

## THE MAKING OF BILLY BISHOP

by Brereton Greenhous

Toronto: Dundurn Press, 232 pages, \$29.99.

Reviewed by Dr. Allan English

**C**ontroversy is swirling once again around one of Canada's legends, and this time it has been generated by Brereton Greenhous's book, *The Making of Billy Bishop*. This becomes clear early in the book when Greenhous characterizes Bishop as "a brave flyer — and a consummate, bold liar." (p.13) First and foremost, some will see this as an assault on the character of a man who is one of Canada's greatest war heroes. Billy Bishop was a young knight of the air in the First World War who was officially credited with 72 aerial victories. This made him the highest scoring ace in the British Empire, and a star player in what was seen by many then, as well as now, as the game of war. Second, Greenhous attacks the way in which we make our heroes in Western countries, another topic that has caused great indignation in various circles.

Bishop entered Kingston's Royal Military College of Canada in 1911. His fellow cadets compared him to a sailor because he had a girl in every port, an early indication of his charming personality and good looks that aided in his meteoric rise to fame. Bishop joined the Canadian Militia in August 1914, not long after the outbreak of the First World War. Through a somewhat circuitous route, he found himself in the Royal Flying Corps, which became part of the Royal Air Force in April 1918. The unusual amount of flying experience he had gained in England (70 hours versus the average of 17.5 hours) stood him in good stead when he began his career as a fighter pilot on the Western Front in March 1917. This book focuses on his career during some of the most intense aerial fighting of the war. However, Greenhous's portrayal of Bishop, including his being sent home for a year from RMC, probably for cheating on an exam, highlights character flaws that the author believes partially explain how Bishop became, or was made into, a false hero. Greenhous contends that he did not perform all the brave deeds that turned him into one of the greatest celebrities of his day. While Greenhous admits "his courage was never in doubt," he concludes that Bishop was a "distinguished fraud." This assertion is based largely on what Greenhous contends was Bishop's increasing tendency to lie in his career, culminating in his systematic exaggeration or falsification of his combat reports, sometimes abetted by his superiors, in 1917-18.

Many of Greenhous's detractors accuse him of not using any new facts to arrive at his conclusions. In the narrowest sense this may be true, as others have questioned Bishop's tally of victories before, but Greenhous has brought together in one place a unique set of sources from which he draws his own inferences. Furthermore, Greenhous has attempted to assess the veracity of the documentary evidence in a way that goes beyond what previous writers have done. In so doing,

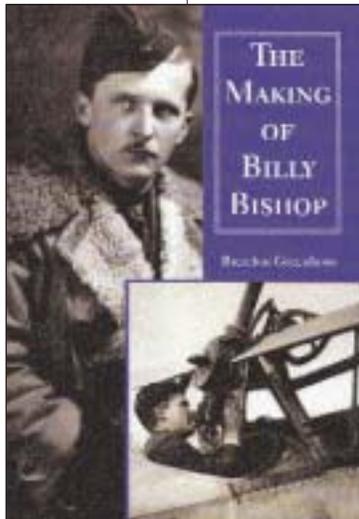
he reminds us that not everything that is written down can be taken at face value, and that context is crucial to interpreting written sources.

Context is a key element in his examination of the process by which we make our heroes. Greenhous challenges the myth that there is some immutable standard for judging who among the many brave warriors in any particular conflict will be granted the title of hero. He reminds us that the awarding of medals and other honours, and therefore the making of our heroes, is in part a political process. This comes as no surprise to anyone who has sat on an awards committee from university sports to national awards. Every awards committee works in its own historical context. When Bishop was awarded his Victoria Cross, many in Britain feared the war would be lost. Morale was sagging, heroes were needed, and Bishop fit the bill perfectly.

One aspect of Bishop's career that does bear further investigation is the role that 'flying stress' (or 'shell shock' in ground troops) may have played in his wartime exploits. Other famous Canadians, Lester Pearson and Georges Vanier to name two, suffered from this affliction in the First World War. Greenhous notes that in May 1916 Bishop's "nerves were at breaking point" and that he was diagnosed with "a severely strained heart." (p. 43) We know that doctors at the time often used the diagnosis of 'soldier's heart' or 'disordered action of the heart' to spare their patients from the stigma, still found today, of having a 'nervous disorder'. In July 1917, Bishop wrote to his fiancé that his nerves were 'shaky'; if Bishop was suffering from flying stress, this might account for some of his behaviour.

Greenhous's strongest critics have claimed that since Bishop is counted among Canada's great heroes, it is somehow unpatriotic to criticize him. This approach mythologizes heroes and tends to portray only their virtues, while ignoring their faults. But even Biblical heroes had their faults. Greenhous's account of Bishop, while not entirely balanced, nevertheless shows him as a man with a mixture of human traits, namely courage, vanity, charm, deceit and determination. But this should not detract from his heroism. Quite the contrary. A god-like being with no faults would presumably have no difficulty becoming a hero. How much harder then for an ordinary mortal such as Bishop. A balanced description of our heroes, and our villains too, shows them to be more like the common people they often were. Sometimes elevation to hero status was the result of luck, sometimes of a courageous act, but most often it was a combination of these two elements, as well as many other factors. In Bishop's case, he was in the right place at the right time, a key but often undervalued factor in the making of heroes.

Explaining the human side of the cast of Canada's historical drama is one of the most important jobs historians can do. In this book we see both Bishop, who Greenhous admits "was a hero," and the people around him, with all their virtues and their flaws. Greenhous's critics too often focus on the flaws that he depicts in these people, and perhaps he *is* overly nega-



tive, but a careful reader will see that Greenhous does not paint one-dimensional, good or bad characters. They are all complex people struggling through one of the greatest crises in the 20th century. Even if we do not agree with all his character sketches, at least Greenhous has not given us cardboard cutout heroes at whose feet we are asked to worship.

If we want to be fair to Bishop and other historical figures, we need to consider him in the context of the times in which he lived. It is probably true that Bishop's claims of enemy aircraft downed, like those of other fighter pilots of the time, were exaggerated by today's standards. But as Greenhous makes clear, it took a great deal of courage just to fly in a First World War aircraft, let alone fight in the RFC on the Western Front, when in April 1917 most pilots in fighter squadrons only survived six weeks. I suggest that we judge Bishop against his contemporaries, and not against some modern standard that cannot be fairly applied to those who lived and fought over 80 years ago in a world very different from ours today.

Greenhous gives us some insights into this world, although his approach has been characterized as iconoclastic. But as Jack Granatstein recently wrote: "An historian's job is to seek the truth, to search out the evidence, analyze it and produce a hypothesis that makes sense of the material. If full weight is given to the context of events, if the documents and accounts are appraised fairly and if the round pegs of evidence aren't wedged dishonestly into the square holes of fact, then maybe, just maybe, truth will be the result. No historian ... or anyone else, has any obligation whatsoever to uphold the received version of history. Indeed, I would go so far as to suggest that good historians always challenge past interpretations." Greenhous has certainly challenged past interpretations, and in so doing provided a very controversial view of one of Canada's legendary heroes.

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## THE REVOLUTION IN MILITARY AFFAIRS

by Elinor S. Sloan

Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 188 pages, \$24.95.

Reviewed by Jason Husiak

**T**he effect of the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) on the armed forces of small and middle-power nations is an area of study needing further exploration in RMA literature. Elinor S. Sloan's book does its part to help fill that void by soberly analysing the RMA's doctrinal and strategic implications for such powers, especially for Canada. Although her book might be a review for those more familiar with Canadian initiatives, her synopsis and analysis of these efforts clearly articulates the RMA's obstacles and opportunities for the Canadian Forces.

Stylistically, the book resembles a doctoral or Masters thesis. Its chapters seem to have been written rather discreetly, or as separate studies in an overall plan for completing a thesis. The book would be improved if these chapters were drawn more closely together by placing greater emphasis on its main thesis. However, Sloan's analysis is methodical and thorough, and she exhibits a practical understanding of her subject. Although she provides a rather sketchy synopsis of the RMA at the beginning, which is understandable given that several volumes would be necessary to catalogue the various approaches to that complex topic, Sloan's work poses questions not generally raised in the context of the RMA, such as its effect on peace-support operations.

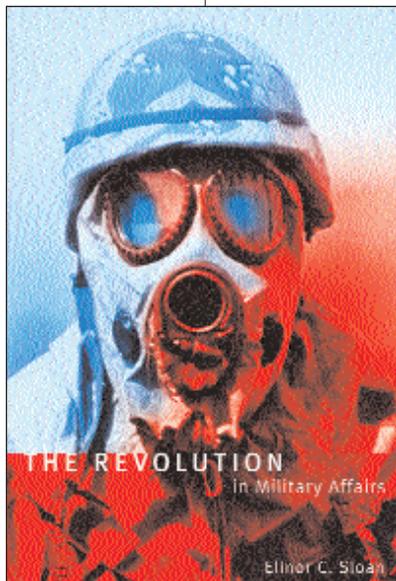
As Sloan states, the RMA has implications that extend to operations other than war, especially considering the role of RMA technology in providing "real-time" intelligence for set-

ting conflicts and enforcing peace agreements, as well as for monitoring natural and humanitarian disasters. Therefore, although the United States is clearly the RMA leader in technology and doctrine, the RMA will affect its smallest allies, even those with minimal global presence. For the foreseeable future, every globally conscious and engaged nation will face the challenges of maintaining allied interoperability, judiciously responding to asymmetric threats, and being able to deploy rapidly anywhere in the world.

Sloan points out that the application of the RMA depends on a thorough understanding of RMA processes. Simply imposing new RMA-like technologies on established war-fighting methods is not enough; these technologies are costly

for even the richest armed forces. She also notes that a technocratic approach ignores the importance of non-technological factors crucial to success in war. Additionally, the RMA is an organizational revolution that stresses jointness, interoperability, agility, flexibility, "just-in-time" force and other concepts partially inspired by new economic thought and managerial approaches. Rather than being determined by technology, the RMA could be conceived as a true "art of war" in which the new meets the old and, as a result, hybrid models of conflict emerge. The most recent example of this process can be seen in the use of US Special Forces in Afghanistan.

Sloan also points to the opportunities the RMA offers, but warns that there are "good reasons" for caution: RMA technology has physical limitations and is by no means a "magic bullet." Political leaders should not be persuaded to think either technology or quick, short "bloodless" conflicts can replace long-term military and diplomatic efforts to achieve security. As she suggests, "placing all of one's eggs in one basket," or embracing "radical innovation," could limit a nation's options in war instead of providing mastery over several war-fighting methods.



Based on this understanding of the RMA, Sloan examines how Great Britain, France, Germany and Australia are changing defence organization, doctrine and technology. Each nation's response has developed at a pace suited to the state of their armed forces, historical circumstances, and the legacies of past geopolitical strategies and operational doctrine. For example, Germany's Cold War orientation to defending the homeland with a conscript force with little or no expeditionary capability is a significant challenge in transforming the *Bundeswehr* into an RMA force. It will demand a mastery of specialized skills that even professional forces find difficult to attain. In each case, political determinations are influencing the modernization process. For example, although the RMA might call for greater interoperability with allies, the national autonomy of French foreign policy must be squared with the need to participate in the RMA.

These case studies raise several questions for the Canadian Forces. In her summary of CF RMA efforts, Sloan points out that the RMA presents great benefits to the CF, even against the

backdrop of budgetary challenges, the maintenance of new and existing international commitments, and the resultant strains on personnel. "Canadian policymakers should view the RMA as much as an *opportunity* as a *challenge*." Clearly, the CF's history of overseas missions, its experience working directly with US forces, its professionalism and its force integration point to RMA dividends.

As Sloan emphasizes strongly at the end of her book, the events since 11 September have made the process of force reorganization and modernization, as well as the reorientation of global priorities, even more imperative for the United States. How other nations will react to the challenges ahead is yet to be determined. In Canada and elsewhere, RMA-like questions such as force interoperability, especially in relation to the US forces, connote not only doctrinal and operational solutions, but also require political and public engagement in the RMA debate.

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## CANADA'S ARMY: WAGING WAR AND KEEPING THE PEACE

by J.L. Granatstein

Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 519 pages, \$50.00.

Reviewed by Major Michael McNorgan

A debt of gratitude is owed to the University of Toronto Press. After having published a number of distinguished works, including the three volumes of official Air Force history, we are now offered *Canada's Army: Waging War and Keeping the Peace* by Jack Granatstein. One might expect that portrayals of such a fundamental national institution as the Canadian Army would be far more common than they are, and yet this is only the third book of its type, the others being George Stanley's classic, *Canada's Soldiers*, published in 1954 and John Marteinson's excellent overview, *We Stand On Guard*, from 1992. Special mention should, of course, also be made of Desmond Morton's *A Military History of Canada*, which covers the other two services in addition to the ground forces.

Everyone who cares for and about Canada's Army will be pleased with Granatstein's superb book. The triumphs and the tragedies are all recorded in their appropriate places, along with sufficient discussion of policy, doctrine, politics, technology and leadership to prevent the work from becoming a mere recitation of battles lost and won.

The underlying theme of the work is the Army's struggle for professionalism; indeed, four of the eleven chapters include that word in their titles. Developing their professional attributes was long the major motivation of Canada's

soldiers, Regular and Reserve, whether they served in the Fenian Raids, the North West Rebellion or in South Africa. As Granatstein points out, this Holy Grail of professionalism was finally found in the trenches of France and Flanders. Found, only to be tossed aside by a Canadian government and public fed up with wars and soldiers, who slashed the Army's numbers and budget back to the level of 1914. As a result, in the Second World War, the Army's professionalism had to be painfully rebuilt from scratch. This was eventually done, only to see the fruits of six years labour nearly dismissed once again by a parsimonious and short-sighted government. Army professionalism was

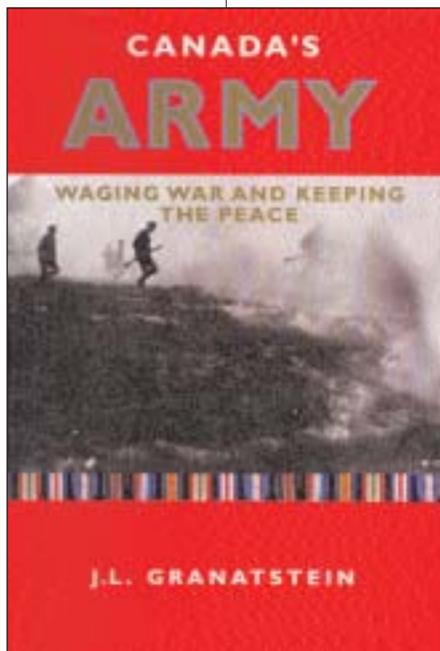
saved, if that is the appropriate term to use, by the Korean War and the creation of NATO. It was thanks to these concurrent crises that the Canadian Army was able to build on its Second World War foundations to create what became known in the 1950s and 1960s as 'the best little army in the world.' Then it all started to unravel. Changes in roles, the wholesale reduction of units in an effort to save money for the defence budget, the upheaval of near continuous reorganizations, over-tasking, under-funding and failures of leadership all contributed to the Army losing sight of the goal of professionalism.

Will the lost professionalism be recovered? That is the next challenge for Canada's Army.

The canvas of *Canada's Army* is broad, its flaws few and relatively minor.

Every soldier, Regular or Reserve, who wishes to understand the Army as an entity, should read it.

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## RETREAT TO THE REICH: THE GERMAN DEFEAT IN FRANCE, 1944

by Samuel W. Mitchum, Jr.

Westport, CT: Praeger, 279 pages, US\$27.50.

Reviewed by Major (ret'd) Arthur Gans

**A**nyone who took OPDP 7 in the Land version, as I did, will find *Retreat to the Reich* by Samuel Mitchum to be a fascinating reprise from the other side of the battle studies, especially in regards to the Falaise Gap. Given that this book is written from predominantly German sources, it will probably cause you to wonder about the picture you had formed previously of the fighting from D-Day through the balance of 1944.

Mitchum is a geographer who has made military history a specialty. He has written some twenty books, focusing mainly on the *Wehrmacht* and the Second World War. His approach includes a detailed knowledge of the personnel of the *Wehrmacht*, their backgrounds and training, in addition to what they did during the war. Since some of my own interests have revolved around Germany in the 20th century, I found the book both interesting in its coverage of the battle for France, as well as for its extensive footnoting of mini-biographies of almost every major participant on the German side.

I do have a few small criticisms. Mitchum often repeats himself when identifying particular things, such as the fact that Gross Lichterfeld is the German equivalent to West Point or, in our context, RMC. He misidentifies one of the most beautiful automobiles ever built, the Horch, as a German Jeep. It was, in fact, a large field limousine which was used by very senior German commanders, usually field marshals. Finally, I was surprised that a book by a geographer would contain such poor maps. Most of them looked like tactical overlays, and lacked the detail that would allow a student to clearly identify the areas covered. They were also quite small.

## A STORM IN FLANDERS

by Winston Groom

New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 276 pages, \$44.95

Reviewed by Colonel (ret'd) Keith Maxwell

**W**inston Groom, the successful American author of *Forest Gump*, has written a very readable populist history of the campaigns in Flanders during the First World War, concentrating on the fighting in the Ypres Salient. The book is clearly intended for an American audience, and tells the whole tragic story of the four battles of Ypres, ranging from October 1914 to October 1918. His description of the appalling conditions and the intensity of the fighting is often told from the soldier's perspective, based on a number of personal memoirs of the war written by British and Canadian soldiers. His overview of the fighting and the controversy within the British command structure are generally accurate, if simplistic. The book is an easy

Despite my minor criticisms, I did enjoy the book, although I must admit that it is not exactly light reading. By the time one is finished, the reader will probably feel that he or she has a substantial understanding of both the personnel on the German side of the battle and the problems which the senior command structures in the French theatre faced. Indeed, I was forced to wonder a number of times how the Allied Forces were as successful as they were. The answer lies in the fact that, in 1944, the Allies had and maintained massive numerical superiority in nearly every important military area. Had the Germans not had over two thirds of their armies occupied in the east, I believe that the results might have been quite different. Only a historian with a complete understanding of the German military materials could have written this book and Mitchum has that kind of understanding.

Another fascinating area to me was how much the 20 July 1944 plot affected the command structure of the *Wehrmacht*. In the last chapter, Mitchum lists the members of the senior command structure who were eliminated as a result of the failed assassination plot. The only similar incident that I can compare it to is Stalin's purge of the Red Army's officer corps prior to the outbreak of the war. Once again, the surprising thing was the fact that the *Wehrmacht* continued to fight effectively for so long after having such a large number of its senior personnel removed or executed.

Looking back at my underlined copies of OPDP 7, the texts might well benefit from having some of Mitchum's materials included in order to convey the difficulties of the battle for France from the perspective of the other side.

Another real advantage to the work is the combination of extensive explanatory endnotes to each of the chapters, and an outstanding bibliography of materials in both English and German. For someone interested in the Second World War period in Europe, I would strongly recommend a careful read of *Retreat to the Reich*.

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read and provides an unfamiliar reader with a good survey of the fighting in Flanders in the First World War.

Unfortunately, the book suffers from a number of inaccuracies and technical flaws which should have been corrected during editing. Further, the book strains to be relevant to the American audience, and suffers from a number of American analogies and American-oriented contextual commentary that seem wholly inappropriate.

The inaccuracies found in the book are clearly the result of inadequate research. While they result in no fundamental flaws, they are annoying and eventually become a major distraction. His description of the British (and Canadian) regimental system is shallow and condescending. That system is described as being 'confusing'. "Regimental designations were a somewhat old-fashioned and quaint way to identify units... Regiments could number anywhere from 1000 to 5000 men and, while they were technically incorporated in the unit divisions...they retained their historic

names....” Clearly, he doesn’t understand the importance of the regiment as the ‘home’ of the soldier or its disconnection from the formal chain of command.

Some of the most significant errors and oversights in the book are made in the contextual comments explaining what was happening elsewhere on the Western Front outside Flanders. His narrative on the initial stages of the war fails to mention the crucial Battle of Mons, where British and German forces first met, while describing less important actions in some detail. In explaining the Battle of the Somme, he states that the attacking forces “...gained barely two miles of ground.” While the battle certainly bogged down to one of attrition at an early stage, the advance averaged more than twice that distance and, in the centre of the battlefield, the allied soldiers advanced over seven miles. He also makes reference to the British Battle of Arras and the taking of Vimy Ridge without any mention of Canadian troops, whose successes at Vimy captured the imagination of the Empire. He makes much of the appointment of French General Nivelle as the operational commander for the coordinated French-British offensive in spring 1917 (which included the Battle of Arras), and emphasizes the subordination of British forces to Nivelle, notwithstanding the fact that the appointment was quite limited in scope and duration. Yet he barely mentions the much more significant appointment of Marshal Foch, a French officer, as the Commander-in-Chief of Allied Armies on the Western Front during the German “Michael” offensive of March 1918, downplaying the fact that it included command of all operational American forces. He doesn’t fare any better when it comes to titles, referring to Sir Edward Grey, the British Foreign Secretary in 1914, as “Sir Grey,” and referring to Field Marshal Haig and General Plumer with incorrect rank on several occasions.

Groom does not let the truth get in the way of a good story, and he is certainly a good storyteller. He includes many of the old myths, including Grey’s apocryphal comment that “lamps are going out all over Europe.” He also asserts as fact the old trench tale, based on the large number of Germans employed in pre-war English restaurants, that the British could get German soldiers to pop their head up over the trench parapet by calling out “Waiter!” He reinforces another old myth about Haig’s Chief of Staff, Lieutenant-General Kiggell, when he saw the dreadful conditions on the battlefield at Passchendaele. Kiggell’s alleged emotional breakdown and outcry, “Good God, did we send men to fight in that!” is unequivocally false. Never concerned about exaggeration, Groom also includes a logistically impossible fiction of German soldiers looting a cache of a million bottles of Scotch during their offensive in 1918!

Groom does make significant mention of Canadian involvement in the fighting in Flanders; however, he also includes a number of sloppy and embarrassing research errors. He twice refers to the initial contingent of Canadian troops, the 1st Canadian Division who fought during the Second Battle of Ypres in April 1915, as the Canadian Corps. The Corps was actually not formed until five months after the battle. Many of his dates are erroneous — he places the Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry (PPCLI) as arriving on the continent on 19 February 1915. In fact, the Regiment arrived on 21 December 1914 and took over a sec-

tion of the trench line near Ypres on 7 January 1915 — the first Canadians to enter the battlefields of the First World War. He also refers to the regiment as the “Princess Pats,” which will grate on the ears of members of that regiment! He makes a similar *faux pas* in referring to the 10th Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF), as the “10th Battalion, Canadian Light Infantry” — in fact, the Battalion was a composite of soldiers from two pre-war regiments, the Calgary Rifles and the Winnipeg Light Infantry. He similarly misnames the 16th Battalion, CEF — the Canadian Scottish Regiment — as, redundantly, the “kilted Canadian Highlanders,” and mistakenly states the date for the Canadian counter-attack on Mount Sorrel.

Toward the end of the book, he describes the large number of names that were inscribed on the Menin Gate Memorial after the war in honour of those soldiers who were killed in Flanders and have no known grave. Curiously and erroneously, he describes the inscriptions as being “gold-plated.” He refers to the Memorial as being British, making no mention of the very large number of Canadian (as well as Australian and other Empire) soldiers whose names also appear. Perhaps use of the addendum ‘Empire’ (or even ‘Commonwealth’) sticks in the American throat.

Groom tries to include more American battle-related content by documenting the involvement of two American divisions in an attack in the Ypres Salient late in the War. However, these divisions were, in fact, assigned to this sector under British command in order to gain experience. Their overall contribution to the fighting in the Ypres Salient was not significant.

He later asserts an American role in the tradition of wearing a poppy on November 11th in remembrance of the fallen. Groom refers to it as the idea of an unnamed American woman, and states that the tradition continued well into the second half of the 20th century. This is an obvious sop to his American audience — the tradition of the poppy as a symbol of remembrance was inspired by Canadian Colonel Major John McCrae’s famous poem “In Flanders Fields.” The wearing of the poppy on the 11th of November (Armistice or, more recently, Remembrance Day) was popularized by Earl Haig’s poppy fund efforts after the War. The tradition is alive and well in Britain, Canada and other parts of the Commonwealth, but it is *not* an American custom.

At one point late in the book, Groom attempts to explain the magnitude of the number of soldiers buried in the Ypres Salient area, drawing a bizarre comparison to the number of American graves in France from World War Two. The comparison seems badly out of context, and is undermined by his factually incorrect statement that the Second World War cemeteries in France “...contain the graves of approximately 10,000 American soldiers.” In fact, almost 150,000 American soldiers died in France, Belgium, Luxembourg and Germany in the last year of the Second World War, and over 30,000 have graves in France.

It is surprising that an author of Groom’s reputation would put out an historical work so full of errors — those errors and the awkward search to make the book relevant to his American audience are substantial flaws in an otherwise

quite readable book. Groom's significant talents as a narrator and writer are diminished by the poor research and editing. Most of the errors are obvious to any serious student of the First World War, particularly one who has studied the Western Front.

The reader in search of meaningful, accurate insight into the tragic battles in Flanders during the First World War should look elsewhere.

Colonel Keith Maxwell, (ret'd) works for NATO in Brussels.

## A HISTORY OF MILITARY THOUGHT FROM THE ENLIGHTENMENT TO THE COLD WAR

by Azar Gat

Oxford University Press, 890 pages, \$47.95 (paper).

Reviewed by Frederic Labarre

**T**his tour-de-force of scholarly research unites in a single volume what took Azar Gat most of the post-Cold War era to write — his trilogy dealing with the evolution of military thinking through the last 450 years. The volume is divided into three books. Book I is essentially an introduction to the second Book, which deals with the Enlightenment and the impact of philosophical, scientific and social currents on the theory and practice of war. Book II treats three classical thinkers in a masterful way: Jomini, Clausewitz and Bulow have rarely been scrutinized with a more critical eye. For this alone, Gat's book is an essential component of the library of anyone interested in military strategy.

Book II explains how the scientific breakthroughs achieved in the late Renaissance and during the Enlightenment changed the perception of man's place in the universe, and how this change affected the way mankind perceived warfare. If late Renaissance thinkers believed they had achieved a comprehensive theory of war based on mathematical rationality, those of the Enlightenment came to understand that war had a social origin and nature. The period of the Enlightenment was thus a struggle between those who thought of war as a science, and those who believed it was an art. This debate, through which Gat guides the reader in a masterful fashion, was modified by the impact of the Age of Revolutions of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, and introduced a more modern worldview. The amalgamation of Enlightenment principles with modern mass armies introduced new complexities for democratic nation-states and the conduct of war. This, Gat shows, sowed the seeds of the disaster of the First World War.

The reader will be taken by the ease with which Gat highlights major trends such as, for example, how morale superseded 'geometric' combat tactics as the essential ingredient of victory. One cannot fail to take note of his approach to the contemporary difficulties of nations and their armies; therefore, Gat's work has practical implications that put

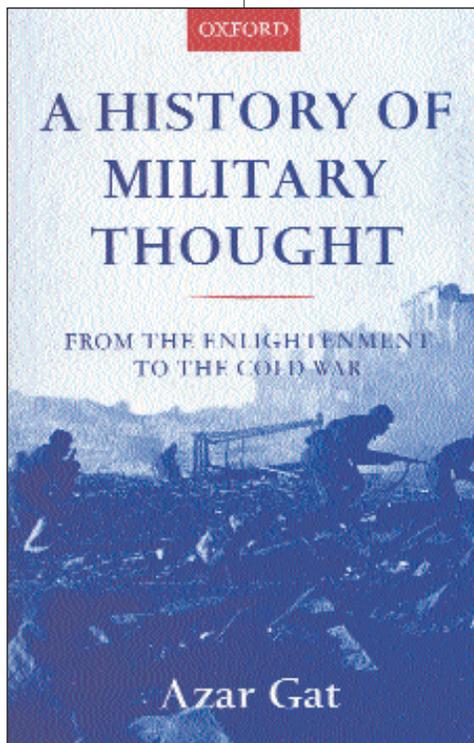
things into perspective. When historical, social and philosophical trends are properly blended and explained, the decisions of Napoleon, Joffre, Foch and others — some of which the luxury of hindsight teaches us were folly — do not seem that ridiculous.

Book III, which does not quite come up to the same standard as the first two parts, discusses the fascist and liberal schools of warfare. The exposé on the ascent of fascism and its corresponding military thought is especially well presented, but perhaps too brief. The other great strength of Book III is the unapologetic treatment of Sir Basil Liddell Hart. The reader may well conclude that nothing remains to be said about this complex man but to acknowledge that his 'pamphleteering' succeeded in establishing the manoeuvrist and the indirect approach concepts that transformed strategy in the Second World War and in most wars thereafter (although those wars are not treated by Gat).

There are, of course, weaknesses apparent in this work. First, it is narrowly Euro-centric in its focus. Russian military thought is all but excluded, as is Asian thought. East Asia has its own classics, and the book might have introduced some of this, if only to explain how conventional warfare has changed in the last 50 years with the onset of guerrilla tactics.

Book III also introduces the reader to the Cold War and to some of the important strategic concepts that gained currency in the last 55 years. Liddell Hart, owing an intellectual debt to Fuller and Lawrence, indeed may have succeeded in imposing his strategic vision, but Gat is mistaken in thinking that he was the only pivotal influence on military thought after the Second World War. Eminent strategists such as Kennan and Brodie are notable by their absence of mention, and it is disingenuous to pretend that concepts such as deterrence and containment were introduced by Liddell-Hart alone. In fact, very little is said of the nuclear era. If Gat had purposefully defined his book as focusing on conventional warfare (and this is nowhere clear), this would not be a serious shortcoming, but that is not the case.

The world has seen more armed clashes in the 50 years after the Second World War than throughout all of the 19th century. Is there nothing to be learned from the American war in Vietnam and the Russian conflict in Afghanistan, with their renewed emphasis on attrition warfare, or the trench



warfare in Eritrea-Ethiopia and in Pakistan and India? These are aspects of military thinking that deserve investigation.

Whatever its minor flaws, this is a book of outstanding quality and is highly recommended. It is a superb companion

to Paret's *Makers of Modern Strategy* and Williamson Murray's *The Making of Strategy*.

Frederic Labarre, MA, *resides in Kingston.*

## SUN TZU AND THE ART OF MODERN WARFARE

by Mark McNeilly

Oxford University Press, 320 pages, \$44.00.

Reviewed by Lieutenant-Colonel Charles S. Oliviero

**M**ark McNeilly states that his aim in writing this book is "to make *The Art of War* more easily understood and applicable by soldiers, statesmen, historians, and those interested in strategy and warfare [by] crystallizing the concepts and ideas put forth in *The Art of War* into six strategic principles." The author then states categorically that these principles are akin to those of physics in that anyone who uses them will be successful. His remarks immediately caused this reviewer to wonder where 'art' and physics conjoin. McNeilly's insistence on the existence of a set of immutable principles raised a false hope that he had perhaps discovered something that 2,500 years of investigation had somehow overlooked.

McNeilly, a former Army captain, is a marketing strategist for IBM. Although he may be a good business strategist, he is neither a military theorist nor an historian and, thus, fails to offer a satisfying military or historical analysis. The book suffers from the same problem as many books of its type. The author is constantly telling the reader what another author meant: when Sun Tzu said this he meant this. When Sun Tzu talks of this he means this. McNeilly has his own views on how war is to be fought (actually an amalgam of half-formed ideas culled from Clausewitz, Liddell Hart and Machiavelli), and this personal view of warfare greatly interferes with the author's explanation of Sun Tzu. In fairness, the book is not really about Sun Tzu at all. It is really about McNeilly's views on warfare.

Ironically, McNeilly makes the same mistake that he accuses western military thinkers of having made. When he refers to Clausewitz, he says that the Prussian focuses too narrowly on war and does not consider it holistically (as he claims does Sun Tzu). He makes the same accusation against Machiavelli. A closer reading of both these authors might well uncover that exactly the opposite is the case. Actually, McNeilly focuses too narrowly on war. The author's own understanding of war in the holistic sense is obviously shallow. In spite of his insistence that Sun Tzu deals with war holistically, McNeilly fails to offer good examples outside of the military realm. His reference to Bismarck and his political manoeuvring prior to the Austro-Prussian War of 1866 is the only real political example used, and it is incongruously linked to a quote from Sun Tzu, where the ancient philosopher admonishes the reader to attack enemy alliances. He makes a similar mistake when he compares the 'European' game of chess with the oriental

game of Go. A superficial explanation of chess belies the author's claim of understanding the game (chess is actually an oriental game of strategy).

McNeilly is obviously a committed acolyte of the venerable Chinese philosopher. He reads into the text meanings that are questionable at best. Although *The Art of War* is one of many texts that form the basis of the doctrine of Manoeuvre Warfare, not all of what that doctrine espouses is to be found in Sun Tzu. The concept of Mission Command, for instance, as admirable as it is, simply does not appear in Sun Tzu. Most students of the ancient philosopher would likely agree that he would likely have been uncomfortable with subordinates who took it upon themselves to interpret direct commands. Again, there is attribution which cannot be supported, and the reader is left wondering if McNeilly is not guilty of hindsight bias in attributing to *Art of War* what is actually in William Lind's *Maneuver Warfare Handbook* or Robert Leonhard's *Art of Maneuver*.

McNeilly's lack of depth in history is apparent when he baldly states that protracted war inevitably leads to an attrition strategy, and that neither are war-winning strategies. This is a black and white treatment of strategy; there are certainly ample examples where both attrition and protracted war have proven victorious.. Mao Tse Tung specifically chose a Fabian strategy against the Japanese. George Washington did likewise against the British. Both won. NATO used a sophisticated form of economic attrition strategy to destroy the Soviet Union. The author fails to recognize that one size does not fit all, and in his dedication to the indirect approach, he fails to see that a blind adherence to any single strategic tool is worse than having no tools at all. He makes a similar mistake when discussing manoeuvre, and fails to appreciate that manoeuvre for its own sake is simply a waste of resources. Manoeuvre is only worthwhile when it serves a higher purpose. Otherwise, it is nothing more than useless movement.

Having said all that, the book is reasonably well written and an easy read. The chapter on character-based leadership is easily the best part of McNeilly's own work, and the inclusion of a reprint of Samuel B. Griffith's original 1963 translation of Sun Tzu's *Art of War* makes the book valuable for the reprint alone. For the younger reader, or for someone without any depth of knowledge on the subject, McNeilly might act as a fair introduction to the subject; however, the reader must be warned that it is facile in its treatment of the great issues of military history. If a person is looking for a simple Sesame Street approach to classic military theory or military history, then this book will do fine. However, for any serious student of war, this publication has little to recommend it.

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