

Maple Leaf Against the Axis: Canada's Second World War by David J. Bercuson, and: Battlefields in the Air: Canadians in the Allied Bomber Command by Dan.

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 ***Maple Leaf Against the Axis: Canada's Second World War by David J. Bercuson, and: Battlefields in the Air: Canadians in the Allied Bomber Command by Dan McCaffrey, and: Airborne: The Heroic Story of the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion in the Second World War by Brian Nolan, and: The Unknown Navy: Canada's World War II Merchant Navy by Robert G. Halford (review)***

Marc Milner

The Canadian Historical Review

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REVIEW

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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

162 The Canadian Historical Review subordinate, Larry Buchan. A more tragic figure was NWMP Commissioner Lawrence Herchmer, commander of the 2nd Canadian Mounted Rifles. When he succumbed to heat and exhaustion, enemies of the Tory disciplinarian who had drilled the Mounties to their fine reputation had the chance to terminate his career. Liberals in Ottawa helped. The most outsized character in the Canadian contingents was Colonel Hughes. Frustrated in his bid to lead the Canadian contingent, the Tory MP from Victoria County, Ontario, wheedled and wept his way to South Africa and into a staff position in a column fighting Cape Colony rebels. In Reid's assessment, Hughes's feats of reckless courage and irresponsibility earned him dismissal as much as letters to Cape town and home-town newspapers bragging of his feats and denouncing his British superiors. For Hughes, of course, his proper reward was a Victoria Cross, and his removal by Lord Roberts (though never publicly admitted) helped fuel the vendetta against professional soldiers he waged as minister of militia from 1911 to 1916. Reid's publisher, Vanwell, continues to serve the market for Canadian popular history with attractive, reasonably priced books. This is a respectable addition to the list.

DESMOND MORTON *Montreal Maple Leaf Against the Axis: Canada's Second World War*. DAVID R. BERCUSON. Toronto: Stoddart 1995. Pp. xv, 316, illus. \$29.95 *Battlefields in the Air: Canadians in the Allied Bomber Command*. DAN MCCAFFREY. Toronto: James Lorimer ~995. Pp. xi, 196, illus. \$29.95 *Airborne: The Heroic Story of the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion in the Second World War*. BRIAN NOLAN. Toronto: Lester 1995. Pp. xii, 227, \$26.95 *The Unknown Navy: Canada's World War II Merchant Navy*. ROBERT G. HALFORD. St Catharines: Vanwell 1995. Pp. x, 272, illus. \$29.95

One of the most enduring themes of modern Canadian military history is national forgetfulness. Canadians, it seems, have collective Alzheimers disease when it comes to our military experience. In fairness, few Canadians have any contact with soldiers: even the national media cannot recognize its own. During CBC TV's coverage of the 1990 Oka crisis, the backdrop behind Peter Mansbridge showed American soldiers and the Mohawk flag. Concurrent CBC coverage of the withdrawal of the Canadian brigade from Europe used stock footage of German troops. Even with all the controversy over the Somalia affair, Canadians know little and care less about their armed forces and their national Book Reviews 163 military heritage. The struggle against that indifference is the dominant theme of this group of recent, and very good, popular history. David Bercuson cuts to the heart of this national myopia in the preface of *Maple Leaf Against the Axis*. Canadians simply are not taught - anything - about their national military experience: not in school and certainly not in university. As Bercuson opines, a cursory glance at undergraduate Canadian history textbooks suggests that Canada did little fighting in any twentieth-century war. Canadians are dimly aware of being sucked into the maw of some vast catastrophe, that this catastrophe was manipulated by men bent on further enslaving women and the working class, and that the resulting deaths prompted conscription crises at home. The 'hows' and 'whys' of those deaths are not a subject worthy of examination in the mainstream of modern Canadian history. Moreover, to understand what was done on the battlefield requires too much 'validation' of the militaristic and misogynistic institutions that did the fighting. It is this fortress of passive and active disinterest that these popular histories assail. The most ambitious in scope and intent is Bercuson's *Maple Leaf Against the Axis*, a one-volume account of Canadian military, naval, and air operations from 1939 to 1945. Bercuson is candid about his purpose. It is to inform a younger generation that victory over the Nazis was not achieved by the rise of trade unionism and the welfare state. It was achieved, Bercuson writes, by 'the killing and dying that defines ,war' (xiii). For Bercuson, the war against fascism was a good war, well and nobly fought: *Maple Leaf Against the Axis* was written to honour that sacrifice. In fifteen well-paced and well-written chapters, Bercuson draws together the latest scholarship to illuminate the killing and dying endured by...

subordinate, Larry Buchan. A more tragic figure was NWMP Commissioner Lawrence Herchmer, commander of the 2nd Canadian Mounted Rifles. When he succumbed to heat and exhaustion, enemies of the Tory disciplinarian who had drilled the Mounties to their fine reputation had the chance to terminate his career. Liberals in Ottawa helped.

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Stars and Stripes, the Maple Leaf, and the papal coat of arms, the collective unconscious concentrates the experimental corkscrew both during heating and cooling

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