

NOTE

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Directorate of History
National Defence Headquarters
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REPORT NO. 76
 HISTORICAL OFFICER
 CANADIAN MILITARY HEADQUARTERS

2 Jul 42

Further Material on British Plans for
 Preparation of Official Histories.
 Present State of Canadian Army Historical
 Activities Overseas.

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by CM for DHist NDHQDate: NOV 12 1986

1. This Report presents material additional to that forwarded in No. 67 (dated 17 Apr 42), dealing with plans for British Official Histories of the present war. The present Report deals particularly with plans for a co-ordinated history of the British Medical Services and with historical activities carried on at Combined Operations Headquarters. Some comments are offered on the present state of the Canadian Army's historical programme.

PLANS FOR BRITISH MEDICAL HISTORIES

2. On 16 Jun 42 the writer called by invitation on Colonel F.A.E. CREW, T.D., at Hobart House. Col. Crew, in addition to being Director of Medical Research for the British Army, has recently been appointed to the editorship of the Army section of the Official British Medical History. Thanks to information obtained from Col. Crew, a fuller account than that in Report No. 67 can now be given of the plans for British Medical histories.

3. As was briefly explained in Report No. 67 (para. 30), the preparation of a medical history of the war has been the subject of special arrangements. An Editorial Board has been constituted including representatives of the Medical branches of the Fighting Services, the Ministry of Health, the Department of Health for Scotland, the Medical Research Council, and the War Cabinet Secretariat. SIR ARTHUR MacNALTY has been appointed Editor-in-Chief. Col. Crew serves as Sub-Editor for the military section.

4. Col. Crew explained that as the contemplated history will include not only the work of the Medical departments of the three fighting services, but also that of the Ministry of Health, the Department of Health for Scotland, and the Emergency Medical Service, the production of a co-ordinated history will not be a particularly easy task. There is certain to be some overlapping between the various services; e.g., in the event of operations in a theatre of war in or close to the United Kingdom, some military casualties will certainly be put into Emergency Medical Service hospitals. On the other hand, in large portions of the field there will be almost no contact between the work of the R.A.M.C. and that of the other medical organizations. Col. Crew is of the opinion that in practice only a rather limited degree of co-ordination with the histories of the other services will be possible.

5. He envisages his own work as a series of volumes falling into three categories:

- (a) An account of the development of the Army Medical Services in this war, dealing with organization, administration, etc.

- (b) Descriptions of the medical aspects of "discrete campaigns", e.g., Norway, France 1940, etc.

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- (c) Clinical and professional aspects, by see for DHist NDHQ

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Col. Crew's feeling is that in (c) there is plenty of room for collaboration, not only between the services, but also between nations. He observed that he saw no need of Canada, for instance, preparing a separate history of the professional developments: it would be more sensible for her to contribute to a general history summarizing and recording the clinical experience and progress of the whole Commonwealth or even of all the Allied Nations.

6. Col. Crew remarked that his descriptions of campaigns could scarcely be undertaken until narratives of General Staff aspects of these campaigns were available. As such narratives are already in preparation (see Report No. 67) this is unlikely to be a serious difficulty.

7. ~~Discontinuous~~ ^{Discontinuous} account of clinical development, Col. Crew pointed out, could not be written until the war was over, but this was not true of (a) and (b), and in fact he proposes to begin work on (a) forthwith. He is now assembling a staff with this in view. He feels that it is very essential to "get on with the job" at once, and remarked that he was oppressed by the feeling of being already "two and a half years late".

8. Col. Crew mentioned that the medical authorities in the United States are now understood to be organizing historical work on a very large scale.

NATURE OF BRITISH MEDICAL RECORDS

9. The nature of the main categories of British medical records was explained to the writer by Colonel S. LYLE CUMMINS, a retired officer who appears in the War Office Directory under A.M.D. 2, as "Historian", and who has evidently been engaged for some time in the collection and organization of this material. The chief categories of material mentioned were (a) the War Diaries of Medical Units; (b) Published Articles; and (c) Reports of Consultants in various theatres of war.

10. The War Diaries were said to be of very unequal value, and in general Col. Crew and Col. Cummins appear to have rather a low opinion of them as sources for medical history. The War Diaries of medical units in this theatre of war go to Hobart House for storage and consultation. Diaries of units in the Middle East are sent, along with other Diaries from that theatre, to India for safe keeping.

11. At Hobart House a comprehensive file has been built up of published material (chiefly articles from professional journals) which is likely to be of use in the preparation of a medical history.

12. The reports from Consultants in the various theatres of war (of which the writer was shown some examples) are likely to be valuable historical sources. These Consultants are travelling medical officers who are in a position to see a great deal and to obtain a general view of the medical operations in the theatres in which they are employed.

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13. Col. Crew mentioned further that provision has been made for the nomination by the Medical Research Council of "Medical Observers" in various departments of medical science. These are eminent civilian doctors who are given temporary military status and granted facilities for observation in the various theatres of war; the writer understood Col. Crew to say that three of these gentlemen were at present in Libya. Their reports should be important material for historical as well as for immediate purposes. Col. Crew remarked, however, that these observers are responsible only to the Medical Research Council, a civil body. He feels that while the provision of medical observers is itself an excellent idea, this is a wrong procedure, and the matter should be handled entirely within the R.A.M.C.

CANADIAN MEDICAL HISTORY

14. The preparation of a medical history of any kind is obviously a task for a professional man, and any observations which a layman may venture to make in the matter must necessarily be merely tentative. The following comments are offered strictly in this spirit.

15. It will be recalled that after the last war a history of the Canadian Military Medical Services separate from that of the Army at large was prepared and published. This work was undertaken by the late SIR ANDREW MACPHAIL, whose racy and interesting volume, entitled Official History of the Canadian Forces in the Great War 1914-19: The Medical Services, was published in 1925. It seems fairly evident that with respect to the present war the same procedure should be followed and a separate medical history prepared. The example set by the British authorities is one indication that this procedure is probably desirable. On the other hand, the considerations rendering difficult the complete co-ordination of the medical histories of the various services are even stronger in the case of Canada than in that of the United Kingdom, and it seems likely that a completely separate history of the R.C.A.M.C. should be envisaged.

16. In view of the progress already made by the British authorities towards the compilation of a medical history, and in the light of their strong feeling that it is highly desirable that work on such a history should proceed while hostilities are still in progress, it would seem to be a matter for consideration by the Canadian Medical authorities whether it is not desirable to appoint a competent officer of the R.C.A.M.C. to undertake preliminary historical work at Canadian Military Headquarters. It has obviously been impossible for the present writer to deal adequately with the special work of the medical service, though he has attempted to keep in touch in a very general way with the development of the R.C.A.M.C. organization in this country. If the publication of an adequate Canadian Medical History shortly after the conclusion of hostilities is felt to be desirable, it seems essential that a competent professional man should now be designated for this work and given facilities for undertaking it.

17. If an officer were appointed to the staff of the Director of Medical Services at C.M.H.Q. for historical duties, he would be in a position to maintain close liaison both with Col. Crew and with the Historical Officer, C.M.H.Q. He would be able to commence at once the preparation of material on the evolution of the organization and administration of the Canadian Medical Services Overseas; he would be in a position to make preparations for maintaining an adequate record of the medical aspects of active operations when these begin; and he would be able to keep in touch with the British authorities with a view to the possible future preparation of such a joint account of clinical developments as Col. Crew envisages.

18. In view of these facts, it is suggested that the medical authorities of the Canadian Army should give consideration to the possibility of such an appointment.

WORK OF THE COMBINED OPERATIONS RECORDER

19. Thanks to the good offices of Lt.-Commdr. K.S. MACLACHLAN, R.C.N.V.R., the writer had the opportunity of visiting Combined Operations Headquarters on 13 Jun 42, and making informal contact with the office of the Recorder there.

20. The Recorder of Combined Operations is Mr. H. ST. GEORGE SAUNDERS, who has acquired considerable reputation in this country as the author of two valuable pamphlets on the work of the R.A.F., published by His Majesty's Stationery Office: The Battle of Britain and Bomber Command. The writer did not see Mr. Saunders, who evidently spends comparatively little time at C.O.H.Q., but he met his Assistant, F/Lt. DUDLEY TAYLOR, R.A.F.V.R., and spent about an hour in conversation with him.

21. F/Lt. Taylor has worked for many years as Mr. Saunders' assistant, and the writer gathered that both these gentlemen were members of the staff of the British Embassy in Paris previous to the collapse of France. F/Lt. Taylor undertakes the task of preparing precis of the important documents relating to the topic upon which Mr. Saunders may be engaged at the moment, and on the basis of these precis Mr. Saunders then writes his narrative.

22. F/Lt. Taylor is at present engaged in performing this work on the records of various operations which have been undertaken under the direction of C.O.H.Q. At the time of the writer's visit he was engaged in making a precis of the documents relating to a certain project which had not in fact, been carried out, but which, he thought, served admirably to exemplify the procedure for planning, considering and developing schemes for individual operations.

23. It is not yet certain that any pamphlet or pamphlets on Combined Operations similar to The Battle of Britain or Bomber Command, will be published during the war; it is obvious that considerations of security would necessitate the omission of a great deal of most important and interesting material; but in any case, thanks to the activity of F/Lt. Taylor, the essential materials for a history of the work of C.O.H.Q. will be available in a condensed, organized and manageable form at the conclusion of hostilities, and the preparation of a complete history from them would presumably be no very long task.

24. F/Lt. Taylor has at his disposal not merely the "high level" documents with respect to the planning of operations, and the official material relating to their actual conduct, but he also collects first-hand accounts of the experiences of "survivors" of the various expeditions. He pointed out that historical work at Combined Operations Headquarters is a much more concentrated and specialized task than that of dealing with the operations of a large army. The forces normally involved are comparatively small, and the operations brief and concentrated; the historical narrative, accordingly, can descend to detail in a manner impossible in an account of large campaigns.

25. Lt.-Commdr. MacLachlan has told the writer that the present arrangements at the office of the Combined Operations Recorder are not necessarily permanent.

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CANADIAN ARMY HISTORICAL ACTIVITIES OVERSEAS

26. The constantly accumulating evidence of the extent of the active preparations made by the British authorities for the writing of Official Histories of the present war serves to justify the more limited measures so far taken by Canada and to suggest the propriety of extending those measures as opportunities arise.

27. In Report No. 67 the writer mentioned the desirability of preparing as soon as possible a comprehensive narrative of the Canadian aspects of the overseas events of 1940, and suggested that the means of effecting this might be found in the appointment of an Assistant Historical Officer, C.M.H.Q. On this passage the following comment was made by Lieut.-General McNAUGHTON, G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army (Letter PA 3-7 to Senior Officer, C.M.H.Q., 27 Apr 42):

2. With particular reference to para 39 in which the Historical Officer renews his recommendation for the ~~Dis~~appointment of an assistant, I am very much in favour of this so that the comprehensive narrative of our operations and developments in 1940 may be prepared at an early date for otherwise there is a danger that we may lose the full ~~story~~ story of this phase because much of the intimate history of the more important parts remains in the minds of individuals and has never been committed to paper.

28. The substance of this comment was transmitted to N.D.H.Q. in Telegram G.S. 1562 (9 May 42), which advised that the War Establishment Committee meeting at C.M.H.Q. had approved the necessary amendment to the establishment of the General Staff Branch, C.M.H.Q. Information has now been received that this amendment has received Privy Council approval. Suggestions for an appointment have been made to N.D.H.Q. (Telegrams G.S. 892, 12 Mar 42, and G.S. 2162, 24 Jun 42). If an experienced historical student with some military background cannot be made available from Canada, it is hoped that an officer may be found in the Canadian Army Overseas with academic or equivalent qualifications which in conjunction with experience in the field would render him suitable for such an appointment. In any case, it is desirable that the Assistant Historical Officer should be available to start work soon, since the Historical Section, C.M.H.Q. (consisting so far of one officer only, plus two attached War Artists) has of late found it more and more difficult to keep abreast of its work.

29. The reports whose compilation makes up the major part of this work fall into three main categories :

- (a) Reports on operations or other individual events of importance.
- (b) Periodical routine reports on important phases of the development and activity of the Canadian Army Overseas.
- (c) Reports on special topics.

30. At the present time two operations await attention. The writer has not yet been able to compile an account of the part played by Canadian troops in the BOULOGNE raid of 22 Apr 42; and only preliminary work has been done on the HONG KONG operations. While the history of the latter is not directly a responsibility of the Historical Officer, C.M.H.Q., it is felt to be desirable to prepare, if possible a precis of the documents on the matter available in LONDON.

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31. Of the regular topics which an attempt is made to deal with roughly every quarter, two are at present in arrears: "Growth of Canadian Military Force in the United Kingdom" (last report, 29 Jan 42), and "Progress in Equipment" (last report, 22 Feb 42).

32. Examples of the "special topics" now awaiting attention are the following:

- (a) Legal and Constitutional Position of Canadian Forces in the United Kingdom under the Visiting Forces Act.
- (b) Reinforcement Policy and Organization of Canadian Reinforcement Units.
- (c) Personnel of Canadian Army Overseas Returning to Canada (P.O.W. Escorts, officers and N.C.O.'s for newly mobilized units, instructors, etc.).
- (d) Honours and Awards to Canadian Personnel: Policy, etc.

Distribution

- (e) Activities of T.A.M.T. Section, C.M.H.Q., and Canadian Mechanization Depot.

L1113336661A89 As in present circumstances it is rarely possible to deal in one month with more than three such topics as those mentioned, and as additional current topics constantly present themselves, the difficulty of catching up with the accumulated work is evident. It is hoped that the Assistant Historical Officer now authorized may be able to give some assistance with the tasks of the Section generally, but the comprehensive narrative of the events of 1940 on which it is hoped to begin work shortly is in itself enough to occupy the full time of a competent investigator for at least a year. In these circumstances it may shortly be necessary for the writer to request still more assistance. It should be kept in mind that the advent of active operations will inevitably vastly increase the burden of historical work. The manner in which this work is to be approached requires consideration, and it is hoped that it may shortly be discussed with the proper authorities at H.Q., First Canadian Army.

34. At a moment like the present, one hesitates to suggest the expenditure of additional time and energy on an activity which appears to make no direct contribution to winning the war, and the writer feels himself in a rather ungrateful position in this respect. Nevertheless, it would seem to be a responsibility imposed by his appointment to assess the situation from the point of view of the needs of the future Official Historian, and to make recommendations accordingly.

35. One or two generalizations may be ventured. If the publication of an adequate Official History soon after the close of hostilities is considered desirable, it is necessary to follow the example of the British authorities and give active attention to the matter while hostilities are still in progress; and one officer engaged in the work now can probably accomplish as much as three approaching it after the coming of peace, when the actual participants are scattered, when the edges of individuals' memories are dulled, and when there will be little to work with except the documents.

COMPILATION OF HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

36. In connection with the historical narrative of the events of 1940 to which reference is made above, and on which it is hoped to begin work almost at once, the difficulty arises that this narrative must be designed to serve the needs of an Official History for which

no general plan has been laid down. The terms of reference provided for the Historical Officer, C.M.H.Q., are "To collect and prepare material for the future use of the Official Historian". As no Official Historian for the present war has yet been appointed, and as the principles upon which an Official History is to be prepared have not been expressly defined, the Historical Officer can only use his own judgment, on the basis of past Canadian experience, and giving due weight to the views of those entrusted with directing the compilation of the Official Histories now being prepared in the United Kingdom.

37. He proposes accordingly to proceed with planning this narrative on the basis of the following assumptions :

I. It is probable that separate histories will be compiled for the three Canadian fighting services.

This is suggested by these circumstances :

(a) Unlike the British histories, which are likely to be mainly accounts of operations, the Canadian histories are likely to include (and in the Historical Officer's view ought to include) accounts of the raising, organization and general activities of the forces, particularly the forces serving outside of Canada. These aspects of the work of each service are largely independent of the work of the other services.

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(b) While it is essential that the Military history, in dealing with operations, should give the fullest attention to the Air aspect (whether R.C.A.F. or R.A.F.) and to the Naval aspect (R.C.N. or R.N.) where such exists, the operations both of the R.C.N. and the R.C.A.F. are to a large extent carried on in areas where they do not touch the work of the Canadian Army.

Time of Origin

(c) The three Canadian services now maintain separate historical departments, and so far as the writer is aware no arrangements (apart from a measure of informal liaison) have been made for co-ordinated or centralized historical activity.

38. II. A Canadian Official History should appeal to the general public as well as to military students.

With this in view, technicalities should be avoided and technical matters generally dealt with only as they affect policy and strategic or tactical development. The history should be approached mainly from the "G" viewpoint. The "A" and "Q" aspects cannot be neglected, but the accumulation of a great mass of detail should be avoided. Specialist aspects should be left for investigation by specialists and treatment in separate studies. The Official History proper should be written throughout in a manner calculated to be interesting to, and comprehensible by, any intelligent Canadian civilian.

39. III. A Canadian Official History, while dealing with Operations in greater detail than any other aspect, should also include the general history of the development and activities of the forces.

See para. 37(a), above. This, in general, is the line taken in the Canadian Official History of the last war. In the treatment of Operations it may be worth while to remember the opinion of the British historical authorities that the narratives in their 1914-18 histories have proved rather too detailed for general purposes. (See Report No. 67.)

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40. IV. It is probable that the General Series of the Official History of the Canadian Military Forces will consist of a single historical narrative.

See Report No. 67. British plans contemplate studies at three levels: (a) a "general conspectus" of the War; (b) Studies of separate campaigns; (c) Special studies of certain operations. It is doubtful whether it would be either practicable or desirable to duplicate this arrangement in Canada, the more so as three separate service histories will probably be required there. But a case might be made for the publication, very soon after the conclusion of hostilities, of a brief outline history, to be followed subsequently by a more detailed work. Apart from this, the procedure followed in Canada in the case of the last war - the consolidation of all general military aspects in a single historical narrative - appears equally applicable to present conditions.

41. It is obvious that an Official History cannot be planned in detail at this stage of the war. It is impossible to foresee at this moment the exact perspective in which the work of the Canadian Army will be seen at the conclusion of hostilities. The Army has so far seen little of active operations, and our view of its activity in general will necessarily be largely determined by future events. It is out of the question, at the present time, for instance, to attempt to estimate how many pages or how many volumes adequate historical treatment will require.

42. It is nevertheless possible to form a fairly definite opinion as to the place which events already past will occupy. In any history whatever, the story of the concentration and progressive development of the Canadian Forces in the United Kingdom must receive due attention; their relationship to the crisis of the spring and summer of 1940 cannot fail to be a matter of considerable interest; despite the absence of contact with the enemy, the adventures of 1 Cdn Inf Bde Gp in France at that time will certainly deserve fairly detailed treatment; and such episodes as the SPITSBERGEN operation merit similar attention. The course of training must certainly be treated, at least in broad outline; and the relationship of the Canadian troops to the general experience of the British people in the matter of bombing raids, etc., must be developed to some extent, for the Canadians were in a special manner identified with the "Battle of Britain" (using that term in the broadest way).

43. The investigators preparing a "first narrative" such as that now contemplated need not, of course, know exactly how much space can be allotted to each topic in the final work. Their narrative, indeed, may itself to a large extent furnish the historian with the means of determining this; and they will work upon the principle that the first narrative should in the nature of things provide considerably more detail than is likely to be required for the final version. If the historian is given more material than he ultimately needs, he can easily discard the surplus.

44. Working on the assumptions outlined above, the writer proposes to prepare as soon as possible a more detailed scheme for the compilation of an historical narrative covering the period between the landing of the First Flight of 1 Cdn Div (17 Dec 39) and the formation of the Canadian Corps (25 Dec 40). This project will be submitted for the comments of the G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, and it is hoped to begin work on the narrative itself shortly thereafter.

C.B. Stacey

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