

THE PITY OF WAR

by Niall Ferguson

New York: Basic Books, 1999. 563 pages, \$25.95.

Reviewed by Lieutenant-Colonel Bernd Horn

The simple title of Niall Ferguson's book belies the complexity of its contents. It does, however, reveal his underlying thesis that the First World War was nothing less than the greatest error of modern history. The author early on introduces the reader to his approach in examining the war. Within the first three pages, Ferguson recollects that as a young boy at Glasgow Academy he had to recite daily both The Lord's Prayer and the poem "Say Not That the Brave Die." He then asserts, "But they did die. Why deny it?"

This line of reasoning sets the tone for the remainder of the massive 462-page tome. Ferguson's exceptionally well written book challenges the prevailing interpretations and accepted history of the conflict. For example, he argues that the war was not inevitable and that the naval arms race at the turn of the century was actually a stabilizing factor rather than a catalyst to war. Furthermore, he makes the case that Britain did not have to enter the war, and by so doing was responsible for expanding it from a continental to a global conflict.

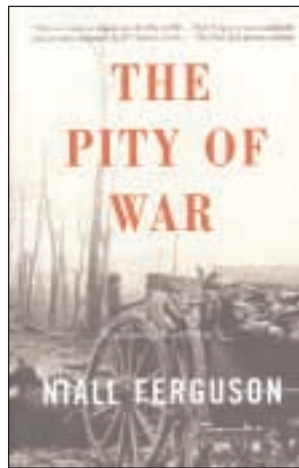
To make his case, the author poses ten questions and then proceeds to answer them. These queries, in fact, are the framework of the book and they are as follows: Was the war inevitable? Why did Germany's leaders gamble on war in 1914? Why did Britain's leaders choose to intervene when war broke out on the continent? Was the war really greeted with enthusiasm? Did propaganda, and especially the press, keep the war going? Why did the economic superiority of the British Empire not suffice to inflict defeat on the Central Powers more quickly and without American intervention? Why did the military superiority of the German Army fail to deliver victory over the British and French armies on the Western Front? Why did men keep fighting when conditions on the battlefield were so wretched? Why did men stop fighting? And finally, who won the peace and who ended up paying for the war? For those intimidated by the size of this work, a succinct summary of the answers to these questions can be found in an excellent synopsis embedded in the conclusion of the book. However, it is well worth the time to read through the entire text for the rich detail it contains.

Undeniably, the strength of Ferguson's work, consistent with his interest in economic history, lies in his use of statistics, charts and graphs to make his case. The most illuminating example is his analysis of fighting effectiveness that he bases on 'body counts'. By utilizing a meticulous statistical approach, the author reveals that the Central Powers' superiority in killing was in the order of 35 percent, losing 4 million combatants to the Entente's 5.4 million. He also compares the number of war dead in order to assess the efficiency of the war effort of the belligerents. Once again, he argues that, contrary to the accepted wisdom, Germany's war effort was far more proficient than was that of the Allies. To prove his point, he illustrates that the cost of killing an enemy soldier was just \$11,344.77 for Germany compared to \$36,485.48 for the Entente. Although hard to contest the numbers, one cannot help but wonder, so what? After all, to use Ferguson's own logic from the start of his book, Germany did lose the war. Why deny it?

Those interested in a more operational focus may be disappointed. Very little is written about the actual conduct of the war. However, Ferguson's chapters on why men fought and wartime atrocities, specifically the killing by all belligerents of those trying to surrender, is extremely absorbing.

This very compelling and intriguing book is certainly a must-read for anyone interested in the First World War or military history in general. It is exceptionally well-researched, and also serves as a compendium of World War I literature. The book contains 53 pages of footnotes and a 26-page bibliography – an even more impressive statistic when one considers the exceptionally small font used. In sum, this book offers fresh interpretations of a long-studied conflict that must be considered. The author's work is unusual yet conveys a sense of brilliance. If nothing else, the author clearly convinces the reader of the validity of the book's title.

Lieutenant-Colonel Bernd Horn *teaches in the Department of History at Royal Military College.*



THE CANADIAN FORCES IN THE PERSIAN GULF: OPERATION FRICTION 1990-1991

By Major Jean H. Morin and Lieutenant-Commander Richard H. Gimblett

Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1997. 304 pages, \$36.99.

Reviewed by Lieutenant-Commander G.A. Hannah

Operation “Friction” was the name originally assigned to Canadian naval operations in the Persian Gulf, while Operations “Scimitar” and “Scalpel” were the names given respectively to the operations of Canadian Air Group and the 1st Canadian Field Hospital in the theatre of operations. Once Canadian Forces Middle East (HQ CANFORME) was established, all CF units operating in the Middle East special duty area were assigned to it under the name Operation “Friction”.

This book is the official history of Operation “Friction” – the Canadian Forces in the Persian Gulf – written by two officers who served in the Gulf theatre during the hostilities in 1991. In his Preface to the book, W.A.B. Douglas, the Director of History of the Canadian Forces from 1973-1994, notes that “The Canadian contribution, even if it was not a large one, merits the careful examination, provided by these official historians.” In conducting their examination, the authors had full access to and made good use of classified primary source materials such as unit reports, war diaries and message traffic, as well as being able to interview participants. They have also made extensive use of large amounts of secondary source material. Thus, as Douglas notes, their examination is the “most accurate and complete interpretation of events possible at the...time.”

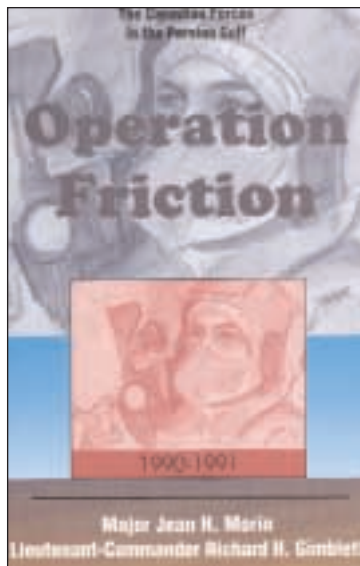
Operation Friction is a comprehensive, chronological narrative account detailing the Canadian Forces involvement in the Persian Gulf from the initial reaction to the crisis through to the decisions to send naval units, air units and a field hospital, consideration of a ground force contribution, operations in peace and war, and to the eventual “disengagement and return” of the forces to Canada. At the same time, the book is more than a sim-

ple narrative history. The narrative continually places the Canadian contribution and operations in the larger geopolitical and military context, and effectively highlights the underlying considerations and rationale for Canadian decisions. Overall, the reader gains a good sense of not only what happened but why.

The front and end piece maps are of very high quality, providing the reader with a visual appreciation of the important geographic details described in the text. Tables, charts and appendices in the book unobtrusively provide necessary extra detail and help readers understand unfamiliar information. The glossary is comprehensive and a must for interpreting the numerous acronyms that are used throughout the text. If anything detracts from the book it is the pictures. Regrettably they are of uniformly poor quality – fuzzy and dark.

Canadian military histories are rarely published so soon after the events on which they report. *Operation Friction* is timely, comprehensive, and provides a valuable insight into larger context and the background political decision making process concerning operations in the Persian Gulf. The authors have done the Canadian Forces and the Canadian public a great service through their labours. This book provides a solid starting point for further serious investigations of Canadian Forces actions in the Persian Gulf. Undoubtedly, time will expose greater details, but the shape of the history has been well determined. This book is one of the ‘must reads’ in Canadian military history for understanding Canadian military operations in the context of the larger Canadian body politic.

Lieutenant-Commander G.A. Hannah teaches history, international relations and ethics at Royal Military College.



KNIGHTS OF THE AIR CANADIAN FIGHTER PILOTS IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR

by David Bashow

Toronto: McArthur and Company, 2000. 224 pages, \$50.00.

Reviewed by Lieutenant-General Fred Sutherland (ret'd)

On 1 April 1982, I had the honour of hosting twelve of the thirteen living Canadian fighter aces of the First World War at a Mess Dinner in Ottawa to commemorate the birthday of the Royal Canadian Air Force. I recall to this day the sparkle in the eyes of these intrepid aviators and their mental acuity, reflected in an almost encyclopedic recollection of their flying exploits which had taken place over half a century earlier. However, my most vivid and lingering memories of that wonderful evening are of their incredible spirit and energy, obviously buttressed by the adrenaline created through reuniting with their wartime colleagues, but sustained at a very high level throughout a demanding weekend.

Building on the success of his earlier work, *All The Fine Young Eagles*, David Bashow has captured that spirit on the pages of this wonderful new tribute to First World War Canadian fighter pilots. Once again he successfully puts the reader in the cockpit and, in a series of comprehensive and thoroughly researched profiles, brings to life the flying exploits of the Canadian aces.

But he accomplishes a great deal more in this book. In successive chapters, each covering one year of the Great War, he chronicles the constant quest for technological advantage and the resultant advances in the development of aircraft, engines and armaments. As well, based on his research findings and a tremendous array of anecdotal evidence from the aces themselves, he traces the evolution of fighter manoeuvres and tactics. Much of what he writes in this regard will be eminently familiar to contemporary fighter pilots. Illustratively, he highlights the transition from 'lone wolf' single airplane combat to the concept of mutual support and larger formations, not unlike today's strike packages. Much of current air doctrine found its genesis in the experience and thinking of these young aviators from both sides of the conflict.

Another highlight of the book are two chapters in particular, one dealing with Air Marshal William Avery

(Billy) Bishop and the other with Captain Roy Brown. The author succeeds in dispelling some of the myths surrounding Billy Bishop, including those related to his performance as a cadet at Royal Military College, and provides a different and valuable perspective on Bishop – both as an officer and as a pilot. He also provides compelling evidence that regrettably, at least from a nationalistic Canadian point of view, Captain Brown did not bring down the Red Baron, Manfred von Richthofen, in air-to-air combat. Rather, he posits that Richthofen's demise was brought about by a young Australian machine gunner in the trenches. These two chapters alone should energize those who have studied and written about fighter aviation to want to read the book.

In addition to being very readable, the book is visually rich, including over forty pages of illustrations, maps, documents and recruiting posters, as well as ten original paintings. The author has first-hand knowledge, and obviously has not forgotten, that we fighter pilots like pictures!

This book is highly recommended for everyone who has an interest in aviation, particularly fighter aviation. It should also be read by Canadians who want to know more about a very special breed of Canadian hero. For if Canada truly became a nation at Vimy, it also did so in the skies over Europe. It became a greater nation through the exploits of many of these 'Knights of the Air' who, in the post-war years, went on to open up our country through their continuing involvement in aviation.

David Bashow is to be commended for his continuing contribution to the body of literature related to Canada's distinguished and proud military aviation heritage.

Lieutenant-General Fred Sutherland, (ret'd) *former Commander of Air Command, is Senior Directing Staff at the Canadian Forces College in Toronto.*



A WAR TO BE WON: FIGHTING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

by Williamson Murray and Allan J. Millett

Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2000. 656 pages, \$54.50.

Reviewed by Colonel Randall Wakelam

In *A War To Be Won*, two well-known and respected military historians and authors attempt to provide a one volume examination of the Second World War – their attempt is generally very successful. Acknowledging the challenge before them, they set out to study the war through the lens of military effectiveness. How did the military organizations succeed (or fail) in carrying out strategic direction; were the technologies of the day adequate to the military plans – or did the plans take into account technological limitations? These sorts of questions and analyses help to focus the book at the operational level of war – a most appropriate way to view the war, and a most effective complement to other recent one volume studies which have looked at strategic level issues, the human dimension of warfare or national questions. Woven into the study of organizational effectiveness, the authors have consciously included the question of effective leadership and command. Taken together, these two themes make for a stimulating examination.

The book is laid out in a series of relatively chronological thematic chapters. Each deals with a specific issue or issues and ends with a short conclusion. In some cases where an activity, such as strategic bombing, lasted over an extended period, the authors have found it more practical, as will most readers, to deal with the matter in one compact discussion rather than leave the topic dangling in a number of chronologically precise but thematically disconnected discussions. Not expected, but much valued, are two chapters at the end of the work which deal with the impact of the war on civilians – both within the war theatres and in North America, and the immediate aftermath of the war.

At 656 pages cover-to-cover, the book is not overly long; indeed, it makes for an enjoyable read with a well-executed text complemented by clear and useful maps, some excellent photos, and a series of appendices which are themselves of great value. Either the authors, or

perhaps the publishers, have decided to be rather too economical with footnotes, and the reader is obliged to place some trust in the expertise and excellent credentials of the authors when specific events or actions are discussed without citation. Those sources that are included are in large measure primary materials and, as discussed below, there is also a comprehensive list of secondary materials.

Purists will argue that a single volume cannot possibly do justice to a period as complex as that of the Second World War, and the reviewer doubts that even Murray and Millett would disagree. In anticipation of this sort of observation they have, one presumes, provided a more than adequate list of suggested readings, by chapter, which includes a range of both the old standards as well as contemporary investigations based on new information. Included in these titles are a few Canadian works, but if it is possible to be disappointed with this book, that disappointment comes when looking for Canadian content. Why, by comparison, Australian activities should garner considerable attention is debatable, but such is the case. Canadian formations are mentioned, but these are few, and if one wants to look at the war from a national perspective then there are many other excellent titles which merit examination. The great value of *A War to Be Won* is that it offers a broad overview against which to examine Canadian decisions and actions.

While not all things to all people, this book – considering the authors, the focus and the extras – offers very good value for money and should definitely earn a place in the collection of anyone serious about the military profession.

Colonel Randall Wakelam is with the Canadian Forces Command and Staff College in Toronto.

THE TRUDEAU LEGACY

by Martin Shadwick

In death, as in life, Pierre Trudeau engendered strong emotions. A *National Post* editorial, for example, eviscerated his foreign policy for its “anti-anti-communism (i.e., anti-Americanism)” and posited that the former prime minister “was generally on the wrong side of the most important ideological battle of our time.” Trudeau’s admirers, in stark contrast, saluted his recognition of China, his efforts at outreach to less-developed countries, his quest for a more independent foreign policy and an antidote to excessive Canadian dependence on the United States (as reflected in the Third Option, the Foreign Investment Review Agency, and the National Energy Programme), and his peace initiative. “He gave Canada,” noted the *Toronto Star*, “a place at the world’s tables of power.”

The reality is more complex. One of the problems of the early Trudeau years was not so much “anti-anti-communism” but a misplaced optimism – an optimism not confined to 24 Sussex Drive – about the prospects for genuine detente between East and West. During his later years in office, Trudeau accepted the deployment of ground-launched cruise missiles in Europe, and criticized the Canadian peace movement for devoting little or no attention to the USSR’s continued deployment of SS-20 intermediate-range ballistic missiles: “The strange result of this forgetfulness is that it somehow becomes possible to portray the Soviet Union not as the aggressor, but as the innocent target. This represents a curious amnesia and reversal of roles, which the Soviet leaders are quick to exploit for their own purposes.”

By the same token, unabashed admiration for Trudeau’s foreign policy must be tempered by the recognition that Pearsonian internationalism had already bequeathed a “seat at the table” and that Trudeau’s foreign policy concluded on a distinctly Pearsonian note. It is most appropriate to applaud the Third Option and the peace initiative, but the failure of the former – albeit for reasons beyond his control – and the limited impact of the latter must be acknowledged.

On defence, Trudeau produced only one *White Paper* but two distinctly different policies. The 1971 *Defence White Paper* and the 1969 declarations from which it flowed were predicated on the belief that the emergence of a less polarized, apparently more benign, strategic environment would allow a marked

reduction in Canada’s military capabilities. They envisaged a freeze in defence spending, sweeping reductions in manpower, a 50 percent reduction in the strength of Canada’s NATO contingent in Germany, the elimination of heavy armour and nuclear weapons, less emphasis on blue water anti-submarine warfare, and greater attention to such roles as Arctic surveillance, internal security, fisheries protection and disaster relief.

The *White Paper* did not prescribe a constabulary-style military – indeed, it declared an intention “to maintain within feasible limits a general purpose combat capability of high professional standard”. But Canada’s military capabilities continued to erode. “For the first time since the interwar period,” warned Rod Byers in 1975, “the armed forces may be approaching an era where it will not be possible to maintain a combat capability.”

In November 1975, at the proverbial eleventh hour, the Defence Structure Review (DSR) effectively restored NATO to its pre-eminent position in Canadian defence policy and rescued DND from the financial wilderness. The product of a less benign strategic environment, entreaties from allies (with European leverage much enhanced by Canada’s quest for trade diversification), and Ottawa’s belated recognition of the regional and industrial development benefits of defence procurement, the DSR heralded a major increase in defence spending and a wide-ranging re-equipment programme. At once an enduring military legacy of the Trudeau era and a telling comment on the scope of present-day block obsolescence, the re-equipment agenda included the Leopard tank, the Armoured Vehicle General Purpose (AVGP) troika, assorted trucks and utility vehicles, a family of small arms, the CF-18 fighter and Aurora maritime patrol aircraft, the initial tranche of Halifax-class patrol frigates and the air defence conversions of the Iroquois-class destroyers.

Amounting, as it did, to a *de facto* reversal of early Trudeau defence policy, the DSR should have been accompanied by a new *White Paper*. Such a document was in fact mooted for late 1978 or early 1979 but, for a variety of reasons, never materialized. The net result was an unconscionable 16-year gap between Pierre Trudeau’s 1971 *White Paper* and Brian Mulroney’s 1987 *White Paper*.

How should the Trudeau legacy be judged? The 1971 *White Paper* clearly presented too benign an assessment of East-West relations, thereby helping to facilitate a near-ruinous, and option-limiting, meltdown of Canada's military capabilities. Canadian defence policy returned to a more sensible and pragmatic posture in 1975, but the subsequent years provided ample evidence

of how difficult, expensive and time-consuming it is to rebuild a defence establishment. That, perhaps, should stand as one of the most important lessons from a tumultuous era in Canadian defence policy.

Martin Shadwick, a former editor of *Canadian Defence Quarterly*, teaches defence policy at York University.

HISTORY AND HERITAGE

The War Diary Team at the Directorate of History and Heritage plays an important role in creating and preserving authentic records of Canadian Forces operations for historical purposes and official investigations. This team was created in 1998 as a direct result of the Somalia Commission of Inquiry recommendations regarding record keeping.

The concept of a War (or Operations) Diary in the Canadian context is more than eighty-five years old. It had its beginnings with regulations issued to the Canadian Expeditionary Force during the Great War. The idea – in fact the very forms used – were borrowed from the British Army, which had adopted the idea from the Prussian Army's *Kriegstagebuch* (War Diary). In the late nineteenth century the Prussian Army, followed by most other armies, had developed the concept of a War Diary in which every unit was to record each day's events.

A dispassionate record such as this provided a means for the thorough analysis of battles in order to determine what had worked well, what had gone wrong, and why. The War Diary, therefore, was a 'general staff' document to be used as the basis for later official histories of campaigns and battles, and to learn lessons that could be applied in the future. In addition, War Diaries served as the most useful resource for the writing of unit histories because the individuals that wrote them were involved in the events as they unfolded.

Current Canadian Forces regulations require that a War Diary must replace the Annual Historical Report when a command, formation, ship or unit is ordered on either foreign or domestic operations. The diary should cover the entire operation, including the pre-deployment, employment and post-deployment phases. In 1966, the Canadian Army's War Diary format was adapted for use by all three elements of the Canadian Forces. Today, however, the CF needs a diary process that can be easily used in war, peace support or humanitarian assistance operations at home or abroad, by any size unit, whether Land, Air or Maritime elements, or Joint Task Force.

The War Diary Team has thus created new forms and added several new sections to the diary, including the Daily Narrative section. This is the entry made by the Diary Officer, usually on a daily basis, that explains what the unit has been doing in more human terms than are conveyed by the daily message traffic. Units are encouraged also to include anecdotal stories of day-to-day happenings. These documents provide a human aspect to the official history, and a good narrative could mean the difference between anonymity and fifteen minutes of fame.

The Commander's Entry is another new addition to the diary, used to include the Commanding Officer's estimate of the situation, record of discussions and decisions, or any other comments or information that the Commanding Officer may wish to enter. This entry is completed on a daily or monthly basis and is the means by which the Commanding Officer comments on and approves the monthly diary submission. This Entry and the Daily Narrative, together with relevant enclosures, create an invaluable and unique historical record.

Enclosures can be anything produced at the unit level, including orders, messages, situation reports, logs, intelligence summaries, briefing notes, meteorological and oceanographic records, routine and standing orders, casualty and significant incident reports, nominal rolls and personnel reports. Also useful are reports on boards of inquiry, summary investigations, medical matters, disciplinary matters, morale, welfare, inspections, visits, honors, awards, equipment states, fuel states, and post-deployment. Other items of interest include maps, traces, photos, videos, compact disks, audio tapes and in-theatre publications.

The next stage in the evolution of the War Diary will be a process that facilitates in-theatre electronic compiling, writing and submitting of the diary. A preliminary War Diary template has already been produced and is currently in use with units on operations.