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# CANADIAN MILITARY HISTORY

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### Canadian War Museum

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**T**he Canadian War Museum, the national military history museum, is a living memorial to those men and women who served in Canada's armed forces. It is also a centre for research and dissemination of information and expertise on all aspects of the country's military past from pre-contact era to the present. It preserves the artifacts of Canadian military experience, interprets them for present and future generations, and advances the professional study of Canadian military history, including the effects of war and conflict on the nation and all its citizens.

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**T**he purpose of the Laurier Centre for Military Strategic and Disarmament Studies (LCMSDS) is to foster research, teaching, and public discussion of military and strategic issues of national and international significance. The Centre is intentionally multi-disciplinary; it has strong commitments in military history, with emphasis on the Canadian experience, and in strategic and operational studies, with emphasis on disarmament. LCMSDS supports both basic and applied research as well as teaching at the undergraduate and graduate levels. In addition, the extensive program of LCMSDS workshops, conferences, public lectures, and publications encourages informed discussion of international security and of Canada's national interests in military and strategic issues - past, present and future.

The Laurier Centre for Military Strategic and Disarmament Studies was founded in 1991 as a Research Centre affiliated with Wilfrid Laurier University. Its primary support has come from the Department of National Defence and from Wilfrid Laurier University. The Director of the Centre is Dr. Marc Kilgour, Professor of Mathematics, and the Co-Director is Professor Terry Copp, Professor of History.

# From the Editor

There has been much discussion in the media since 11 September 2001 about the "war" against international terrorism, and the problems of a proper response from western states. The attacks on New York and Washington have been likened to a modern Pearl Harbor: a cowardly sneak attack on American civilians going about their peaceful pursuits. In a sense, the Pearl Harbor analogy is right. The attack of 11 September came from out of the blue and shattered not only lives and property, but comfortable notions and a sense of order and well being. But beyond that simple comparison there is little that the two incidents share, and the problem of a proper response remains a serious challenge to the west.

The reason this new war is complicated is because it is not a war - in the western sense - at all. Pearl Harbor was attacked by aircraft from a battle fleet operating on behalf of a state which, as it turns out, was just a little slower in declaring war than it was in launching the attack. If the argument in Victor Davis Hanson's new book *Carnage and Culture: Landmark Battles in the Rise of Western Power* (Doubleday, 2001) is right, then Japan's greatest victory in 1941 was also its gravest error. For the Japanese, who had adopted the western model for many things, employed the western way of war against the dominant western power. According to Hanson, this was cutting cards with the devil. Admiral Yamamoto, who had spent considerable time in the United States before 1941, understood this too, but he could not prevent Imperial Japan's impulse to twist the dragon's tail.

It was not simply the huge differential in material and economic power that doomed the Japanese, according to Hanson. It was, in fact, trying to beat the west at what it did best: fight conventional wars. Moreover, it was western culture itself, especially the freedom of thought and enterprise which engendered military innovation and the western concept of civic militarism - every man a soldier, and every man fighting for *his* values, rights, or property - that made the west such a uniquely powerful military force. It was the western penchant for battles of

annihilation, and for innovative military technology, which doomed the Empire of Japan to a humiliating and final defeat. That course was foretold the moment the first bombs rained down on Pearl Harbor.

The preferred western course of action to resolve such differences, Hanson argues, is a proper, stand-up battle of armed forces: just what the Japanese offered on 7 December 1941. "The classical notion that pitched, shock confrontation is the only way to resolve wars," Hanson writes about the lingering aspects of this western way of war, "in part explains why Americans consider it honorable and effective to bomb the Libyans when they have committed a terrorist act in Europe, or to rain down enormous battleship projectiles upon Palestinian villages openly and 'fairly' from offshore when a few of their residents are alleged to have bombed in a 'cowardly' fashion American Marines asleep in their barracks." This western tradition of fighting - the idea that tough, well armed citizens ought to take on all comers and resolve the matter fairly, in an open fight - is why "terrorists who shamelessly killed a few women and children, or states that surprised us on Sunday morning in a bombing attack on our fleet, usually found mechanized murderous armies of retaliation on their soil and daylight fleets of bombers over their skies." (97).

How this western way of war will be reconciled with the tragedy of 11 September 2001 remains - at the time of writing this - to be seen. Certainly, direct large scale military action against such a nebulous target as international terrorism, and so resilient an idea as religious fundamentalism, is inadequate. The terrorists, operating from weakness, have deliberately not chosen the western model of conflict.

There is much in this and other issues of *Canadian Military History* that supports Hanson's thesis. As Michel Auger makes clear in this issue, the Voltigeurs and other militiamen of Lower Canada who served from 1812 to 1814 fought to preserve their property and way of life:

to defend Lower Canada, not the British Empire. As Auger argues, they responded to the uniquely western notion of what Hanson calls civic militarism: the obligation of men who own property and have certain rights to defend the system of which they are a part. It was this that rebuilt the Roman legions after their catastrophic defeat at Cannae in 216BC, and the lack of civic militarism that left the Carthaginians stranded in the boot of Italy - or the Persians in Greece a century and a half earlier after Salamis - without reinforcements from home. It was, of course, this whole idea of obligation to serve against a danger that threatened our way of life that led hundreds of thousands of Canadians into military service in the great wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Few of those soldiers would have articulated it in the way Hanson does, or even perhaps understood the point he was making. But they went, fought and died for their ideals. Indeed, they fought because they felt they had a proprietary right to do so, which is Hanson's central point.

In the two world wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century a similar drive motivated the other side, and the results were bloody and often catastrophic: western wars fought as only westerners can fight them. "The most gallant Apaches - murderously brave in raiding and skirmishing on the Great Plains - would have gone home after the first hour of Gettysburg" Hanson argues. The same might be said about the cold rationalism of civic militarism that made the Somme, or the Hundred Days Campaign, or Normandy possible - and victory over non-Europeans almost a certainty.

Moreover, Hanson argues, we can and do accept most of the losses of the great wars as "fair" because they were mostly the result of soldiers fighting soldiers. This notion probably reaches its apogee in western war at sea, where ship fights ship, like the battle between *Haida* and *U-971*. During the war "Hard Over" Harry DeWolf never flinched from driving his ship into the teeth of enemy fire, and going those final yards to ensure the destruction of the enemy vessel. In naval warfare ships need to be killed, not men. Nonetheless, there are 'rules' to follow. "The real atrocity for the Westerner," Hanson writes, "is not the number of corpses, but

the manner in which soldiers died and the protocols under which they were killed." For the westerner, ambushes, terror attacks and the execution of prisoners fall outside the norm of acceptable behaviour - although, somewhat paradoxically, attacking an enemy population directly with air power (probably a carryover of the older tradition of unrestricted attacks on castles and walled cities) is acceptable.

Within this narrowly conceived western way of war combatting fanatics has always posed problems, perhaps never more so than trying to combat religious fundamentalists. Fortunately, when Canada has fought fanatics in the recent past they have generally been narrowly defined. As Mike Sullivan points out, Nazi fanaticism was ethnic and racially based, and therefore not easily transferable to other cultures and traditions. Destroy the Nazi state and you eradicate the Nazi fanatic. Things are not quite so simple with an idea which crosses state and ethnic boundaries, like religious fundamentalists or international communism. The ultimate battleground in this struggle - the hearts and minds of those who subscribe to ideas and those who are encourage to accept them - is beyond reach of conventional weapons. Resolving the current crisis will be more a test of brain than brawn, and we can only hope that those in charge have the skills needed to deal with it.

Marc Milner  
University of New Brunswick

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The painting on the cover of the last issue of *Canadian Military History* was a detail from "The Battle for Courcellette" by Louis Weiter, Canadian War Museum CN 8931.

# Coming of Age in Normandy

**Katherine Hayes**

*Editor's Note: This op-ed piece was originally published last November in the National Post. When it first appeared it was a very heartfelt reminder to not forget the sacrifices of previous generations. Without question, these words have even more relevance in the wake of the events of 11 September 2001.*

Everywhere I looked there were small, white tombstones. They mark the bodies of Canadian men who died during the D-Day invasion. It was last month, and I was in Normandy, and my view of the world was changing.

As I stood there, I held the hands of my two small children and I wept. Together, we read the names of the young men buried there. A 19-year-old from British Columbia, a 24-year-old from Quebec. Just ordinary Canadian boys.

I cried not only for the loss of their lives, but because at the age of 43, I finally understood their sacrifice. And I knew that despite our solemn vow to remember, most of us are forgetting, or never learned, why those men fought.

I'm an ordinary Canadian. I don't have any kind of military background. In fact, I've always vaguely considered myself part of the peace movement. My position was always "for peace" and "against war." Of course, the Second World War was an exception, because force was necessary then, and honourable. Anyway, for me, it was long ago and far away.

Until my family visited the D-Day beaches in France. On that day, Geoff and I struggled to explain the war to our son and daughter. Try to explain freedom to a nine-year-old. Try to explain tyranny and oppression and evil. The words don't come easily. From the luxury of our safe, wealthy democracy, the concept of a fight for good against evil sounds uncomfortable, overly dramatic. But you cannot study the war, and cannot stand before those graves, and not understand that those boys died for freedom. You cannot deny the evil of Hitler, or dictatorship and destruction and death.

It happened only 55 years ago, and we are forgetting it already.

When we returned from Normandy, I read about Romeo Dallaire's horrific experience in Rwanda in *Saturday Night* magazine. And it came to me that there has been a terrible consequence to our ignorance of our past. It goes beyond our failure to honour our

veterans. I think that because we have failed to remember the struggle that took place during the war, we have failed to continue that struggle.

Tyranny was not destroyed during the war; it was only beaten back. And other tyrants have crept back, gaining confidence, because they no longer fear us. They put guns in the hands of our children and force them to kill their neighbours. They encourage their soldiers to rape women in the streets. Look at Milosevic, and the Hutu government in Rwanda. They understand that Western people, including Canadians, are no longer "comfortable" with military solutions, even in the face of atrocities.

The peace movement made many valuable contributions to the world. But it also caused a tragic consequence to modern victims of terror. By eroding support for the military in our country and in the world, we lost the strength to respond to such tyranny.

The peace movement helped us drift toward a consensus to withdraw support for our Armed Forces. We believed this would make the world a better place. We would become better people. Non-violent. Peace-loving. The opposite of soldiers.

Now, in Canada, we give cautious approval for peacekeepers, but we warn our politicians that we will not tolerate a single photograph of a soldier actually engaged in combat. And we will not forgive them for the death of "one of our own." We will not have it on our conscience.

Politicians live by the polls, and in this issue, they do exactly what we want them to do. So our peacekeepers are sent to the "hot spots" of the world with their hands tied behind their backs, instructed to stand tall, as some kind of noble symbol of our goodness. In the end, these soldiers return demoralized and frustrated by absurd restraints designed to protect the careers of our politicians, not the victims of tyranny.

War is terrible. Soldiers kill, civilians die and blood flows. But there is something worse than that. It is watching evil occur, and not stopping it. Ask

Romeo Dallalre. Ask what has been placed on his conscience.

This decent Canadian was forced to witness the massacre of 800,000 innocent people because he couldn't get approval to stop it. Even as he watched the evil unfold, the butchered children stacked like cordwood outside his door, he was unable to act.

And, as Canadians, we are stunned. How did this happen? Still today, we can't look away from Dallaire and his struggle for sanity. Somehow, his grief has become part of us, as individuals and as a nation. Again, because we are a good people, we hope that he will be all right: that when he shows us whom to blame, we can fix it. Perhaps he should hold up a

Dear Sir,

**J**ust a word to congratulate Dan Jenkins on the article on "Intelligence in the Canadian Corps, 1914-1918" in the Spring 2001 issue of *Canadian Military History*.

It was very interesting to compare the methods and organization of Intelligence in the field in the First World War, with that of the Second World War. On looking over his article, not much had changed from the First War to the Second. There were not the trench systems of static warfare, but the intelligence organization and the tasks to be performed, was adapted to a system based on all round defence of each battalion, with a contribution from supporting arms, including aircraft. In the Second World War when units were dug in and static, communications were by telephone, as in the First World War. The organization chart in Figure 1 was still much the same.

However, when on the move, radio and dispatch riders were relied upon. The intelligence functions were still carried on, even as units leap-frogged each other on the move. When they ceased moving it was back to line transmissions again. We had an advantage in that Allied aircraft dominated the skies and we could see over the hill - over many hills - and gain information as to the enemy moves and defences. Artillery intelligence also became more refined due to technical advances. So did Engineer intelligence. We also had tanks

mirror so we can see our own faces. We have all chosen this path of non-interference, and we have become utterly lost upon it.

As a Canadian, I grew up in that cemetery. I gave up my last illusions of the "goodness" of staying as neutral as possible. As a Canadian, I want to hold my head up in the world. I want to remember that those young men and women fought for freedom and justice, miles and miles from Canadian shores. I want to remember their sense of responsibility, and moral decency, and unflinching courage.

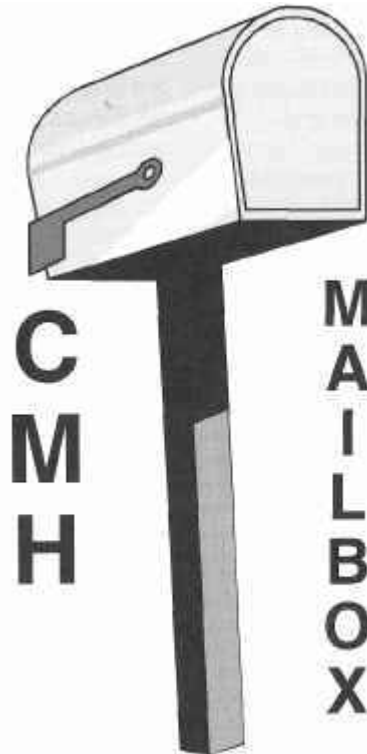
And from my place in the democracy that they fought for - that they fought to the death for - I want my country to remember our honour.

reporting information, plus Recce units, etc. The system adapted to both static and mobile warfare. Higher HQs outside the battlefield also contributed using their sources.

As for today. No major war has yet been fought bringing into play the satellite and star wars equipment. The Gulf War was a trial balloon on a small scale. Detection methods using technical and electronic means has advanced, in fact one gains the impression that the next war will be fought from

computer consoles and no troops on the ground will be required except as peacekeepers after the enemy and his territory has been reduced to ashes. Of course, all the electronic systems will be fine - unless an enemy has developed a means to jam them - and if he has one we are not likely to know until it is used; or until the supply of batteries runs out; or the teams of highly trained technicians needed to keep the system operating are used up.

Then it will be back to the ground, with commanders and troops using *their own brains for computers as before*. Then, in all months of muck and filth and destruction of the battlefield, and using ingenuity and adaptability, and all other qualities required, just as Joshua is reported to have used his intelligence organization, then the war will continue until one side lays down its arms. Maybe Canada will have to engage in such ground warfare again, while the star wars are being fought. We are not in the star wars field. Then there are poison gases and germs. What are the Canadian Forces ready for now? We have no reserves. It is politically incorrect to raise such questions now. I would be very surprised if the Canadian Intelligence organization and effectiveness has not also sunk to the level of the other elements in spite of the efforts of the dedicated rank and file.



Sincerely,  
Reg R. Dixon, CD. Retd.