historians take the official histories as their starting point (though few of them admit as much), and thus unofficial histories also minimize the importance of gas. Strangely, perhaps, personal memoirs often mention it but never give it much attention — certainly less than its due. It was left to a poet, Wilfred Owen, to make the point more passionately than anyone, then or since.

... If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling from froth-corrupted lungs,
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
The old Lie: *Dulce et decorum est*
Pro patria mori.

Happily, gas has been little used since that time. Mussolini sprinkled mustard gas around what was then Abyssinia in 1937 and, more recently, Saddam Hussein has used it against his Kurds. He might still be using it if it were not for that Anglo-American 'no-fly' zone over northern Iraq. It's not often that airpower can be graded as 'humane'.

THE ALLIED CONVOY SYSTEM 1939-1945: ITS ORGANIZATION DEFENCE AND OPERATION

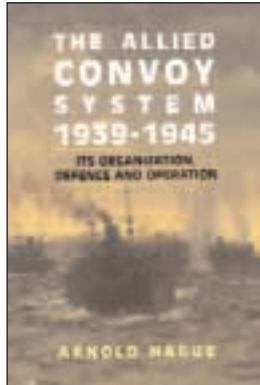
By Arnold Hague

St. Catharines: Vanwell, 2000. 200 pages, \$24.95.

Reviewed by Lieutenant-Commander Gregg Hannah

This book offers a great deal of information on Second World War Allied convoy operations. The title, however, is somewhat misleading. The British leadership of the Allied convoy system during the war is undisputed. Nevertheless, Canadian, and later American, contributions to the convoy organization were significant and, in the end, critical to the Allied success, in particular, to the Battle of the Atlantic. Unfortunately, this book deals mainly with the British convoy effort and provides only cursory details of Canadian or American contributions. This should not be surprising as the author acknowledges that the book was written “initially at the request of the Naval Historical Branch, Ministry of Defence (Navy), in London as a record to assist in replying to convoy inquiries.” The author states that he wrote “a short text for office use” not intended for publication.

The structure and style of the current book still bears the imprint of the first text. The chapters of the book provide broad background information. In general, the information is good for an initial appreciation of the subject but, understandably, lacking in depth and detail. The author does, in several cases, point out useful reference works in the text. Unfortunately, reference sources for the material in the book are not cited. An appendix provides a valuable discussion of the author’s sources for details given in the appendices, and limited insight into some of the possible sources for material in the rest of the book.



Chapter information often overlaps, and chapters often contain information that the chapter headings might not suggest. The lack of an index for the book is, therefore, a drawback to its ease of use. There is a heavy reliance in the text on military acronyms and abbreviations. To assist the reader a comprehensive glossary is provided at the beginning of the book and, more importantly, a detailed list of the convoy alpha designators is found in an appendix.

The real strength of this work lies in the detailed presentation of convoy statistics in the appendices. Information is set out in easy to use tabular form. In the first appendix, the number of convoys, the total number of ships, and a breakdown of the losses for each of the convoy series or groups of series is presented. Follow-on appendices expand the details for each convoy in a series. Information tabulated is the convoy departure date and port, arrival date and port, total number of ships and the number of ships sunk and damaged. Of particular interest is the detailed information given for each merchant ship that was sunk.

Despite the rather general background information in the body of the book, the appendices provide an excellent starting point for anyone investigating specific aspects of the convoys themselves.

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FOR FREEDOM AND HONOUR?

by A.B. Godefroy.

Nepean: CEF Books, 1998. 94 pages, \$19.95.

Reviewed by Lieutenant-Colonel Bernd Horn

Almost without exception, any book written on the First World War laments the tragic and wasteful loss of life in the muddy battlefields of France and Flanders. Many historians and scholars have examined in-depth the slaughter of human life associated with the Great

War’s hallmark trench warfare. The sacrifices made are often cloaked in a heroic and courageous mantle. However, rarely examined are those deaths that occurred at the hands of one’s own comrades, specifically executions for failure to do one’s duty. Andrew Godefroy, a Reserve combat engineer officer and

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recent Masters graduate from Royal Military College's (RMC's) War Studies programme, tackles this setaceous issue in his highly commendable book, *For Freedom and Honour?*

This short but authoritative work is crisply written and well researched. The book's organization follows a logical flow and leads the reader through a thought-provoking odyssey from the theoretical to the 'coal face'. Godefroy implants the question of whether or not the executions of twenty-five Canadian soldiers during the First World War for crimes ranging from murder, to cowardice and desertion, were necessary for the maintenance of military discipline or were merely the result of an immature Canadian military administrative system. The reader is not left long to ponder this question as a central theme quickly begins to weave its way through the entire text, namely, that those executed were victims of timing, place and circumstance. The author ultimately asserts that the executions were completely unnecessary.

The book's first two chapters succinctly summarize the question of national jurisdiction and the complexity of subordinating the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) to the British Army, as well as the organization and mechanics of the British Field General Court-Martial system. The remainder of the book puts the face on the theoretical. Godefroy examines the case of each of the twenty-five Canadian soldiers executed during the First World War to reveal the circumstances of their charges and

the resultant death sentences. Undeniably, the case studies provide an enlightening, if at times disturbing, picture of the large and bureaucratic military machine fed by the inherent weaknesses and foibles of mortal man. Intriguing is the author's portrayal of the dynamic between Canadian officers and their superior British commanders on the question of executions. Godefroy explains that the senior Canadian leaders, although acknowledging the requirement for the death penalty in instances of gross breaches of military discipline, were normally willing to show leniency where they felt that mitigating circumstances warranted. Disconcerting is his argument that in each case where Canadian commanders attempted to commute a death sentence, their British Corps or Army Commander overruled them.

Although the author early on states that his only objective is to provide dispassionate information so that the reader might make his own judgements, at times his strong personal biases seep through, adding a very powerful emotional flavour to his arguments that sometimes detract from the actual analysis. Overall, the book is an insightful and edifying work that will appeal not only to the First World War enthusiast, but also to any reader interested in military history or human behaviour. It is definitely a worthwhile addition to any personal or institutional library.

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