

THE OXFORD COMPANION TO POLITICS OF THE WORLD, Second Edition

Editor in Chief Joel Krieger

London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1018 pages, \$79.95.

Reviewed by Major David Last

Picture your first interview with a new commanding officer. You stand at her door, salute, sit down — *what the heck is that brick on the desk?* This can't be a good sign. What muddy-boots soldier or eagle-eyed knight of the air would have *The Oxford Companion to World Politics* on the desk? Times sure have changed. Or have they? Look at it from her point of view. Did she get there because of affirmative action? Will she censor the junior officer's critique of defence policy before it is submitted to *Canadian Military Journal*, or censure him after it appears? What do politicians expect of her in the next 'humanitarian intervention' planned for a hot and nasty corner of the world? What will she do with the civilian peacebuilding advisor attached to her command (I'm not making this up!)? When the CIDA liaison officer bleats about democratization and development priorities, or ADM(HR-Mil) sends out a CAN-FORGEN on gender equity, are you going to trust *McLean's* for the deep thoughts that will help you make sense of it all?

The Oxford Companion to World Politics will never replace the platoon commander's tactical manual (it won't fit in a pocket). But it is as useful as any single source can be to make sense of concepts that affect the way soldiers do business, or the way citizens are influenced by the world around them. Organized alphabetically like an encyclopaedia, it has 672 entries, more than 80 new ones since its first edition. Six essays on critical issues provide conflicting perspectives to hone your mess-hall debating skills. On the United Nations, for example, Lloyd Axworthy writes that it has a vital role in world affairs. John Bolton retorts that it is a deeply flawed institution. Maybe they are both right, and that is part of the complexity of the world we need to understand as managers of violence. Did I mention affirmative action? Glen Loury, once a critic of affirmative action, summarizes the arguments for explicit public efforts to reduce inequality. Lani Guinier, a Harvard law professor, argues that neither 'merit' placement nor affirmative action produce real equality. How do we decide what is fair in a unit? Other essays address censorship, the limits of democracy, entitlements, and sustainable development.

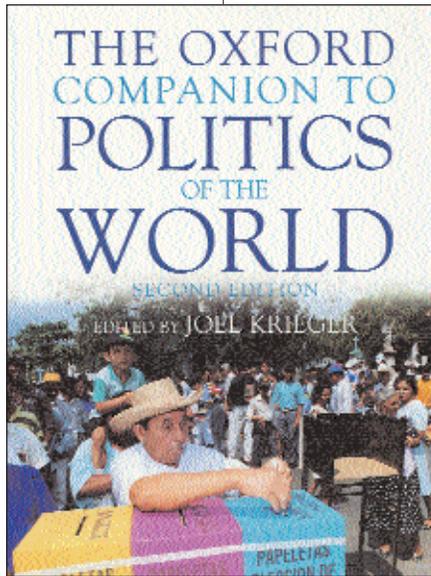
The 23 interpretive essays each provide a few thousand words on key concepts. From class and politics to socialism and war, these entries have been written by

experts in their respective fields. In fact, the editors have sought out recognized authors for almost every entry — more than 500 contributors are listed, and almost every one has been published. This means that the handbook is a useful research tool despite its lack of bibliography and footnotes. Want to know more about war? Jacek Kugler wrote the entry. Look him up and you will find his books on political capacity, power transitions, the stability of deterrence, and his classic, *The War Ledger*, which examined the statistics of violent conflict. Did you think Marxism died with the end of the Cold War? Read August Nimtz on the contribution of Marxism to the democratic breakthrough, "...seldom in history has a writing been so prescient as the 150-year-old *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. Much of the document reads better today than when it was written..." (529). Like many entries in the handbook, this provocative and stimulating reading will leave you wondering how much other stuff was left out of your education.

The shorter entries are succinct, but no less thought provoking. While you are waiting for peace to break out in Bosnia, read what the grand old man of peace studies, Johan Galtung, has to say on the subject of 'peace.' Galtung participated in the International Peace Academy's first peacekeeping seminars in Vienna in 1970. He was behind the definitions in *The Peacekeeper's Handbook*, which was adopted by the Canadian Forces as our peacekeeping manual until we got around to writing our own book in 1993. After you have digested the distinctions between positive and negative peace, as well as physical and structural violence, those protesters against globalization won't look quite the same, and you will have a better idea of what you are waiting for in Coralic. The extensive index also makes *The Companion* easy to use. Are you too young to remember Richard Holbrooke or Jimmy Carter? Look them up in the index! Getting mixed up in Stan-land? Find Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan on the handy maps at the back, and more than a dozen entries in the index (once you learn how to spell them).

The Oxford Companion to Politics of the World is not bedtime reading. It keeps me awake to realize how much I don't know. It is a valuable tool for anyone trying to follow world events, or complete courses or Staff College. At over 1000 pages, this book is thick enough to hold up your monitor ergonomically, but if it is on your CO's desk, you might want easier access to it. The reading room of the Officer's Mess, beside the regimental standing orders, would be a good spot for it, but you might want to chain it down.

Dr. David Last teaches political science at Royal Military College.



BASTARD SONS: AN EXAMINATION OF CANADA'S AIRBORNE EXPERIENCE 1942-1995

By Lieutenant-Colonel Bernd Horn

St Catharines: Vanwell Publishing Limited, 2001, 288 pages, \$40.00.

IN SEARCH OF PEGASUS: THE CANADIAN AIRBORNE EXPERIENCE 1942-1999

By Bernd Horn and Michael Wyczynski

St Catharines: Vanwell Publishing Limited, 2001, 254 pages, \$39.95.

Reviewed by Major J.C. Stone

B*astard Sons* is the first assessment of Canada's airborne experience that goes beyond the Canadian Airborne Regiment's Somalia mission of the early 1990s. The book relies heavily on primary source material, and is not limited to a simple discussion on the demise of the Canadian Airborne Regiment in 1993. The main thesis of the book is that the lack of a clearly defined, credible and enduring role for the use of airborne forces in Canada undermined any chance for long-term and substantive political and military support for an airborne capability. Lieutenant-Colonel Horn argues that this has always been so, whether deciding to follow the British and American deployment of airborne forces during the Second World War as the spearhead for operations into Europe, or to act as the primary defence of Canada in the 1970s and 1980s. Colonel Horn notes that the "Canadian attitude to airborne forces has always been schizophrenic and driven by political purpose rather than doctrine and operational necessity."

The essence of this issue is that the leadership, both military and political, never believed that airborne forces represented a credible national requirement. For example, in the aftermath of the Second World War, the government used airborne forces as part of the Mobile Striking Force (MSF) to defend against a hostile incursion into the Arctic. Airborne forces were an inexpensive option during a time when reducing defence expenditures was a government priority.

Bastard Sons covers the following periods in the airborne history: the establishment of the airborne capability 1942-1945, the immediate post-war period 1946-1948, the Mobile Striking Force and Defence of Canada Force 1948-1967, the Canadian Airborne Regiment 1968-1995, and the re-creation of decentralized parachute companies after the disbandment of the Airborne Regiment.

The first period, 1942-1945, highlights the contradictions in the establishment of the airborne capability.

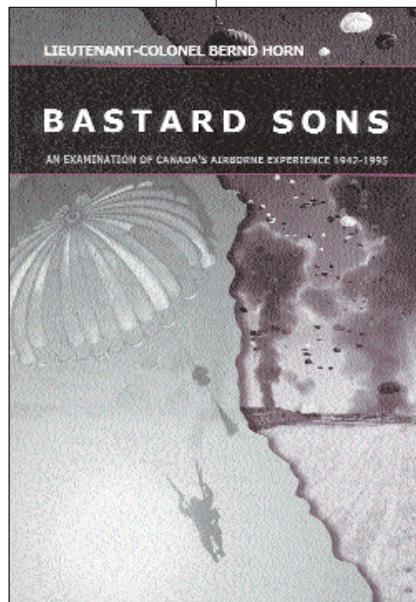
Although this began with the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion, this capability was not established, as some might think, to meet operational requirements evolving in Europe. Horn notes that the stated purpose of the unit was for home defence, even though the rationale of home defence had been rejected previously for lack of relevance — there was no credible threat to Canada.

At the end of the war, the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion was disbanded. Army Headquarters anticipated no requirement for airborne forces in the post-war Army — an Army that was expected to return to the small cadre that existed before the war. What saved the capability was the need to provide an airborne and/or air transportable force as part of the 1946 US/Canada Base Security Plan.

Next, Colonel Horn discusses the MSF being used as the rationale for the paratroop capability. Within the MSF, specific infantry rifle companies were designated for an airborne role, while the remainder of the infantry battalions were to be air-transportable. Horn argues that the MSF was in large measure a concept rather than a reality and, like the airborne capability, was never fully accepted as being credible. The MSF and the airborne/air-transportable capability it represented diverted limited military resources from UN and NATO tasks — the real tasks throughout the 1950s and early 1960s. However, in the 1960s, a change of government, unification of the three services and a change in defence policy focus rekindled the discussion about the need for a paratroop capability.

Horn discusses the creation of the Canadian Airborne Regiment, a 1200-man parachute special force to be kept at high readiness and able to deploy worldwide at a moment's notice. Horn demonstrates that it was only the determination of the Minister of National Defence and the Chief of the Defence Staff that ensured the unit's creation — too many other people thought it would not come to fruition if enough obstacles were put in place. More important, however, the rationale for its existence was never really reconciled with a valid and justifiable operational requirement. Consequently, its role and focus were subject to the interpretation of the commander of the day. Horn reviews some of the problems this created for the unit, with particular emphasis on how the lack of a clearly defined operational role and the consequent lack of focused training led to some of the problems highlighted by the Somalia Inquiry.

The final period of the book is a discussion of the Somalia mission and the subsequent demise of the Airborne Regiment, as well as how the military has maintained a limited paratroop capability, and how the issues involved with this event relate to the history and



activities of the unit. Horn argues that, in many ways, the paratroop capability has come full circle. The Army now has infantry companies assigned the role of parachuting as an additional specialized task, similar to what was required in the immediate post-Second World War period.

If there is an area open to criticism in *Bastard Sons*, it is the author's interpretation of how that lack of a credible operational requirement has been consistent throughout the airborne experience. In many cases, those same individuals that Horn accuses of not supporting the creation of an airborne regiment would argue that the unit *did* have an operational requirement, but that it was not as important as other commitments associated with NATO and the UN. Arguably, this is an emotional issue that will remain open to a variety of interpretations — the split likely being seen as between those who jump and those who do not. Nevertheless, the book is very well written, well researched and enjoyable to read.

Bastard Sons provides a much-needed analysis of Canada's airborne experience beyond the Somalia scandal, a subject that comes into any discussion of the Canadian Airborne Regiment in today's context. It is excellent value for money, and recommended reading for anyone interested in Canadian military history and defence policy.

In contrast to the in-depth and scholarly approach taken in *Bastard Sons*, *In Search of Pegasus* is a coffee table book with 194 of its 255 pages being photographs.

In Search of Pegasus is structured in much the same way as *Bastard Sons*, with six parts developed chronologically. In addition to the introductory and concluding chapters, the periods include the Establishment of a Canadian Airborne Capability, 1942-1945; An Army in Transition, 1946-1967; The Canadian Airborne Regiment, 1968-1995; and Survival of a Capability, 1995-1999.

Despite the lack of footnotes and other scholarly conventions, it is obvious that this book is as well researched as *Bastard Sons*. It tells the story of the Canadian Airborne experience in an interesting way. Pictures support the story being told in the text, and emphasize the unique environment within which Canada's airborne soldiers had to operate.

In Search of Pegasus is an excellent book that complements the more analytical approach of *Bastard Sons*. Both are worth reading, particularly by those who have not experienced the challenges associated with arriving on the battlefield by parachute.

Major Craig Stone is on the staff of the Canadian Forces College.

RWANDA: LA DESCENTE AUX ENFERS. TÉMOINAGE D'UN PEACEKEEPER, DÉCEMBRE 1993-AVRIL 1994.

By Luc Marchal

Brussels: Editions Labor, 2001, 333 pages, no price given.

Reviewed by Serge Bernier

On 4 December 1993, Colonel Luc Marchal began the diary he had promised himself to keep while acting as Kigali Sector commander of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR). Unbeknownst to him, he was embarking upon a 'descent into hell.'

So much has been said about this mission that the well-informed reader might wonder whether this book can offer anything new. But from the first pages of this account, readers, especially those who have not had the opportunity to read the many reports published since 1994, will know they are not wasting their time.

In addition to commanding the UN's Kigali Sector, Marchal was also head of the Belgian contingent, which turned out to be no small task. This contingent was made up of the *prima donnas* of the Belgian Army, the para-commandos, who refused to carry arms slung non-threateningly on their shoulders like common infantrymen, even though that was what the mission required on patrol. Marchal had to explain to the battalion commander at great length why this was necessary. The battalion commander eventually obeyed, but grudgingly

and without being convinced. Marchal was shocked as he became aware of the undisciplined behaviour of his men, even though he himself had once served in this very unit. Canadians who remember what happened in Somalia with our Airborne Regiment will be able to make some very interesting comparisons between these two groups of soldiers — both of whom thought so very highly of themselves.

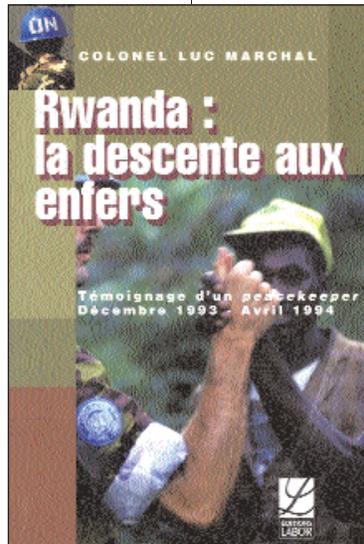
Since the Belgians are the former colonizers of this area, and since part of the population was opposed to the Arusha Accords which attempted to re-establish peace between rival groups of Rwandans, it was imperative that those who came to help not cause unnecessary problems by virtue of their attitude. Marchal became aware of just such negative attitudes among some of the Belgian paratroopers, whose actions reinforced the position taken by those opposed to the peace process. There were repeated acts of indiscipline, including a two-against-one brawl that roughed up a superior officer of another nationality. Far too many soldiers had to be returned to Belgium for disciplinary reasons — 18 were sent home in less than four months — in addition to disciplinary measures taken on the spot. Verbal warnings given to the battalion commander did not produce the desired results, so Marchal wrote to him on 17 January 1994, stating that if this did not stop he would confine members of the Belgian battalion to their barracks after working hours. Nothing changed. The French military attaché complained about the treatment of soldiers of his country's military technical team by Belgian soldiers on patrol. The Austrian consulate had its flag stolen by Belgian soldiers. On 31

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January, the Director of Foreign Policy in the Rwandan Ministry of Foreign Affairs was attacked in his home, but it must be noted that this man also headed the Mille Collines radio station which openly incited animosity towards the Belgian para-commandos. This action further inflamed the situation. The Belgian ambassador to Rwanda was furious; fearing hostile reactions against the Belgian nationals, he gave Marchal a severe dressing down. Marchal was also admonished by his own military hierarchy, and by the UN military commander, Canadian General Romeo Dallaire, who wanted the Belgian contingent sent home. Dallaire gave Marchal 48 hours to resolve the situation, during which time Marchal, accompanied by the battalion commander, André Leroy — one might ask who he really commanded — went to offer his apologies to Jean-Bosco Barayagwiza, the politician attacked on 31 January. After 7 February, the Belgians were confined to barracks, but on 7 March another serious incident took place when four Belgians got drunk in front of the main post office and ransacked part of the Mille Collines Hotel. In front of a crowd of Rwandan witnesses, one of the Belgian patrols abominably mistreated the Rwandan Chief of Defense Staff and his minister, even though they had clearly identified themselves. All politicians should read pages 140 to 155, since political power is at the bottom of all this: politicians did not do their homework properly before deciding to commit a contingent, or in structuring it for the mission and the tasks that its soldiers would be called upon to carry out.

Marchal's primary mission was linked to UNAMIR, to which he could obviously not devote as much attention as he would have wanted. On 2 March, President Habyarimana's party began to give support to UNAMIR, despite the mission's now reduced prestige. The Kigali Sector commander had only limited success, as Marchal himself makes clear. The aim of Operation "Save City," which began just a few days after the Belgians' arrival in Kigali, was to show that the UN force was now in location. When patrols began, Marchal realized that the Belgians, Bangladeshis, and later the Ghanaians, were not on the same wavelength regarding procedures. The Belgians behaved as if they were in a war zone. Then came the establishment of a demilitarized zone in Kigali and the surrounding area. An agreement was reached on 23 December, and the stage was set for Operation "Clean Corridor," involving the arrival and installation in Kigali of an armed battalion of the Rwandan Patriotic Front. Along the entire 80 kilometres of their route, these men, seen as 'rebels' by many Rwandans, had to be escorted and protected. Once again, the 400-odd Belgians involved did not seem to understand the importance of their mission even if, in the end, "Clean Corridor" went relatively well. As for the events that followed, despite the author's efforts, it is impossible to present them in an optimistic light. Discussions between the warring parties were difficult and marked

by ill-will on both sides. Marchal was on the verge of demonstrating this when the course of history put an end to his investigations into the movements of RPF members after their installation in Kigali under the protection of the United Nations. The UN civilian police force was uncooperative. Until 19 March, its director, Austrian colonel Manfred Bliem, seemed more interested in his 'magnificent secretary' than in coordinating the security of Kigali with UNAMIR troops (pp. 205-206). Marchal does a good job of providing details about how information was received in January about the likelihood of a massacre, as well as the deaf ear of the authorities in New York.



Then, on 4 April, the apocalypse began in circumstances that are well known. On 7 April, the Prime Minister was killed, along with 10 Belgian peacekeepers who had replaced the initial battalion of para-commandos towards the end of March. It is evident, according to Marchal, that many knew about "the information that something was going on at Kigali Camp." But the author does not name them, and "passes no judgment" (p. 241). He no doubt knew, as Dallaire has repeated several times since 1995, that the smallest mistake could easily have led to the killing of UNAMIR personnel, expatriates and small isolated groups of peacekeepers and military observers. Once Belgian authorities had decided to withdraw their contingent, the Operations Center in Brussels became concerned about the security of the headquarters of the Kigali Sector, directed by Marchal, and gave orders that he leave the downtown area and go to a less vulnerable location. Marchal, in order to help the mission, obeyed only at the last minute. His troubles were not over. Belgian para-commandos who came to evacuate Belgian expatriates in April vandalized the airport before handing it over to the Ghanaians in UNAMIR on leaving. Before their departure, the Belgians from Kibat 2 — who had lost 10 men — ripped a Rwandan flag to pieces with bayonets in front of local troops.

All Canadian officers should read this book. Do not wait for the translation. Apart from a few passages, it is easy to understand and presents very clearly, especially in the last section, how easily a government can abandon the soldiers it chooses to send on a mission that goes badly. Marchal had to face Belgian military justice; this was a difficult experience for him, and we can empathize with him. Of course, as an historian, I remain somewhat unsatisfied. I would like to know what the colonel wrote in his diary on arrival in Kigali about the people with whom he would work over the next months, including his superior, General Dallaire.

Perhaps the best way to encapsulate the atmosphere pervading this work is to quote Johan Swinnen, the Belgian ambassador to Rwanda who once rebuked Marchal and who wrote the preface to his book: "The

bitterness and disappointment that we feel throughout this account cannot be understood fully except in the light of the optimism and hope that he manifested during the accomplishment of his noble mission in Rwanda” (p. 6). After reading this captivating account,

I am awaiting even more impatiently for that of General Dallaire, to whom Marchal was a companion and a loyal subordinate.

Dr. Serge Bernier is Director of History and Heritage at NDHQ.

LIVING HISTORY CHRONICLES

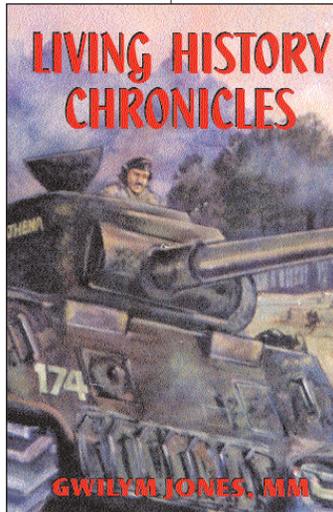
by Gwilym Jones, M.M.

Burnstown, ON: General Store Publishing, 225 pages, \$29.95.

Reviewed by Major Michael Boire

Born in Wales and raised in the United States, Gwilym Jones headed north when the Second World War broke out in order to defend hearth and home while in the ranks of the Canadian Army. Trained in the proud traditions of the Canadian Grenadier Guards, he then earned his stripes, under fire, with the reconnaissance troop of the Three Rivers Regiment in Italy. Returning to Canada after the conflict, he became a Canadian citizen and, like so many other veterans, went back to school, earning several degrees. Over the course of a long and productive life, Jones has been an executive, social worker, painter, author, and poet — truly a Renaissance man. Not content to while away his retirement years, Jones turned to writing, and we are the better for it. His first book was a personal narrative of his own experiences as an armored crewman in action during the Italian and Northwest Europe campaigns.

In this, his second book, Jones builds on his first success with the narrative genre by presenting the experiences of fellow veterans. This is a collection of stories written by a group of former Canadian soldiers, sailors and airmen, as well as veterans of the armed forces of Great Britain and Poland. Together, these men have organized themselves into a ‘Living History Speakers Bureau’ affiliated with the Canadian Legion in the Toronto area. Their mission is to tell young Canadians what it was like to live through the Great Depression and fight in the Second World War and Korea. There are thirty-three narratives in this short volume; each one is a distilla-



tion of formal and informal talks delivered by individual veterans in local classrooms and at public events. Jones introduces each veteran in a short biographic note that provides the wartime context of the stories. Many of the narratives are precise renditions of specific experiences, while others are reminiscences disjointed by fading memory. This variety is to be expected. Nonetheless, the narratives are all sincere and authentic wartime recollections cast against truly great moments of Canadian history.

Indeed, the book’s jacket says it best: “Here you will read about how it felt to liberate Holland, to entertain the troops, to be torpedoed, to thread your way through a minefield, to lose your best friend in an instant. You will read about the D-Day Landing at Juno Beach, the Italian Campaign and the Korean War. You will follow an RAF pilot as he is shot down, taken prisoner, and then — exercising considerable ingenuity — attempts to escape six times.”

This is a book of many uses. It’s a good read; light, yet occasionally serious, always engaging, and consistently straightforward. Careful editing has allowed the storytellers’ personalities to shine through. However, the book’s value goes well beyond entertainment. For Canadian students, this book could be used as a first-rate primary source. The authors are the actors, as they recount significant moments of their lives.

Indeed, it is the modesty and sincerity of each storyteller that binds the chronicles together into a remarkable coherent account of Canadians fighting in distant lands for a cause that they still share.

Major Michael Boire is a doctoral student in War Studies and teaches history at Royal Military College.

BELEAGUERED RULERS: THE PUBLIC OBLIGATION OF THE PROFESSIONAL

by William F. May

Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 289 pages, US\$24.95.

Reviewed by Major (ret’d) Arthur Gans

Dr. William F. May, Maguire Professor of Ethics Emeritus at Southern Methodist University, is one of the deans of professional ethics in North America. In this book he examines a number of professions in the

United States: law, medicine, engineering, corporate executives, politicians, journalism and the media, the ministry and teaching, to see how they are fulfilling their public responsibilities.

May writes from a frankly Protestant religious position. His point of view is that professions owe to the public an obligation in the form of a covenant. This obligation exists because the community allows the professions to both govern and discipline themselves. He also reiterates the idea of the vocation of the professional; that is, the sense that the professional comes to his or her work from more than simply training or

desire, but from a sense that he or she is 'called' to it. Although May does not specifically list the military as one of the professions with which he is dealing, he does, from time to time, speak of the military. But his aim in this book is to speak particularly to those professions which relate to the civil society.

He defines professionals carefully, and distinguishes them from those whom he calls careerists. For May, the professional is marked by three characteristics: the intellectual, the moral, and the organizational. These, in turn, call forth three classic virtues: practical wisdom, fidelity, and public spiritedness. He discusses leadership as one of the skills and arts that are absolutely essential to the professional. And the direction of this discussion is one that could equally be applied to military leadership, although he does not mention this specifically.

In my opinion, this book is a valuable contribution to the general literature on professions. May's analysis of many of the professional problems can and should be applied to both the practice of those professions within

the military and to the military itself. Many members of the officer corps were trained in one or another of the professions with which May deals in this book. I am sure that as they read it, they will see points of application, just as I did. In particular, I would suggest that several of the discussions pertaining to the sense of vocation needed within the professions can be applied liberally to the military, and may serve as an antidote to the kind of careerism which has caused so much difficulty over the years.

At a time when Canadian troops are once again engaged in combat, it is perhaps fitting that the members of the military profession be again reminded of the core virtues of our profession: Truth, Duty, Valour, and the public obligation to which we are committed by law and our commissions. I think that May's book can help in that process. At the very least, he can help us avoid some of the pitfalls.

Major the Rev. Arthur Gans is a retired Army chaplain who has a special interest in military ethics.

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE BISMARCK

by David J. Bercuson and Holger H. Herwig

Toronto: Stoddard Publishing Co., 385 pages, \$42.00.

Reviewed by Lieutenant-Commander Mark Tunnicliffe

The story of the break-out of *Bismarck* — its pursuit, engagement, escape and final destruction — is one of those made-for-Hollywood dramas of the Second World War whose retelling never fails to attract interest. Intrigue, portent, calculation, courage, luck (both good and bad), personal idiosyncrasies and, ultimately, bloody battle, are a heady mix, not only for a great story but also for careful historiography. New information on the events surrounding the *Bismarck* drama, arising not only from newly opened government archives, but also from the recent exploration of the wreck site, provide the potential for fresh insight into the momentous events of May 1941. Consequently, a new book on the subject by two well-known historians is sure to be received with anticipation and enthusiasm.

The main thesis of the book is to bring out supposedly new evidence that the US actively participated in the hunt for *Bismarck* and played a bigger role than previously thought. However, despite considerable research into the log books of USN battleships and the Coast Guard cutter *Modoc* (which got caught up in the action by *Victorious*' Swordfish torpedo bombers against *Bismarck* on 24 May), the authors present little credible new evidence to suggest that the USN was any more active in the search for *Bismarck* than previous accounts have suggested. The patrols of the old battleships, the USS *Texas* and USS *New York*, played up by the authors as key elements in the search for *Bismarck*, would certainly have served to provide credibility to the extended neutrality zone declared by Roosevelt. However, given

their slow speeds, these ships would not have been able to conduct much of a search or chase against anything faster than a supply ship. Indeed, the authors push their evidence, such as it is, to extreme conclusions. For instance, their statement that "an encounter at sea between the *Bismarck* and either of the two US battleships would have probably resulted in the loss of the *Texas* or the *New York*..." is a debatable projection. Given Hitler's injunction to avoid any provocation with the USN, and Lütjen's determination on both exercises "Rhineübung" and "Berlin" to avoid contact with any major combatants, it is far more likely that *Bismarck* would have made use of her superior speed to break contact the moment the fighting tops of any heavy unit were observed.

Perhaps the most egregious case of overstatement made in this book concerns the role of the USCGC *Modoc* during the attack of *Victorious*' aircraft. Based on 'new' evidence — an eye-witness account published in 1980 by the former engineering and communications officers of *Modoc* — they conclude that there is "a good bet that when Esmonde's [*Victorious*' strike flight leader] Swordfish aircraft circled the *Modoc*, he asked where the *Bismarck* was and was told." This conclusion appears to be based on evidence tenuous in the extreme. For while the authors state that the aircraft circled *Modoc* exchanging recognition signals, the referenced eye-witness account makes no mention of any signalling with British units. One would presume that the Communications Officer of *Modoc* (B. Chiswell) would have been aware if any information was passed to the British and, 40 years after the event, triumphantly published the fact in his memoir. However his report is simply that of a surprised passive observer. In making their inferences, the authors express surprise that Esmonde would not have been able to differentiate the radar return from a small cutter from that of a nearby battleship during a tactical descent in thick cloud, drawing the inference that there must have been collusion

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with the US in staging the attack. However, it is certainly far easier to see how this would occur, given the primitive state of the radar used, than the fact that the pursuing British fleet would have mistaken *Modoc* for *Bismarck* when they encountered her on the horizon shortly thereafter. Nevertheless they did. *Modoc* was spared the attentions of British gunnery only through a jammed signal halyard on *Prince of Wales*, which delayed the engagement long enough for a positive identification to be made. This event, which the authors do not mention (or attempt to refute), does make the case for specific collaboration between the pursuing British forces and *Modoc* less obvious.

The book is weakened by a series of errors, which, while generally trivial, tend to undermine the credibility of the authors. What makes this all too frequent occurrence particularly frustrating is that the book often contradicts itself. Errors in misidentifying the secondary battery on the King George V-class battleships, or the number of main turrets in *Sheffield* or *King George V*, are corrected in the book's comprehensive glossary, suggesting that the errors are ones of proof-reading rather than research. Other errors, however, lead to farcical conclusions. For instance, the authors claim that an Italian 8-inch shell weighed 500 lbs., but later in the book have a British sailor "calmly carrying [an unexploded German 8-inch] shell to the railing and tossing it into the sea," leading the reader to conclude that either British sailors had the constitution of gorillas or that the Italians had mastered the secret of making super heavy shells. (The correct weight for Italian 8-inch shells is 276 lbs., according to *Jane's Fighting Ships*.) The authors also occasionally treat statistics in a rather cavalier manner. In stating that *Bismarck* displaced some 12,000 tons more than *King George V*, they are actually comparing the full load displacement of the former with the standard displacement of the latter — a clear apples and oranges situation. By the time that Bercuson and Herwig conclude that a broadside of eight 1,764 lb. 15-inch shells was 29,500 lbs., the reader has become distinctly uncomfortable with proceeding any further without a calculator close at hand. Finally, errors in small details of common historical fact, such as referring to HMS *Achilles* as HMNZS *Achilles* (a year before the creation of the Royal New Zealand Navy), or that Admiral Byng was hanged on his flagship (he was shot), do not enhance the authors' credibility.

Furthermore, the authors' attempt to insert a 'popular' style into the narrative fails, serving instead to irritate the reader, and implying to the professional sailor that perhaps the main reason that the principle actors in the saga had so many difficulties was that they had failed to learn the basic watchkeeping and pilotage skills of their trade. In putting undocumented direct quotes into the mouths of the principal officers, the authors should have taken care to ensure that attributed

conning orders at least conformed to the standard instructions of the day. Instead, the authors insist in imputing such theatrical conning and engine orders as "Full Ahead", "Slow back, both" and "Hard A-Port/Starboard" (the latter proscribed by *The Admiralty Manual of Navigation* because of its potential for jamming the steering gear) to senior British officers. The suggestion that *Hood* used 40 degrees of helm at high speed to make a 40-degree course alteration in the middle of a gunnery evolution amounts to an undocumented slam at basic seamanship skills, though probably unintended as such, due to an evident misunderstanding of its implications. Similarly, the authors ascribe to Admiral Tovey's senior navigator the elementary error of plotting radio D/F bearings on a Mercator chart (during the chase phase when the British had lost contact with *Bismarck*) without comment, suggesting that they didn't understand the implications of such a statement. The real issue with the charts in *King George V* was far more complicated (and investigated in detail by Ludovic Kennedy in his book *Pursuit*), but there is no need to ascribe to a (presumably) 'Dagger N' staff officer an error in chart selection a midshipman would not make. Indeed, by the time the authors have the commanding officer of *Prinz Eugen* terminate an internal broadcast announcement to the ship's company with "over and out," the reader is left with the impression that the principle players in the *Bismarck* saga are refugees from a 'B-grade' Hollywood cop show.

No book is without its flaws and merits, of course. In the latter case, Bercuson and Herwig delve into the characters of the principle players in the drama in an effort to understand why they may have made certain decisions. To some extent, this is more revealing than previous *Bismarck* accounts, and certainly provides food for thought. Indeed, from the perspective of the professional naval officer, *Destruction of the Bismarck* provides an excellent example of how headquarters (on both sides) can help or hinder the operational commander, depending upon how that function is executed by senior command. Additionally, while the book is rather light on charts and diagrams, the authors do present a new plot of ship deployments as observed from the German perspective.

Overall, *Destruction of the Bismarck* is a disappointment. Indeed, in over-blowing the US involvement in the hunt for *Bismarck* with little traceable documentation that supports their suppositions, the reader is left with the unnerving feeling that the authors have set up Hollywood for another *U-571* type fiasco, showing how the US secretly sank *Bismarck*. That is an historical rewrite we don't need!

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