

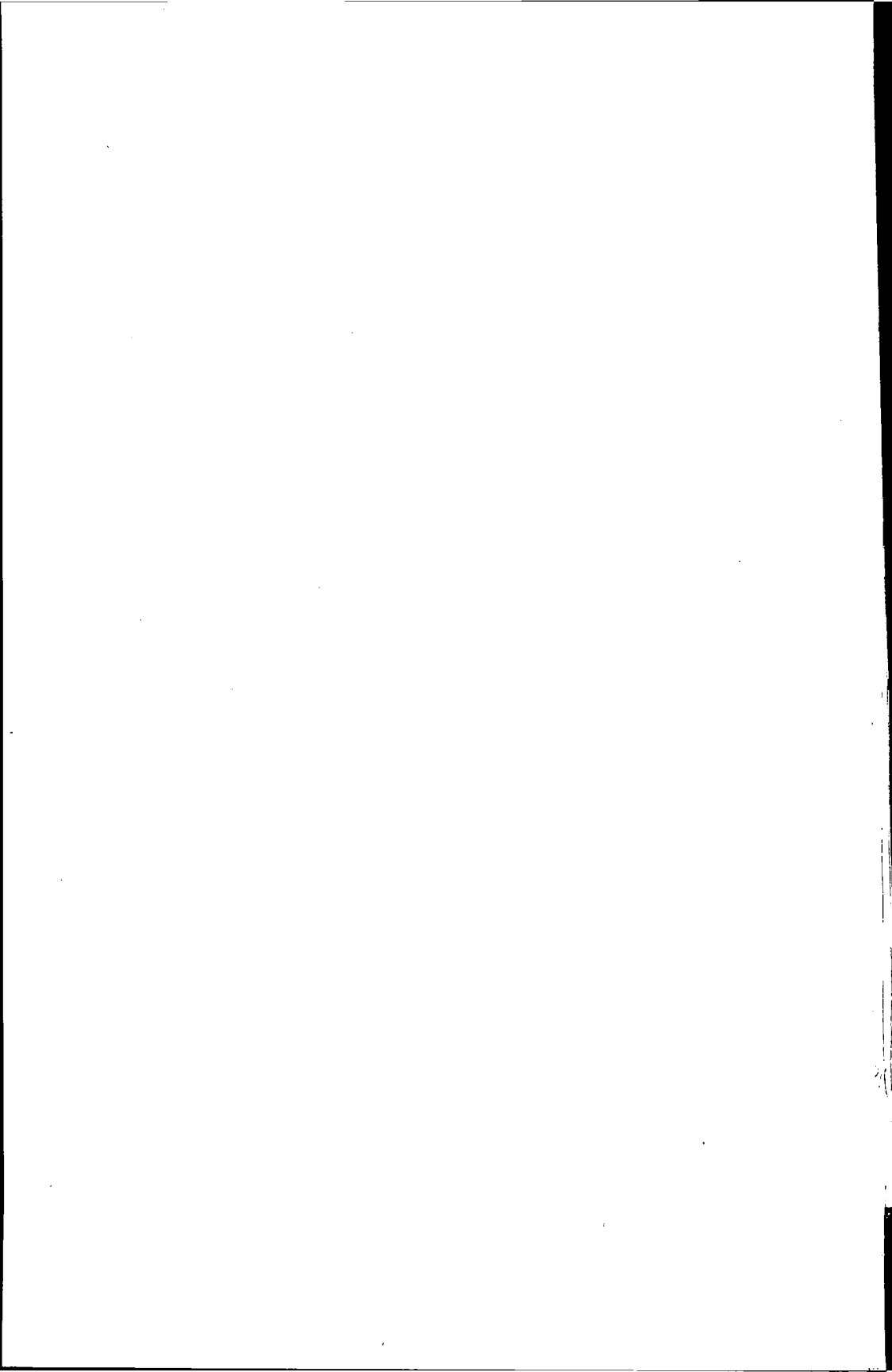
LOYAL SERVICE

PERSPECTIVES ON FRENCH-CANADIAN
MILITARY LEADERS

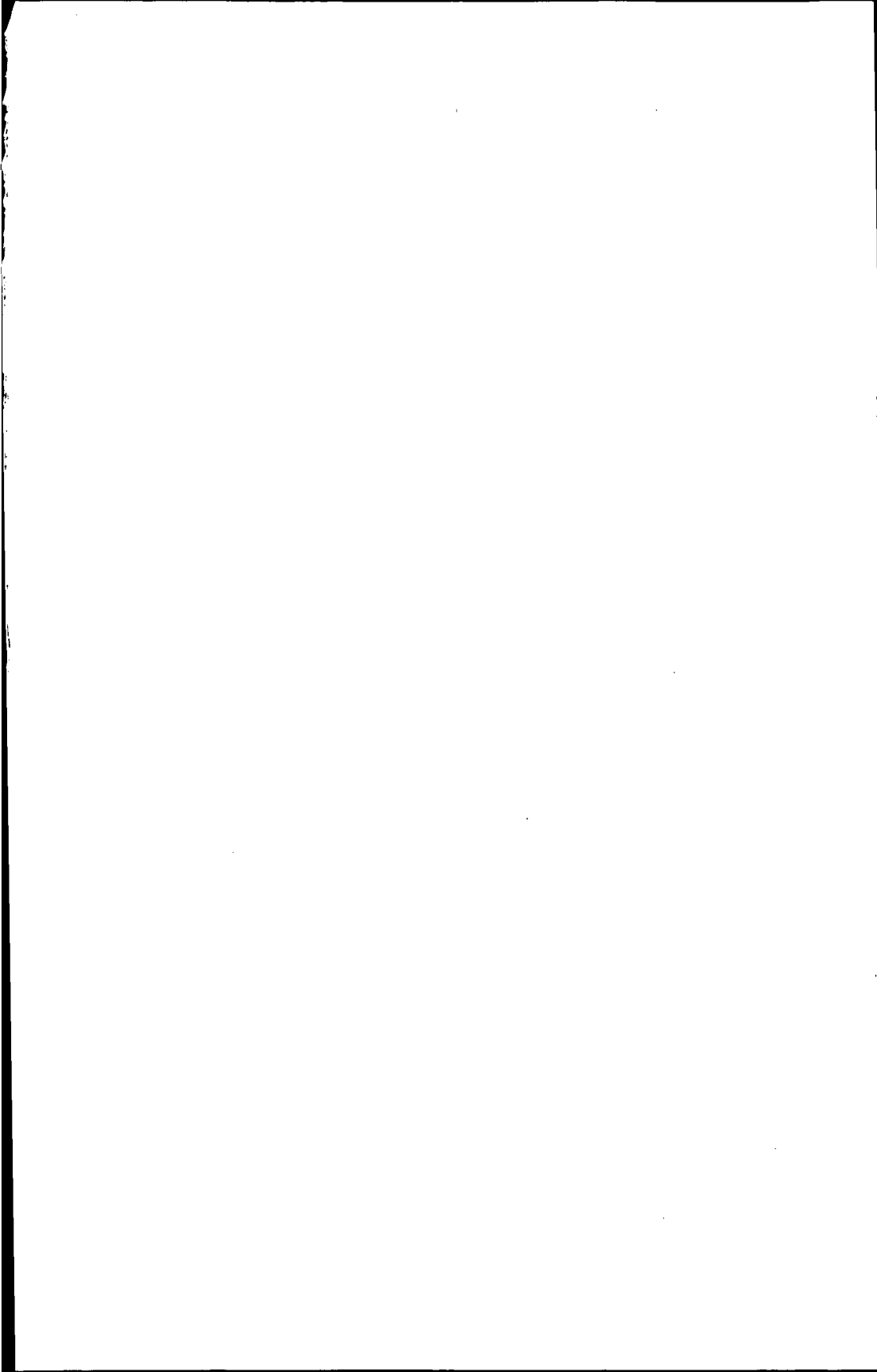


EDITED BY COLONEL BERND HORN
AND DR. ROCH LEGAULT

FOREWORD BY LIEUTENANT-GENERAL J.H.P.M. CARON



LOYAL 
 SERVICE



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PERSPECTIVES ON FRENCH-CANADIAN MILITARY LEADERS



EDITED BY COLONEL BERND HORN
AND DR. ROCH LEGAULT

FOREWORD BY LIEUTENANT-GENERAL J.H.P.M. CARON



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CONTENTS

FOREWORD • 7

LIEUTENANT-GENERAL J.H.P.M. CARON

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS • 9

INTRODUCTION • 11

BERND HORN AND ROCH LEGAULT

CHAPTER ONE • 19

Hertel and Canada's First Tacticians in the Seventeenth Century

RENÉ CHARTRAND

CHAPTER TWO • 53

Marin and Langis: Master Practitioners of *La Petite Guerre*

BERND HORN

CHAPTER THREE • 87

Ascending to Leadership:

The Militia Commanders of Montreal, Lower Canada (1790–1839)

CHRISTIAN DESSUREAULT AND ROCH LEGAULT

CHAPTER FOUR • 125

Adolphe Caron: Canada's Successful War Minister

DESMOND MORTON

CHAPTER FIVE • 167

The Military Career of Colonel Oscar Pelletier:
An Example of French-Canadian Leadership Before the First World War

MICHEL D. LITALIEN

CHAPTER SIX • 193

The Strength of Character: Major-General F.L. Lessard

JOHN MCFARLANE

CHAPTER SEVEN • 217

From Cadet to Brigadier-General:
Thomas-Louis Tremblay and the 22nd Battalion (French-Canadian)

MARCELLE CINQ-MARS

CHAPTER EIGHT • 237

French-Canadian Leadership in Canada's Navy, 1910–1971

JEAN-FRANÇOIS DRAPEAU

CHAPTER NINE • 265

Jacques Dextraze and the Art of Command, 1944–1973

YVES TREMBLAY

CHAPTER TEN • 293

Balancing Between Autocratic and Democratic Leadership:
The Career of Major-General Claude LaFrance

SERGE BERNIER

CHAPTER ELEVEN • 311

Do the Right Thing: Lieutenant-General Roméo Dallaire in the 1990s

CAROL OFF

CONTRIBUTORS • 329

INDEX • 331

FOREWORD



French Canadians have a long, proud history of serving their nation. Nowhere is their legacy of loyal service better represented than in the profession of arms. From the beginning French Canadians assisted in carving out and defending the nascent country. They were critical to France as defenders, and as allies against hostile Natives and competing European powers. In the aftermath of the conquest during the Seven Years' War, French Canadians continued, albeit under a different flag, to defend Canada.

As our country evolved, so too did their service. Key to the defence of the nation against our southern neighbour, French Canadians remained loyal and played a critical role in repelling American invasion during the American War of Independence and the War of 1812. Later, when Canada became an independent nation and dispatched military forces abroad to serve the national interest, French Canadians proudly took their place and served with distinction. That tradition of proud military service continues to this day.

However, proud service is only one component — leadership is another. Key to the success of the French-Canadian legacy of military competency and proficiency is the presence of strong leadership. In essence, that is exactly what this book, *Loyal Service: Perspectives on*

French-Canadian Military Leaders, examines. It is a collection of essays focused on French-Canadian military leaders throughout the history of our great country. It covers the entire spectrum from the practitioners of *la petite guerre* during the struggle for New France, to the colonial period, the two world wars, and the Cold War. Although it covers only a fraction of the great French-Canadian military leaders, it is an important starting point.

I am delighted to have been invited to introduce this very noteworthy volume. Its content and overriding theme will be of great interest to readers. The fact that its editors and contributors are historians and writers of notable repute only adds to the weight of this book. In closing, I wish to applaud their efforts at putting together such an exciting and important addition to Canadian military history literature.

Lieutenant-General J.H.P.M. Caron
Chief of the Land Staff
Canadian Forces

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



We would be remiss if we did not thank the multitude of individuals and organizations that had a hand in the generation of this book. As such, the editors wish to acknowledge the contribution of all those who provided assistance, both directly and indirectly, to this project. First, we wish to thank the contributors for their in-depth research and insights. Their efforts made this volume possible. Next we would like to thank the very talented Silvia Pecota for her artwork, which graces the cover. In this vein, we also wish to extend our gratitude to the re-enactors, Corporal Al Hennessey from 1 RCR, George “Wolf” Thomas, and David Lundberg, all who tolerated heat, mosquitoes, and a relentless photographer to ensure we captured exactly the right poses so that the cover would be perfect.

We also owe a debt of gratitude to the Canadian Forces Leadership Institute for its support of this initiative. Specifically, the editors must thank Craig Mantle for his invaluable assistance in sourcing many of the graphics used in the volume, as well as Joanne Simms and Carol Jackson for their administrative support to the project. We would also like to extend our thanks to the Royal Military College of Canada, Library and Archives Canada, and the Directorate of History and Heritage. In addition, we must also extend our thanks to Parks Canada,

specifically Sue Surgeson, for her assistance in sourcing a wealth of historical images from the organization's collection.

Finally, we would like to thank all those who in many indescribable ways assisted us in completing this book. We greatly appreciated their efforts on our behalf.

INTRODUCTION



BERND HORN AND ROCH LEGAULT

The concept of loyalty often conjures up a multitude of emotions. There is loyalty to family, friends, community, organizations, nation, even to causes and principles. With such a strata of potential obligations, often conflicting, it is no wonder that loyalty, or the degree to which it is shown, can become a point of contention. Nowhere is this more evident than in the emotion-filled, and often clouded, discussion on French-Canadian commitment to the nation. Our history offers many examples of accusations and counter-accusations regarding loyalty to Crown and country.

The loyalty of French Canadians towards Canada and the Crown of England has been suspected since the first governor of the colony, Major-General James Murray, came to office in the 1760s. Overseas military expeditions in support of empire have created bitter dissension between anglophones and francophones, specifically in the cases of the Boer War, the First World War, and the Second World War. The issue is often mistakenly simplified to an issue of race and geography, when in fact those objecting to involvement in these military undertakings included dissenters from across the country. Nonetheless, the matter normally came down to a widespread belief by anglophones that their French-Canadian brethren were not pulling their weight in national

undertakings that required sacrifice and service. Conversely, many francophones felt that loyalty did not necessarily entail supporting imperial foreign policy. As always, the truth lay somewhere in between.

However, the loyalty of French Canadians to their country, specifically their military role in safeguarding the nation and promoting its national interests, is without question. Quite simply, they have always provided loyal service to Canada. Whether under a French king or English monarch, or under the more contemporary federal system, French Canadians have continually answered the call to service and served their nation with courage, commitment, and honour. Moreover, they have provided a plethora of gifted leaders who led not only francophones, but the rest of their countrymen, as well, particularly during times of conflict, crisis, and turmoil.

It is this reality, often lost in the larger study of Canadian military leadership, that we wish to recognize and advance. Undisputedly, leadership study has exponentially increased in the recent past, and the practice in Canada has been no different. In fact, some significant failures in the Canadian Forces (CF) in the 1990s,¹ particularly the Somalia Crisis, provided the catalyst for increased emphasis on the study and teaching of leadership and professionalism in that institution with remarkable results. By 2002, the CF had established key organizations. Some of these, such as the Canadian Forces Leadership Institute as part of the Canadian Defence Academy, have since promulgated seminal doctrinal manuals and texts on leadership and the profession of arms.² This interdisciplinary study of leadership by a myriad of military and civilian experts has dramatically advanced the yardsticks.

However, a void still exists.³ As such, this book aims to shed some light on French-Canadian leadership, both from an individual and group-based perspective from the very beginnings in New France to the present. It intentionally begins with perspectives from the beginning of Quebec because of the indelible impact this has had on the French-Canadian military experience. It was the function of circumstance and geography that shaped the independence, innovation, tenacity, and courage that would come to characterize French-Canadian leaders. A number of case studies taken over a 400-year

period allow these attributes and characteristics to be showcased throughout Canada's military history. Reviewing the contributions of individuals over so many years reveals the positive and significant impact that French Canadians have had on our nation's military history.

It is important to note, however, that the broadest definition of the term *leadership* was used to allow the contributors to focus on specific individuals and bring out the salient issues that made their choice a remarkable military leader who had a significant impact on the nation and its armed forces. As such, the distinction between *command* and *leadership* is not always accurately drawn. Although this does in no way impact the stories told, it is important to ensure that the requisite understanding of terminology is at least made up front.

Command is the vested authority an individual lawfully exercises over subordinates by virtue of their rank and assignment. The accepted definition of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), which Canada adopted, defines command as "the authority vested in an individual of the armed forces for the direction, co-ordination, and control of military forces."⁴ Command is a very personal function and each person approaches it in different ways depending on their experience, circumstances, and personality. Its essence, however, is the expression of human will — an idea captured in the concept of a commander's intent⁵ as part of the philosophy of mission command.⁶ In sum, command is the purposeful exercise of authority over structures, resources, people, and activities.

But command is not a uni-dimensional concept. There are three components — authority, management, and leadership. Each component is an integral and often interrelated element of command. Each can achieve a distinct effect. None is mutually exclusive — and when used judiciously in accordance with prevailing circumstances and situational factors, they combine to provide maximum effectiveness and success.

The first component is positional power, or authority. Commanders can always rely on their authority to implement their will. Although authority is a powerful tool for commanders, reliance on rank and position will never build a cohesive, effective unit that will withstand the test of crisis.

The second element is management, which is designed to control complexity and increase group effectiveness and efficiency. It is primarily concerned with the allocation and control of resources (i.e., human, financial, and material) to achieve objectives. Its focus is staff action such as resource allocation, budgeting, coordinating, controlling, organizing, planning, prioritizing, problem solving, supervising, and ensuring adherence to policy and timelines. Also, management is based on formal organizational authority and is unequivocally results orientated. Its emphasis is on the correct and efficient execution of organizational processes.

The third pillar is leadership — the “human” side of command. It deals with the purpose of the organization — “doing the right thing” versus “doing it right [management].” In accordance with CF leadership doctrine it is defined as “directing, motivating, and enabling others to accomplish the mission professionally and ethically, while developing or improving capabilities that contribute to mission success.” Leadership relies on influence, either direct or indirect, whereas management is based on power and position. In the end, the leadership component of command is about influencing people to achieve some objective that is important to the leader, the group, and the organization. It is the human element — leading, motivating, and inspiring, particularly during times of crisis, chaos, and complexity when directives, policy statements, and communiqués have little effect on cold, exhausted, and stressed subordinates. It is the individualistic, yet powerful component that allows commanders and leaders at all levels to shape and/or alter the environment or system in which people function and thereby influence attitudes, behaviour, and the actions of others.

It is within this powerful realm of influence and potential change that leadership best demonstrates the fundamental difference between it and the concept of command. Too often the terms *leadership* and *command* are interchanged or seen as synonymous. But they are not. Leadership can, and should, be a component of command. After all, to be an effective commander the formal authority that comes with rank and position must be reinforced and supplemented with personal qualities and skills — the human side. Nevertheless, as discussed earlier, command is based on vested authority and assigned position and/or rank.

It may only be exercised downward in the chain of command through the structures and processes of control. Conversely, leadership is not constrained by the limits of formal authority. Individuals anywhere in the chain of command may, given the ability and motivation, influence peers and even superiors. This clearly differentiates leadership from command.⁸

As such, as will be seen, some commanders have more talent than others in leading troops in battle, while others excel in organizational skills. In other words, each practised the art and science of command differently — some relying more on leadership while others placed greater focus on the authority and managerial components. Nonetheless, each chapter will be allowed to stand on its analysis and research. The theoretical examination of command and leadership ends here.

After all, the focus of the book is the study of a number of French-Canadian leaders and their contribution to the nation during times of peace, crisis, and conflict spanning the entire historical spectrum from New France to the end of the twentieth century. Three chapters cover the pre-Confederation period. The first reveals the origins of Canadian tactical theory. Through a review of New France's military history and its proud defender, Samuel de Champlain, the author René Chartrand underscores the contributions of the Hertel family in the creation and practical application of a uniquely Canadian way of leading men into battle.

Bernd Horn's chapter provides additional detail and reinforces how circumstance and geography shaped a distinct leadership tradition and Canadian way of war. He examines the achievements of Joseph Marin de La Malgue and Jean-Baptiste Levreault de Langis de Montegron, master practitioners of *la petite guerre* in the defence of New France during the eighteenth century.

In the aftermath of the Seven Years' War, when Canada was ceded to the British Crown, French Canadians faced barriers to assuming more prominent roles in defence of the colony. Nevertheless, they maintained a presence, particularly within the militia, even though these units did not maintain the active role they held during the French regime. In Chapter 3, historians Christian Dessureault and Roch Legault examine a group of militia leaders in Montreal and reveal the

criteria for appointment to command of a battalion within the militia in Montreal.

The contributors to later chapters in this volume introduce some historical figures who illustrate French-Canadian leadership from Confederation to the Second World War. Desmond Morton takes a detailed look at the role played by Minister Adolphe Caron in suppressing the Métis uprising during the North-West Rebellion of 1885, which was significantly more important than current historiography has led us to believe. In two separate chapters, Michel Litalien and John McFarlane describe the careers of Oscar Pelletier and François-Louis Lessard. These two historians demonstrate that French-Canadian leadership at the end of the nineteenth century continued to flourish in a young country whose military was inextricably linked to the proud, formidable, and globe-spanning British Empire.

The contributions that follow describe two outstanding leaders in combat. Marcelle Cinq-Mars recounts the First World War experiences of Thomas-Louis Tremblay through the entries in his personal journal, while Yves Tremblay paints a stunning portrait of the art of leadership displayed by Jacques Dextraze, from his beginnings in the profession of arms to the final achievements of his professional career as the chief of the defence staff.

The final three chapters of the book cover French-Canadian leadership in the three different services — Navy, Army, and Air Force. French-Canadian leadership at sea has not been the subject of much detailed study, consequently, Jean-François Drapeau's description of French-Canadian naval leaders, both in combat and staff positions, is doubly valuable. As this historian notes, these leaders worked in an environment that was difficult for francophones. The Air Force is represented by a review of Major-General Claude LaFrance's career. Historian Serge Bernier explains how this leader was quickly able to switch his command and leadership styles based on the appointments he held and the circumstances of his situation. Finally, a chapter by investigative reporter Carol Off is included, which considers Lieutenant-General Roméo Dallaire's contribution as a great French-Canadian leader. Although this text is a reprint from a previous publication,⁹ it is a valuable addition to

be considered with the other chapters. Quite simply, Dallaire's experiences take on their full meaning when they are re-examined in the context of French-Canadian military leadership.

It is important to note that in no way do we wish to purport that this volume even comes close to comprehensively covering the issue of French-Canadian military leadership. However, it is an important start. It is through this initial survey of individuals focusing on French-Canadian leadership as a group concept as opposed to an examination of military leaders who happen to be French-Canadians that we hope to ignite wider and deeper study. This book will have achieved its goal if it generates similar works by professional historians, amateur history buffs, sociologists, or today's francophone military leaders.

NOTES

1. See Canada. *Dishonoured Legacy: The Lessons of the Somalia Affair — Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Deployment of Canadian Forces to Somalia*, Transcript of Evidentiary Hearings, Vols. 1–5 (October 1995); and *Report to the Prime Minister on the Leadership and Management of the Canadian Forces*, 25 March 1997. Available at <http://www.forces.gc.ca/site/minister/eng/pm/mnd60.html>.
2. See Canada, *Leadership in the Canadian Forces: Conceptual Foundations* (Kingston: DND, 2005); and Canada, *Duty with Honour — The Profession of Arms in Canada* (Kingston: DND, 2003), available on the Canadian Defence Academy website at http://www.cda-acd.forces.gc.ca/cfli/engraph/leadership/conceptual/toc_e.asp.
3. The editors recognize that there are a few earlier biographies and studies of French-Canadian military leaders, including: Guy Frégault's, *Iberville le conquérant* (Montreal: Société des Éditions Pascal, 1944) and *Le grand marquis: Pierre de Rigaud de Vaudreuil et la Louisiane* (Montreal: Studies by the Institut d'histoire de l'Amérique française, Fides, 1952); Serge Bernier's, *Mémoires du général Jean V. Allard* (Boucherville, QC: Éditions de Mortagne, 1985); Roch Legault's, *Une élite en déroute* (Montreal: Athéna éditeur, 2002); Pierre Vennat's, *Général Dollard Ménard de Dieppe au référendum* (Montreal: Art Global, 2004). In addition, some French-Canadian biographies were included in the compilation by Bernd Horn and Stephen Harris, *Warrior Chiefs: Perspectives on Senior Canadian Military Leaders* (Toronto: Dundurn

- Press, 2002). This book, however, is dedicated totally to the more specific issue of French-Canadian leaders throughout the Canadian military experience.
4. Canada, *Land Force Command* (Ottawa: DND, 1997), 4.
 5. The commander's intent is the commander's personal expression of why an operation is being conducted and what he hopes to achieve. It is a clear and concise statement of the desired end-state and acceptable risk. Its strength is the fact that it allows subordinates to exercise initiative in the absence of orders, or when unexpected opportunities arise, or when the original concept of operations no longer applies.
 6. Mission Command is a command philosophy that promotes decentralized decision-making, freedom, and speed of action and initiative. It entails three enduring tenets: the importance of understanding a superior commander's intent, a clear responsibility to fulfill that intent, and timely decision-making.
 7. *Leadership in the Canadian Forces: Conceptual Foundations*, 30.
 8. See Canada, *Leadership in the Canadian Forces: Leading the Institution and Leading People* (Kingston: DND, 2007) and *Leadership in the Canadian Forces: Conceptual Foundations* for a more in-depth understanding of leadership and command.
 9. See Carol Off, "Do the Right Thing! Lieutenant-General Roméo Dallaire in the 1990s," in Bernd Horn and Stephen J. Harris, eds., *Warrior Chiefs* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2001), 325–46.

CHAPTER ONE

Hertel and Canada's First Tacticians in the Seventeenth Century

RENÉ CHARTRAND

During the major part of the seventeenth century, the young French colony on the banks of the St. Lawrence River faced substantial difficulties. The very security of the little settlements was continually under threat from stealthy attacks that could occur at any moment and almost anywhere.

Quebec, the strongest settlement in the colony, was more protected from raids, since its site contributed to its security. Trois-Rivières, founded in 1634, was more exposed and was at times totally cut off. Montreal, on the other hand, was virtually besieged from its founding in 1642, lying as it does at the confluence of rivers frequented by the enemy. The following year, six Montreal settlers died in ambushes. This situation of permanent insecurity was obviously not conducive to the fur trade or settlement in the new colony.

When the French arrived in the early seventeenth century, the Natives used two methods of fighting. One was a confrontation in open country between two groups of warriors wearing wooden armour, carrying wooden shields, and armed with lances, clubs, bows, and arrows. It was this type of combat that Samuel de Champlain, the founder of Quebec and the colony's first governor, participated in with his companions from 1609. Champlain and his companions had an



Samuel de Champlain, the governor of New France, with allied Natives defeating the Iroquois near the present town of Ticonderoga, New York, 30 July 1609. At the start of the new Canadian colony, the French military personnel wore European-style helmets and armour of the type used by pikemen, but armed themselves with arquebuses. (Historical engraving, R. Chartrand Collection)

edge. They carried European firearms and pieces of metal armour; each soldier wore a “pikeman’s corslet” and carried an arquebus.¹

During the years following 1610, Champlain and his companions helped their Native allies to fight their enemies successfully, using the advantages gained by European weapons and metals. The fighting remained essentially in open country, which the French could understand and, even with very small numbers, dominate because of their technological superiority. However, the aboriginal inhabitants of north-eastern North America practised another way of fighting, one that was entirely alien to European soldiers. The aim was to remain concealed and attack the enemy by surprise, sowing as much terror and confusion as possible, while inflicting the maximum of damage and casualties,

and then to disappear immediately. This second type of warfare could occur at any time, anywhere, and involve groups of warriors ranging from a handful to a sizable body of men. There was no warning and everyone — men, women, and children — were threatened indiscriminately. The fate of the non-combatants was essentially the same as that of the fighting men. The perfect raid was one that sowed the maximum amount of terror and damage to the enemy and resulted in no friendly casualties. This type of combat drew its inspiration primarily from hunting and used essentially the same principles and techniques, particularly stealth, camouflage, and lightning attack.

In the face of European weapons, *la petite guerre* or the "little war," namely the raid — which bears a strong resemblance to modern guerilla warfare — was the method preferred by the Native enemies of the French over the years. For the French, as for any European soldiers, this way of fighting was utterly barbaric and dishonourable. As a general rule European armies tried to protect defenceless non-combatants from the worst depredations of war, as they were regarded primarily as innocent victims. These concepts were unknown in Canada, and all the Natives — whether allies or enemies — engaged in this type of raiding warfare continuously and without mercy.²

During the early years of the colony, the few professional soldiers often with the help of settlers responded to the Native tactics by slightly adapting their weapons and equipment to the new realities of warfare. To protect themselves against spears and arrows, the French wore metal breastplates and helmets like the pikemen in the army in metropolitan France. However, instead of carrying pikes, they armed themselves primarily with arquebuses, as they were lighter than muskets. This was the first instance of tactics being adapted to the changing conditions of warfare in the young colony.

In 1619, Champlain asked for "40 muskets with their bandoliers, 24 pikes, 4 wheel-lock arquebuses" with their ammunition, to be sent to Quebec. What he received, two years later, consisted of 12 halberds, "with white wooden shafts, painted black," two arquebuses, 50 pikes, 64 pikeman's breastplates "without armguards," two "armets de gendarmes," in other words, fuller armour for officers, and no new muskets. He had

only a few muskets. In fact, the inventory for 1629 records only 15. It is clear, however, that the pikes remained in the stores. The weapon was virtually useless in Canada against Native enemies. The idea was probably to use them against European adversaries. But even in that case they were of little value. When English privateers led by the Kirk brothers appeared in sight of Quebec, the little French post and its occupants were poorly armed indeed and capitulation proved the wiser course.³

Quebec was returned to France in 1632. The most immediate threat to the security of the French who settled there remained from hostile Natives. Champlain's ideas on the tactics required to fight them successfully remained resolutely European. In 1633, he proposed the ideal military organization to carry the fight to the enemy. This was a troop of soldiers consisting of 80 men armed with cavalry carbines, 10 armed with swords, 10 pikemen, 10 halberdiers, four miners, four carpenters, four locksmiths, and two surgeons. Each of these 124 men had also to be armed with a pistol and protected by a kind of armour in the form of a coat of mail (or chain mail) made of small strips of steel that came down as far as the knees. While this was an innovative proposal in terms of cavalry carbines and pistols — weapons that were shorter and lighter than the heavy muskets carried by European infantry — these troops were still heavily weighed down by wearing the long tunic of steel strips, the equivalent of the heavy medieval coat of mail. Furthermore, the 30 men armed with swords, pikes, and halberds, weighed down by their tunics, would have had a difficult time catching up with their half-naked enemies. Ultimately, the effectiveness of thrusting weapons (i.e., pikes and halberds) against elusive Natives was highly dubious. It is possible that these weapons were intended for defence against Europeans.⁴

Champlain's recommendations remained theoretical, the main reason being that such a large number of soldiers constituted an unsustainable expense. The weapons and equipment he suggested were not adopted, which in all likelihood indicates a degree of doubt about what tactics were appropriate in Canada against an aboriginal enemy. Nonetheless, Father Le Jeune watched the squad of soldiers sent to Quebec in 1633 marching "to the beat of drums." These soldiers were armed as described earlier, and undoubtedly equipped and dressed

exactly as they would have been in France. Their potential adversaries, watching them from the edge of the forest, were completely different.⁵

These fearsome enemies were the Natives of the Five Nations Confederacy, known as the Iroquois. Their territory lay to the south of the French colony, in what is now New York State, stretching from the Hudson and Mohawk rivers as far as Lake Erie. This confederacy, which was formed gradually from the mid-fifteenth to the late sixteenth centuries, comprised the Mohawk (Agniers), Onondaga (Onontagués), Oneida (Oneiouts), Cayuga (Goyogouins), and Seneca (Tsonontouans) nations. The Iroquois were a fierce, warlike people. They formed one of the most powerful Native nations in northeastern North America.⁶

From the time of their arrival in Canada, the French formed alliances with the Natives: the Algonquins, the Montagnais, and above all the Hurons — all sworn enemies of the Iroquois since time immemorial. Their fighting methods were the same as those of their adversaries, with the result that all were equal in terms of tactics and weaponry. Aware of the superiority that firearms brought, the French forbade trading in them with their Native allies — with the exception of a privileged few, who were generally “neophytes,” as converts to Christianity were known. The British colonists in Virginia and Massachusetts as a rule did the same.

The Dutch settlers along the Hudson River saw things differently. In their view, firearms were suitable goods for trading with the Iroquois who lived north of their settlements. As a result, from the 1620s onwards, Iroquois warriors travelled to Fort Orange (today's Albany, New York) with furs and often returned with firearms.

Several years passed before the French and their allies felt the consequences of this trade in firearms between the Dutch and the Iroquois, but ultimately the acquisition of firearms by the Iroquois was to prove disastrous for the little French colony. Initially, firearms were no great advantage for the Iroquois. The arquebuses and muskets of the day were usually fired by a match, which made them useless in wet weather. They also produced a great quantity of smoke when fired, revealing the position of the shooter lying in ambush. Gradually, however, the Native warriors mastered all aspects of handling firearms. By the late 1630s, this type of weapon held no further secrets, and they had adopted it to



Soldier of the Company of the Hundred Associates, circa 1650. Body armour was no longer used and the musket became the weapon of choice for soldiers in Canada. (Reconstitution by Michel Pétard, Directorate of History and Heritage)

their way of fighting. For example, in ambush, they moved to conceal their position immediately after firing a shot.

The French attempted to adjust to the reality that the Iroquois had the same weapons as they did. Since musket balls could pierce a breastplate, the soldiers in the colony abandoned their breastplates and helmets at that time. From then on, they also placed much greater emphasis on increased mobility, which abandoning their armour helped them achieve. From now on, they wore only cloth, were armed with muskets or arquebuses, and usually carried a sword.

Although there were clashes between the French and the Iroquois during the 1630s, the primary aim of the Iroquois was to weaken the Huron, a principle ally of the French. From 1641 onwards, the simmering conflict erupted into total war, and Iroquois warriors paddled up the Richelieu River to attack the French.

It was at this time that a group of French colonists, inspired by the idea of spreading the faith, founded a new settlement in Canada — Montreal, founded in 1642 and originally called Ville-Marie. Its location at the confluence of the St. Lawrence and Ottawa rivers made it strategically important. As the westernmost settlement, Montreal was the one most exposed to Iroquois attacks. The French defences were weak, for the garrison had only a score of soldiers. Even reinforced with volunteers, this represented only “a handful of men” with, critically, “little experience in the woods,” as the chronicler Dollier de Casson relates.

The governor, Huault de Montmagny, decided to block the Iroquois's access by building a fort at the mouth of the Richelieu River. The French thought they could intimidate them by firing at their canoes with artillery to prevent them going any further. Fort Richelieu, located where the city of Sorel now stands, is a typically European means of defence in response to the tactics of the Iroquois. Far from repelling the enemy, the fort became the warriors' favourite target. Construction was not even finished before the Iroquois rose up to harass the French with their arquebuses. They did not attack by mounting an assault after the manner of European soldiers, but lurked all around them. The little garrison paid dearly for the slightest careless act. Soldiers on sentry duty were cut down at long range by invisible sharpshooters, while others disappeared mysteriously

without trace. The Native canoes, meanwhile, passed by under cover of darkness or circumvented the mouth of the river by portaging, with the result that the area around Montreal remained as perilous as ever.

In the fall of 1643, the governor of Montreal, Paul Chomedey de Maisonneuve, leading 30 men, decided to pursue the enemy into the forest. This initiative came within a hair's breadth of disaster, for the French fell into an ambush. One detail, although banal in itself, nonetheless reveals the beginnings of adaptation in tactics. It is reported that, during the attack, Maisonneuve "placed his men behind the trees as the enemy did and they began firing at will." These tactics enabled the French to resist, but they ran short of ammunition, and had to retreat. Several were killed and Governor Maisonneuve himself only just managed to escape. Without the Native-inspired stratagem of taking cover behind the trees, many Frenchmen would undoubtedly have perished in the ambush. The French, however, were no match for their stealthy enemies. It was recommended that the inhabitants of Montreal not leave their homes at any time unless they were well-armed with pistols and swords.⁷

Far away to the west, on the shores of Lake Huron, was the missionary settlement of Sainte-Marie among the Hurons, which also came under pressure from the enemies of the French during the 1630s. The Iroquois resolved to eliminate the Huron during the 1640s, as they were weak, having suffered epidemics of disease caused by the viruses transmitted by the Europeans. The presence of the French missionaries also caused divisions among the Huron. The Iroquois were less affected by the epidemics and refused to allow any missionaries to enter their villages. Most importantly, they were better armed, thanks to the guns they obtained from the Dutch. Despite the raids on Montreal, the French recognized that the main effort of the Iroquois was aimed at Huronia. In 1645, a few French soldiers were dispatched as reinforcements to Sainte-Marie, but they stood little chance against the hundreds of Iroquois warriors. The missionary Father Lallemant considered Huronia "invested and besieged at all costs." After years of merciless harassment, some 1,200 Iroquois warriors launched the final assault in 1649. The Huron warriors were overwhelmed and retreated. There were

only eight French soldiers at Sainte-Marie, powerless witnesses to the disaster; the following year, Huronia was no more.⁸

With Huronia destroyed, the Iroquois turned their attacks on the French settlements in the St. Lawrence Valley. They had already blocked the river by occupying the shores of Lake Sainte-Pierre. Fort Richelieu, now useless, was abandoned in 1646. Trois-Rivières and above all Montreal became the targets of choice for the enemy warriors.

The French colonists protected themselves as best they could by erecting stockades around their settlements. However, they had to attack if they were to hold the Iroquois enemy in check. The problem was a difficult one for the French, for they knew that they were numerically inferior and, more important, they were ill-suited to the tactics of forest warfare. Nonetheless, the idea of organizing a "flying camp" appeared around this time. A "flying camp" in Europe was a small group of soldiers who moved more quickly than the army as a whole. This type of formation was generally found in the outposts of a field army.

A 40-man "flying camp" was accordingly organized in Canada in 1648. It consisted of regular soldiers and volunteers. If the hope was to keep the Iroquois at a distance by this means, it was a vain one. They were much faster than the French soldiers and were adept at camouflage. However, the flying camp was by no means useless, as it gave the French a degree of tactical mobility. In 1651, the flying camp grew to 70 men, undoubtedly because it was considered too weak to successfully confront a strong contingent of Iroquois. The increase was costly, however, so the flying camp was dissolved the following year, leaving the settlement with a static defence. The enemy then redoubled their attacks, concentrating their raids on Trois-Rivières. To help the small local garrison, the flying camp was resurrected in 1653, under the command of Eustache Lambert. When the emergency had passed, it was again disbanded in favour of a — short-lived — peace concluded with the Iroquois.

The experiment of the "flying camp" coincides with the appearance of a new breed of man in the colony. Hitherto, the fur trade in Canada had been carried on in the traditional way: the Natives would go to a fort occupied by the French to trade furs for European goods. Starting

in 1653, however, the French merchants decided to travel into the heartland of allied or friendly Native nations to trade. This shift in trade strategy led to a large number of young men learning the secrets of life in the forest and the manners and customs of the Natives. These were the *coureurs de bois*. Their influence on the type of fighting practised in Canada was not immediately noticeable in the mid-seventeenth century, since concepts of tactics remained firmly anchored in European practices. However, the appearance on the scene of men who had adapted fully to life in the woods would ultimately be the decisive factor in the evolution of tactics in North America.⁹

The advent of the flintlock musket also transformed the weaponry of combatants in Canada. Thanks to its silex "flint" firing mechanism, the new weapon was more reliable than the old muskets and arquebuses, which were normally fired using a match. The new flintlock musket was of equal calibre but lighter and easier to handle than the older traditional matchlock models. The flintlock was well-received with obvious enthusiasm by the soldiers and settlers in Canada. References to it can be found in the mid-1640s, and during the following decade the flintlock musket clearly became the paramount weapon in the colony. This superiority in weaponry enjoyed by the French over their Iroquois enemies again proved temporary, however, as it soon became apparent that they had acquired flintlocks from the Dutch trading posts.¹⁰

Another European weapon whose usefulness was questionable in fighting in the forests of Canada was the sword. In practice, soldiers and volunteers equipped themselves with small hatchets, "tomahawks," and knives instead of the long, cumbersome swords, which were prone to becoming entangled in the foliage. But on balance, the usefulness of the sword went far beyond its function as a sidearm. As a weapon, it was laden with symbolism, the quintessential symbol that identified the man wearing one as a soldier. Since the Middle Ages, commoners had been forbidden from wearing swords. They were a privilege reserved for the nobility, gentlemen, and soldiers. Thus, although useless in the Canadian forests, the sword remained part of the official armament of the soldier in the colony throughout the French period, even though it was never actually used in combat.

Following the resumption of hostilities with the Iroquois in 1657–58, the small colony was in a permanent state of virtual siege. In the years that followed, the situation in the St. Lawrence Valley became extremely precarious for the French colonists. The Iroquois would burst out of nowhere, strike, and disappear. The French would retaliate as best they could. In 1658, the governor, Voyer d'Argenson, launched a pursuit of the Iroquois with 100 or so men. His intention was to track them down, confront them in a European-style pitched battle, and annihilate them. But, of course, the Iroquois never gave him the opportunity, seemingly melting away into the landscape as soon as the governor's men appeared. Thus, despite having been established in Canada for half a century, the French seemed to have made virtually no progress in terms of battle tactics.

An additional factor that exacerbated this tactical shortcoming was the small size of the French forces, which obliged them to restrict themselves to strictly defensive measures. They could do no more than encourage the settlers to congregate in closed, fortified villages, which in turn contributed to a siege mentality. In 1660, an incident occurred in which the young commander of the Montreal garrison, Adam Dollard des Ormeaux, and 16 comrades were killed at Long-Sault, on the Ottawa River, when their little fort was stormed and captured by the Iroquois. Although some reinforcements were dispatched from France to Canada, they had no effect and the murderous raids multiplied with no way to contain them. It was in this siege atmosphere that the first corps of volunteers was organized in the colony in Montreal in 1663. The "Militia of the Holy Family Mary-Jesus-Joseph" numbered 139 men, divided into 20 squads, to patrol the outskirts of the town.¹¹

Canada's salvation arrived in 1665 with the arrival of 1,200 infantrymen sent to the colony by the young King Louis XIV. They were part of the Carignan-Salières Regiment, comprising 20 companies of 50 men each, and four companies detached from the Lignières, Chambéllé, Poitou, and Orléans regiments. There was also a small company of 20 men, which served as the escort for the governor general, the Marquis de Tracy. These infantry arrived dressed as they were in Europe in brown uniforms lined in grey, with hats adorned with beige and black

ribbons. The governor general's guards wore the same uniform as the Musketeers in the royal palace. There was accordingly not much change for Canada in terms of dress. In weaponry, however, there was a noticeable adaptation. In contrast to a European regiment in which approximately one quarter of the soldiers were armed with long pikes, all the infantry sent to Canada carried firearms. At least 200 soldiers, furthermore, were armed with the new flintlock muskets, a weapon banished in favour of muskets by the army in metropolitan France.

The arrival of this large number of troops forced the Iroquois into a defensive posture. Tracy's tactics were simple and direct: invade the enemy's territory, destroy his forts and his crops, and reduce the hostile Natives to famine. After a few skirmishes, a large expeditionary force of 300 soldiers and 200 Canadian volunteers left the colony in the middle of winter 1666 headed for the southern Iroquois lands. The winter adventure turned into a near-disaster and the force neither reached, nor destroyed, the Iroquois villages. The following summer, however, saw some 700 soldiers and 400 Canadian volunteers again marching south. They reached Iroquois territory in September, destroying everything in their path. Four of the villages were burned, along with their crops. The Iroquois, masters of the art of ambush, realized that they were powerless against a European force attacking them on their own ground. They also found that their Dutch and English friends kept their distance. Ultimately, this reversal of fortunes cost them a portion of the fur trade and their people were threatened with famine. Faced with all these factors, their chiefs negotiated with the French and peace was concluded in 1667.

Although these expeditions do not signal any real change in French tactics, they do demonstrate that a strong force of well-disciplined, well-armed, and well-equipped European troops could prevail over aboriginal enemies. The lesson was that taking refuge behind the stockades was not enough: the Natives had to be beaten on their own ground.

To guarantee the safety of the settlers, however, the colony had to be garrisoned by a large number of troops. The metropolitan authorities failed to understand this and withdrew virtually all the regular troops from Canada between 1667 and 1671. The Iroquois naturally did not fail to notice this development and, while stopping short of

provoking an all out war, there was a notable increase in incidents between them and the French.

In 1669, the King ordered the formation of the Canadian militia in a bid to enhance the colonists' security. Every man capable of bearing arms between the ages of 16 and 60 was henceforth a member of his parish militia company. The members of the companies were required to meet several times a year to train and they were all subject to mobilization. The Canadian militia had no uniforms and wore their civilian clothes. They were required to be "always well armed and always supplied with powder and the matches necessary to use their weapons when the occasion arises."¹²

In principle, the militia was a force auxiliary to the regular troops. Militias in Europe were rarely mobilized and almost never served in the field with the armies, since their primary role was to reinforce the fortress garrisons. The role of the militia in Canada was to be very different. A number of Canadian militia members were well-acquainted with forest survival, long canoe trips, and were often superb shots. Such men, if well-led, could form a formidable force capable of covering great distances. Beginning in 1673, Governor Frontenac mobilized a portion of the militia to accompany him as far as Lake Ontario, where he founded Fort Frontenac (present-day Kingston).

No militia, however effective, can replace professional soldiers. Militia members were civilians first. While some were seasoned fighters, many others were pitiful part-time soldiers. The situation accordingly became critical in the early 1680s, when relations with the Iroquois deteriorated into open warfare. Their increasingly frequent raids obliged Governor de la Barre to ask for the urgent dispatch of regular troops from France. His call for help was heard and, in November 1683, three companies of regulars — 150 non-commissioned officers and soldiers, commanded by six officers — disembarked at Quebec.

These were naval troops, known as the *Compagnies Franches de la Marine* (colonial regular troops). Contemporary documents also refer to them as "naval detachments" and especially "colony troops." They were indeed "colonial troops." In France's former colonial empire, the minister of the navy was also responsible for colonial administration,



Soldier of the Compagnies Franches de la Marine, circa 1680. The uniform worn in North America was identical to that worn in France. (Reconstitution by Michel Pétard copyright © Parks Canada)

with the result that the troops who stood guard in America were usually in the minister's service. Prior to the 1760s, the companies to which these troops belonged were not regimented: they remained independent, and were thus described in contemporary usage as "free" companies. In the case of Canada, these were the first royal troops destined to serve in the colony on a permanent basis. The garrison strength was doubled in 1684, and five years later increased twelve-fold. This force of some 1,750 soldiers and 105 officers was to be reduced subsequently but never withdrawn. These "colonial" troops became the first regular armed forces in Canada and to this extent are the true forerunners of today's Canadian Forces.

After 1685, the officers commanding these troops were trained in Canada, for they were recruited from the families of "gentlemen" who had settled in New France. As was the case in France, completion of the training gave them an officer's commission signed by the sovereign in the regular forces of the French colonial army.

The establishment of this garrison of regular colonial troops during the 1680s was to be the catalyst that prompted the emergence of the first real Canadian tacticians. Prior to this, there were few professional officers in the country and they lacked the resources to refine their ideas. With the arrival of the *Compagnies Franches de la Marine*, a framework was created that produced a large number of officers. Many were born in France, although in many cases they had settled permanently in the colony. The authorities, moreover, encouraged the recruiting of officers in the colony, with the result that, over the years, the vast majority of officers of the colonial troops in New France were born in Canada.

In the final quarter of the seventeenth century, the potential enemy of the French shifted south of the territories held by the Five Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy. New Holland became British and was renamed New York. All the European colonies along the Atlantic seaboard, from the Carolinas to Massachusetts, were now British. For Canada, this unification of the Atlantic colonies under a single flag constituted a formidable challenge. The population of the British colonies grew inexorably. The estimated 125,000 souls in 1675 had doubled within 15 years, and by 1713 had reached 375,000. In 1740, it

was over 900,000 and only 10 years later exceeded 1,170,000. Dividing these figures by six gives a relatively conservative idea of the proportion of able-bodied men capable of bearing arms: around 20,000 in 1675, 60,000 in 1713, and 200,000 by the middle of the eighteenth century. Moreover, these were prosperous colonies capable of organizing and arming their militias. They could also arm fleets of warships. And this did not include the garrisons of regular troops from Britain, supplemented when the occasion required by the Royal Navy. Lastly, their formidable Iroquois allies, who formed the British colonies' first line defence, should not be forgotten.

The situation in New France was the opposite. Acadie and Plaisance (Newfoundland) in the seventeenth century, and Île Royale in the following century, were small colonies that depended mainly on fishing and subsistence farming. The defence of these colonies was heavily dependent on the naval supremacy of the mother country, to which they were unable to contribute in any event. The New England colonies could arm a fleet, something unthinkable at Port-Royal. These little French colonies were dependent on what the French fleet was able to contribute for the protection of its North Atlantic colonies. If the navy was strong, these colonies had nothing to fear, but if it was weak, invariably, the garrisons would be besieged and fall since no help was possible, in spite of their value in battle. The strategic choices for the defence of these colonies were determined in France and were based on the state of the battle fleet.

In Canada, control over a vast expanse of territory was essential, for the economy of the colony depended on the fur trade with the Natives. This did not require outright occupation of the whole country, but it did presuppose that forts and posts were scattered across it, with the dual aims of trading and of preventing other Europeans from doing so. The population was very small compared to that of the British colonies. Canada had a population of only 12,000 in 1690, which rose slowly to around 65,000 by the middle of the eighteenth century. The Canadian authorities could nonetheless influence the military situation in their favour, provided they made the right strategic and tactical choices.

The officers in Canada thus faced a very difficult problem: how to defend an immense colony with so few men. This was the issue they struggled with during the 1680s, as warning signs of a conflict with England and its colonies multiplied.

Erecting fortifications is the most basic of all defensive measures. During the 1680s, one thing became very clear: the state of the fortifications in Canada, where they existed at all, was lamentable. The first priority was to restore Fort Frontenac and surround Montreal with a stockade, as these were the places most exposed to attack by the Iroquois, the faithful allies of the English. Quebec City was a natural fortress, but it lacked a wall, having only a few artillery batteries and an ineffective fort, Château Saint-Louis, which also served as the residence of the governor general. Little credence was given at Versailles to the idea that Quebec would be attacked from the sea but, in 1690, there was a change of heart and defensive works, comprising 16 stone forts linked by a wooden stockade, were built. This was to be the first of many major works built at Quebec.

The building of more or less temporary fortifications, however, offered no overall solution to the problems posed by the defence of Canada. The officers who reflected on these problems were confronted with the vast, wild expanses of North America. In addition to the complications arising out of the geographic dimension, there was the problem of climate. The harshness of the Canadian winter is unknown in Western Europe, with the exception of certain parts of Scandinavia and Russia.

The treatises on the art of war were written for armies operating in European battlefields. European battle tactics called for compact masses of musketeers, supported by pikemen, fighting on foot. Artillery trains moved at a painstakingly slow pace, depending on the weight of the guns, and this in turn slowed down the movement of armies. The cavalry of the day was considered the most mobile element, but only rarely displayed this attribute.¹³

A French officer arriving in Canada in the 1680s soon realized that the bulk of his military knowledge and experience was useless in the colony. There were no roads, so the use of field artillery was impossible. Similarly, cavalry could not be deployed in a country covered with

forests. Even infantry was severely constrained under such conditions. The only efficient way to travel in New France was along the waterways. Natives and traders used the rivers that drain the interior of the North American continent. The French explorers discovered their extraordinary dimensions — in 1682, Robert Chevalier de la Salle set off from Montreal and travelled down the Mississippi to the Gulf of Mexico. The initial conclusion was inescapable: troops must move by water using scores of canoes and other types of small craft.

There was also the enemy to consider. The Iroquois were formidable fighters with their ambushes and raids, but they were relatively few in number, with probably 1,200 to 1,500 warriors. Since the 1680s, the French garrison had enough numbers to hold them in check. They could also call on a relatively well-organized militia. It would appear that, overall, the Iroquois threat was less critical than in the past. However, in 1684 and 1687, Governors General de La Barre and Denonville dispatched major expeditions against the Iroquois, comprising several hundred soldiers of the *Compagnies Franches de la Marine*, strongly supported by militia, but failed to neutralize them. These campaigns were a repeat of the tactics used 20 years earlier by the soldiers of the *Carignan-Salières* Regiment. The soldiers of the *Compagnies Franches de la Marine* marched towards the Seneca villages with drums beating, dressed in their pale grey and blue uniforms, wearing three-cornered hats and high-heeled shoes, while the militia were a noisy, undisciplined rabble. The Seneca villages were burned, but their nation was not defeated, any more than were the other four nations in the Iroquois Confederacy.

The other enemies that required more careful watching henceforth were the British soldiers and militias in New England. In contrast to New France, there were few regular troops from Britain itself. However, the militias, especially in Massachusetts, the most important of the British colonies, were in most cases numerous, well-armed, and well-equipped. These enemies, however, practised the art of war in the European manner. If, by some ill chance, a large army consisting of British regulars and New England militiamen were to march into Canada, the troops that could be mustered to oppose them would probably not be able to contain them. However, given the natural obstacles

separating New France from New England, the likelihood of a land invasion was slight. An attack by sea seemed equally unlikely. For the moment, raids by the Iroquois allies of the British were the threat to everyone's safety.¹⁴

French officers who thought carefully about the situation concluded that the best way to defend New France would be to put the British colonies on the defensive, which would also neutralize their Native allies. To achieve this, they had to find a way of keeping the British soldiers and colonists on their guard at home. Such a mobilization would oblige them to devote considerable forces and resources to providing a degree of security in their colonies. That would weaken their ability to organize incursions into Canada. Attacking is always the best method of defence.

But how was this to be achieved? The observations of Canadians in Native communities suggested an answer to this question and provided a basis for the development of a tactical doctrine appropriate to the country.

The influence of Charles Le Moyne (1626–1685) and Joseph-François Hertel de la Frésnière (1642–1722) was preponderant in this area. They both had outstanding experience of conditions in the Canadian environment, the Natives, and their military tactics.

Le Moyne served in Canada as a soldier from the 1640s onwards and distinguished himself by his successes in many battles against the Iroquois. After he was captured and adopted by his Native enemies, he learned their language before escaping from them. He was successful in business and from the 1660s onwards was one of the colony's most respected figures. He also served as interpreter for the governors, without neglecting his military activities. In 1666 he commanded the Montreal volunteers on expeditions with the Carignan-Salières Regiment. He had several sons, to whom he taught what he had observed about the art of war as practised in Canada. His sons, several of whom died in battle, bear the names Le Moyne de Longueuil, de Sainte-Hélène, de Maricourt, de Châteauguay, and d'Iberville. Their exploits made them military heroes of New France.¹⁵

Hertel de la Frésnière (1642–1722) was born in Trois-Rivières into a military family, as his father had been a soldier in the small Canadian

garrison since the 1620s. In 1657, young Hertel also became a soldier and took part in numerous skirmishes with the Iroquois. He was captured in 1661, tortured and then adopted by his enemies, whose language he learned, and whose customs he observed until he managed to escape around 1663. He subsequently rejoined the small garrison at Trois-Rivières and served as an interpreter. He took part in the campaigns of the Carignan-Salières Regiment in 1666 and 1667. Later, in 1673, he served with the Count of Frontenac's expedition, which went as far as the shores of Lake Ontario, where it established Fort Frontenac (present-day Kingston, Ontario). Similar to Le Moyne, Hertel fathered several sons who became warriors, as well. They included Hertel de la Fresnière Junior, de Moncours, and de Rouville. Impressed by his experience in Native matters, Governor de la Barre appointed him to command France's Native allies during the 1680s.

Much like Le Moyne, Hertel de la Fresnière believed that the Native tactics were ideally suited to North America, when allied to European discipline. This marriage of military cultures was the winning formula for the tactical innovations they advocated. However, military men in Canada were obliged to make considerable changes in relation to the art of war as practised in France.

In Canada, combatants had to adopt a far greater degree of individual independence and responsibility when on raiding missions than a soldier marching in serried ranks to the beat of the drum in a pitched battle in Europe. In North America, soldiers had to move fast, in small groups, act as scouts, approaching the enemy unobserved, surprising, attacking, and destroying him and then vanishing with equal rapidity. By combining both methods, they achieved the surprise and terror of Native ambushes, combined with the chain of command and obedience characteristic of European soldiers. It was the terrifying attack of the Natives, but combined with the studied coordination that demanded cohesion and discipline among European troops. The Natives, although famous for their superb raid tactics, were often without command or discipline and could decide not to fight.¹⁶

Ideally, a force comprised of professional officers, French soldiers, Canadian militia, and Native allies should serve together as seamlessly

as possible, despite the numerous cultural differences. For example, even within the confines of the forest, they had to be able to mount an assault on minor fortifications using mantlets, ladders, and a battering ram to smash in the gates, since these instruments could be quickly assembled on the spot. The withdrawal of the "war party" had to be swift and well-planned, so that the enemy forces could not catch up with them. At worst, the enemy would be able to follow their trail. If they were closely pursued, they would be harassed continuously. But if they fell back quickly, with enemy forces following far behind, an ambush could be prepared to discourage them from further pursuit.

Soldiers and militia also had to cover great distances in winter on snowshoes for their raids. Whereas the universally accepted tactics relied on massive firepower by moving thousands of men in ranks to force a decisive battle, French and Canadian officers displayed sharp, open minds and opted for original tactical doctrines that matched the conditions and resources of the country they had to defend.¹⁷

These concepts had to be tested, however, and an initial opportunity presented itself in 1686. The *Compagnie France du Nord*, one of whose shareholders was Le Moyne, claimed the shores of Hudson Bay for France from the British Hudson's Bay Company, which had maintained forts there since the 1670s to trade with the Natives. Even though England and France were at peace at the time, trade wars between them were sometimes settled by force of arms. It was decided that an expedition would be sent to chase the English out of the bay.

This body of troops was led by an officer of the *Compagnies Franches de la Marine*, Chevalier de Troyes. His second-in-command was Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville and his brother, Jacques Le Moyne de Sainte-Hélène, the sons of Charles Le Moyne. They led 30 men from the *Compagnies Franches de la Marine* and 70 Canadian *voyageurs* on an incredible odyssey that took them as far as Hudson Bay. Organizing the equipment for this expedition was very different from the customs of European armies. The regulation uniforms of the soldiers — pale grey tunics with blue lapels and five dozen brass buttons, grey trousers, long grey stockings, high-heeled shoes, and black felt hats with a broad brim adorned with faux gold braid — were left behind. To execute the



Soldier of the Compagnies Franches de la Marine and a Canadian volunteer during the campaign against the English at Hudson Bay in 1686. (Reconstitution by Francis Back copyright © Parks Canada)

long-range mission successfully, they received outfits that were unheard-of for professional European soldiers. They consisted of a blue hooded greatcoat decorated with gold braid, pants, leggings, mittens, two pairs of moccasins, shirts, and a "tapabord" style hat, which is a kind of cap. The Canadian *voyageurs* wore the same outfit, except for the stripe on the hood. They all had rifles with plug bayonets as well as pistols, axes, and even sabres and grenades. In addition, the Canadians carried knives. This clothing, inspired by that of the *coureurs de bois* and the Natives proved ideal for raiding warfare.¹⁸

They left Montreal in the snow on March 31, 1686, and reached Hudson Bay (actually James Bay) after 85 days of hazardous travel, involving many physical challenges, over wild country. They were then at Fort Moose (present-day Moose Factory, Ontario), a post of the British Hudson's Bay Company. For the garrison, stupefied to see troops emerging from the bush, the surprise was total. The French and Canadians wasted little time and mounted their attack. They took the fort by scaling its six-metre stockade and demolishing the gate with a battering ram. They then captured Fort Charles (Rupert House), as well as a ship lying at anchor close to the fort. Finally, Fort Albany capitulated in July. The success was total. The expedition proved that French soldiers and Canadian militiamen could successfully cross hundreds of kilometres of forest and capture enemy posts with reasonable ease. The posts were incapable of offering effective resistance. Lastly, it was noted that the Canadians uttered "loud shouts" in Native fashion when they mounted their assault, proof that they had absorbed the Natives' warlike values.

When compared to the lamentable spectacle of the expeditions against the Iroquois in 1684 and 1687, the successes at Hudson Bay showed the way forward. Hertel de la Fresnière observed everything and concluded that joint expeditions, consisting of men familiar with the climate and long journeys through the forest and down the rivers, could strike the enemy over great distances.

For Hertel, the ideal "war party" consisted of Canadian officers thoroughly familiar with the country and with the customs of the Natives, some seasoned regular soldiers, *coureurs de bois*, Canadian

voyageurs, and — an important additional element — Native allies. The latter could change their mind at any time, for they were allies and not subordinates, so the commander needed to have a strong diplomatic presence to inspire their respect and enthusiasm.

There was a realization that logistics played a crucial role in these expeditions. Participants could count only on what they could carry with them. Since they had to move very fast, the strict minimum was the rule. They set off in canoes loaded with food, weapons, and ammunition. Some of the supplies were hidden along the route in anticipation of the return journey. When they came close to the target, the canoes were hidden and the rest of the way was covered on foot, through the forest, with every man carrying his load. In winter sleds replaced the canoes and the men wore snowshoes. The same conditions applied to the Natives taking part in the raid.¹⁹

The great principles of tactics, which were to be formulated more precisely by the great Prussian military thinker Clausewitz a century later, were already apparent in the defence of New France. Canada had a garrison and volunteers. According to Hertel and his colleagues, this garrison of naval troops and Canadian volunteers had to do something more than mount guard while awaiting the enemy's incursions. Quite the opposite: they had to be led into battle, attack the enemy on his own ground, and keep him on the defensive. According to Clausewitz, battle is the only effective activity in war, the only one by which the enemy can be destroyed. It is the supreme law of decision by arms, and that is what the Canadian tacticians recognized in the event of war.²⁰

War was declared between Britain and France in 1689. Encouraged by the British colonial authorities in New York and by the French lack of success against them, the Iroquois mounted a major raid on Canada. During the night of 4–5 August 1689, hundreds of warriors surprised the little town of Lachine near Montreal. About 100 of the inhabitants were killed or captured, some horribly tortured. The entire colony was stricken with horror at the news. At that moment, the Count of Frontenac arrived at Quebec to serve a second term as governor of New France. This proud old soldier was the man of the hour. In his mind, as in the minds of all Canadians, the real guilt for the "Lachine massacre"

rested with the New England colonists: the Iroquois were merely their tool. The English had to be hit on their home ground.

Frontenac knew of the success of the Hudson Bay raid and was learning the tactical ideas of Hertel de la Fresnière, which many officers supported. He decided to undertake expeditions that would strike at targets in New England. There would be three, setting out from Quebec, Trois-Rivières, and Montreal. The idea of a mixed force was retained: each group consisted of regular troops, Canadian militia volunteers, and Native allies. Another innovation was that the three groups would depart in winter, a virtually unthinkable notion for warfare at that time.

And so it was that on a very cold night in January 1690, the inhabitants of a village comprising some 30 houses surrounded by a stockade were sleeping peacefully. This was Schenectady, in the British colony of New York, north of the town of Albany. There were no sentries on duty at the walls and the stockade gate was stuck in a snowdrift. Such precautions were considered superfluous in midwinter. The expedition that had set off from Montreal arrived during the night and entered silently, without being detected. It was jointly commanded by Jacques La Moyne de Sainte-Hélène and Nicolas d'Ailleboust de Manthet. Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville was serving as second-in-command and another of his brothers, François Le Moyne de Bienville, was with the expedition, as well. The detachment consisted of 114 Canadians and French, and 96 Natives. A signal was given to attack the houses. The place was razed to the ground. A few of the inhabitants managed to escape.

Two months later, during the night of March 27, the expedition that had set off from Trois-Rivières, commanded by Hertel de la Fresnière accompanied by three of his sons, assaulted the fort and village of Salmon Falls, near the town of Portsmouth, in the colony of Massachusetts. After two hours, nothing remained standing. Hertel's men withdrew promptly. The Massachusetts militia assembled from other towns and decided to pursue the French. When he realized that, Hertel decided to set a trap for them at the narrow bridge over the Wooster River. When the pursuers entered the bridge, they made a splendid target. A volley of rifle fire greeted them from invisible sharpshooters hidden in the bushes and a score of them fell. The remainder panicked and were terrified by the war

cries of the Canadians and Natives. The Hertel expedition subsequently joined up with the one commanded by Portneuf, which had set off from Quebec and which was heading for Casco, in what is now the state of Maine. The place was taken and razed in May.²¹

These initial raids may appear surprising, for New England was heavily populated compared to New France. It was rather like David attacking Goliath. However, the raids planned by the Canadian tacticians revealed the military vulnerability of New England. The hundreds of kilometres of dense forest separating the two colonies worked in Canada's favour. The Canadians, far more knowledgeable about the woods than the English colonists in America, could use these forests to their own great advantage. Their expeditions roamed the forests much like privateers on the oceans, striking the enemy at places of their choosing. In using attack as its best method of defence, the little Canadian colony was able to dominate its larger American neighbour. The aim was to force the stronger party to concentrate on its defence against a far smaller force.

This is not what initially happened in New England. The British colonial authorities, outraged at the French attacks, decided to invade Canada the following summer by land and by sea. An army of 1,000 militiamen from New York and Connecticut assembled north of Albany to proceed to Montreal up the Richelieu River, while a fleet assembled at Boston with another army of 2,300 Massachusetts militiamen on board to lay siege to Quebec. The army that was supposed to attack Montreal was depleted by sickness, desertion, and discord, with the result that the troops were withdrawn. Meanwhile, after many delays, the fleet of 34 ships intended to attack Quebec sailed up the St. Lawrence in September 1690, arriving within sight of the city on October 16. Its commander was Admiral Sir William Phipps. In Quebec, Governor Frontenac waited calmly at the head of some 2,100 men, including 900 soldiers.

Frontenac's famous response to Phipps's call to surrender, "I shall reply through the mouths of my cannons," has gone down in Canadian history. The city's artillery caused serious damage to any of Phipps's ships that dared to approach. Less well-known is the decisive role of "Canadian" tactics in the successful defence of Quebec.

On 18 October, some 1,200 men from Massachusetts landed on the shore at Beauport, east of the city. Their objective was to overwhelm the French defenders dug in south of the Saint Charles River and then assault the city. The Massachusetts men formed up in ranks and advanced on the city. Not all the city's defenders, however, were inside the walls. Frontenac had detached some 200 Canadian militiamen who, waiting in ambush in the woods, "skirmished" with the Massachusetts men who withdrew, surprised and shaken. The Canadians then remorselessly harassed the enemy encampment. At last, on 20 October, the Massachusetts militia decided on a major attack. They formed up in ranks, unfurled their flags, and, in classic European military style, marched towards the Saint Charles River with drums beating. Frontenac waited for them, dug in, with three battalions of the *Compagnies Franches de la Marine* in battle order behind earthworks on the Saint Charles River. In addition, he detached two of the Le Moyne brothers, the *Sieur de Longueuil* and the *Sieur de Saint-Hélène*, out of the defensive positions to command approximately 200 Canadian volunteers. Frontenac was aware that these young officers were masters of the new "Canadian" tactics and was counting on them to weaken the Massachusetts troops before they reached the French defences. If the attackers then suffered heavy losses while assaulting the fortifications, the *Compagnies Franches de la Marine* could counter-attack and drive them back.

The Massachusetts militiamen, after marching for some time "in very good order," found their way blocked by the volunteers from Longueuil and Sainte-Hélène who fired at them from behind cover. The attack was compromised and they "retreated in good order." The Canadians suffered only a few dead and wounded, although, unfortunately, Sainte-Hélène was amongst them. Frontenac then detached Lieutenant de Villieu at the head of "a small detachment of soldiers, all men of good will" to join the Canadian volunteers. The next day, five bronze field guns of the Boston artillery were landed and the attack was renewed. De Villieu and his troops caught them in one initial ambush while the militia from Beauport, Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré, and Île d'Orléans mounted a second. The Boston artillery opened fire, but "shot

so badly” that no one was hurt. Furthermore, the French guns of the Saint Charles River battery responded. The attack was stopped cold and the men from Massachusetts retreated. Harassed right up to their camp throughout the night, they succumbed to panic and fled, routed, onto their ships, leaving their field guns on the shore. Two days later, the siege was lifted and Phipps’s fleet returned to Boston. The Massachusetts losses numbered at least 120, while the defenders of Quebec suffered nine killed and a few wounded.²²

Clearly, the Massachusetts men had not even reached their first objective, the Saint Charles River earthworks. The skirmishing of the Canadian volunteers thwarted all their attacks. One important fact to note is that Lieutenant Villieu’s troops of the *Compagnies Franches de la Marine* knew the Canadian tactics. De Villieu was born in France and like many officers from metropolitan France who arrived in Canada during the last two decades of the seventeenth century had clearly assimilated the advantages of “Canadian-style” warfare. One, if not the greatest, of these advantages can be seen from the astonishing discrepancy in losses on the two sides during these initial battles. Clearly, those who espoused the new Canadian tactics enjoyed a substantial edge, since their losses were modest in the extreme.

In spite of the French success in 1690, the British colonists to the south did not give up. It was clear to them that they could not attack Canada with a fleet and field armies. However, they could also mount raids against the little Canadian forts on the banks of the St. Lawrence. Their Iroquois allies were of course also involved, but from now on, they would insist on the participation of British militiamen. One man in particular was ideally suited for this role, Major Peter Schuyler of Albany, in the colony of New York. As early as 1690, he had intercepted and defeated French troops sent to negotiate with the Onondaga (near the present-day city of Syracuse). On the strength of this success, he commanded an expedition in the summer of 1691, comprising 120 New York volunteers and at least 144 Native allies, of whom 80 were Mohawks. The aim of the expedition was to carry out a raid in the area around Montreal. When they approached Fort Chambly, Native scouts allied to the French detected Schuyler and his men. The governor of

Montreal, Chevalier de Callières, was warned. He assembled troops and militia and sent some 120 men to reinforce Fort Chambly under the command of the Sieur de Le Ber and Sieur de Varennes. Schuyler in the meantime circumvented Chambly and, on 11 August attacked Laprairie, south of Montreal. The fighting was fierce, but the little garrison held fast, despite heavy losses. Finally, doubtless fearing the arrival of French reinforcements, Schuyler and his men withdrew. A small French detachment was wiped out when it attempted to cut off Schuyler's retreat as he made for his canoes left on the banks of the Richelieu River. Schuyler did not anticipate any more opposition, which was a fateful mistake, as the warriors of New France moved swiftly through the bush. Le Ber's and Varennes's men burst forth and attacked Schuyler's force. After an hour and a half of fighting, Schuyler had lost 83 men killed, including 17 Natives, and 25 wounded, against minimal losses of five or six wounded for Le Ber and Varennes. The New Yorkers' heavy losses confirmed the French superiority in raiding and the militia of the British colonies never again risked mounting raids against Canada.

Subsequently, the Iroquois mounted further minor attacks against Canadian villages. One such attack led to the famous resistance by Madeleine de Verchères in her small fort against a party of Iroquois in 1692. For the French, the task thus remained one of neutralizing the Iroquois. The new Canadian tactics were continually refined and attracted new practitioners. The time had come to turn the tables, using the new tactical doctrine. From now on, the French and their Native allies would be able to threaten the Iroquois on their home ground.

The choicest targets were the Mohawk "castles" north of Albany. In midwinter, January 1693, a large Canadian expedition overwhelmed the defenders and razed the "castles" (in fact, fortified villages), a serious blow to the Iroquois leaders. For them, this destruction came at a critical time, as they were increasingly coming round to the view that their British allies were providing them with precious little support against the French. While the Iroquois were more than willing to mount raids against Canada, they felt that the British should again attack the French by sea — thereby displaying a flawless understanding of their

strategic and tactical problems.. They also realized that the Natives allied to the French had weapons and ammunition in large quantities, while they were receiving no additional powder and few weapons from their British allies.²³

The hammer blow delivered by the French during 1696 occurred in the wake of this discouraging realization. Since successive raids had forced the Iroquois onto the defensive, Governor Frontenac, still a formidable warrior though he was 74 years old and needed to be carried in a canoe, entered the territory of the Onondaga Iroquois nation at the head of some 2,000 men, including militia and regulars. Tactically, this was a relatively conventional force, surrounded by scouts and assault troops. The Onondaga, powerless to resist, scattered while Frontenac's troops levelled their villages and destroyed their crops.

Now facing famine and seriously weakened militarily, the Iroquois noted bitterly that the French had thoroughly mastered the art of conducting such expeditions against distant targets. The British colonies, furthermore, did not lift so much as a finger to help their Iroquois allies. Peace was finally concluded at Ryswick in 1697 between France and England. Discouraged and exhausted, the Iroquois nations signed a definitive peace treaty with the French in 1701 as part of the "Great Peace of Montreal," which also involved numerous Native nations in the Great Lakes region.

While Canadian war doctrine was subsequently revised and refined, it was not fundamentally changed. Thanks to it, the war shifted essentially from the settlements of New France to those of New England from the 1690s onwards.

The highest authorities in the colony and in metropolitan France acknowledged the outstanding merit of the Canadian tacticians Le Moyne and Hertel. The Le Moyne family's battle exploits were undoubtedly one factor that prompted Louis XIV to sign the letters patent of nobility that Baron de Longueuil received in 1700. Hertel de la Fresnière had no fortune and enjoyed less influence than his compatriot, as is attested to by the attempts by Frontenac from 1689 on to obtain letters patent of nobility for him. However, this outstanding officer, in all likelihood the first true Canadian tactician, was finally ennobled in 1716.

The raiding tactics used by modern-day “guerrillas” are familiar to us from the daily news bulletins. In the 1690s, however, it was a way of fighting that was completely unknown to the French forces in Europe. One of the saddest realizations is the virtually universal indifference among army officers in metropolitan France to these tactics from their great North American colony. In France, only the achievements of European enemies were admired. Thus, in the mid-eighteenth century, light infantry tactics became fashionable in France because of the German and Austrian *Jäger* and — supreme irony of fate — of the British light infantry developed in the closing campaigns of the Seven Years' War in Canada against the Canadians.²⁴

In conclusion, the Canadian tactics were crowned with success. They kept the British colonies in America on the defensive which, although far more powerful, failed to counter them successfully. They preserved France's immense territorial acquisitions in North America and enabled a handful of French soldiers and Canadian militiamen to command respect. Against this Canadian doctrine, Great Britain was forced to deploy the doctrine of overwhelming superiority to achieve the final conquest of Canada in 1759–60. With the conquest by the British and colonial Americans, and the ceding of Canada by France to Britain, the Canadians consigned their weapons to the storeroom and their unwritten tactics, which had made so many of their exploits possible, were forgotten.

NOTES

1. Samuel de Champlain, *Oeuvres de Champlain*, with an introduction by C.-H. Laverdière (Quebec City, 1870), 361. A “corselet” is a breastplate that was worn by soldiers in Europe who were armed with pikes.
2. These concepts were based on the ideal of the code of chivalry dating back to the Middle Ages and on the values of charity linked to Christianity. In practice, the situation for civilians in Europe was far from ideal. During the religious wars, many innocents were tortured and massacred for no greater offence than being of a different faith from the conqueror. The tribulations suffered by peasants at the mercy of an utterly undisciplined *soldateska* that raped and pillaged are legendary

- throughout the ages and sadly, they reached their apotheosis in Germany during the terrible Thirty Years' War (1618–1648).
3. Samuel de Champlain, *Oeuvres de Champlain*, 974, 1016, 1021, 1414.
 4. *Mercure François*, 1633, Tome XIX, 841–43.
 5. *Relation des Jésuites*, 1633, 36.
 6. For further details on the Iroquois and warfare, see in particular the study by Roland Viau, *Enfants du néant et mangeurs d'armes: Guerre, culture et société en Iroquoisie ancienne* (Montreal: Boréal, 2000).
 7. François Dollier de Casson, *Histoire de Montréal de 1640 à 1672*, adapted and with commentary by Aurélien Boisvert, (Montreal: 1992), 48–50.
 8. Lallemand is quoted in *Relation des Jésuites*, 1644, 36; *Journal des Jésuites*, edited from the original manuscript published by C.-H. Laverdière and H.R. Casgrain (Quebec City, 1871), 9. For the Sainte-Marie mission, see: Kenneth E. Kidd, *The Excavation of Ste Marie I* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1949). In 1645, there were 58 French at Sainte-Marie, including 22 soldiers. For the Huron, see, Bruce Trigger, *Les Enfants d'Aataensic: l'histoire du peuple huron* (Montreal: Libre-Expression, 1991).
 9. Marcel Trudel, *Histoire de la Nouvelle-France: III, la seigneurie des Cent-Associés 1627–1663, tome 1: les événements* (Montreal: Fides, 1979).
 10. On the evolution of the rifle, see the study by Torsten Lenk, *The Flintlock: Its Origin and Development* (London, 1965); from 1646 on, rifles are mentioned in *Le Journal des Jésuites*, 49.
 11. National Archives of Quebec at Montreal (ANQM), Ordonnances (orders) box 1663–1670. Montreal, 27 January 1663. Order by His Excellency the Governor establishing the Militia of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, with the roll of its soldiers.
 12. National Archives (France), Colonies, series C11A, Vol. 32, fol. 125, Louis XIV to Governor Courcelles, Paris, 3 April 1669.
 13. See for example: M. de Lamont, *Les fonctions de tous les officiers de l'infanterie depuis celle de sergent jusqu'à celles de colonel* [*The Duties of All the Officers in the Infantry, from Sergeant to Colonel*] (Paris, 1669); Sieur de Gaya, *Traité des armes* (Paris: Sébastien Cramoisy, 1678).
 14. On the British colonies, see: Douglas Edward Leach, *Arms for Empire: A Military History of the British Colonies in North America, 1603–1763* (New York: Macmillan, 1973); Morrison Sharp, "The New England Trainbands in the Seventeenth Century," PhD Thesis, Harvard University, 1938.

15. See the biographies of the Hertels and Le Moynes in the *Dictionnaire-biographique du Canada*, Vols. 1 and 2 (Quebec City: Laval University, 1967-70).
16. Chevalier de Beauchêne, *Aventures du chevalier de Beauchêne, Canadien-français élevé chez les Iroquois et qui devint capitaine de flibustier* [*Adventures of Beauchêne, a French Canadian Raised Among the Iroquois and Who Became a Privateer Captain*] (originally published in 1732 and republished in two volumes in Paris: Librairie commerciale et asiatique, 1969). The unknown author of these adventures recounts numerous details of the Canadian style of warfare. See also the study by Ian K. Steele, *Guerillas and Grenadiers* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1971).
17. If snowshoes replace the skis of the Finnish troops, the parallel with New France is striking. There are no additional materials in French or English in this field, except for an extremely rare book entitled *Ski Tracks on the Battlefield* by V.A. Firsoff (New York: Barnes, 1943). I am indebted to Lieutenant-General Kanninen and the Finnish Armed Forces Historical Division for sending me documentation on the subject, and to Ms. L. Turkeli of the Department of the Secretary of State, Canada for her translation of the relevant excerpts. The Finnish sources are: *Hakkapeliitta-Lehti*, no. 2, 1926; *Asemies-Lehti*, no. 4, 1939; J.O. Hannula, *Sotataidon Historia*, Vol. 2.
18. National Archives (France), Colonies, series C11A, Vol. 8, fol. 273, *État des vivres et munitions* [*List of Rations and Ammunition*] (March 1686); *Journal de l'expédition du chevalier de Troyes à la baie d'Hudson, en 1686* [*Diary of the Expedition of the Chevalier de Troyes to Hudson Bay in 1686*], edited and annotated by Abbé Ivanhoé Caron (Beauceville, 1918), 67. According to the *Mercure Galant* of November 1708, "the customary dress of the Canadians is a kind of hood, a dress which folds in front after the manner of a military *justeaucorps*, made of bison, with tight sleeves and closed like those of a jacket, the sailor's belt or sash keeps the outfit in order. The Canadians (those on the coast and of the middle class) rarely wear hats, but instead wear *tapabords* which are caps in the English style; when they go to war, they wear their swords on a shoulder strap, or under the arm as well as a rifle, with powder in a horn which is used as a powder horn and lead in a kind of cartridge box."
19. In addition to the French accounts, such as that by Robert Challes, *Mémoires, correspondance complete, Rapports sur l'Acadie et autres pieces*, presented by Frédéric Deloffre and Jacques Popin, (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1996), 137-39, the memoirs of the prisoners brought back from New England contain valuable pointers on the type of fighting and logistics of the Canadian expeditions.

20. Carl von Clausewitz, *De la guerre* [*On War*], translated by Denise Naville (Paris: Minuit, 1953), 401. Carl von Clausewitz was a veteran of the Napoleonic Wars, a general and director of the War College when he wrote down his reflections on war, to be published after his death. He is regarded as the greatest philosopher and theoretician on the subject of war.
21. The Baron de Saint-Casti, with a party of Abenakis that had come from Acadie, joined in the expedition to Casco. He was already well-acquainted with Native tactics, and this contact with Hertel de la Fresnière undoubtedly provided an opportunity for an exchange of views and ideas on the evolution of tactics. It should be noted that Maine was the northern portion of the colony of Massachusetts and did not become a separate state of the United States until 1820. For further information on Saint-Castin, see: Pierre Daviault, *Le Baron de Saint-Castin, chef Abénakis* (Montreal: ACF, 1939).
22. See: Ernest Myrand, *Phips devant Québec* (Quebec City: Demers, 1893) and Thomas Savage, *An Account of the Late Action of the New-Englanders, Under the Command of Sir William Phipps, Against the French at Canada* (London, 1691).
23. *A Narrative of an Attempt Made by the French of Canada Upon the Mohaques Country Being Indians Under the Protection of Their Majesties Government of New York* (New York: William Bradford, 1693), reveals the lack of support received by the Iroquois.
24. The argument that the most educated officers in France were unaware of these actions is untenable. Detailed reports were often published in the *Gazette de France*, the official weekly gazette, and in the *Mercure Galant*, a popular monthly magazine.

CHAPTER TWO

Marin and Langis: Master Practitioners of La Petite Guerre



BERND HORN

Humanity has always shown itself to be incredibly versatile and adaptable. The intrepid leaders and colonists of New France were no different. From the beginning, their survival depended on ingenuity and adaptability. Circumstances dictated a pragmatic approach because of realities that could not be avoided. First, New France's status as a distant wilderness colony in an overtly hostile land limited its population and resource base. The constant menace posed initially by the Iroquois and later by the English created difficulties in recruiting colonists. Exacerbating the problem was the fact that New France was not a priority for the motherland, which further limited the amount of national treasure that France was willing to spend on the colony's development and security. All this meant that New France would live or die by its ability to protect itself.

As a result, the inhabitants and leadership of New France developed a way of war that reflected their environment, their capability, and their temperament. They could not afford a long protracted conflict, nor could they tolerate many casualties. Therefore, they quickly learned the Native way of war from their Native allies and enemies, and became skilled practitioners of *la petite guerre*. This methodology, which focused on guile, stealth, and surprise and relied on speed and skilful

use of terrain, allowed them to overcome their long bitter wars of annihilation with the Iroquois and later punch above their weight and fend off the encroachment of the larger more resource rich English colonies for far longer than should have been possible.

But the successful execution of *la petite guerre* was not accomplished through chance. Rather, its effectiveness was directly attributable to the leadership of the French-Canadian partisan leaders who led their fellow Canadians and Native allies on the gruelling raids that forced the Iroquois to peace terms and later paralyzed the English colonies. As such, Joseph Marin de La Malgue (known as Marin) and Jean-Baptiste Levrault de Langis Montegron (known commonly as Langis, or in English as Langy) represented the epitome of the French-Canadian guerrilla leaders that allowed New France to defy the odds as long as it did.

Expert guerrilla leaders such as Marin and Langis, however, were the product of New France's tenuous circumstances. Simply put, it was a question of adapt or die. The exceedingly harsh climate in comparison to European standards, seemingly impenetrable wilderness, and belligerent Natives, most notably the Iroquois, proved too much for most Europeans.¹ Not surprisingly, economic prosperity, if not survival itself, necessitated alliances. For this reason, Samuel de Champlain, the first governor of New France, quickly entered into treaties of friendship and trading partnerships with a number of northern tribes (i.e., Abenakis, Algonquin, Huron, Montagnais, and Outaouais), despite the fact that many of these tribes were locked in conflict with the far more aggressive Iroquois Confederacy.² Although Champlain was aware that his choice of allies would most certainly alienate the Iroquois, his decision to join an Algonquin and Huron war party in July 1609 made war inescapable.³ The expedition's success, as well as another campaign the following year that drove an Iroquois war party out of the Richelieu Valley would later prove to be costly victories.⁴ In sum, these humiliating defeats inflicted on the proud Iroquois transformed the Iroquois Confederacy into intractable enemies of the French. This in turn, led to almost a century of conflict. By 1627, the Iroquois had become a constant terror to the settlers in Canada and at its peak threatened the very survival of New France.

One early Canadian historian wrote, “conscious of their strength, the natives became daily more insolent; no white man could venture beyond the settlement without incurring great danger. Buildings languished, and much of the cleared land remained uncultivated.”⁵ “They are everywhere,” wrote one French governor, “They will stay hidden behind a stump for ten days, existing on nothing but a handful of corn, waiting to kill a man,



A French-Canadian volunteer: the French relied heavily on the Canadian way of war to maintain the security of New France despite its demographic, economic, and military inferiority compared to the British colonies. (*Soldier Dressed for Winter Campaign, 1690* by Francis Back copyright © Parks Canada)

or a woman." He lamented "it was the cruelest war in the world" and that the Iroquois "were not content to burn the houses, they also burn the prisoners they take, and give them death only after torturing them continually in the most cruel manner they can devise."⁶ From 1633 until the end of the century the Canadians realized less than 15 years of peace. Between 1608 and 1666 — 191 settlers were killed by the Iroquois out of a population that numbered 675 in 1650 and 3,035 in 1663.⁷

This is not entirely surprising. The Iroquois war parties were extremely effective. They forced the colonists to remain barricaded in cramped stockades and only venture out to tend their fields in large armed groups. Even then, there was no guarantee of survival. "The Iroquois used to keep us closely confined," conceded one Jesuit missionary, "that we did not even dare till the lands that were under the cannon of the forts."⁸ Even the infusion of colonial troops from 1604 to 1663, did little to ease the perpetual menace. Although they provided limited garrisons in some locations they were too few to cover the entire colony and incapable of matching the Iroquois on their own terms.⁹ "The Iroquois," declared King Louis the XIV, "through massacres and inhumanities, have prevented the country's population from growing."¹⁰

The constant hardship and terror inflicted on the Canadians shaped their collective experience and outlook. It tempered in them a stoicism and courage, if not contempt for danger, as well as a ruggedness and fortitude that enabled them to withstand the rigors of the North American wilderness. It also ingrained in them a level of ferocity and savageness in conflict that recognized no mercy and gave no quarter. The Canadians adopted a Native manner of making war — a very tactical outlook that was dependent on the clever use of ground and cover, the element of surprise, sudden ambushes and swift raids, and engagement in combat only when the likelihood of success was high and the possibility of casualties was low.

This was an evolutionary process that was born from necessity. The tutelage by Native allies, as well as a study of their Native enemies provided the necessary knowledge to overcome their weakness. The arrival of regular soldiers from the Carignan-Salières Regiment, who finally

deployed to Canada in 1665, provided the catalyst for offensive expeditions to strike the Iroquois on their own terms, in their own territory.

Lieutenant-General Alexandre de Prouville de Tracy, who was dispatched from Guadeloupe to Quebec with an additional 200 soldiers to assist with vanquishing the Iroquois menace quickly developed a plan of action. First, he decided to deny the Iroquois access to the vital waterways that led into New France. As such, he decided to build forts at strategic locations to close off the Richelieu Valley from Lake Champlain to the St. Lawrence River. These forts filled an important economic and political purpose. The fortifications controlled access to major waterways and acted as trade outlets, thus reinforcing French territorial claims and power, as well as providing a presence within the wilderness that the various Native nations recognized and used. This became a key component of the French hold on their Native allies.

The forts also denied the Iroquois easy access into New France, particularly the use of the Richelieu Valley waterway, and allowed the French to intercept Iroquois war parties. Finally, they provided the French forces with a secure forward operating position. They could now function more easily at a distance from the settled areas and attempt to contain the violence and destruction to the frontiers. More important, the forts acted as launching pads to conduct offensive operations. They provided assembly points and supply depots prior to setting off into enemy territory. At long last the French and Canadians could conduct war elsewhere — they could fight away to protect their home. Offence could now be practised as the most effective form of defence.

The first attack was conducted in January 1666, at the height of the vicious North American winter. The 300 regular troops suffered terribly because of the harsh conditions. However, the approximate 200 Canadians and handful of friendly Natives who accompanied them did not. In fact, Daniel de Rémy de Courcelle, the governor of New France and leader of the expedition, became deeply impressed by the abilities and fortitude of the Canadians. He quickly realized that they were at home in the woods and capable of the Native method of war.¹¹ He made great use of them, notably as the vanguard during the approach and as the rearguard during the return to French territory. In subsequent

expeditions, as a point of principle, large contingents of Canadians were always included.

This first excursion represented a turning point. It demonstrated that expeditions were possible, even at the worst time of the year when neither side normally conducted operations. Moreover, the French Canadians proved themselves masters at travelling, surviving, and fighting in the trackless forests. A second French foray took place that autumn. This time, the force was substantially larger — consisting of approximately 600 regulars, an equal number of Canadian volunteers, and about 100 Natives.¹² The second expedition was marginally more successful than the first. Importantly, the net effect was achieved — the bold strikes brought their enemies to the peace table and allowed for an era of prolonged peace.¹³ Not surprisingly, because of their apparent impact, these raids set the pattern for future operations.

It was, however, the French Canadians and their Native allies who became increasingly responsible for this new aggressive, offensive strategy. After all, they proved themselves so aptly capable of *la petite guerre*, which was in essence small-scale irregular warfare. The European understanding of *petite guerre* was that “carried on by a light party, commanded by an expert guerrilla ... separated from the army, to secure the camp or a march; to reconnoitre the enemy or the country; to seize their posts, convoys, and escorts; to plant ambushes, and to put in practice every stratagem for surprising or disturbing the enemy.”¹⁴ As the French Canadians discovered, key to its success was the selection of limited objectives that could be overcome easily. Stealth and surprise were of the utmost importance. As such, ambushes and raids were the preferred method of attack. Lightning strikes were always succeeded by immediate withdrawals. There were no follow-on attacks or campaigns, and rarely were any of the tactical operations capable of achieving a larger strategic value other than pre-empting, delaying, or disrupting possible enemy offensive action.

The two early expeditions against the Iroquois had an important psychological effect on the French Canadians. The raids demonstrated the importance and effectiveness of offensive action. They also inculcated volunteers with military experience and regulars with wilderness indoctrination. But of greatest consequence, the expeditions provided

self-confidence in respect to the martial skills of the Canadian colonists, as well as demonstrating their aptitude and capability in fighting in the North American wilderness. As such, in April 1669, King Louis XIV ordered Governor Courcelle to organize a Canadian militia and to ensure that the men between 15 and 60 years of age “always be well-armed and always have the powder, lead, and fuses necessary to use their arms when needed.”¹⁵



A Canadian militiaman: English soldiers feared the Canadian partisans and considered them “the most dangerous enemy of any ... reckoned equal, if not superior in that part of the world to veteran troops.” (Reconstitution by Francis Back copyright © Parks Canada)

This capability was increasingly demonstrated, much to the misery of the English and, to some degree, their Iroquois allies to the south. Raids against the English in Hudson Bay in 1686, the Seneca in New York in 1687, the Iroquois in 1693 and 1696, and a number of devastating strikes against English settlements such as Casco, Deerfield, Haverhill, Salmon Falls, and Schenectady during a succession of wars from 1688 to 1748, refined the French-Canadian practice of *la petite guerre*.¹⁶ The leadership of New France quickly recognized a hard-earned lesson rooted in generations of struggle — an opponent who is focused on defending his home, is less apt and less able to conduct mischief elsewhere.¹⁷ In addition, they also understood that they could mobilize a series of devastating raids faster than the English could organize an invasion. “Nothing,” wrote Canadian-born Governor Pierre de Rigaud de Vaudreuil coldly, “is more calculated to discourage the people of these [English] colonies and make them wish for the return to peace.”¹⁸

Many French and Canadian leaders, particularly those with extended exposure to the North American manner of war, or those born and raised in Canada, came to believe that the optimum war fighting strategy was achieved by a mixed force that included the military strengths of regulars (i.e., courage, discipline, tactical acumen) with those of the volunteers and Natives (i.e., endurance, familiarity with wilderness navigation and travel, marksmanship) who relied more on initiative, independent action, and small unit tactics than on rigid military practices and drills — in simple terms the Native way of war.

The Native way of war was fundamental to the practice of *la petite guerre* in North America. It was conducted in stark contrast to the European emphasis on mass, rigid discipline, and volley fire. Conversely, it placed great reliance on guile, stealth, the use of cover and especially accurate shooting. Some contemporary writers felt the unerring fire of the Natives was what made them such a threat. Captain Pierre Pouchot, a member of the French Béarn Regiment that fought with distinction in North America, wrote in his memoirs that the Natives were excellent marksmen who “very rarely fail to shoot their man down.” Although initially their proficiency with weapons was

superior to that of the Whites, very soon the colonists, particularly those who engaged in war, became equally adept. As a point of principle, they aimed at single targets, specifically at officers who were easy to identify by their dress and position on the battlefield.¹⁹

The Native manner of warfare also emphasized mobility and knowledge of the terrain and forests. Cover was used to its fullest benefit, a deliberate choice being made not to make oneself an obvious target. In addition, Natives emphasized taking great care during operations "not to come too thick together."²⁰

The French Canadians very ably practised the Native way of war. In fact, during the contest for North America between the French and the English the practice of the Native way of war, or *la petite guerre*, was associated as much with the Canadians as it was with the Natives. Both their English opponents and the French regulars recognized their skill and effectiveness.²¹ Major-General James Wolfe felt that "Every man in Canada is a soldier."²² Other contemporary English accounts echoed with the lament that the Canadian woodsmen and *coureur de bois* "are well known to be the most dangerous enemy of any ... reckoned equal, if not superior in that part of the world to veteran troops."²³ One anonymous source noted that the Canadians and Natives travelled without baggage, maintained themselves in the woods, and did "more execution ... than four or fives time their number of our men."²⁴

Even the French regulars, who despised the Canadians and Natives, had to concede that they contributed distinct skills and capabilities to campaigns. "God knows," wrote Colonel Louis Antoine de Bougainville, "we do not wish to disparage the value of the Canadians ... In the woods, behind trees, no troops are comparable to the natives of this country."²⁵ The official army journals kept for the French field force commander, Lieutenant-General Louis Joseph de Montcalm, also revealed that "The Canadians ... certainly surpass all the troops in the universe, owing to their skill as marksman."²⁶

However, French Canadians could not lead troops, even on raids. Command of soldiers and operations was a privilege and responsibility left to French regular officers or officers of the *Compagnies Franches de la Marine* (colonial regular troops).²⁷ Paradoxically the regular officers,

including the majority of those in the *Compagnies Franches de la Marine*, were incapable of leading the raiding parties. Their unfamiliarity with the terrain, lack of endurance, and inability, or reluctance, to understand and effectively work with the Natives, necessitated an alternate solution.²⁸ It was for this reason that Governor Vaudreuil repeatedly informed the Royal Palace at Versailles that the Canadians and the savages did not operate with the same confidence under the command of French officers as they did under the control of their own Canadian officers.²⁹

As such, a solution was found by tapping into the very capable and now experienced French Canadians. Increasingly, Canadians began to serve as officers in the *Compagnies Franches de la Marine*. The restricted organization of these colonial troops offered little upward mobility for regular French officers, since each independent company was commanded by only a captain and there was no room for advancement. Therefore, the positions were often difficult to fill in the traditional way, so, vacancies were given to individuals from the Canadian gentry or the families of French officers who remained in Canada. This became common practice.³⁰

Over time, many French Canadians, such as Marin and Langis, became officers in the *Compagnies Franches de la Marine*, and thus were capable of leading their fellow citizens and Native allies on raids that terrorized and paralyzed the English colonies.³¹ Their skill and knowledge of their surroundings, the art and science of war in North America, as well as their sound understanding of the temperament and capabilities of their Native allies, who in turn identified with and respected them, made Marin and Langis master practitioners of *la petite guerre*. Even Lieutenant-General Montcalm recognized their talent. "Langy excellent — Marin brave but foolish," he wrote, "all the rest not worth mentioning."³² In the end, their leadership and feats of arms were an important component of New France's ability to stave off the inevitable English onslaught.

But their ability and ultimate success was rooted in their background and experience. Marin was born in Montreal in 1719, into a family steeped in martial tradition. His grandfather was an officer in the colonial regular troops and his father, Paul Marin de la Malgue, was



King Louis XIV ordered Governor Courcelles to organize a Canadian militia and to ensure that the men between 15 and 60 years of age “always be well-armed and always have the powder, lead, and fuses necessary to use their arms when needed.” (*Canadian Militiamen* by Francis Back copyright © Parks Canada)

an officer of the colonial regular troops who became renowned for his diplomatic, trading, and war fighting skills.³³ Marin the elder, at the age of 30, took command of Chagouamigon (near present-day Ashland in northern Wisconsin on Lake Superior). This appointment carried the customary monopoly of the region’s fur trade, but his primary responsibility was to ensure and maintain the alliance between the Native nations and France. A famous partisan leader in his own right, it was no surprise that the young Marin was brought up on stories and the reality of fighting in the wilderness of North America.

It was within this setting, and under the tutelage of his father who was greatly feared and respected by the Natives, that the younger Marin learned his trade. In 1732, at age 13, Marin’s father sent him to explore the *pays d’en haut*.³⁴ For the next 13 years, as a cadet in the colonial

regular troops, he remained in the northwest. This experience was critical in his development. It provided him an understanding of the complexities of the fur trade, but more important, he gained a sound knowledge and skill at wilderness travel, native culture, and temperament. In fact, he became fluent in Sioux and several Algonquin dialects. In addition, he gained military experience during the campaign against the Chickasaws in 1739–1740, and he earned his diplomatic spurs when he made peace and trade agreements with the Sioux west of Baie-des-Puants (present-day Green Bay, Wisconsin).³⁵

In 1745, Marin and his father, like many others working in the Northwest were recalled to the East to assist with the war against the British raging in Acadia and Cape Breton Island. Although his influence was minimal at the time, this latest exposure to war provided more experience. Marin also brought the news to Montreal on 1 August that the key French strategic fortress of Louisbourg had fallen to the English.³⁶

Later that year, Marin, under his father's command, participated in a large-scale raid against the English, which devastated Schuylerville and neighbouring areas in New York. During the next two years, 1746–1748, Marin was busy in Acadia, Grand-Pré, Cape Breton Island, and the New York frontier, learning and plying the deadly craft of *la petite guerre* under such mentors as François-Pierre de Rigaud de Vaudreuil and Nicolas-Antoine Coulon de Villiers. He was promoted to the rank of second ensign at the end of the conflict in 1748.

The following year the governor of New France, La Jonquière, gave Marin command of the post at Chagouamigon. Marin now found himself not only in his father's trading network but also in his father's old command.³⁷ As well, he was assigned the responsibility of making peace with the Sioux and Ojibwas who were locked in conflict with each other and with the French. Significantly, he succeeded. His knowledge and skills in dealing with Natives combined with his ability to earn their respect became evident.

In 1750, Marin was promoted full ensign and his father, with the support of the governor, attempted to have him reassigned as the deputy commander in Baie des Puants, but Marin's popularity in Chagouamigon was such that the inhabitants there insisted that he stay.

Nonetheless, in 1752, after a sojourn in the garrison in Quebec, Marin was dispatched to Baie des Puants to take command of the very influential and powerful post from his father. The governor also asked him to search for a route to the "western sea" and to increase the number of Native tribes allied to the French. He was once again largely successful. Although he did not find a route to the Pacific, he did expand French influence and presence in the Northwest. Furthermore, he strengthened the French alliance with the Natives, and between the various tribes. As such, he was a key component of the negotiated truce between the Cree and the Sioux in 1752, and he was directly responsible for averting a potential conflict between the Ojibwas and the Sioux the following year.

For New France, continuing peace with and within the Native tribes was critical. They represented a force multiplier for the French, who were out numbered and unable to compete with the resources of the southern British colonies. Moreover, they possessed the martial skills required for conducting *la petite guerre* so critical to New France's ability to fend off the inevitable English invasion. Marin continually proved capable and successful in maintaining the French interest in the Northwest. But his greatest contribution was yet to come.

Marin was once again recalled to Quebec because of the latest contest between the French and English — namely, the Seven Years' War.³⁸ He arrived in Montreal on 11 July 1756, with a large contingent of native warriors.³⁹ Now a lieutenant, Marin plied his craft much to the dismay of the English frontier settlements. Later that summer, he participated in the successful campaign to capture the British fort at Oswego where he and his command of Menominee warriors continually bested larger British detachments.

In August, he led a force of approximately 100 on a raid against Fort William Henry on Lake George, New York, and defeated a force of approximately equal size. His constant raids, particularly because of the brutality and savage nature of the French Canadians and Natives, terrorized both the garrisons of the frontier forts and the settlements at large. "It is an abominable way to make war," lamented Bougainville upon hearing a recital of a raid by Canadians and Natives led by Marin. "The retaliation is frightening," he added, "The air one breathes is contagious

of making one accustomed to callousness.”⁴⁰ But, this unrelenting pressure, with its brutality, created fear within the English, who continually delayed campaigns because of home defence concerns, or shortages of war stock (it had been stolen or destroyed during successful raids).

In December 1756, Marin led a force of 500 French Canadians and Natives on another raid that tore a path of destruction through New York. Six months later, in July 1757, Marin led a small reconnaissance party to the vicinity of Fort Edwards, in New York State. Once again, his expertise became evident. He not only made his way close to the fort, but he annihilated a 10-man patrol, and 50-man guard. Finally, overwhelmed by British reinforcements, he expertly held them off for an hour and then withdrew. In total, the action cost him only three men. A missionary with the Abenakis reported, “Here the valor of the Canadians has so often multiplied them that we would not be astonished to see them repeated more than once in the course of a campaign.”⁴¹ He added:

It was Monsieur Marin — a Canadian Officer of great merit — who was returning glorious and triumphant from the expedition with which he had been charged. At the head of a body of about two hundred savages, he had been detached to scour the country about Fort Lydis [Fort Edward, New York]; he had had the courage with a small flying camp to attack the outer entrenchments, and good fortune to carry a chief part of them. The savages had only time to cut off thirty-five scalps from the two hundred men whom they had killed; their victory was not stained with a single drop of their own blood and did not cost them a single man. The enemy, numbering three thousand men, sought in vain to have revenge by pursuing them in their retreat, but it was made without the slightest loss.⁴²

André Doreil, the financial commissary of wars, exclaimed it a “most daring expedition.”⁴³

The next major engagement for Marin occurred in August 1758. It pitted him against his arch-nemesis, Major Robert Rogers, whose

Rangers were a direct result of the British inability to counter the French superiority effectively in *la petite guerre*.⁴⁴ Carelessness on the part of Rogers and the British force of about 530 men alerted Marin and his outnumbered raiding party.⁴⁵ Marin quickly deployed his Canadians and Natives and skilfully sprung an ambush that caught the enemy completely by surprise. Although inflicting heavy casualties and capturing several prisoners, the remainder of the British force reacted well and the confrontation soon settled into a bitter battle of attrition. Marin was caught behind enemy lines, between a large force and an even larger pool of reinforcements, only hours away. As a result, he broke his command up into small groups and they melted away. Marin had once again bested the British.

This latest exploit just added to Marin's reputation. Doreil again commented on Marin's performance referring to him as "a Colonial officer of great reputation."⁴⁶ Not surprisingly, he was promoted captain in January 1759, and spent the first part of the year conducting raids against the frontier settlements in Pennsylvania and Maryland. That summer he joined a relief effort to raise the British siege of Fort Niagara (near current-day Youngstown, New York). However, his force was ambushed and he was taken prisoner. Not surprisingly, his capture was announced as a great triumph in the English colonies.⁴⁷

As impressive and effective as Marin's exploits were, he was only one of the two great French-Canadian guerrilla leaders. The other was Langis. He was born in 1723 and like Marin, was part of a family tradition of serving in the colonial regular troops. As such, he followed the footsteps of his father and three older brothers.⁴⁸ He began his military career on Cape Breton Island and in 1755, as an ensign, participated in the unsuccessful defence of Fort Beauséjour (near current day Sackville, New Brunswick). Upon its capture, he returned to Quebec. During this campaign his superiors identified him as "an extraordinarily brave officer."⁴⁹

This strength, as well as his ability to lead, much like Marin, would become even more evident during the final contest for North America during the Seven Years' War. His intelligence, tactical acumen, and expert knowledge of the wilderness quickly earned him the respect and trust of

his superiors and the French regulars. Moreover, his ability to effectively motivate and lead Natives and his fellow Canadians made him indispensable. One senior French officer, Louis de Courville, described him as “an officer who distinguished himself by his bravery — he is active, vigilant, always ready to go on campaign.”⁵⁰ Even Lieutenant-General Montcalm, who disliked the Canadians and their way of war, wrote to Governor Vaudreuil to state, “Sieur Langis de Montegron has never ceased being used for the most interesting of scouting, also the most laborious, and who has always distinguished himself.”⁵¹

Langis became a key player on the Lake Champlain — Lake George campaign front. He was employed continually raiding, scouting, and gathering intelligence. His forays took him deep into enemy territory where his attacks left the British unnerved and consistently on the defensive. One contemporary journal account reflects the terror. “at night there was a Hundred men upon gard or more,” revealed a colonial soldier, “for feare of there [Canadians and Natives] coming a Gain in the Night....”⁵² Quite simply, soldiers hated to go into the woods for reconnaissance or foraging because of the fear of being killed and scalped by the Canadians and their Native allies.

The information Langis brought back on enemy fortifications and/or their intentions (drawn from prisoners) kept the French well-informed. His control of the wilderness also ensured that movement for the English was constrained, so they could neither gather intelligence, nor ensure communication between their forces. “It is not possible to conceive the situation and danger of this miserable country,” lamented a young George Washington, “such numbers of French and Natives are all around that no road is safe.”⁵³ One British colonel confided, “I am ashamed that they [French] have succeeded in all their scouting parties and that we never have any success in ours.”⁵⁴ As such, the efforts of Langis and Marin contributed in large part to the French advantage of situational awareness and initiative — and the English lack of the same.

Even the infamous British guerrilla leader, Major Robert Rogers, was unable to match Langis. In March 1758, Rogers and his force of 175 Rangers and eight British regulars ambushed a French force of

approximately 96 Canadians and Natives. Successful, the Rangers rushed in on the defeated French forces to scalp the dead and pursue those attempting to escape. However, Langis who was following up the French vanguard force, heard the gunfire, immediately deployed his troops, and quickly led a counter attack that routed Rogers and left three quarters of the British force dead. Major Rogers himself only narrowly escaped leaving behind his rucksack and tunic (which had his commission scroll inside).⁵⁵ This latest feat prompted Montcalm to write to the French minister of war, stating that Langis understood "petty war the best of any man."⁵⁶

Throughout the spring of 1758, Langis was constantly in the field attempting to determine the British intentions. Although seizing many prisoners, no useful information was discovered. Then, in June, Langis captured 17 Rangers who revealed an impending attack against the strategic Fort Carillon (Ticonderoga to the English). On 4 July Montcalm, demonstrating his confidence in the Canadian partisan leader, entrusted Langis with a vital scouting mission "to go observe the location, number, and the movements of the enemy."⁵⁷ Montcalm also called on French officers to volunteer to serve under Langis for the task. The response was so overwhelming that the number of volunteers had to be restricted. Bougainville, an aide to Montcalm, noted in his diary that "a captain and seven lieutenants of our regulars march under the orders of an ensign."⁵⁸ Such was the reputation and stature of Langis.

Langis's force departed and returned the following night with news that the British invasion force was en route. As a result, Montcalm ordered his troops to take up defensive positions. Langis's role, however, was not yet complete. He deployed once again to monitor the British advance and on 7 July had a chance encounter with the British advance guard. In the ensuing bloody clash, both sides suffered substantial casualties. However, the loss of Brigadier, Lord Howe was of the gravest consequence to the English. "He it was," revealed Bougainville in his journal, "who had projected the enterprise against Canada and he alone was capable of executing it."⁵⁹ Bougainville's assessment seemed accurate. Outnumbered almost four to one, with only 3,600 troops, primarily French regulars, Montcalm routed Major-General James



A war party led by French Canadians during the French and Indian War. One contemporary chronicler wrote, "The frontiers were laid waste for above three hundred miles long, and generally about thirty broad." (*Portage* by Robert Griffing, Paramount Press)

Abercromby's army of 6,000 regulars and 9,000 provincials, the largest force ever assembled in North America up to that time.⁶⁰ "This brilliant victory," wrote a jubilant Brigadier-General François-Gaston, chevalier de Lévis, "saved Canada."⁶¹ Once again, any English hope of launching an invasion against New France in 1758 was thwarted in the distant backwaters of the North American wilderness.

In the months following the French victory, Langis continued his forays against the English. However, despite the critical victory at Ticonderoga, the tide of the war was clearly changing. British Prime Minister William Pitt had decided to settle the matter of North America once and for all and sent overwhelming naval and land forces sufficient to blockade, invade, and seize Canada. By late 1758, the French became increasingly hard-pressed both militarily and economically. It seemed a forgone conclusion. First, France could not send regular troops to reinforce Canada, because they were needed on the continent and elsewhere, and the Royal Navy controlled the seas, so

sending troop transports was a risky proposition. Second, Montcalm was convinced that the only hope against British regulars lay in a static defence. He believed that the dispersion of scarce soldiers among the western outposts was perilous. As such, Montcalm was adamant that the only hope of saving New France was to concentrate as much force as possible at the critical point — Quebec.⁶² His recent victory at Ticonderoga convinced the French leadership at Versailles. Accordingly, as the British began their march North in 1759, the French abandoned their frontier forts and withdrew to Quebec.

Despite the new strategy, and the apparent rejection of *la petite guerre*, Langis and others maintained what pressure they could. In spite of Montcalm's virulent dislike for Governor Vaudreuil, the Canadians, Natives, and guerrilla warfare, he did see the usefulness of harassing the enemy.⁶³ He believed that successful raids, particularly while besieged at Quebec, lowered enemy morale, bolstered that of the Canadians, and maintained the offensive spirit in his troops. Langis did not disappoint him.

Langis was instrumental in harassing the English forces, particularly the British Rangers who had begun burning homesteads of *les habitants* during the siege of Quebec. He also crossed swords with Major Rogers on two more occasions. On the first, he discovered whaleboats that were used by Rogers and 142 Rangers for their raid on the Abenakis village of St. Francis. The subsequent pursuit ended with 69 Rangers dead or captured and the others narrowly escaping with their lives.⁶⁴

The second encounter was even more successful. Despite the fall of Quebec in September 1759, Langis operating from Île aux Noir (near Montreal) continued his aggressive raids. In February 1760, as Rogers was en route to Crown Point from Albany, his convoy of sleds was ambushed by Langis. Recognizing Rogers in the first sled, Langis focused his attack on the lead sled that carried the British Ranger leader. The initial volley killed the horses and Langis's force pounced on Rogers and his 16 recruits. In the ensuing melee, Rogers and seven others escaped to Crown Point. The other nine Rangers were killed or captured. Langis also seized 32 brand new muskets, 100 hatchets, 55 pairs of moccasins, and £3,961, the payroll for the troops at Crown Point.⁶⁵

His final raid was conducted six weeks later, once again near Crown Point. Representative of his skill and daring, Langis was able to capture two British regular officers, a Ranger officer, and six troops without a firing shot. His luck, however, had run out. Shortly after his return to Montreal with his prisoners, he drowned while trying to cross the St. Lawrence River in a canoe. Captain Pouchot noted the news in his journal, commenting that Langis was "the best leader among the colonial troops."⁶⁶ An English paper also reflected that assessment. "Mons. Longee, a famous partisan, fell through the ice sometime and was drowned," it reported, "his loss is greatly lamented by all Canada, and his equal is not to be found in that country."⁶⁷

In the end, the efforts of Marin and Langis, as well as the other French-Canadian partisan leaders failed against the concerted effort of the British. But this should not be surprising. The strategy of *la petite guerre* that served New France so well for so long was as Montcalm recognized incapable of achieving a decisive strategic victory. However, it was, as it proved, an effective and cost-efficient form of warfare that enabled New France to punch above its weight and give it greater military power than circumstances should have allowed. It turned the balance in the war of attrition against the Iroquois and it held the English at bay longer than should have been possible.

This was only possible through the expert leadership and tactical capabilities of the French-Canadian leaders who had an intimate knowledge of the North American wilderness and methods of travel, survival, and warfare. Their ability to conduct raids deep in enemy territory continually struck terror in the English frontier settlements and consistently disrupted, unbalanced, and pre-empted English intentions and campaigns. They ensured the initiative, despite the disadvantage in resources, remained with the French for the greater part of the Seven Years' War.

Moreover, these leaders had a sound understanding of the culture and temperament of their fellow Canadians and the Natives. As such, they were capable of leveraging the strengths of these irregulars and closing the disparity in numbers that existed in the military forces of the opposing sides.

The deep strikes into English territory during the Seven Years' War consistently disrupted British campaign plans and kept them on the defensive from the summer of 1755 until 1758. Moreover, they ravaged frontier settlements, economies, and public morale. "We are under the utmost fear and consternation," complained one English colonist, "upon accounts of the [French and] Natives having again began their murders and massacres in the province of Pennsylvania, upon the River Delaware adjoining to this province ... These fresh depredations have so terrified us that we dare not go out to our daily labour, for fear of being surprized and murdered...."⁶⁸ Similarly, an English officer angrily decried that "nothing is to be seen but desolation and murder, heightened with every barbarous circumstance, and new instances of cruelty — They, at the instigation of the French with them, burn up the plantations, the smoke of which darkens the day and hides the mountains from our sight."⁶⁹

The strategy was carried out year round, and it was both inexpensive and extremely successful. It was clearly an economy of effort. Small parties of Canadians and Natives terrorized the frontier and tied down large numbers of troops for rear security. Their political leaders could not ignore the plight of the English colonists. The incursions into Virginia alone caused the governor there to raise 10 militia companies, 1,000 men, for internal defence. Similarly, Pennsylvania raised 1,500 provincial troops and built a string of forts extending from New Jersey to Maryland in an attempt to impede the raiders.⁷⁰

Moreover, the English militiamen were reluctant to undertake campaigns when they felt their families were at risk. Furthermore, the destruction of settlements, farms, and livestock, as well as the murder or capture of settlers, ate away at the economy of the English colonies. Crops could not be sown or harvested. Grains could not be stored for the winter, or be used to feed the army on campaign. This created privations for both soldier and citizen alike. The impact on the frontier was quite simply devastating.⁷¹ As mentioned, although an effective strategy for the out-numbered French, it was only successful as a delaying action. It did not bring the British to the peace table as Governor Vaudreuil had hoped.



The ability to endure the harsh climate, navigate the vast hinterland, and fight in the Native manner of war made Canadians a dreaded foe. (*Warning for Braddock* by Robert Griffing, Paramount Press)

This does not diminish the contribution of the French Canadians — particularly the intrepid guerrilla leaders Marin and Langis — to the defence of New France. Their daring, expertise, and tenacity were critical contributions to the economic and military vitality of the

colony. Their knowledge and intimate interface with the Native peoples provided the conduit through which trade, territorial expansion, and alliances prospered. In times of war, these relationships translated into military power. The French-Canadian guerrilla leaders could call on the tribes they had befriended, and they could lead them because they understood their culture, language, and temperament. As such, Marin and Langis symbolize the epitome of the great French-Canadian guerrilla leaders. Their efforts on behalf of Canada represent a proud martial legacy of duty and valour to their country.

NOTES

1. Initially, very few settlers ventured to the New World. By the middle of the seventeenth century, there were only approximately 2,500 people in New France. Many of these were explorers, fur traders, and missionaries. Nonetheless, the lure of freedom, opportunity, and especially wealth was enough of an impetus to spur growth and the French established settlements and a series of forts, predominately for fur trading. Peter N. Moogk, *La Nouvelle France: The Making of French Canada — A Cultural History* (East Lansing, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 144.
2. Bruce G. Trigger, "The French Presence in Huronia: The Structure of Franco-Huron Relations in the First Half of the Seventh Century," *The Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. 49, No. 2 (June 1968), 118. The Iroquois Confederacy (Five Nations) consisted of the Cayuga, Oneida, Onondaga, Mohawk, and Seneca tribes. The Tuscarora joined the confederacy in the first quarter of the eighteenth century. George T. Hunt, *The Wars of the Iroquois: A Study of Intertribal Trade Relations* (Milwaukee: University of Wisconsin Press, 1967), 93. See also William R. Nester, *The Great Frontier War: Britain, France, and the Imperial Struggle for North America, 1607–1755* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2000), 96; Robert A. Goldstein, *French-Iroquois Diplomatic and Military Relations, 1609–1701* (Paris: Mouton, 1969), 29–47.
3. On 20 July 1609, Champlain led the first combined French, Algonquin, and Huron force against the Iroquois at a site near present-day Ticonderoga, New York. Armed with an arquebus, Champlain felled two Iroquois chiefs and injured a third warrior with his first shot. His two French companions, also equipped

with firearms, then opened fire from the flank. This onslaught, particularly because of the new weaponry involved, caused panic among the Iroquois and they fled the field of battle.

4. W.J. Eccles, *The French in North America 1500–1783* (Markham, ON: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1998), 21–23; and Marcel Trudel, “Samuel de Champlain,” in George Brown, ed., *Dictionary of Canadian Biography, Vol. 1* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966), 186–99. See also W.J. Eccles, *France in America* (Markham, ON: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1990), 103; and Goldstein, 48–54.
5. *The Conquest of Canada, Vol. 2* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1850), 93.
6. Letter, Vaudreuil et Raudot au Ministre, 14 November 1708, quoted in W.J. Eccles, *The French in North America*, 41.
7. Eccles, *The French in North America*, 40–41.
8. W.J. Eccles, *Canada Under Louis XIV* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1964), 46.
9. Drafts normally numbered from 50–200 at a time for short durations.
10. Quoted historical documents, display, Fort Chambly National Historic Site of Canada, Chambly, Quebec. Accessed 23 August 2001.
11. The expedition actually failed to attain its optimistic objectives, namely, it failed to destroy or humble the Iroquois. They failed to locate any Mohawk villages and only destroyed a few outlying cabins. Furthermore, they only killed four warriors and wounded six others at the cost of approximately 400 of their own. Most of these are attributed to hypothermia and starvation. Only seven French were killed and four wounded in the skirmish with the Mohawks. Jack Verney, *The Good Regiment: The Carigan-Salières Regiment in Canada, 1665–1668* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1991), 50, 52; Goldstein, 98–99.
12. Although the two-month operation failed to bring the Mohawks to decisive battle, it did succeed in deploying a large French force into the heart of Mohawk territory and destroying four villages, their crops, and stored foodstuffs estimated at sufficient quantities “to nourish all Canada for two entire years.” The French action condemned their enemies to a possible slow death by starvation and exposure over the winter, or the humiliating prospect of begging for subsistence from other tribes, or their English allies. Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France, 1610–1791, Vol. 50* (New York: Pageant Book Company, 1959), 143; Matthew Dennis, *Cultivating a Landscape of Peace. Iroquois-European Encounters in Seventeenth-Century America* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1993), 217;

- Conquest of Canada*, Vol. 2, 290; Hunt, 135; and Edward P. Hamilton, *Fort Ticonderoga: Key to a Continent* (Ticonderoga, NY: Fort Ticonderoga, 1995), 33.
13. *Conquest of Canada*, Vol. 2, 290; Hunt, 135; and Verney, 90; and Edward P. Hamilton, *Fort Ticonderoga. Key to a Continent* (Ticonderoga, NY: Fort Ticonderoga, 1995), 33.
 14. The literal translation is small war. M. Pouchot, *Memoirs on the Late War in North America Between France and England* (originally Yverdon, 1781; reprint Youngstown, NY: Old Fort Niagara Association, 1994), 242. See also Hew Strachan, *European Armies and the Conduct of War* (New York: Routledge, 1983), 30–37; and Ian McCulloch, “Within Ourselves ... the Development of British Light Infantry in North America During the Seven Years’ War,” *Canadian Military History*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (Spring 1998), 44–45.
 15. All men between the ages of 16 and 60 who were fit to bear arms were compelled to join the militia. Companies were based on the same framework as a regular company — each was commanded by a captain, assisted by a lieutenant, an ensign and a number of non-commissioned officers (corporals and sergeants). The companies were approximately 50 strong. Each parish provided a company, or more depending on its size. With the Iroquois threat quelled, the Carignan-Salières Regiment was redeployed to France in 1668, leaving the defence of New France once again in the hands of a few scattered regular and colonial troops and the French-Canadian settlers. Nonetheless, confidence remained high. Jacques de Meulles, the Intendant of New France wrote in 1683, “our youth is hardened and quite used to the woods ... [and] we make war better than they [Iroquois] do.” Letter, De Meulles to Seignelay, 1683, in Richard A. Preston and Leopold Lamontagne, *Royal Fort Frontenac* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1958), 147; Eccles, *France in America*, 73; and René Chartrand, *Canadian Military Heritage, Vol. 1, 1000–1754* (Montreal: Art Global, 1993), 74.
 16. Notably: King William’s War (War of the Grand Alliance), 1688–1697; Queen Anne’s War (War of the Austrian Succession), 1740–1748; and King George’s War (War of the Austrian Succession), 1740–1748. See Robert Leckie, *A Few Acres of Snow* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1999) and Ian K. Steele, *Guerillas and Grenadiers* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1969); and Goldstein, 148–54. For example, on 25 January 1693, 100 *Troupes de la Marine*, 200 Natives, and 325 Canadians left Montreal to strike at the Mohawk. They torched three villages, destroyed their winter food supply, and took 300 prisoners. W.J. Eccles, “Frontenac’s Military Policies, 1689–1698 — A Reassessment,” *Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (September 1956), 208.

- The infamous attack on Deerfield, Massachusetts, on 16 March 1704, by 200 Natives and 50 Canadians, destroyed the town and killed 47 inhabitants, while 111 people were carried away as captives. Dale Miquelon, *New France, 1701–1744* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1989), 40.
17. Louis de Courville, *Mémoires sur le Canada depuis 1749 jusqu'à 1760* (Quebec City: Imprimerie de Middleton and Dawson, 1873), 116.
 18. Quoted in George F. Stanley, *Canada's Soldiers: The Military History of an Unmilitary People* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1960), 72.
 19. Pouchot, 160 and 476; Carl Benn, *The Iroquois in the War of 1812* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 71; and M. Malone, *The Skulking Way of War* (Lanham, MD: Madison Books, 1991), 59–60.
 20. Thomas Church, *The History of Philip's War* (Exeter, NH: J & B Williams, 1829; reprint Bowie, MD: Heritage Books, 1989), 108–09. One survivor of Major-General Edward Braddock's defeat reported: "They continually made us Retreat, they haveing always a large marke to shoute [shoot] at and we having only to shoute at them behind trees or on their Bellies." Charles Hamilton, ed., *Braddock's Defeat: The Journal of Captain Robert Cholmley's Batman; The Journal of a British Officer; Halkett's Orderly Book* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1959), 28–29.
 21. It must also be recognized that there was a deep degree of animosity as well. The English often referred to their opponents as "our cruel and crafty enemy the French ..." One participant conceded to his diary that "I can't but take notice of ye cruel nature of our Indians, I look on'm not a whitt better than ye Canadians." One American summed up the sentiment of many when he wrote, "Canadians delight in blood; and in barbarity exceeding if possible, the very savages themselves." Letter to *Boston Gazette*, 13 June 1757, quoted in Armand Francis Lucier, ed., *French and Indian War Notices Abstracted from Colonial Newspapers, Vol. 2: 1756–1757* (Bowie, MD: Heritage Books, 1999), 256.
 22. Letter, Major-General James Wolfe to William Pit, quoted in A. Doughty, *The Siege of Quebec and the Battle of the Plains of Abraham, Vol. 1–6* (Quebec City: Dussault & Proulx, 1901), 65.
 23. Impartial Hand. *The Contest in America Between Great Britain and France with Its Consequences and Importance* (London: Strand, 1757), 128.
 24. *Ibid.*, 138; and Eccles, *French in North America*, 208. Captain Pouchot, the last French commander of Fort Niagara, observed: "The Canadians are well built, very robust & active, with an admirable capacity to endure hard work & fatigue, to which they are accustomed through long & arduous journeys connected with their trading activi-

- ties, in which a great deal of skill & patience are required.... They are brave, fond of war and very patriotic." Pouchot, 183.
25. Edward P. Hamilton, ed., *Adventures in the Wilderness: The American Journals of Louis Antoine de Bougainville, 1756–1760* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), 333 [hereafter *Bougainville's Journal*]. Even Montcalm, who particularly disliked the Canadians, wrote after his victory at Fort Ticonderoga in July 1758: "The colonial troops and Canadians have caused us to regret that there were not in greater number. Chevalier Levy under whose eyes they fought speaks highly of them." Quoted in Andrew Gallup and Donald F. Shaffer, *La Marine: The French Colonial Soldier in Canada, 1745–1761* (Bowie, MD: Heritage Books, 1992), 42. One early Canadian historian concluded: "For scouting harassing the enemy, fighting under cover of wood or earthworks, the undisciplined native American soldier whether French or English could not be equalled by any regulars." Doughty, 52.
 26. Quoted in Abbé H.R. Casgrain, *Wolfe and Montcalm* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964), 196–97. French officers, particularly Montcalm, however, held the French Canadians largely in contempt. Montcalm believed that the Canadians were an undisciplined rabble of little to no military value who had an inflated opinion of themselves. "They know neither discipline nor subordination, and think themselves in all respects the first nation on earth," he wrote. "The Canadians thought they were making war," he quipped, "when they went on raids resembling hunting parties." Bougainville confided his disdain for the Canadian approach to his journal — "To leave Montreal with a party, to go through the woods, to take a few scalps, to return at full speed once the blow was struck, that is what they called war." Quoted in C.P. Stacey, *Quebec, 1759: The Siege and the Battle* (Toronto: Robin Brass Studio, reprint 2002, Donald Graves, ed.), 33; Letter, Montcalm to the Minister of War, 18 September 1757, quoted in Francis Parkman, *Montcalm and Wolfe* (New York: The Modern Library, reprint 1999), 231; and *Bougainville's Journal*, 252.
 27. The colonial regular troops were infantry soldiers raised in company strength to guard naval ports in France and serve overseas in the French colonies. They were under the control of the Ministry of Marine rather than the Ministry of War to circumvent the rampant abuses present in the regimental system of the army. For this reason they were independent companies and not components of existing regiments. Commissions in the *Compagnies Franches de la Marine* (colonial regular troops) were not purchased but earned by merit (albeit they were also affected by influence). Each company was commanded by a captain, and consisted of a lieutenant, a brevet ensign, a second

ensign, two cadets, two sergeants, three corporals, two drummers, and 41 soldiers. In 1756, the strength of the non-commissioned ranks per company was increased to 65. W.J. Eccles, "The French Forces in North America During the Seven Years' War," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography (DCB)*, Vol. 3, 1741 to 1770 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), xvii.

28. Alliances with the Natives came at a price. European commanders characterized the Natives as an unwanted burden, if not a nuisance. "They drive us crazy from morning to night," exclaimed one senior French officer. "There is no end to their demands," he added, finally concluding that "in short one needs the patience of an angel with these devils, and yet one must always force himself to seem pleased with them." Doughty, 202; Canada Archives, *The Northcliffe Collection* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1926), 138; and Robert F. Berkhofer, "The French and Natives at Carillon," *The Bulletin of the Fort Ticonderoga Museum*, Vol. 9, No. 6 (1956), 146. Bougainville bemoaned: "One must be the slave to these savages, listen to them day and night, in council and in private, whenever the fancy takes them, or whenever a dream or a fit of vapors, or their perpetual craving for brandy, gets possession of them; besides which they are always wanting something for their equipment, arms, or toilet." *Bougainville's Journal*, 133. In an attempt not to aggravate the Natives, the most wanton outrages were often accepted. One French officer decried the tolerance shown to their Native allies. "You could see them running throughout Montreal," he recorded, "knife in hand, threatening and insulting everyone." Courville, 97; Doughty, 202–03; and Benn, 136. governors of New France, particularly Pierre de Rigaud de Vaudreuil, were constantly criticized for their leniency towards the Natives. Of 76 Natives accused of disorderly conduct, assault, or murder in the Montreal District alone from 1669 to 1760, only one was actually prosecuted. The rest were released without charge. The rationale was simple, albeit unpalatable for the French and Canadians — the authorities feared that the application of the harsh justice demanded by the French criminal code would alienate the Natives and cause them to defect to their enemies. See Moogk, 43–45; and Gallup, 142. Their behaviour on campaigns was little better. Montcalm confided to his journal that "[the Indians] feeling the need we have of them, are extremely insolent; they wish our fowls this evening. They took with force some barrels of wine, killed some cattle, and it is necessary to endure all." H.R. Casgrain, ed., *Journal du Marquis De Montcalm durant ses campagnes en Canada de 1756–1759* (Quebec City: L.J. Demers & Frère, 1895), 385. French officers claimed that it proved very expensive to maintain their Native allies because they "exhausted so much provisions" and "could not be stinted to allowance

- taking everything at pleasure and destroying three times the Quantity of Provisions they could eat." The Natives had no sense of rationing and would consume a week's allocation of provisions in three days and demand additional replenishment. Consistently, the Europeans denounced the Natives as disruptive to their campaigns and a drain on valuable resources. Ian K. Steele, *Betrayals: Fort William Henry and the Massacre* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 132–33; and Robert S. Allen, *His Majesty's Indian Allies* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1992), 144. The commander at Presque Ile, in 1756, upon hearing the news of the capture of Oswego stated, "When you are fortunate, you will have many friends [Indians]. If conditions are gloomy, you will be alone." *Bougainville's Journal*, 59. "One is a slave to Indians in this country," lamented Bougainville, but he also added that, "they are a necessary evil." *Ibid.*, 171.
29. Letter, Vaudreuil to Ministry of Marine, 30 October 1755, Extraits des Archives des Ministères de la Marine et de la Guerre A Paris - Canada - Correspondence Générale - MM. Duquesne et Vaudreuil Gouverneurs-Généraux, 1755–1760 (Quebec City: L.J. Demers & Frère, 1890), 107.
 30. See Chartrand, *Canadian Military Heritage, Vol. 1*, 84–85; and Eccles, *The French in North America*, 173–74.
 31. See Lucier, *Vol. 2*, 233; Letter from General Shirley to Major-General Abercromby, 27 June 1756, PRO, War Office 1/4, Correspondence, 1755–1763; Letter From William Shirley (New York) to Principal Secretary of War, 20 December 1755, PRO, War Office 1/4, Correspondence, 1755–1763; H.R. Casgrain, ed., *Lettres du Chevalier De Lévis concernant La Guerre du Canada 1756–1760* (Montreal: C.O. Beauchemin & Fils, 1889), 75; Casgrain, *Journal du Marquis De Montcalm*, 110–11; and Le Comte Gabriél de Maurès de Malartic, *Journal des Campagnes au Canada de 1755 A 1760* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1902), 52–53.
 32. Letter Montcalm to De Lévis, H.R. Casgrain, ed. *Lettres du Marquis De Montcalm au Chevalier De Lévis*. (Quebec City: L.J. Demers & Frère, 1894), 35.
 33. See "Marin de la Malgue (la Marque), Paul," in *DCB, Vol. 3, 1741 to 1770*, 431–32. Although amassing a sizable fortune in the fur trade in the Northwest, particularly at Baie-des-Puants (present-day Green Bay, Wisconsin), Marin the elder was considered an able officer. In 1746, he led a war party on a raid that destroyed Schuylerville (present-day Saratoga, New York) and ravaged the surrounding region. In 1752, when Governor Duquesne decided to deploy a large force of 1,500 men to claim control of the Ohio Valley and dislodge the American advances in the region, he chose Marin the elder to command. Now 61, Marin drove himself and his troops relentlessly. Hundreds

died because of sickness brought on by exertion and poor diet. Marin himself became deathly ill but refused to retire to rest. In September he was awarded the cross of Saint-Louis, but he died of illness on 29 October before it actually arrived. "The King loses an excellent subject who was made for war," wrote Governor Duquesne upon hearing of his death. He added, "I had formed the highest opinion of that officer." *Ibid.*, 432.

34. The *pays d'en haut* refers to the Northwest — the region of the upper Great Lakes basin.
35. See "Marin de la Malgue, Joseph," in *DCB, Vol. 3, 1741 to 1770*, 512–514. See also Bob Bearor, *Leading by Example, Vol. 21* (Bowie, MD: Heritage Books, 2004), 161–73.
36. Subsequently Marin travelled to Quebec where on 20 September he married the daughter of Joseph de Fleury de La Gorgendière. This is of significance as he now became related to Pierre de Rigaud de Vaudreuil — the future governor of New France.
37. Marin senior was the commander at Baie-des-Puants and La Jonquière at this time. Due to his connection with the governor and intendant (Bigot), Marin senior was virtually in control of the Northwest.
38. The Seven Years' War (1756–1763) was arguably one of the first global conflicts. It was fought in Europe, North America, and India, with maritime operations reaching out over the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, as well as the Mediterranean and Caribbean Seas. In North America, the conflict (often termed the French and Indian War or, for the French, the War of the Conquest) actually began two years earlier in the late spring of 1754, in response to growing competition for territory. The North American theatre eventually became part of the greater conflict. Initial French victories and English setbacks in the early years of the war were reversed by 1758, because of the British decision to focus their strategy and resources on the wilderness campaign. A virtual naval blockade, in concert with an infusion of more than 20,000 British regulars, turned the tide. The capture of the Fortress of Louisbourg and Fort Frontenac in 1758, forced the French to adopt a defensive posture centred around Quebec and Montreal. The deteriorating French condition also resulted in the defection of a large number of their Native allies. In 1759, the British began to roll up the remaining French forts on the frontier. One army captured Fort Niagara, and another marched up the Lake Champlain/Richelieu River corridor, while a third invested Quebec. The British victory on the Plains of Abraham in September 1759, gave them possession of Quebec City. The remnants of the French Army and their Canadian militia and remaining Native allies withdrew to Montreal in hopes of recapturing Quebec in the spring. Although almost successful, as a result of their victory in the

Battle at Ste. Foy and subsequent siege of Quebec in April 1760, the appearance of the Royal Navy, forced the French to return to Montreal where they later surrendered on 8 September 1760. The war formally ended with the Treaty of Paris that ceded virtually all of New France to the British.

39. Marin actually returned to Quebec in 1754, but was sent to the Northwest again by Governor Dusquesne in the following year.
40. Edward P. Hamilton, ed., *Adventures in the Wilderness: The American Journals of Louis Antoine de Bougainville, 1756–1760* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), 41 [henceforth *Bougainville's Journal*].
41. Letter from Father ***, Missionary to the Abnakis, in Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents. Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France, 1610–1791, Vol. 70* (New York: Pageant Book Company, 1959), 107. He added: "Such deeds are surprising in Europe."
42. *Ibid.*, 111.
43. *DCB, Vol. 3*, 513.
44. Robert Rogers remains one of the legendary Anglo-Saxon colonial heroes to emerge from the French and Indian War. His bold forays against the French were tonic to a beleaguered public that was constantly subjected to Native depredations on the New England frontier. During a time when neither the British regulars nor the colonial militia seemed empowered to strike at the enemy or even defend the settlements, Rogers and his Rangers represented fearless offensive action. By the fall of 1755, he was conducting scouts behind enemy lines and his efforts soon earned him an overwhelming reputation. "Captain Rogers whose bravery and veracity," wrote Johnson, "stands very clear in my opinion and of all who know him ... is the most active man in our Army." By the winter of 1756, the bold forays behind enemy French lines were regularly reported in newspapers throughout the British colonies. In March 1756, Major-General Shirley, commander-in-chief of the British forces in North America, ordered Rogers to raise a 60-man independent Ranger company that was separate from both the provincial and regular units. His unit was directed scout and gain intelligence in the Lake Champlain theatre, as well as "distress the French and their allies by sacking, burning and destroying their houses, barns, barracks, canoes, battoes ... to way-lay, attack, and destroy their convoys of provisions by land and water." This they did with a vicious regularity. As of 6 April 1758, Major-General Abercromby, now the commander-in-chief of British forces in North America, awarded Rogers a formal commission as a captain of a Ranger company and as "Major of the Rangers in his Majesty's Service."

- Although referred to by Montcalm and others as "elite," Rogers was bested consistently by both Marin and Langis. See John R. Cuneo, *Robert Rogers of the Rangers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959); Burt G. Loescher, *The History of Rogers Rangers. Volume I — The Beginnings Jan 1755 - 6 April 1758* (Bowie, MD: Heritage Books, 1946; reprint 2001) and *Genesis Rogers Rangers: Volume II — The First Green Berets* (San Mateo, CA: 1969; reprinted Bowie, MD: Heritage Books, 2000); Timothy J. Todish, *The Annotated and Illustrated Journals of Major Robert Rogers* (Fleischmanns, NY: Purple Mountain Press, 2002); and *Warfare on the Colonial American Frontier: The Journals of Major Robert Rogers and an Historical Account of the Expedition Against the Ohio Indians in the Year 1764, Under the Command of Henry Bouquet, Esq.* (original edition, 1769; Bargersville, IN: Dreslar Publishing, reprinted 2001) [Henceforth *Rogers's Journal*].
45. He was once again leading a war party against the British, hoping to further demoralize the English by striking them at Fort Edward and Albany after their humiliating defeat at Fort Ticonderoga on 8 July 1758, when Montcalm's force of 3,600 repulsed Major-General Abercromby's army of 15,000. Although Montcalm did not immediately follow up, the arrival of more Canadians and their Natives allies allowed the French to mount an active raiding campaign to keep the English off balance.
 46. *DCB, Vol. 3, 513.*
 47. Marin was imprisoned and sent to England where he was eventually released to France. Marin's home in Quebec would suffer the same fate as those of the English colonists he had preyed upon — it was plundered and burned. He estimated his loss at more than 60,000 livres. *DCB, Vol. 3, 513.*
 48. See "Levrault de Langis (Langy) Montegron, Jean-Baptiste," in *DCB, Vol. 3, 399–400.*
 49. Quoted in Bearor, *Leading by Example*, 181.
 50. See Louis de Courville, *Mémoires sur le Canada depuis 1749 Jusqu'à 1760* (Quebec City: Imprimerie de Middleton and Dawson, 1873).
 51. Quoted in Bearor, *Leading by Example*, 183.
 52. See "Amos Richardson's Journal, 1758," *Bulletin of the Fort Ticonderoga Museum*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (September 1968), 278; and *Governor Murray's Journal of the Siege of Quebec, from 18 September 1759 to 25 May 1760* (Toronto: Rous & Mann, 1939), 14.
 53. See extract of a letter from Sir William Johnson to General Shirley, 10 May 1756, PRO, War Office 1/4, Correspondence, 1755–1763; Parkman, *Wolfe and Montcalm*, 168; and Doughty, Vol. 1, 167.
 54. Walter O'Meara, *Guns at the Forks* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1965), 85.
 55. See Loescher, Vol. 1, 247–62; Pouchot, 130; and Toddish, 105–12.

56. Bob Bearor, *The Battle on Snowshoes* (Bowie, MD: Heritage Books, 1997), 93.
57. *Bougainville's Journal*, 224.
58. *Ibid.*, 224; and *DCB*, Vol. 3, 400.
59. *Bougainville's Journal*, 229. "The fall of this noble officer," wrote Major Robert Rogers, "seemed to produce an almost general languor and consternation through the whole army." Major Thomas Mante, another contemporary officer, wrote, "In Lord Howe the soul of General Abercromby's army seemed to expire. From the unhappy moment the General was deprived of his advice, neither order or discipline was observed, a strange kind of infatuation usurped the place of resolution." The famous colonial historian Francis Parkman noted, "The death of one man was the ruin of fifteen thousand." Francis Parkman, *The Battle for North America*, 632–33.
60. The British suffered 1,944 casualties, 1,610 of those regulars. The French suffered only 377. See René Chartrand, *Ticonderoga 1758 — Montcalm's Victory Against All Odds* (London: Oxford, 2000); *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Vol. 3, 462; Noel St. John Williams, *Redcoats Along the Hudson: The Struggle for North America 1754–63* (London: Brassey's Classics, 1998), 143–45; and Anderson, 240–49.
61. H.R. Casgrain, *Lettres du Chevalier De Lévis concernant La Guerre du Canada (1756–1760)* (Montreal: C.O. Beauchemin & Fils, 1889), 199. See also Parkman, *The Battle for North America*, 627–28, 630–32.
62. See H.R. Casgrain, ed., *Lettres et pièces militaires: instructions, ordres, mémoires, plans de campagne et de défense 1756–1760* (Quebec City: L.J. Demers & Frère, 1891), 45; Anderson, 346; Steele, *Guerillas and Grenadiers*, 108–10; Eccles, *The French in North America*, 210–11; Pouchot, 171; Martin L. Nicolai, "A Different Kind of Courage: The French Military and the Canadian Irregular Soldier During the Seven Years' War," *Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. 70, No. 1 (1989), 59–64; and Preston and Lamontagne, 277.
63. "The Canadians thought they were making war," quipped Montcalm, "when they went on raids resembling hunting parties." Quoted in Stacey, *Quebec, 1759*, 33. Montcalm wrote, "They know neither discipline nor subordination, and think themselves in all respects the first nation on earth." Letter, Montcalm to the Minister of War, 18 September 1757, quoted in Francis Parkman, *Montcalm and Wolfe*, 231. Bougainville's disdain for the Canadian approach is also clearly discernable in his journal — "To leave Montreal with a party, to go through the woods, to take a few scalps, to return at full speed once the blow was struck, that is what they called war." *Bougainville's Journal*, 252.

64. Langis waited in ambush at Missisquoi Bay where the whale boats were found in hopes Rogers would return. Durantaye, another guerrilla leader and officer in the Compagnies Franches de la Marine (colonial regular troops), led the overland pursuit. See *Rogers's Journal*, 137–44; Stephen Brumwell, *White Devil* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2004); Cuneo, 101–16; and Loescher, *Genesis*, 58–66.
65. See Loescher, *Genesis*, 83–84.
66. Pouchot's journal, quoted in Bearor, *Leading by Example*, 195.
67. Armand Francis Lucier, ed., *French and Indian War Notices Abstracted from Colonial Newspapers, Vol. 4: September 1759 — December 1760* (Bowie, MD: Heritage Books, 1999), 183.
68. Extract from a letter dated 28 April 1757, quoted in Lucier, *Vol. 2*, 233. By the spring of 1756, raids by Canadians and Natives organized by Captain Dumas alone had resulted in 700 deaths or captures. By the end of the summer, operations had extended as far south as the Carolinas. One report noted, "All these provinces are laid waste for forty leagues from the foot of the mountains, in the direction of the sea. The number of prisoners in these territories since last April [1756] is estimated at about three thousand — men, women and children, in addition to thirteen hundred horses." Steele, *Guerillas and Grenadiers*, 97–98; and H.R. Casgrain, ed., *Journal du Marquis De Montcalm durant ses campagnes en Canada de 1756–1759* (Quebec City: L.J. Demers & Frère, 1895), 357.
69. Letter from an officer, dated Fort Cumberland, 6 October 1755, in Lucier, *Vol. 1*, 329.
70. Letter from General Shirley to Major-General Abercromby, 27 June 1756, PRO, War Office 1/4, Correspondence, 1755–1763.
71. Claude-Godefroy Coquart, a priest, wrote his brother, "Our Indians have waged the most cruel war against the English ... Georgia, Carolina, Marrelande, Pensilvania, are wholly laid waste. The farmers have been forced to quit their abodes and to retire into the town. They have neither plowed nor planted." Robert C. Alberts, *The Most Extraordinary Adventures of Major Robert Stobo* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), 152. See also Anderson, 637; Leckie, 101; Letter From William Shirley (New York) to Principal Secretary of War, 20 December 1755, PRO, War Office 1/4, Correspondence, 1755–1763; Parkman, 173; H.R. Casgrain, ed., *Lettres du Chevalier De Lévis concernant La Guerre du Canada 1756–1760* (Montreal: C.O. Beauchemin & Fils, 1889), 75; Steele, *Guerillas and Grenadiers*, 24; Casgrain, *Journal du Marquis De Montcalm*, 110–11; Malartic, 52–53; and O'Meara, 161.

CHAPTER THREE

Ascending to Leadership: The Militia Commanders of Montreal, Lower Canada (1790–1839)

CHRISTIAN DESSUREAULT AND ROCH LEGAULT

The militia captain is the first example of Canadian military leadership. These leaders of New France emerged in the seventeenth century to protect the St. Lawrence Valley against the incursions of the Native peoples and later of the British. They shared this responsibility with the regular colonial troops of the ministry of the navy, the *Compagnies Franches de la Marine* (colonial regular troops). In the aftermath of the Conquest and the ceding of Canada to the British Crown by France, the colony entered a turbulent period. The American Revolution brought the perils of war to the country and the officers of the Canadian Militia were reborn, once again to defend Canada. However, this time they fought side by side with British imperial troops.

In 1791, after Canada had inherited a new constitution and a House of Assembly that could vote its own laws, its elected members quickly established a militia.¹ The largest in number was that of the Montreal region in Lower Canada, consisting mainly of Canadians of French origin. This chapter will focus on this militia, particularly on its leadership.

We will focus on experiences of a military nature and the support in various forms, which enabled the battalion commanders in the Montreal region, of which there were 112, to rise to command of the militia and to exercise leadership. The majority of them are lieutenant-colonels.



Upper Canada incorporated militia soldier, 1813. (Reconstitution by G.A. Embleton
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Twenty-one of them are colonels. There are two exceptions, Jacques-Clément Herse and Pierre Héroux, two merchants with no military background, who held the rank of major. Lack of space will prevent us from dwelling on the type of leadership that this group provided to the militia members and to the militia as an institution, although our approach may nonetheless indicate a number of trends.

This research is based on the prosopographic method: an approach used in the past by nineteenth-century historians, rediscovered and revived by scholars of antiquity in the 1970s, and then, in the subsequent decades, by historians of the modern and contemporary periods.² Prosopography consists of producing a social history by applying a socio-graphic questionnaire to a series of biographies of individuals belonging to the same social or institutional group. This study of the commanders of the sedentary militia in the Montreal region forms part of this new trend in the social history of elites.³

The *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*⁴ and the *Dictionnaire des parlementaires du Québec*,⁵ were the primary sources for information on the lives of the commanders. Unfortunately, they do not all have official biographies in these two authoritative collective works. We accordingly used regional and local histories published in the counties, parishes, and seigneuries in the Montreal region to compile information on the lives of some of the commanders. The computerized database on the population of historical Quebec, compiled by the University of Montreal's historical demographics program (PRDH), and the various records of births, marriages, and deaths, were more specifically used to enhance the demographic and family data.⁶ We also conducted systematic searches in some computerized indexes, such as the Thémis database of the Société Archiv-Histo.⁷ For some of the less well-known commanders we even gleaned information from the original documents in the civil registries and the notarial records preserved in the Archives Nationales du Québec in Montreal.

The commanders of the Montreal Militia do not match the traditional image of a stable group of officers at the head of a secular institution somnolently ensconced on the banks of the St. Lawrence River. On the contrary, they display the contrasting characteristics that we will



A Lower Canada sedentary militiaman, 1813. (Reconstitution by G.A. Embleton
copyright © Parks Canada)

present and analyze from a social perspective before embarking on a discussion of the criteria for access to command. The first criteria for access considered will of course be the military dimension: experience in the active militia and in the regular army. However, the factors that explain the presence of a man defending Lower Canada at the head of a troop of militia are not limited definitively to criteria that are associated strictly with the profession of arms. Even in professional armies, the rise of military professionalism was still not a *fait accompli* at that time. Many other factors such as social status, occupation, and ethnic affiliation came into play. On a number of other occasions, we will identify a variety of reasons to explain the social authority of the commanders such as the holding of influential institutional positions, association with political allies, dominance in certain sectors of the economy, and family ties.

INTRODUCTION TO THE MILITIA LEADERS

General Considerations

The Montreal Militia is not a static institution. It developed over time. The commanders' positions were initially few in number, but increased steadily as new staffs were formed in response to population pressures and a desire for a more effective territorial defence organization. Before 1792, several parish captains still served as militia leaders, with the exception of the four formed staffs (two in Montreal, one in Boucherville and one in Chambly). Half the government of Montreal was thus not organized in this way. At the point where the history of the militia in Lower Canada begins, Pierre-Paul Neveu Sevestre commanded the 1st Montreal Battalion and Pierre Guy led 2nd Battalion. On the South Shore, René-Amable Boucher de Boucherville led the Boucherville Battalion, while Jean-Baptiste Melchior Hertel de Rouville held this position in Chambly. Lastly, the militia of Lavaltrie were under

the command of Pierre Paul Margane de Lavaltrie. This completes the list of the men who could claim to be leaders of the militia as the captains of the militia of New France had been before them. Beyond the apparent continuity with New France, it should be noted that the leaders of this militia were not exactly the same as their predecessors in the days of the French Crown. In fact, they were a mixture of aristocratic seigneurs identified with the old families who formerly provided the officers for the regular colonial troops, and long-established Montreal bourgeois families. The social picture became more complex as the militia developed and accordingly deserves examination in some detail.

The Social Profile of the Commanders

The 112 commanders fall into nine separate social profiles. In reality, the social profiles may overlap, even for the same family group. The first three profiles in our classification involve directly the owners of seigneurial estates in the St. Lawrence Valley. The first profile includes 30 commanders who are mainly, indeed, almost essentially, identified as seigneurs between 1792 and 1839. This profile excludes seigneurs who, in addition to the day-to-day management of their domains, reported another active profession or who are identified with a concurrent socio-professional status. Nonetheless, this profile includes the seigneurs who served as officers in the army or who held public office in the service of the colonial government, such as John Johnson,⁸ seigneur of Monnoir, and Louis-René Chaussegros de Léry,⁹ the *grand-voyer* (chief road commissioner) for the district of Montreal and co-owners of several seigneuries.

The second profile includes nine commanders who are identified both with seigneurial ownership and with the business world, sometimes simultaneously, sometimes at separate periods of their lives, such as Joseph-Hubert Lacroix,¹⁰ a merchant on Île-Jésus and the Seigneur of Blainville, and Robert Unwin Harwood,¹¹ merchant and Seigneur of Vaudreuil.

The third profile concerns the two instances of seigneurs who also worked in a liberal profession during their lifetimes. One of the two

individuals in this category, Barthélémy Joliette,¹² practised as a notary in the Lanaudière region until 1813, he married Charlotte Tarieu de Lanaudière, a descendant of the old Canadian seigneurial nobility. This ambitious entrepreneur soon became the administrator of the entire seigneurie of Lavaltrie, of which his wife Charlotte had inherited the undivided third. Then, over several decades, he accumulated the powers and prestige associated with the seigneurial title of Lavaltrie, where he even supplanted his brother-in-law, Pierre Tarieu de Lanaudière, the primary heir, as the socially acknowledged seigneur in the community.

The three subsequent profiles comprise both individuals who belonged to the colonial merchant middle class and others to the petite bourgeoisie of rural merchants and liberal professions. The first of these three profiles, under the key word *merchant*, incorporates the 44 commanders who were primarily active in the commercial sphere and more broadly in the business world, including both wholesale and retail, in industry, or in finance. Merchants and businessmen clearly predominate within this group of individuals, whose activities were still, without exception, concentrated in the commercial sphere. On the one hand, this group includes rural merchants whose economic activities are undoubtedly on a modest scale, at the local or regional level. This is undoubtedly the case with Michel Prévost, a merchant in Saint-Jacques de l'Achigan, who began his professional life as a miller.¹³

This category also includes Montreal entrepreneurs who accumulated considerable fortunes, and whose business networks extend far beyond the Montreal region and Lower Canada, such as John Molson.¹⁴ We then classified under a specific profile the five commanders whose bourgeois status constituted their primary socio-professional identifier. We have used the term *bourgeois*, even if its contemporary meaning in Lower Canada remained relatively fluid, including a wide range of social statuses from rich urban proprietors to well-to-do retired farmers. Nonetheless, the militia commanders designated as *bourgeois* in this study belong to the urban world of Montreal and are associated with the commercial sphere in terms of both family ties and social networks.

The subsequent profile includes members of the liberal professions, but excludes individuals previously identified as seigneurs: one surveyor,

two lawyers, one of whom was also a notary, and nine other notaries. The activities of most of these 12 individuals go significantly beyond the practice of their respective professions. Some, like the notaries Joseph-Édouard Faribault de L'Assomption or Edme Henry de Laprairie, are identified as being among the most influential businessmen of their region.¹⁵ Others, such as the notaries Louis Guy and Jean-Marie Mondelet, profited substantially from their privileged contacts in the power networks of the colonial government to enhance their social status.¹⁶

The following two classification profiles constitute a distinct category in the socio-professional recruitment pool for commanders. Lieutenant-Colonel John Simpson,¹⁷ receiver of customs and lock inspector at Côteau-du-Lac, assumed command for two years, from 1828 to 1830, of the 4th Battalion of York County (the Vaudreuil division). This former parliamentarian, who generally supported the bureaucratic party, was appointed commander in 1828 during a period of political crisis, when the organization of the sedentary militia became an issue in the power relationships between the governor and the Reformist members. Following the reform of this institution in 1830, which marks the victory of the Reformers on the issue, it was Lord Harwood who assumed command of the battalion, even though Simpson remained at Côteau-du-Lac where he commanded a group of volunteers during the rebellions of 1837–1838.

More surprising is the presence at the head of sedentary militia battalions of three farmers, especially since they had obtained these positions after the reform of 1830. Although farmers, their appointment officially instituted economic criteria in the access to rank. The size of a candidate's income was accordingly reflected in the hierarchy of the ranks obtained. It is nonetheless noteworthy that these farmers were appointed to command battalions located on the periphery of the Montreal region, in areas recently colonized, such as the Upper Richelieu and the border townships of Hemmingford and Hinchinbrooke. It is important to note that the vocation of farmer, moreover, may conceal a wide variety of socio-economic circumstances, ranging from a penniless peasant to the lord of the manor, often a fully acknowledged member of the local, if not regional, gentry.¹⁸

Lastly, we have grouped under the "others" heading the last six commanders who were not classified under the previous headings. This disparate group includes four former soldiers without further mention of any other socio-professional status. One of these retired soldiers, Colonel Daniel Robertson,¹⁹ commander of the Argenteuil Battalion in 1809 and 1810, became a large landowner in the region when in 1804 he received more than 5,000 acres of land as a concession from the government in Chatham Township (this township is one of the territorial units of the Argenteuil Battalion). Robertson, who for a long time commanded the Michilimackinac post in western Canada, was close to the Montreal fur traders and was an honorary member of the Beaver Club from 1793 on. He was thus able to consolidate his social status in the colony after his military career. The other retired soldiers are also landowners, albeit on a more modest scale in their respective regions. This group also includes two commanders, whose office of seigneurial agent constitutes the primary basis for their social status, while this same office constitutes an additional social asset for many other militia commanders identified as merchants and members of the liberal professions. Lieutenant-Colonel Antoine Filion²⁰ held the office of seigneurial agent in the seigneuries of Soulanges and Nouvelle-Longueuil for members of the family of his wife, Adélaïde-Antoinette Liénard Saveuse de Beaujeu, while Robert Jones²¹ during the 1830s managed the seigneurie of Sorel on behalf of the Crown after having held the office of custodian of the barracks at Fort William Henry.

THE CRITERIA FOR ACCESS

The commander of British forces in North America was responsible for making appointments to the position of commanding officer of battalions of the sedentary militia. He was also the governor of Canada and resided at Quebec City, where he had his headquarters. Despite being geographically and culturally far removed, in some cases, from

the people whom he appointed and whom he certainly did not know personally in every case, the logic underlying his choices was quite simple: it aimed to win the support of the leaders of Lower Canadian society in Montreal so that they would be able to mobilize the forces of the colony effectively alongside the authorities in the face of danger. Consequently, they were men with some knowledge of military matters, together with social prestige. We will accordingly divide the access criteria into two main categories: military experience and social status. Lastly, because the distinguishing feature of Lower Canada is its socio-cultural divide, we will also discuss this aspect in a third category.

Military Experience

The commanders of the sedentary militia in the Montreal region include within their ranks 24 officers with some kind of military experience. That is a relatively small percentage, especially since some of them had acquired this experience during the French regime. Was their appointment to a command position based on a remote memory of the exercise of leadership when they commanded the troops of the *Compagnies Franches de la Marine*? After all, 30 years had elapsed between the time of their experience and their commission in the militia of Lower Canada. What is certain, however, is that the men who remained in Canada after the conquest and their dependents had experienced some difficult times.²²

Members of the British armed services were added to the group, but their contribution was lacking in dynamism. This can doubtless be explained by the scarcity of military organizations established by London for men desirous of practising the profession of arms in the colony in the early days of the British regime in Canada, from 1760 to 1812. However, the military experience of the militia officers can be expressed in participation in volunteer regiments and in the active militia established during the War of 1812, when the United States attempted to annex the colony. If this aspect is taken into account, 52 commanders of the sedentary militia — almost half — had experience in military leadership.

Some commanders began their active careers in the service of the King of France, while others served in the days of the French regime. The merchants, for instance, were in the militia. This was the first group to come to the attention of the British governors, who were also regular army officers. Names such as Boucher, Hertel, Lemoyne de Longueuil, Margane, and Saint-Ours lent undeniable prestige to the Montreal Militia in the days of Lower Canada. René-Amable Boucher de Boucherville (1735–1812) was wounded on the Plains of Abraham while he was an ensign of foot in the *Compagnies Franches de la Marine*. Like him, Joseph-Dominique-Emmanuel Lemoyne de Longueuil (1838–1807) was wounded while serving under the same flag. The two men together placed their swords at the disposal of the British during the American invasion. Longueuil, furthermore, commanded the Royal Canadian Volunteers from 1796 to 1802, the only Canadian regiment between the Royal Proclamation of 1763 and the War of 1812. Michel-Eustache Chartier de Lotbinière (1748–1822), Jean-Baptiste-Melchior Hertel de Rouville (1748–1817), Pierre Paul Margane de Lavaltrie (1743–1810) and Roch-Paul de Saint-Ours (1747–1814) shared with the above-named two officers the fact that they had begun their military careers and seen battle while they were still adolescents. These initial military experiences were attained as members of the *Compagnies Franches de la Marine* or in regiments of the French Army.

During the War of 1812, 28 commanders formed part of the active militia (the battalions of the select embodied militia) and the *Voltigeurs Canadiens*. This latter regiment was a volunteer unit that, according to the claims of its commander, Charles-Michel d'Irumberry de Salaberry, was involved at all times in the fighting. The officers who led the troops in battle during these war years were responsible, in the opinion of Canadian circles and of the British military authorities, for the most significant Canadian contribution to the victory.

It thus comes as no surprise that we find Salaberry at the head of a militia battalion after the war, his reputation embellished with the prestige of his success at the Battle of Châteauguay. Even if other officers disputed the merits of the victory, as is often the case with military actions, his prestige was reinforced by long command experience in



Canadian Voltigeurs and their Native scout on the march, 1813. (Reconstitution by G.A. Embleton copyright © Parks Canada)

regular British units. He was in fact a major in 60 Regiment of the Line before taking command of the Voltigeurs.

Jacques Viger is another officer of the Voltigeurs who had acquired combat experience. After the war, he also retained a marked interest in defence matters. However, Viger's military career was marred by one grievous mistake. It was committed in 1813. He took leave from his regiment. Notwithstanding his biographer's²³ explanation that this was inadvertent, he nonetheless spent several months away from duty, much too long not to raise suspicions of desertion, a serious breach of duty for an officer, in many minds. This mistake, however, which could have affected his popularity and his ability to exert effective leadership in the aftermath of the war, did not constitute an obstacle to his obtaining command of the 8th Battalion of the Montreal City Militia in 1829.

Jean-Baptiste-René Hertel de Rouville was also a member of the Voltigeurs. He became a lieutenant in the sedentary militia at the age of 18 and obtained a commission at the same rank in the Voltigeurs on the

outbreak of war. He took part in the Battle of Châteauguay. Shortly after his return to his sedentary militia unit, he was given command of his battalion. This astonishingly rapid rise through the promotional process was undoubtedly helped by his time spent in a volunteer unit. It is also true that the family network undoubtedly provided the desired support at the appropriate moment: he served during the war under the orders of his brother-in-law Irumberry de Salaberry, and he succeeded his father at the head of the Chambly Battalion in 1816.

The select embodied militia battalions raised for the War of 1812 may be regarded as the sedentary militia in battle. As a result, the officers who were to command them would assume leadership in a real war. It would seem, however, that the recent military experience had little bearing on the composition of the sedentary militia, as there were no changes in the composition of the officer corps. Active involvement in the war does not appear to have been rewarded. Performance in battle was not decisive in terms of appointment to command militia units, at least, not immediately — Salaberry and Viger, of the Voltigeurs both had to wait until 1828.

Nineteen of the commanders appointed in the post-war period had had their most recent wartime experience in the corps of volunteers, the embodied militia, or other units associated with them. The other six active wartime officers had already held command in the sedentary militia. Overall, this is unquestionably rather few, since the governors of Lower Canada had the opportunity between the end of the war and the end of our study to make 74 command appointments to lead the sedentary militia and to reward efforts during the war. Accordingly, barely one-quarter of the new officers of the militia of Lower Canada could claim to have defended King and country in defence organizations associated with the militia of their colony.

The Battle of Châteauguay holds particular significance for our corps of militia officers. Even those officers who neither had military experience, nor had participated in the active militias during the War of 1812, missed no opportunity to recall their involvement, real or imagined, direct or remote, in this action. This battle, more than all the clashes of the War of 1812, seems to have symbolized the entire war

effort of the militia of Lower Canada long after the end of hostilities. Edme Henry had the privilege of taking part in the battle, since his commander, Charles Grant, had been taken prisoner by the Americans. Paul-Théophile Pinsonneault, according to family tradition, also took part in the battle. Eustache-Ignace B.-T. Desrivières, participated in the melee, at the head of his battalion — notwithstanding his advanced age, as he was approaching his mid-50s. These references to the battle nonetheless illustrate the fact that experience in the war still carried some weight in justifying choices for command of Lower Canadian militia units.

The other military experiences of the members are many and varied. Most of these commanders were not French Canadians, but belong to the same institution as the latter. George Henry Monk, for example, was an ensign in the Royal Nova Scotia Regiment, and then a lieutenant in the Nova Scotia Fencibles. For a variety of reasons, which doubtless included that of not wanting to leave North America, he then tried his



An artist's interpretation of the Battle of Châteauguay, 1813. This image appeared in the Sunday edition of *Le Journal*, 24 June 1884. (Library and Archives Canada C-003297)

luck in western Canada before returning to Nova Scotia, where he had the opportunity to enter the office of the Army Commissariat in 1811. He was posted to Michilimackinac with the lowest rank in the service, that of deputy assistant commissary general. This was a demanding job, for this was a theatre of operations where British forces were hard-pressed by the enemy and where the environment, in trading stations and commercial locations far from major centres, consisted of Native peoples and colonists from a wide range of European backgrounds. Monk was thus called upon to display administrative, and diplomatic skills to meet the troops' logistical requirements.

Beyond service to King and country, Monk's dearest wish was to return to his family. In June 1815, his brother wrote to him and said he was right to leave the service, because it was unfair that the commissariat wanted to keep him at Michilimackinac.²⁴ The efforts made on his behalf by his father and his uncle, who was the chief judge of the judicial district of Montreal, to obtain promotion or to find him a worthwhile officer's position in a line regiment in eastern Canada, failed. This is why he was managing a seigneurie, Lachenaie, in Lower Canada in 1821. It was at this location that he briefly obtained command of a new militia division organized in 1826. Not long thereafter, however, he opted to join his uncle in Liverpool on 24 March 1827.

The fate of Philippe Byrne is similar to that of Monk, since he also obtained a position as militia commander in Lower Canada, even though he was an outsider in Lower Canadian society. He was nonetheless able to claim that he had served his King in British defence organizations. He had since 1805 been a member of the Barrack Department, the British Army organization responsible for housing, rations distribution, and troop marches. It was from Newfoundland that he sent a letter in 1809 to the governor of Canada, James Craig, begging him to extricate him from that colony by giving him a commission as an infantry officer, as he felt that his chances of promotion were blocked and his salary inadequate. His words leave no room for interpretation: "as the idea of passing his youth and the most valuable part of his life in such a dormant state, at the salary of 73 pounds ... really throws a melancholy over his feelings ..."²⁵

Byrne had no hesitation about evoking his father's past in asserting his Loyalist credentials. This appeal to the political level undoubtedly concealed his inability to claim relevant leadership experience. The War of 1812 gave Byrne an opportunity to obtain a captain's commission in the select embodied militia. However, despite this experience and his family connections, he was only very briefly in command of a sedentary militia battalion, for the space of a single entry in the records, at Sainte-Marie-de-Monnoir, before he died. Overall, his rise had been slow since he had already been a captain of the sedentary military at Chambly before leaving Lower Canada for Newfoundland in 1805.

John Johnson and Daniel Robertson are undoubtedly the officers who enjoyed the greatest prestige among those who joined the destiny of the French Canadians in the St. Lawrence Valley. John Johnson belonged to one of the three greatest European families in America and it was by a curious twist of fate that he became one of the commanders of the militia of Lower Canada. He received his baptism of fire at the age of 13 when he took part alongside his father in the Battle of Lake George (St. Sacrement) in September 1755 against Montcalm's predecessor as French commander, the Marquis of Dieskau.

The American Revolution put an end to the rise of the Johnson family in North American society. John participated in the King's Royal Regiment of New York in the fight against the revolutionaries. He rose to the rank of brigadier-general in 1782, but was forced to flee to what became Lower Canada in the wake of the military defeats suffered by his party. After spending some time in Great Britain in 1796, he settled permanently in Lower Canada, where the social, economic, and military prestige of his family opened the doors for him to obtain the position of commander of the 1st Townships (i.e., Eastern Townships) Militia Battalion, which included, in the Montreal region, the seigneurie of Monnoir, which he owned.

Robertson was a lieutenant at the end of the Seven Years' War. He undoubtedly took part in the most important battles fought by the British Army in America, as he joined the ranks of the Royal American Regiment when it was formed in 1754, the famous unit that later became the British 60th Regiment of the Line. He claimed, moreover, to

have taken part in the conquest of Canada, Martinique, Grenada, and Havana in 1762.²⁶ These expeditions count among some of the most demanding of the entire age. He was retired after the signing of the Treaty of Paris.

At the beginning of the American Revolution, as a Loyalist, he volunteered for service in the 84th Royal Highlands Emigrants, and at the end of hostilities, he was once again placed on the retired list. Subsequently, he seems to have been able to find a position in the Canada's sedentary militia in addition to a commission in the British Army, which he purchased in 1793. He had not calculated on Britain's entry into the war against France. When the wars of the French Revolution broke out, the 1st Battalion of the 60th Regiment was recalled to Europe, which complicated Robertson's position. As he was too old to hope for rapid promotion and too well-established socially in Lower Canada, he attempted to remain in the colony by changing battalions in 1796. He succeeded in remaining in the army until he reached the rank of colonel in 1798.²⁷ He then became commander of a militia battalion one year before his death, which occurred in 1810. In addition to his military career, Robertson was a great landowner and a member of the economic elite of Lower Canada. He nevertheless experienced a variety of financial setbacks towards the end of his life.

The information contained in Annex 1 (the names of the 112 commanders, their dates of birth and death, the units they commanded, the years when they began and ended their time as commander) show the career progression of the leaders of the sedentary militia. The boxes that are empty in Annex 1 are more significant than would appear at first. They are not only the result of deficiencies in the sources. In fact, the lack of career progression illustrates that the institution was open, that its members came and went geographically and also that they moved laterally (i.e., from one military organization to another) or that they engaged in activities for which they had a dispensation to hold a position in the militia. We also know that there were members of the Lower Canadian elite who chose not to participate in the militia officer corps for a variety of other reasons even though, in theory, this choice could have resulted in their serving as common militia soldiers.

In practice, it is clear that the relations they maintained with the leaders of the militia protected them from performing this service, which the ordinary inhabitants regarded as burdensome.

Advancement in rank was slow, even for late entrants. This means that even those officers who obtained commissions in the sedentary militia with a high rank did not subsequently progress more rapidly than other members of the officer corps.

Promotion and seniority in the sedentary militia were no guarantee of progression to command. All in all, once the position had been established in the hierarchy, whether as ensign or a major, progression was subsequently slow for those who attempted to persevere, as Annex 2 shows. Exceptions are quite rare. In the latter case, the fastest progress of officers who opted to remain in the militia of Lower Canada and who managed to obtain more than two promotions are those of Jean-Marie Mondelet (captain in 1812, major at an indeterminate date, and lieutenant-colonel in 1814), Jean-Baptiste-René Hertel de Rouville (lieutenant in 1811, major in 1813, and lieutenant-colonel in 1815), Lawrence George Brown (captain in 1828, major in 1830, and lieutenant-colonel in 1831) and David David (ensign in 1825, captain in 1827, major that same year, and lieutenant-colonel in 1832).

Mondelet and Rouville were undoubtedly helped by the wartime circumstances, when the leaders of the colony paid more sustained attention to the organization of the militia. Mondelet was also closely associated with the British Army, which presumably ensured him a certain prestige among the militia authorities. Even though he had no military experience, he prepared numerous notarized contracts for them. In fact, in the post-war years, he became the army's main notary for Montreal and region.

Lastly, it should be noted that staff positions in the militia could offer an access route to command. The individuals who filled such positions (our sample contains 14 of them) often had military experience or qualities as administrators that were acknowledged in their circle.

Social Status as a Criterion for Command

What occupations and social status afforded access to leadership in the militia? They varied over time. In fact, distribution by social class and by period of the appointments British governors made to militia command positions reflects a significant evolution. We have divided this appointment process into four periods, corresponding to specific phases in the organization of the sedentary militia in the Montreal region. In 1792, command of the first battalions was given to local seigneurs in the countryside and to bourgeois merchants in the city. The organization into battalions or divisions in the countryside nonetheless remained limited to a small section of the South Shore, while the commanders in Montreal had authority over a large portion of Île Jésus and the North Shore.

In 1805, the entire settled territory on the south and north shores of the St. Lawrence was gradually organized into specific militia units and the authority of the commanders at Montreal was henceforth limited to the city, its outskirts, and the rural parishes on the Island of Montreal. From 1792 to 1805, the commanders outside the Island of Montreal were essentially recruited from the ranks of the seigneurs, while the commanders appointed for the Island of Montreal included three merchants, one member of the liberal professions (both lawyer and notary), and one merchant seigneur, Pierre Foretier,²⁸ the owner of a sub-fief in the city and of the seigneurie of Île-Bizard.

Between 1805 and 1814, new commanders were appointed as part of a process driven by the territorial expansion, rising external tensions and the use of the militia during the war.²⁹ During this period, the battalions on the Island of Montreal accounted for only three of the 21 appointments, and the positions were given to merchants. In the rural areas, the social selection became diversified. The seigneurs, including one merchant seigneur, accounted for half of the new appointments, while merchants and notaries accounted for slightly less than the other half.

From 1815 to 1829, the sedentary militia evolved against a background of population growth, territorial expansion, the return of peace,

the consolidation of the civilian roles of militia officers, and, towards the end of the period, conflict over the real extent of the authority of the governor over militia officers. During this period, the social profile of the new commanders became diversified and the appointment of merchants increased considerably, to the detriment of the seigneurs. New commanders from the business world were henceforth more numerous, even in the countryside. After 1830, social diversification and the rise of the merchant class became further accentuated. This evolution confirms the trend observed by historian Fernand Ouellet, on the basis of a large sample, for senior officers as a whole.³⁰ However, the decline of the seigneurs was neither as early nor as radical.

Table 1

Evolving Socio-Professional Profile of Militia Commanders in the Montreal Region, 1792–1839

(Based on Appointments Made by Period)

| Socio-Professional Profile | Before 1805 | From 1805 to 1814 | From 1815 to 1829 | From 1830 to 1839 | From 1792 to 1839 |
|------------------------------|-------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Seigneurs | 8 | 8 | 9 | 5 | 30 |
| Seigneurs and Merchants | 1 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 9 |
| Seigneurs and Liberal Profs. | - | - | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Merchants | 3 | 8 | 19 | 14 | 44 |
| Bourgeois | 1 | - | 3 | 1 | 5 |
| Liberal Professions | 1 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 12 |
| Civil Servants | - | - | 1 | - | 1 |
| Farmers | - | - | - | 3 | 3 |
| Other | - | 2 | 1 | 3 | 6 |
| TOTAL | 14 | 21 | 40 | 37 | 112 |

The Ethno-Cultural Factor in the Selection of Commanders

Membership in the anglophone or francophone³¹ group is undoubtedly an important contributing factor in obtaining command positions. We have opted for a division based on geographic origin and the presumed ethno-cultural membership of commanders, isolating on the one hand commanders of Canadian origin³² and commanders of British or American origin. We have, furthermore, introduced into this classification an "other origins" category for immigrants from continental Europe, although these had undoubtedly already integrated into one or other of the main communities in Lower Canada before being appointed to a command position in the sedentary militia.

Commanders of French-Canadian origin account for approximately 60 percent of all appointments for the period of 1792 to 1839. The initial development of the institution was centred on the old Canadian seigneurial nobility in the rural areas and the francophone bourgeoisie for the Island of Montreal. The relative weight of French Canadians in the leadership was nonetheless eroded during the period, whereas the number of commanders recruited among the newly arrived colonists of British or American origin increased steadily during the period. Edward William Gray,³³ lawyer, notary, and sheriff, was the first

Table 2

Evolution of the Ethno-Cultural Profile of Militia Commanders in the Montreal Region, 1792–1839

(Based on Appointments Made by Periods)

| Ethno-Cultural Origin | Before 1805 | From 1805 to 1814 | From 1815 to 1829 | From 1830 to 1839 | From 1792 to 1839 |
|-----------------------|-------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| British and American | 1 | 8 | 13 | 16 | 38 |
| Canadian | 13 | 12 | 23 | 19 | 67 |
| Other | - | 1 | 4 | 2 | 7 |
| TOTAL | 14 | 21 | 40 | 37 | 112 |

anglophone commander appointed to lead the first battalion of militia for the city and outskirts of Montreal in 1804. It was not until several years later, however, that the colonial authorities proceeded to appoint several commanders of British origin to the sedentary militia.

Between 1808 and 1811, during the period of political crisis under Governor Craig, the five new commanders selected were exclusively of British origin. However, during the wartime period, the new Governor Sir George Prevost adopted an entirely different policy, reverting to the appointment of a large majority of French-Canadian commanders.³⁴ After the war, a gradual increase in the number of commanders of British and American origin occurred. Subsequently, in the decade following the militia reform in 1830, they account for up to 40 percent of the new commanders recruited.

During the period studied, the colonial authorities also appointed seven militia commanders from among immigrants from continental Europe, specifically France, Switzerland, and the Netherlands. Five of these seven commanders were living in rural areas, where they were actively involved in the social life of mainly francophone communities. Lieutenant-Colonel Louis Marchand,³⁵ commander of the 3rd Chambly Battalion, is the most striking example of this integration into a majority francophone society. Born in Amsterdam on 15 March 1800, this Jewish immigrant, whose original name was Solomon Koopman, settled in the Richelieu area, where he embarked on a business career in collaboration with Eustache Soupras de Saint-Mathias. In 1828, he converted to Catholicism and two years later married Charlotte Ceré, the daughter of a French-Canadian farmer in the region. He was an active member of the Patriot Party, and was directly involved as a rebel in the popular uprisings of 1837.

The other two commanders born in continental Europe led battalions from the city and outskirts of Montreal. Jean Bouthillier,³⁶ a merchant born in France, seems to have been more closely associated with the francophone community in the city of Montreal, while Lieutenant-Colonel Louis (Lewis) Gogy,³⁷ also born in France, but into a family of Swiss origin, apparently had closer relations with the anglophone community, especially following his appointment as sheriff of Montreal.

The socio-ethnic distribution of militia commanders shows a much higher proportion of seigneurs in the French-Canadian group and of merchants in the other two groups. The calendar of appointments, however, has some influence on this dimension. Most of the commanders of British, American, or other origin were chosen after 1815, at a time when the merchant class was in the ascent. This rise can also be seen, albeit to a lesser extent, in the appointments of commanders from the French-Canadian majority. Furthermore, the appointment of members of the liberal professions reinforces this dynamic of social diversification in the group of French-Canadian commanders after 1815.

Table 3

Socio-Ethnic Profile of Militia Commanders in the Montreal Region, 1792–1839

(Based on Appointments Made by Period)

| Socio-Professional Profile | Ethno-Cultural Origin of Militia Commanders | | | Total |
|------------------------------|---|---------------------|----------|------------|
| | French-Canadian | British or American | Other | |
| Seigneurs | 23 | 6 | 1 | 30 |
| Seigneurs and Merchants | 7 | 2 | - | 9 |
| Seigneurs and Liberal Profs. | 2 | - | - | 2 |
| Merchants | 20 | 19 | 5 | 44 |
| Bourgeois | 5 | - | - | 5 |
| Liberal Professions | 9 | 3 | - | 12 |
| Civil Servants | - | 1 | - | 1 |
| Farmers | - | 3 | - | 3 |
| Other | 1 | 4 | 1 | 6 |
| TOTAL | 67 | 38 | 7 | 112 |

It should be noted that some individuals transcend this division based on ethno-cultural origin by having close contacts to members of both communities. One of the commanders of French-Canadian origin, Colonel François Roch de St-Ours was, on his mother's side, the grand-nephew of James Murray, the first British governor of Quebec.³⁸ On the other hand, two of the 38 commanders of British or American origin had a direct link, either through their mother or through their father, to the French-Canadian community: Charles William Grant and Daniel de Hertel.

The parents of C.W. Grant, fifth Baron de Longueuil, are well-known. The latter's father, David Alexander, was an officer in the British Army who, on the strength of his marriage and his contacts in the colonial administration, became one of the richest land owners in Lower Canada, while his mother, Marie-Charles-Joseph Lemoyne de Longueuil, had inherited the Barony of Longueuil and, in consequence, the title of Baroness.³⁹

In the case of Daniel de Hertel, a resident of Chatham Township and commander of the Argenteuil Battalion from 1827 to the end of the period under study, was the grandson of Joseph-Hypolite Hertel de St-François, a military officer under the French regime who, after converting to Protestantism, continued his career in the Department of Indian Affairs after 1763.⁴⁰ During the American invasion of 1775, he was one of the Canadians loyal to the British Crown who were taken prisoner when Fort Chambly fell into the hands of the rebel forces. Daniel's father, Louis-Hypolite, was an officer in the Royal Canadian Volunteers Regiment. Louis-Hypolite De Hertel, however, left the colony towards the end of the eighteenth century, abandoning his wife and children. On his mother's side, Daniel De Hertel was also the grandson of Daniel Robertson, whose career was described above.

Two other commanders, John McKenzie and Francis Desrivières (François Amable Trotir Desrivières Beaubien), demonstrate that family networks often extend beyond strict genealogical descendants. The former, the commander of the Île-Jésus Battalion from 1825 to 1829, was the natural son of Roderick McKenzie, a fur merchant who himself commanded the militia of the Terrebonne Battalion, and a Native woman from

the Northwest.⁴¹ In 1803, John was probably living with his father in Terrebonne when he married Rachel Chaboillez, the daughter of a merchant involved in the fur trade.⁴² In 1821, John McKenzie married the daughter of another commander of Île-Jésus, Jacob Oldham.⁴³

François Desrivères,⁴⁴ was related through his father to the Trottier Beaubien Desrivères family, which was highly regarded in francophone bourgeois circles in Montreal, and to which three other commanders of the sedentary militia in the Montreal region were related. After the death of his father, his mother remarried, when he was 12, to James McGill, a rich fur merchant who himself held the position of battalion commander in the sedentary militia in Montreal. Thanks to his stepfather, François Desrivères became part of the network of fur traders of the North West Company. Despite his excellent contacts in British business circles, he remained deeply attached to his origins, to Catholicism and to the francophone community.

Mixed marriages are another example of this interweaving of family networks in the two main ethno-cultural communities in Lower Canada. Seven of the 67 commanders of French-Canadian origin had, in their first or second marriages, spouses of British origin, while five of the 38 commanders of American or British origin married French Canadians.

CONCLUSION

While militia commanders had to be deemed acceptable within their own community, the final word belonged to the British governors, men who, most of the time, held the rank of general officers in the regular army during the period under study. This is why the criteria for access to leadership in the militia are both social and military in nature. In order to achieve profile, aspirants to positions of command had to acquire a certain amount of combat experience or be part of a defence organization established during the New France period, the American Revolution or the War of 1812. Such aspirants could also enhance their profile on the strength of their social status and their ethno-cultural origins.

The defence landscape of the colony was changing gradually with the introduction of troops of volunteers in the early 1820s,⁴⁵ an initiative of Governor Lord Dalhousie, alongside the traditional militia. As a result, the militia was to lose, albeit slowly, its former prestige. Militia officers would henceforth use channels other than that of attaining command of sedentary militia battalions to exert their leadership. This trend became most pronounced after our period of study.

It is difficult to draw parallels with the standing forces in terms of the criteria for access to leadership because of the dearth of research on the subject. We must, nonetheless, avoid being too harsh in our judgement of the Canadian Militia, in emphasizing its lack of professionalism in the profession of arms. One need only compare the commanders of the Montreal Militia with two leaders of the British regular forces in the War of 1812, those at the Battle of Queenston Heights that, according to some sources, saved Upper Canada. Major General Isaac Brock had very little combat experience prior to the battle. The record of his successor on the battlefield, Major-General Sir Roger Hale Sheaffe, was no more impressive; in fact, it was identical. Brock was killed by enemy fire while attempting to lead an ill-advised charge to retake a gun. Yet, he would become a legendary figure. Sheaffe, his replacement, during the defence of York in April 1813, was found lacking and recalled to Britain, and never again took part in a military action. Nonetheless, he was promoted to the rank of lieutenant-general in 1821 and general in 1838.⁴⁶

The commanders of the Montreal Sedentary Militia exhibited social leadership throughout the period, since the range of the militia's responsibilities in French-Canadian society encompassed more than defence alone. They also responded to the call of duty during the War of 1812. They did not, however, exert firm leadership during the Rebellion of 1837–1838. The reasons for that are complex and their origins are to be found in the military and social spheres that we have discussed. This is, however, another topic and one that will be left to other historians.

*Annex 1**Commanders of the Sedentary Militia Units in the Montreal Region of Lower Canada*

| Name | Born | Died | Unit | Command |
|---|------------|------------|--------------------------------|-----------|
| Archambault, Amable | 22/03/1774 | 28/08/1850 | 1st St-Hyacinthe Battalion | 1835-1839 |
| Beaubien, Benjamin | 10/11/1776 | | 3rd Montreal Battalion | 1833-1839 |
| Boucher de Boucherville, René-Amable | 12/02/1735 | 31/08/1812 | Boucherville Battalion | 1792-1812 |
| Boucher de Boucherville, Thomas-René-Verchères | 21/12/1784 | 13/12/1857 | 1st Chambly Battalion | 1837-1839 |
| Boucher de Labruère, René (Philippe-René) | 03/05/1767 | | Boucherville Battalion | 1817-1837 |
| Boucher de Lotbinière, François-Claude | 14/10/1739 | 28/04/1810 | 2nd Boucherville Battalion | 1795-1801 |
| Boucher Labruère Montarville, Joseph | 08/01/1744 | 10/03/1813 | Boucherville Battalion | 1802-1813 |
| Bourdages, Louis | 06/07/1764 | 20/01/1835 | Richelieu Battalion | 1813-1833 |
| Bouthillier, Jean | 1763 | 21/07/1832 | 3rd Montreal Battalion | 1826-1832 |
| Bresse, Joseph | 27/10/1769 | 01/04/1836 | Chambly Battalion | 1826-1828 |
| Brown, Lawrence George | | | 2nd Beauharnois Battalion | 1832-1839 |
| Byrne, Philippe | | | Ste-Marie Battalion | 1829-1830 |
| Caldwell, James | | 18/04/1815 | 1st Montreal Battalion | 1814-1815 |
| Cartier, Jacques | 10/04/1750 | 22/03/1814 | Verchères Battalion | 1813-1814 |
| Cartier, Jacques fils | 29/08/1774 | | Verchères Battalion | 1833-1839 |
| Chartier de Lotbinière, Michel-Eustache | 31/08/1748 | 01/01/1822 | 1st Vaudreuil Battalion | 1804-1818 |
| Chaussegros de Léry, Louis-René | 13/10/1762 | 28/11/1832 | Boucherville Battalion | 1829-1833 |
| Cuthbert, James | 04/06/1769 | 05/03/1849 | 1st Berthier Battalion | 1806-1839 |
| Cuthbert, James fils | | 01/01/1845 | 3rd Berthier Battalion | 1832-1839 |
| Cuvillier, Austin (Augustin) | 20/08/1779 | 11/07/1849 | 5th Montreal Battalion | 1837-1839 |
| David, David | | 01/01/1841 | 2nd Chambly Battalion | 1833-1837 |
| Davidson, John | | | 1st Beauharnois Battalion | 1834-1839 |
| De Hertel, Daniel | 20/03/1797 | | 2nd Argenteuil Battalion | 1827-1839 |
| Delorme, Hyacinthe-Marie Simon | 15/08/1777 | 01/01/1814 | St-Hyacinthe Battalion | 1813-1814 |
| Desrivères, Eustache-Ignace B.-T. | 10/02/1761 | 03/10/1816 | Verchères Battalion | 1815-1816 |
| Desrivères, François-Amable Trottier (Francis) | 05/10/1764 | 16/03/1830 | 1st Montreal Battalion | 1826-1830 |
| Dessaules, Jean | 1766 | 20/06/1835 | St-Hyacinthe Battalion | 1815-1833 |
| D'odet Dorsonnens, Protais | 19/06/1780 | 16/02/1836 | Lachenaie Battalion | 1833-1839 |
| Dwyer, John | | | 3rd St-Hyacinthe Battalion | 1830-1839 |
| Faribault, Joseph-Edouard | 04/05/1773 | 03/08/1858 | 1st L'Assomption Battalion | 1812-1834 |
| Filion, Antoine | 22/01/1768 | 01/11/1848 | 1st Vaudreuil Battalion | 1821-1827 |
| Foretier, Pierre | 12/01/1738 | 03/12/1815 | 3rd Montreal Battalion | 1804-1815 |
| Forsyth, John | 08/12/1762 | 27/12/1837 | 4th Montreal Battalion | 1829-1839 |
| Grant, Charles William | 04/02/1782 | 05/07/1848 | Beauharnois Battalion | 1814-1839 |
| Gray, Edward William | 04/12/1742 | 22/12/1810 | 1st Montreal Battalion | 1804-1810 |
| Griffin, Robert | | | 1st and 2nd Montreal Battalion | 1821-1827 |
| Griffith, Thomas | | 01/01/1851 | 3rd L'Assomption Battalion | 1834-1839 |
| Grisé, Pierre | 16/01/1763 | | 2nd Richelieu Battalion | 1827-1832 |
| Guéroul, Louis | 20/03/1798 | | 2nd Richelieu Battalion | 1835-1839 |

| Name | Born | Died | Unit | Command |
|---|------------|------------|------------------------------------|-----------|
| Guérout, Pierre-Guillaume | 31/08/1751 | 18/06/1830 | Chambly Battalion | 1816–1827 |
| Gugy, Lewis (J.-G.-B.-G.-Louis) | 1770 | 17/07/1840 | 2nd Montreal Battalion | 1827–1839 |
| Guy, Louis | 27/06/1768 | 17/02/1850 | 1st Montreal Battalion | 1828–1834 |
| Guy, Pierre | 11/12/1738 | 07/01/1812 | 1st and 2nd Montreal Battalions | 1792–1812 |
| Harwood, Robert Unwin | 22/01/1798 | 12/03/1863 | 4th York (Vaudreuil) Battalion | 1830–1839 |
| Henry, Edme | 15/11/1760 | 14/09/1841 | Beauharnois Battalion | 1822–1839 |
| Héroux, Pierre | 27/09/1795 | 14/03/1844 | 2nd Laprairie Battalion | 1839 |
| Herse, Jacques-Clément | 1749 | 30/03/1816 | L'Acadie Battalion | 1814–1816 |
| Hertel de Rouville, J.-B. Melchior | 21/10/1748 | 30/11/1817 | Chambly Battalion | 1792–1817 |
| Hertel de Rouville, J.-B.-René | 20/06/1789 | 03/01/1859 | Rouville Battalion | 1815–1828 |
| Hervieux, Jacques | 07/05/1752 | 08/12/1828 | 2nd Montreal Battalion | 1812–1827 |
| Hervieux, Jean-Baptiste | 11/01/1743 | 24/12/1820 | L'Assomption Battalion | 1806–1817 |
| Hervieux, Pierre | 30/12/1765 | | 5th Montreal Battalion | 1831–1837 |
| Hingston, Samuel-James | | | 1st Beauharnois Battalion | 1830 |
| Hoyle, Robert | 16/09/1781 | 15/02/1857 | Godmanchester Battalion | 1828–1839 |
| Irumberry of Salaberry, Charles-Michel | 19/11/1778 | 27/02/1829 | Rouville Battalion | 1828–1829 |
| Irumberry de Salaberry, Melchior-Alphonse | 19/05/1813 | 27/03/1867 | 2nd Chambly Battalion | 1837–1839 |
| Johnson, Adam Gordon | | | 6th Township Battalion | 1808–? |
| Johnson, John (2 du même nom) | 05/11/1741 | 04/01/1830 | 1st and 6th Township Battalions | 1808–1829 |
| Joliette, Barthélémy | 09/09/1789 | 21/06/1850 | Lavaltrie Battalion | 1827–1839 |
| Jones, John | 1761 | 01/01/1842 | 6th Pointe-Claire Battalion | 1831–1834 |
| Jones, Robert | 1770 | 24/09/1844 | 1st Richelieu Battalion | 1830–1838 |
| Kell, William | | | Argenteuil Battalion | 1824–1826 |
| Lacroix, Joseph-Hubert | 05/05/1743 | 15/07/1821 | 3rd Ile-Jésus Battalion | 1806–1817 |
| Lacroix, Paul | 26/07/1740 | 05/07/1823 | Boucherville Battalion | 1813–1816 |
| Lambert-Dumont, Eustache-Nicolas | 25/09/1767 | 25/04/1835 | 1st York (Vaudreuil) Battalion | 1813–1832 |
| Languedoc, François | 11/10/1790 | 23/09/1840 | L'Acadie Battalion | 1832–1839 |
| Lavolette, Jean-Baptiste-Étienne Guernier | | | 1st Deux-Montagnes Battalion | 1835–1839 |
| Lecompte Dupré, Pierre-Hypolite St-Georges | 22/10/1764 | 11/06/1825 | 3rd Montreal Battalion | 1816–1825 |
| Lecomte Dupré, Georges-Hypolite St-Georges | 23/03/1738 | 26/11/1797 | 2nd Montreal Battalion | 1795–1797 |
| Lemay, Théophile | 12/10/1784 | | 2nd Rouville (Ste-Marie) Battalion | 1833–1839 |
| Lemoine de Longueuil, Jh-Dom.-Emmanuel | 02/04/1738 | 19/01/1807 | Vaudreuil Battalion | 1795–1807 |
| Lemoine de Martigny, Prime de (Joseph-Prime) | 10/02/1806 | | 2nd Verchères Battalion | 1837–1839 |
| Lemoine, Hugues de Martigny | 09/01/1794 | | Ramesay Battalion | 1827–1939 |
| Lemoine, Joseph-Jacques De Martigny | 01/04/1768 | 06/07/1838 | Verchères Battalion | 1817–1837 |
| Leprohon, Jean-Philippe | 20/01/1765 | 26/06/1831 | 6th Montreal Battalion | 1818–1831 |
| Liénard Saveuse de Beaujeu, Georges-René | 04/06/1810 | 29/07/1865 | 2nd Vaudreuil Battalion | 1837–1839 |
| Malhiot, François-Xavier | 04/12/1781 | 12/06/1854 | 1st Verchères Battalion | 1830–1839 |
| Marchand, Gabriel | 21/11/1780 | 10/03/1852 | 3rd Chambly Battalion | 1828–1831 |
| Marchand, Louis | 15/03/1800 | 01/07/1881 | 3rd Chambly Battalion | 1833–1837 |
| Margane, Pierre Paul de Lavaltrie | 13/08/1743 | 10/09/1810 | Lavaltrie Battalion | 1794–1809 |

| Name | Born | Died | Unit | Command |
|--|------------|------------|---------------------------------------|------------|
| McCullum, Daniel | | | 3rd Rouville Battalion | 1830–1833 |
| McDonald, Charles | | | 2nd Rouville Battalion | 1833–1839 |
| McGill, James | 06/10/1744 | 19/12/1813 | 1st Montreal Battalion | 1811–1813 |
| Mckenzie, John J.P. | 1789 | | l'Île-Jésus Battalion | 1825–1829 |
| McKenzie, Roderick | 1761 | 15/08/1844 | 1st Effingham (Terrebonne) Battalion | 1816–1839 |
| McVey, Thomas | | 01/01/1832 | 1st Township (L'Acadie) Battalion | 1821–1832 |
| Molson, John | 03/10/1787 | 12/07/1860 | 6th Montreal Battalion | 1839 |
| Mondelet, Jean-Marie | 29/04/1773 | 15/06/1843 | 7th Montreal Battalion | 1817–1839 |
| Monk, George Henry | 14/08/1783 | 01/01/1828 | Lachenaie Battalion | 1827 |
| Murray, Patrick | 1749 | 01/01/1823 | Argenteuil Battalion | 1811–1823 |
| Neveu de Sevestre, Pierre-Paul | 29/06/1719 | 22/01/1802 | 1st Montreal Battalion | 1792–1802 |
| Nivard de Saint-Dizier, Etienne | 14/04/1766 | 16/05/1820 | Pointe-Claire Battalion | 1819–1820 |
| Oldham, Jacob | 1768 | 01/01/1845 | Île-Jésus Battalion | 1822–1825 |
| Pinsonneault, Paul-Théophile | 10/03/1780 | 27/05/1832 | Laprairie Battalion | 1830–1832 |
| Porlier, Louis Lamarre (Louis-Joseph) | 05/10/1734 | 11/05/1809 | 2nd Montreal Battalion | 1798–1803 |
| Porteous, Thomas William | 08/12/1765 | 20/02/1830 | 3rd Leinster (Lachenaie) Battalion | 1828–1830 |
| Pothier, Toussaint Jean-Baptiste | 16/01/1771 | 22/10/1845 | L'Acadie Battalion | 1817–1839 |
| Prévost, Michel | 30/09/1753 | 17/07/1843 | 1st L'Assomption Battalion | 1826–1839 |
| Raizenne, Ignace | 1771 | 23/09/1849 | 3rd Montreal Battalion | 1832–1839 |
| Robertson, Daniel | 1733 | 05/04/1810 | Argenteuil Battalion | 1809–1810 |
| Rocher, Barthelemy | 15/11/1765 | 23/05/1836 | 2nd Leinster (L'Assomption) Battalion | 1818–1833 |
| Saint-Ours, Roch-Charles | | | 1st L'Assomption Battalion | 1833–1839 |
| Saint-Ours, Roch-Charles-Louis | 24/08/1753 | 11/11/1834 | St-Ours Battalion | 1804–1834 |
| Saint-Ours, Roch-François | 18/09/1800 | 10/09/1839 | 1st Richelieu Battalion | 1833–1839 |
| Saint-Ours, Roch-Paul | 05/09/1747 | 13/08/1814 | L'Assomption Battalion | 1806–1814 |
| Scriver, John | 1791 | | 3rd L'Acadie (Hemmingford) Battalion | 1839 |
| Simpson, John | 10/01/1788 | 21/04/1873 | 4th York (Vaudreuil) Battalion | 1828–1830 |
| Sutherland, Daniel | 01/01/1756 | 19/08/1832 | 1st Montreal Battalion | 1816–1817? |
| Tarieu de Lanaudière, Charles Gaspard | 09/09/1769 | 07/06/1812 | Lavaltrie Battalion | 1806–1812 |
| Turgeon, Michel | 11/11/1765 | 22/07/1846 | 3rd Île-Jésus (Blainville) Battalion | 1813–1839 |
| Viger, Jacques | 07/05/1787 | 12/12/1858 | 8th Montreal Battalion | 1829–1839 |
| Webster, Arthur | | 01/01/1866 | 2nd Terrebonne Battalion | 1830–1839 |
| Wilsie, Isaac | | | 1st L'Acadie Battalion | 1836–1839 |

Note: For several commanders, we have given the approximate year of their birth on the basis of information contained in the biographies or by calculating the year of birth on the basis of the date of their death and their age at their death, when such data were available. Generally, we have established the dates of their command on the basis of the militia annuals and reports.⁴⁷ However, the date of the commission is used prior to the appearance of the lists.

Annex 2*Career Progression of Commanders in the Sedentary Militia*

| Name | Ensign | Lieutenant | Captain | Major | Lt.-Colonel | Colonel |
|---|--------|------------|---------|-------|-------------|---------|
| Archambault, Amable | | 1804 | 1812 | 1830 | 1835 | |
| Beaubien, Benjamin | | 1802 | 1808 | 1814 | 1833 | |
| Boucher de Boucherville, René-Amable | | | | | | 1790 |
| Boucher de Boucherville, Thomas-René-Verchères | 1807 | | 1812 | 1827 | 1837 | |
| Boucher de Labrière de Montarville, Joseph | | | | | 1795 | 1802 |
| Boucher de Labrière, René (Philippe-René) | 1799 | | | 1802 | 1815 | |
| Boucher de Laperrière, François-Claude | | 1795 | | | | 1795 |
| Bourdages, Louis | | 1796 | 1800 | 1812 | 1813 | |
| Bouthillier, Jean | 1792 | | 1797 | | 1814 | |
| Bresse, Joseph | | 1812 | | 1817 | 1818 | |
| Brown, Lawrence George | | | 1828 | 1830 | 1831 | |
| Byrne, Philippe | | | 1806 | 1822 | 1824 | |
| Caldwell, James | | | 1797 | 1811 | 1813 | |
| Cartier, Jacques | | | | 1800 | 1808 | |
| Cartier, Jacques fils | | 1803 | | 1813 | 1833 | |
| Chartier de Lotbinière, Michel-Eustache | | | | | 1795 | 1805 |
| Chaussegros de Léry, Louis-René | | | 1806 | 1812 | 1813 | |
| Cuthbert, James | | | | | 1805 | |
| Cuthbert, James (son of Ross) | | | | 1830 | 1839 | |
| Cuvillier, Austin (Augustin) | | | 1813 | 1830 | 1839 | |
| D'odet Dorsonnens, Protais | | | | 1828 | 1833 | |
| David, David | 1825 | | 1827 | 1827 | 1832 | |
| Davidson, John | | | 1820 | 1827 | 1830 | |
| De Hertel, Daniel | | | 1817 | 1823 | 1827 | |
| Delorme, Hyacinthe-Marie Simon | | | | 1804 | 1807 | |
| Desrivères, Eustache-Ignace B.-T. | | | | 1810 | 1814 | |
| Desrivères, François-Amable Trottier (Francis) | 1790 | 1792 | 1794 | 1814 | 1821 | |
| Dessaules, Jean | | | 1801 | major | 1814 | |
| Dwyer, John | | | 1812 | | 1830 | |
| Faribault, Joseph-Edouard | | | 1805 | 1806 | 1812 | |
| Filion, Antoine | | | 1806 | | 1812 | |
| Foretier, Pierre | | | | 1789 | 1801 | 1804 |
| Grant, Charles William | | | | | 1812 | |
| Gray, Edward William | | | | | | 1787 |
| Griffin, Robert | | | | | 1821 | |
| Griffith, Thomas | | | | | 1834 | |
| Grisé, Pierre | | | | 1813 | 1815 | |
| Guérout, Louis | | 1815 | | | 1835 | |
| Guérout, Pierre-Guillaume | | | | 1800 | 1804 | |

| Name | Ensign | Lieutenant | Captain | Major | Lt.-Colonel | Colonel |
|---|--------|------------|---------|-------|-------------|---------|
| Gugy, Lewis (J.-G.-B.-G.-Louis) | | 1803 | captain | 1812 | 1813 | |
| Guy, Louis | | | 1797 | | 1812 | 1830 |
| Guy, Pierre | | | | | 1787 | 1802 |
| Harwood, Robert Unwin | | | | | 1831 | |
| Henry, Edme | | | | 1812 | 1822 | |
| Héroux, Pierre | | 1827 | 1830 | 1839 | 1839 | |
| Herse, Jacques-Clément | | | | 1813 | | |
| Hertel de Rouville, J.-B. Melchior | | | | | | 1790 |
| Hertel de Rouville, J.-B.-René | | 1811 | | 1813 | 1815 | |
| Hervieux, Jacques | | | 1792 | 1803 | 1809 | |
| Hervieux, Jean-Baptiste | | | | 1795 | 1806 | |
| Hervieux, Pierre | | | 1799 | 1812 | 1814 | |
| Hingston, Samuel-James | | | | 1827 | 1830 | |
| Hoyle, Robert | | | 1818 | 1820 | 1830 | |
| Irumberry de Salaberry, Charles-Michel | | | | | 1812 | |
| Irumberry de Salaberry, Melchior-Alphonse | 1824 | | | 1830 | 1837 | |
| Johnson, Adam Gordon | | | | | 1801 | |
| Johnson, John (2 with same name) | | | | 1801 | | 1804 |
| Joliette, Barthélémy | 1812 | | | 1814 | 1827 | |
| Jones, John | | | | major | 1830 | |
| Jones, Robert | | | 1806 | 1812 | 1828 | |
| Kell, William | | | | 1810 | 1813 | |
| Lacroix, Joseph-Hubert | | | | 1795 | 1803 | 1812 |
| Lacroix, Paul | | | | 1796 | 1813 | |
| Lambert-Dumont, Eustache-Nicolas | | | | 1795 | 1812 | |
| Languedoc, François | | | | | 1830 | |
| Laviolette, Jean-Baptiste-Étienne Guernier dit | | | 1826 | 1828 | 1835 | |
| Lecompte St-Georges Dupré, Georges-Hypolite | | | | major | 1792 | 1795 |
| Lecompte St-Georges Dupré, Pierre-Hypolite | | | 1797 | 1803 | 1803 | |
| Lemay, Théophile | 1804 | | 1820 | 1830 | 1833 | |
| Lemoyne de Longueuil, Jh-Dom.-Emmanuel | | | | 1790 | | 1794 |
| Lemoyne de Martigny, Hugues | | | | 1827 | 1827 | |
| Lemoyne de Martigny, Joseph-Jacques | | | 1804 | | 1818 | |
| Lemoyne de Martigny, Prime (Joseph-Prime) | | | | | 1837 | |
| Leprohon, Jean-Philippe | | | 1797 | | 1813 | |
| Liénard Saveuse de Beaujeu, Georges-René | | | | 1837 | 1839 | |
| Malhiot, François-Xavier | | | 1802 | 1812 | 1813 | |
| Marchand, Gabriel | | | | | 1827 | |

| Name | Ensign | Lieutenant | Captain | Major | Lt.-Colonel | Colonel |
|--|--------|------------|---------|-------|-------------|---------|
| Marchand, Louis | | | | | 1831 | |
| Margane de Lavaltrie, Pierre Paul | | | | | | 1794 |
| McCullum, Daniel | 1808 | 1810 | 1821 | 1827 | 1833 | |
| McDonald, Charles | | | | 1828 | 1833 | |
| McGill, James | | | | 1787 | 1797 | 1810 |
| Mckenzie, John J.P. | | | 1820 | major | 1825 | |
| McKenzie, Roderick | ensign | 1807 | | | 1812 | |
| McVey, Thomas | | | | 1813 | 1820 | |
| Molson, John | | 1820 | 1824 | 1828 | 1839 | |
| Mondelet, Jean-Marie | | | 1812 | major | 1814 | |
| Monk, George Henry | | | | | 1827 | |
| Murray, Patrick | | | | | 1809 | 1811 |
| Neveu de Sevestre, Pierre-Paul | | | | | | 1792 |
| Nivard de Saint-Dizier, Etienne | | 1795 | 1797 | 1812 | 1812 | |
| Oldham, Jacob | | | | 1812 | 1828 | |
| Pinsonneault, Paul-Théophile | | | | 1827 | 1830 | |
| Porlier, Louis Lamarre (Louis-Joseph) | | | | 1792 | 1795 | 1800 |
| Porteous, Thomas William | | | | 1812 | 1828 | |
| Pothier, Toussaint Jean-Baptiste | | | 1804 | 1814 | 1815 | |
| Prévost, Michel | | | 1794 | 1827 | 1830 | |
| Raizenne, Ignace | | | 1812 | 1812 | 1830 | |
| Robertson, Daniel | | | | 1775 | | 1809 |
| Rocher, Barthelemy | | | 1796 | | 1807 | |
| Saint-Ours, | | | | | | |
| Roch-Charles de (Charles-Auguste) | | | 1817 | 1821 | 1833 | |
| Saint-Ours, Roch-Charles-Louis de | | | | 1777 | 1790 | |
| Saint-Ours, Roch-François de | | 1818 | | | 1830 | 1833 |
| Saint-Ours, Roch-Paul de | | | | | 1795 | 1806 |
| Scriver, John | | | 1823 | 1831 | 1839 | |
| Simpson, John | | | | 1827 | 1827 | |
| Sutherland, Daniel | | | 1807 | 1812 | 1815 | |
| Tarieu de Lanaudière, | | | | | | |
| Charles-Gaspard | | | 1796 | 1802 | 1806 | |
| Turgeon, Michel | | | 1805 | 1808 | 1812 | |
| Viger, Jacques | 1810 | 1812 | 1812 | 1824 | 1824 | |
| Webster, Arthur | 1811 | 1814 | 1821 | 1827 | 1830 | |
| Wilsie, Isaac | | | 1823 | 1830 | 1836 | |

Note: We arrived at the dates on which a rank was obtained mainly based on the lists available in the gazettes and reports. However, prior to the appearance of such lists, the dates on which commissions were delivered were used. When a rank appears in the rank column instead of a date, it is because we were unable to determine the date on which the rank became effective.

NOTES

1. The literature of note in this field is by Claude de Bonnault, "Le Canada militaire," in *Rapport de l'Archiviste de la province de Québec* (1949–1951), 263–527; Yvonick Danard and Armelle Gautier, "La milice de l'Ancien Régime en Bretagne," in *Revue historique des armées, L'Europe et les espaces maritimes (1690–1790)*, No. 205 (December 1996), 115–25; Michelle Guitard, *Histoire sociale des miliciens de la bataille de la Châteauguay* (Ottawa: National Historic Sites and Parks Branch, Parks Canada, 1983), 150; Fernand Ouellet, "Officiers de milice et structure sociale au Québec (1660–1815)," in *Histoire sociale/Social History*, Vol. 12, No. 23 (1977), 36–65; Luc Lépine, *Les officiers de milice du Bas-Canada, 1812–1815/Lower Canada's Militia Officers 1812–1815* (Montreal: Société généalogique canadienne-française, 1996); Denis Racine, *Répertoire des officiers de milice du Bas-Canada, 1830–1848*, Société de généalogie de Québec, Contribution No. 51 (1986), 275; Robert-Lionel Séguin, "Les miliciens de Vaudreuil et Soulanges," in *Rapport de l'Archiviste de la province de Québec* (1955–1957), 225–52.
2. Jean Duma, "À propos des élites: approche historiographique," *Cahiers d'histoire (Espaces Marx)* No. 73 (4th quarter 1998), 7–17.
3. The literature from this perspective on the militia includes the studies done in France by Robert Descimon and in Canada by Christian Dessureault and Roch Legault. Robert Descimon, "Les capitaines de la milice bourgeoise à Paris (1589–1651): pour une prosopographie de l'espace social parisien," in Jean-Pierre Genet, ed., *L'État moderne et les élites, XIIIe-XVIIIe siècles — Apports et limites de la méthode prosopographique — Actes du colloque international CNRS-Paris I, 16–19 October 1991* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1996), 189–211; Christian Dessureault and Roch Legault, "Évolution organisationnelle et sociale de la milice sédentaire canadienne: le cas du Battalion de Saint-Hyacinthe, 1808–1830," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association/Revue de la société historique du Canada*, Vol. 7 (1997), 87–112.
4. We have used the online version of the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography (DCB Online)*, which greatly facilitates the process of retrieval and extraction for this type of work: <http://www.assnat.qc.ca/fra/membres/notices>.
5. For the same reasons, we will also refer to the online version of the following dictionary: <http://www.assnat.qc.ca/fra/membres/notices>.
6. The database can be accessed online at the following address: <http://www.genealogie.umontreal.ca/en/acces.htm>. The database is also available in CD-ROM format.

7. CD-ROM *Thémis I, Cour du banc du roi, matière civile, district de Montréal (1791–1827) partie 1: Société Archiv-Histo*, Montreal, Quebec, Canada.
8. J. Johnson was born in the colony of New York in 1741, and died in Montreal in 1830. A fervent Loyalist, he fought in the War of Independence as an officer in the King's Royal Regiment of New York. At the end of the war, he settled permanently in the province of Quebec, where he held the position of superintendent and inspector general of Indians. He was appointed to the Legislative Council in 1796 (Earl Thomas, *DCB Online*: Johnson, Sir John).
9. L.-R. Chaussegros de Léry was born in Paris in 1762 to Canadian parents living temporarily in France, and died in 1832 in Boucherville. In view of the difficulties that faced a member of the Canadian aristocracy embarking on a career in the British Army in the immediate aftermath of the Conquest, he served as an officer in the French Army until the Revolution. The events of the Revolution prompted him to return to Canada, where he tried, with varying degrees of success, to join the new British Army as an officer. After the turn of the nineteenth century, he inherited a significant seigneurial fortune on the death of his father, and benefited from the support of his father in law, R.-A. Boucher of Boucherville, to succeed him as chief road commissioner for the district of Montreal. He subsequently obtained other government appointments and was finally appointed to the Legislative Council in 1818 (Roch Legault, *DCB Online*: Chaussegros de Léry, Louis-René).
10. J.-H. Lacroix was born in Quebec City in 1743, and died in 1821 at Saint-Vincent-de-Paul (Île-Jésus). He began his career as a retailer in Quebec City. In 1776, he settled in Saint-Vincent-de-Paul, where he was active in both the fur trade and retailing. In 1806, he inherited the seigneurie of Blainville, which he had been managing for several years, from M.-A.-T. Céloron de Blainville, the widow Nolan-Lamarque. In 1812, he was appointed commander of three militia divisions: Blainville, Île-Jésus, and Terrebonne (W. Stanford Reid, *DCB Online*: Lacroix, Hubert-Joseph).
11. R.U. Harwood was born in Sheffield, England, in 1798, and died in 1863 at Vaudreuil. He immigrated to Canada in 1821 to work in Montreal in a wholesale hardware business managed by his brother John. In 1823, he married the eldest daughter of the late M.-E.-G.-A. Chartier de Lotbinière, Seigneur of Vaudreuil, Rigaud, and Lotbinière. In 1829, when his wife inherited the seigneurie of Vaudreuil, he left the City of Montreal and the business world to settle in the seigneurial manor at Vaudreuil (John Beswarick Thompson, *DCB Online*: Harwood, Robert Unwin).
12. Jean-Claude Robert, *DCB Online*: Joliette, Barthélemy.

13. André Lavoie et al., *Dictionnaire biographique des parlementaires du Québec, 1792-1992* (Sainte-Foy, QC: Laval University Press, 1993), 622.
14. This commander was the eldest son of John Molson Senior, the founder of a veritable dynasty of Montreal entrepreneurs. J. Molson Junior (born in 1787 in Montreal, died in the same city in 1860) was actively involved in all the important economic activities of Lower Canadian economic life: brewing, steam navigation, metallurgy, railways, gas lighting in the streets of Montreal, import-export, investment inland, insurance, and banking. He undoubtedly represents one of the most eminent members of the new nineteenth-century Montreal bourgeoisie, firmly bound together by business relationships, numerous social ties, and by a shared culture and ideology. See Alfred Dubuc and Robert Tremblay, *DCB Online*: Molson, John.
15. The activities of J.-E. Faribault, a notary at L'Assomption, covered many areas of economic life, including credit and land rent. He was also heavily involved in establishing numerous sawmills and flour mills in the Lanaudière region. E. Henry, a notary at Laprairie, was also active in these sectors of the local economy. He also invested in some emerging sectors, such as steam navigation and the creation of a private bank, although this latter experience was ultimately disappointing. The fortunes and social status of these two notaries were also based in large measure on their involvement, in their capacity as seigneurial agents, in the administration of impressive inherited landed estates in their respective regions (Marthe Faribault-Beauregard, *DCB Online*: Faribault, Joseph-Édouard ; Françoise Noël, *DCB Online*: Henry, Edme).
16. The notary L. Guy, a descendant of Nicolas Guy, Grand Chamberlain in Paris under Louis XIV, belongs to one of the most distinguished families of Montreal's old francophone bourgeoisie. A moderate conservative, upholder of the social order, he was frequently entrusted with public office, including the positions of commissioner of roads and bridges, syndic of the Maison d'Industrie [Chamber of Industry], census commissioner, commissioner responsible for building churches and presbyteries, in addition to receiving a commission to hear and judge criminal cases. He also undertook on a professional basis numerous lucrative contracts for the government and the army. Although the family history of J.-M. Mondelet was less prestigious and his political position more ambivalent, he held the same type of public office. He was also retained by the government as official notary for numerous contracts involving the army or the seigneurie of Sorel (Eliot Kyte Senior, *DCB Online*: Guy, Louis; Elizabeth Abbott-Namphy and Margaret MacKinnon, *DCB Online*: Mondelet, Jean-Marie).
17. John Beswarick Thompson, *DCB Online*: Simpson, John.

18. C. Dessureault, "L'égalitarisme paysan dans l'ancienne société rurale de la vallée du Saint-Laurent: éléments pour une ré-interprétation," *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (Winter 1987), 373–407.
19. David A. Armour, *DCB Online*: Robertson, Daniel.
20. This is the only profession identified thus far in the contemporary sources (in the civil government records) for this commander, who does not have an article in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*.
21. This militia commander was born in the colony of New York in 1770 and died at Sorel in 1844. He was the son of a Loyalist military officer, John Jones, who also held the position of custodian of the barracks at Fort William Henry at the end of the century. Karine Faivre, *Les loyalistes du Québec: le cas de l'United Empire de Sorel*, MA Thesis (History), Université de Montréal, 1997.
22. See, in this regard, Roch Legault, *Une élite en déroute. Les militaires canadiens après la Conquête* (Montreal: Athéna Éditions, 2002).
23. Jean-Claude Robert, *DCB Online*: Viger, Jacques.
24. Library and Archives Canada (henceforth LAC), MG23 GII-19, reels C-1451 and C-1452, f.1801–1802.
25. LAC, RG 8, Vol. 548, page 166, reel C-3071, St. John's, Newfoundland, 5 October 1809, petition to James Craig.
26. LAC, RG 8 Vol. 930, page 103, reel C-3281, War Office, London, 3 September, 1793, letter to Major-General Clarke in Quebec City.
27. LAC, RG 8 Vol. 931, 11, to 14, reel C-3281, Montreal, 19 June 1797, Robertson to Captain Green.
28. This commander (born in Montreal in 1738, died in the same city in 1815) represents a quite exceptional case of upward social mobility in Canadian society of that era. The son of a shoemaker who died when he was still a child, he managed to amass a substantial fortune in the fur trade at a time when French-Canadian merchants were declining in this industry. He then invested in land, acquiring numerous plots in the faubourgs of Montreal, including the Closs fief, and the seigneurie of Île-Bizard. These land investments also brought him substantial income in rents and in speculative profit. In 1804, he received the rank of colonel in the militia and commanded the 3rd Montreal Battalion (Joanne Burgess, *DCB Online*: Foretier, Pierre).
29. We have classified the appointments for 1815 in the subsequent period, even if military operations on the ground continued several months after the official signing of the

peace treaty. Furthermore, we have noted the appointment of only three commanders in 1815, including two seigneurs and one merchant.

30. F. Ouellet, *op.cit.*
31. Due to lack of data on mother tongue or language used by individuals, the classification of commanders on the basis of this criterion essentially remains a qualitative, approximate judgment.
32. We also use the adjective *French-Canadian*, although this is an anachronism during this period.
33. Myrom Momryk, *DCB Online*: Gray, Edward William.
34. Between 1812 and 1814, we have identified the appointment of eight commanders of French-Canadian origin, one commander born in France and integrated into the French-Canadian majority in Lower Canada and two commanders of British origin, including Charles William Grant, who also had ties to the French-Canadian community, since he was the son of Baroness Marie-Charles-Joseph Lemoyne de Longueuil. Furthermore, the three commanders appointed in 1815 were French Canadian.
35. Michel De Lorimier, *DCB Online*: Marchand, Louis.
36. We have found few traces of this commander in the contemporary sources up until now. Born in 1763 at Lacouarde on Île de Ré, he died in Montreal in 1832. On his death, he was declared the negotiating merchant in the Saint-Laurent faubourg of Montreal. He was appointed commander of the 3rd Militia Battalion of the city and faubourgs of Montreal in 1826.
37. Born in Paris in 1770, died in Montreal in 1840. He was a lieutenant in France in 1791 in a regiment of Swiss guards commanded by his father. He left Paris at the time of the French Revolution. After a short stay in Canada, he was married in 1795 to Julianna O'Connor, the wife of a surgeon and military officer in the British Army. He subsequently immigrated permanently to Canada and settled in the Trois-Rivières region, where he inherited in succession the seigneuries of Dumontier and de Grandpré as well as half (minus seven acres) of the seigneurie of Grosbois. He served as a deputy and then a member of the Legislative Council, and for many years held numerous public offices in the district and the town of Trois-Rivières, including that of sheriff. He was appointed sheriff of Montreal in 1827, and that same year became commander of 2nd Militia Battalion of the city and faubourgs of Montreal (Renald Lessard, *DCB Online* Gogy, Louis).
38. François was the son of Charles de St-Ours, seigneur, colonel, and militia commander, and Josette Murray, the grand-niece of James Murray. See De Bonnault,

- Claude, "Généalogie de la famille de Saint-Ours, Dauphiné et Canada," BRH, 56, 4-5-6 (April-June 1950), 107-11.
39. "On 20 March 1806, Ms. Grant was widowed. The inventory of community property reveals that the family fortune was based on land ownership: the Barony of Longueuil, the seigneuries of Belœil and Pierreville, 36,400 acres of land in the townships of Upton, Roxton, Barford and Hereford, in Lower Canada." (Louis Lemoine, *DCB Online: Le Moynes de Longueuil, Marie-Charles-Joseph*).
40. Thomas-M. Charland, *DCB Online: Hertel de St-François, Joseph-Hypolite*.
41. John was born in 1781 in Rupert's Land (Gilles Laporte, *Patriotes et locaux: leadership régional et mobilisation politique en 1837 et 1838*, Sillery, Septentrion, 304).
42. Christ Church, Montreal, 24 January 1803.
43. Jacob Oldham had been an associate of Roderick McKenzie in the fur trade. Like his associate McKenzie, Oldham had married the daughter of a French-Canadian fur trader. Claude Pronovost, *La bourgeoisie marchande en milieu rural 1720-1840* (Sainte-Foy, QC: Laval University Press, 1998), 148-49.
44. Stanley Brice Frost, *DCB Online: Desrivières (Trottier Desrivières)*, François (François-Amable, Francis).
45. On this subject, see the work of Elinor Kyte Senior: *Redcoats and Patriotes: The Rebellions in Lower Canada, 1837-38* (Stittsville, ON: Canada Wings in collaboration with the Canadian War Museum, National Museum of Man, National Museums of Canada, 1985). French translation (Montreal: VLB Éditeur, 1997), 218; *Roots of the Canadian Army: Montreal District, 1846-1870* (Montreal: Historical Publications, Society of the Montreal Military and Maritime Museum, 1981), 125; *British Regulars in Montreal: An Imperial Garrison, 1832-1854* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1981), 288; and the study by Brian Young, "The Volunteer Militia in Lower Canada, 1837-50," in Tamara Myers, Kate Boyer, Mary Anne Poutanen, and Steven Watt, eds., *Power Place and Identity: Historical Studies of Social and Legal Regulation in Quebec* (Montreal, 1998), 37-53.
46. On the subject of Sheaffe, see Wesley B. Turner, *British General in the War of 1812, High Command in the Canadas* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999), 97-100.
47. Primarily, *L'almanach de Québec* published by John Neilson for the years 1802-1840. The title is subject to variation and its appearance was not regular; and LAC, RG 9, I-A-2, Vols. 1-20, Annual Census, 1793-1840, Office of the Adjutant-General of the Militia of Lower Canada.

CHAPTER FOUR

Adolphe Caron: Canada's Successful War Minister



DESMOND MORTON

The Honourable Sir René-Joseph Adolphe Caron is seldom listed among the heroes of Quebec or Canadian history. One of the *patroneux* who reliably delivered the bulk of Quebec's francophone constituencies to Sir John A. Macdonald's Conservatives between 1867 and 1891, Caron was effectively, if resentfully, buried under the much larger shadow of Sir Hector Langevin. Charming, energetic, and effectively bilingual, his successful management of a war most Québécois have been taught to deplore made Caron a memory to be systematically effaced. Now, a dismissive judgment of the North-West Campaign of 1885 is not limited to Quebec. The somewhat astonishing elevation of Louis "David" Riel to the status of national hero in a nation he would cheerfully have destroyed is not the only variation on the theme of political correctness in contemporary Canadian historiography. The fact remains that when the young Dominion of Canada faced its first real war in 1885, the man who provided successful management and an early conclusion to the conflict was a young "bleu" lawyer from Quebec City, without a trace of military training or experience, and the parliamentary representative for the constituency of Quebec County from 1873 to 1891.

Nor was the 1885 campaign by any means a "slam dunk." The so-called National Dream of a Canadian transcontinental railway had

turned into a financial nightmare, with Canada's borrowing capacity strained to breaking point and disastrous news from the Northwest easily able to collapse the Dominion's finances. Contemporaries were well-aware of the recent defeat of General George A. Custer and 264 members of his Seventh U.S. Cavalry Regiment by Sitting Bull's Sioux at the Battle of the Little Big Horn on 25 June 1876. If professional soldiers could be worsted by Plains Indians, what chance did Canada's ill-trained, poorly armed, faintly ridiculous militia have? How could Ottawa even maintain an army thousands of miles from Ottawa as spring replaced winter on the barren Canadian prairie?

Between the deadly clash of Riel's Métis and the North-West Mounted Police (NWMP) at Duck Lake on 24 March and Louis Riel's surrender on 15 May, Sir Adolphe Caron mobilized, equipped, and dispatched a force of 3,000 militia and regular troops from eastern Canada, matched them with almost as many volunteers from Manitoba and the North-West Territories, and arranged thoroughly adequate medical, logistics, and communications support for a Canadian army in its first and only independent campaign. On 2 July 1885, when the Cree leader, Big Bear, surrendered to Sergeant Sharpe of the NWMP, Métis, and First Nations resistance had completely dissolved and Canadian troops were on their way home.¹

Already it was politically incorrect to be too triumphal about the 1885 campaign. Having been appalled to the depths of his conservative Catholic soul by the murder of priests and the violence launched by Riel against the Canadian state, government officials, and prairie settlers, Caron never did quite grasp the apparently sudden reversal of Quebec opinion about his success. That change of mind might bury Caron's achievement but the fullness of time surely allows him some overdue recognition in addition to his contemporary knighthood for completely defeating Louis Riel's rebellion within two months of its outbreak, at a cost of only \$4.4 million and 40 dead soldiers and scouts.

Carpers and critics might protest that Caron was fortunate that the Canadian militia's military commander, Major-General Fred Middleton, was an elderly but robust professional, who had thought hard about selecting the most useful troops for the campaign, namely,



A portrait of René-Joseph Adolphe Caron taken in October 1883, when he was minister of militia and defence. (Photographer: J.W. Topley, Library and Archives Canada PA-026727)

mounted infantry. Conversely, his Métis opponents had saddled themselves with the leadership of a half-mad mystic who started a war and then effectively intervened to prevent his followers from using their considerable advantages.

As is customary in the civil-military division of power in a parliamentary democracy, the soldier, Middleton had planned and executed the campaign while the minister, Caron, provided support, advice, and authority from the seat of government in Ottawa. Although the militia lacked any of the ancillary services a modern army required for field service, the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), with its stores of supplies, teams, and steamers, was immediately put at the government's service as a ready-made logistics organization. In addition, McGill University's medical school and its students, together with female religious orders, provided highly competent medical support. Moreover, a pre-existing telegraph system kept Ottawa in almost instantaneous communication with its army. While no one would claim that the Canadian militia was well-armed or trained in 1885, it was better armed and equipped than the Métis and First Nations forces, and it learned on the job.

The fact remains that Adolphe Caron was the minister responsible. He would have been held to blame if the campaign was a disaster or if the militia or its equipment and supplies had conspicuously failed. Neither happened. Instead, he was honoured for his services with a knighthood in the Order of St. Michael and St. George. Rude contemporaries used its initials to sneer that Caron's decoration was called "Kindly Call Me God," but a title was eagerly sought in Victorian Canada and Caron's success produced much angry jealousy from his fellow Conservative ministers, not to mention Quebeckers, who rapidly turned Riel into a national defeat as soon as his cause had failed.

Despite the decrease in Conservative popularity in Quebec after 1885, Caron's Quebec county constituents re-elected him in 1887. Armed by the contents of J. Israel Tarte's little black bag, Quebec historians and their readers soon learned to dismiss Caron as one of the odious *patroneux*. The Langevin-McGreevy scandal taught all Canadians how the Conservative party in Quebec traded favours for funds, and there was plenty of mud for all, including Sir Adolphe Caron. His long

service at militia and defence ended in 1892 with his demotion to postmaster general and when he resigned with Sir Auguste-R. Angers in 1895 to protest Mackenzie Bowell's reluctance to defend Manitoba Catholics, Caron's ministerial career was over. Sir Charles Tupper dropped him from the Cabinet in 1896 and Rimouski voters ended Caron's political career a few months later.

Caron was not the first French-Canadian minister of militia and defence. When Sir John A. Macdonald formed the first post-Confederation government in Ottawa in 1867, he persuaded his ailing senior partner in the pre-Confederation government, George-Étienne Cartier, to accept the militia portfolio. Although suffering severely from the liver disease that would soon kill him, Cartier acquiesced. Having established the Civil Code and abolished the seigneurial system, a new Canadian militia would be the final national institution he would shape in his long political career. Cartier had decided that defence of the new Dominion would depend, essentially, on volunteers. A universal obligation to serve, however traditional, survived in Cartier's 1868 Militia Act only as a pale reflection of the once-universal sedentary militia of the early nineteenth century. Only one muster of the new reserve militia ever took place. Cartier gave unashamed priority to a volunteer militia that dated only from 1855, and which had gradually spread across the Upper and Lower Canada largely under the impetus of the Fenian Raids. At Confederation, it could easily be adapted to a similar system in New Brunswick and, with much more difficulty, to Nova Scotia, where universal service had been imposed to meet rare rumours of a Fenian invasion.

As a Quebec minister, Cartier was a target for French-Canadian militia officers who insisted that volunteering would never work in their communities. Cartier stood firm against local colonels who demanded compulsion to fill their depleted ranks. Obligatory service, the colonels insisted, was an old and honourable Québécois tradition. Perhaps, but it would be politically futile, Cartier insisted, and his colonels would have to do their best without it.

In English-speaking Ontario, volunteering had prospered since 1860. Militia colonels there had advantages that French-speaking

colonels might well consider liabilities. Since Great Britain's Edward Cardwell had formally agreed that his country would be Canada's protector, Canada's defenders had identified as closely with the British armed forces as they now do with those of the United States. Militia uniforms might be Canadian-made and often worn out, but they imitated each twist of British military fashion. Both British and Canadian officers agreed that American invaders would be much more circumspect if they thought the troops on the next hill were British regulars. Left to their own devices, militia officers favoured the elaborate and expensive uniforms made popular by oleographs of British imperial wars. Cavalry insisted on the fancy frogging and fur pelisses of Hussar regiments; infantry soon pined for Highland kilts or the tall plumed bearskins of the British Brigade of Guards. When Montreal's 4^{ème} Chasseurs canadiens sought revival by adopting uniforms based on the Papal Zouaves, the British commander-in-chief, the Duke of Cambridge, ridiculed Zouave uniforms as "foreign fancy dress."²

Nor did Cartier challenge the fact that the working language of the Canadian Militia soon became exclusively English. The minister certainly appointed French-speaking officers to the militia staff in Quebec, though some of his appointees had more experience as Conservatives than as soldiers. Cartier also left his personal secretary, Georges Futvoye as his department's first deputy minister, a precedent that continued with a succession of French-speaking deputies in Canada's defence department until the Second World War. Futvoye's successor was Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Eugène Panet, until then commanding officer of Quebec's 9th Voltigeurs and a senator. Cartier also added the Quebec historian, Benjamin Sulte, to the department's tiny office staff. As Panet's successor, the government of Sir Wilfrid Laurier chose Eugène Fiset, the medical officer who accompanied Canada's first contingent in the South African War and was later Member of Parliament (MP) for Rimouski. Few other federal departments had French-speaking deputies, and their influence in the Militia Department was attenuated by the weakness of the force in French Canada.

When the Liberals came to power in 1873, Prime Minister Alexander Mackenzie, gave the defence portfolio to a succession of Nova Scotians;

when Macdonald returned in 1878, his choice fell again on a Quebecker, Louis-François Masson. Ill health, aggravated by losing his battle over the Zouave uniform, led to Masson's resignation. Macdonald persuaded him to accept a more nominal position and Ontario's Alexander Campbell went to the Militia Department for a few months. While Masson was sick, Quebec County's ambitious young MP, Adolphe Caron, answered departmental questions. Nervous about Caron's youth, Macdonald preferred to trust Campbell with an interim appointment, but Caron remained his logical choice.

The son of René-Édouard Caron, a "bleu" of the bleus, Caron had finished his law studies at McGill and soon became a partner in the Quebec firm of Andrews, Caron, and Andrews. Defeated in his first election, he was luckier in 1873, when Pierre-Joseph-Olivier Chauveau left Quebec County for a seat in the Canadian Senate. Fluently bilingual and sociable, Caron used his years in opposition to try to outmanoeuvre Hector-Louis Langevin for leadership of his party's Quebec caucus. In 1878, Macdonald chose the older man for Quebec City's traditional Cabinet portfolio, but Caron was a contender. In November 1880, Campbell gave up the Militia Department and Caron, at the age of 37, became his successor and the youngest minister in the government.

Although his father had served in the militia, Adolphe lacked even a scintilla of military knowledge or experience. This was no obstacle for a defence minister but rather a guarantee of his neutrality. English-speaking colleagues noted his excellent English and some Quebec associates grumbled that he had become "*trop assimilé*." Caron was soon associated with both conflict and reform. To reinforce Britain's shaky commitment to Canada's defence, both Macdonald and Alexander Mackenzie had agreed to place the militia under the command of a major-general from the British Army. The first, Sir Edward Selby-Smyth, had been affable, eager to please, and reluctant to criticize. In consequence, he had completed his term and an extension and left the force with the effects of seven years of budget cuts and stagnation. None of Selby-Smyth's successors could quite match his feat. The first of them was Major-General R.G.A. Luard, a coleric veteran who, frankly, needed

the salary. As minister, Caron's first problem was quelling the storms Luard provoked by his determination, in the words of a well-known army motto, to "never pass a fault."³

There was no lack of faults. Ten years after the British Army abandoned Quebec's citadel, sections of the walls of the fortress had fallen into the ditches. At militia camps, Luard found most of the volunteers were raw recruits, allowed only six days of training every second year. City battalions were better only because their men were allowed 12 evenings each year. Except for Halifax, where a British battalion had remained, few militias had ever seen trained soldiers and it showed. Everywhere, discipline was subject to the allegiances of party politics. In the 1878 election, the Conservatives had promised militia reform and a restoration of the million dollars a year that Macdonald and Cartier had established as a norm. Once in power, of course, reform ran into a familiar obstacle: "the present state of the finances did not render it opportune." When Dr. Fred Strange, a militia officer and Conservative MP, proposed that the force be cut from 37,000 to 20,000 and that the savings be used to make the remainder efficient, he provoked the outrage of the many rural militia colonels who were also MPs for their counties.⁴

Caron was relatively young, but in political terms he was quite old fashioned: a traditional *bleu* like Cartier, submissive to the clergy, and popular among younger members of the Conservative caucus, anglophone and francophone alike. A move that accorded with Sir John A. Macdonald's National Policy of enhancing Canadian manufacturing, led to the opening of Canada's first cartridge factory located in Caron's own constituency. Though production was modest and the product was as unsophisticated as the militia's decrepit Snider-Enfield rifles, the government-owned factory rendered Canada's militia self-sufficient in a critical resource.

A closely related and more controversial change was to buy the militia's uniforms from Canada's under-developed clothing industry. Manufacturing the traditional British scarlet cloth proved more complex than Canadian contractors had anticipated but since the manufacturers included such prominent Conservatives as Senator W.E.

Sanford of Hamilton and Bennett Rosamond of Almonte, the militia learned to live with fast-fading and quickly worn-out, but Canadian-made, tunics and trousers.⁵

Caron also embraced one of Luard's proposed reforms. Artillery schools — established at Quebec and at Kingston, Ontario, to provide lodgers and guards for extensive British fortifications and military stores at both locations — had greatly helped to make the militia's artillery the most efficient part of the force. Similar schools could do much for the cavalry and infantry. In 1883, with improving prosperity and tax revenues attributed to Macdonald's National Policy, Militia Department spending was again pegged at a million dollars. By continuing to train most of the force only in alternate years, Caron calculated that there was enough money to finance a third artillery battery in far-away British Columbia, a new 50-member Cavalry School Corps to be located at Quebec's Citadelle, and three 100-member companies of an Infantry School Corps in former British barracks at Fredericton, New Brunswick, St-Jean-sur-Richelieu near Montreal, and at Toronto's New Fort (on the present CNE grounds). This was news a young minister was delighted to share. Opportunities to reward the party faithful with commissions and contracts were equally welcome.

To disarm the largely Tory "Militia Lobby" of rural colonels, Caron also found the money to pay volunteer militia officers the pay of their rank rather than the flat rate imposed after Liberal cuts. Any carping from them about wasting money on "Regulars" could easily be punished by withdrawing a privilege most of them badly wanted. The minister also established lower pay rates for his "permanent corps" than for the militia. A volunteer earned 50 cents a day as his drill pay with food and lodging provided; a permanent force private also received rations and quarters but only 40 cents a day. Caron may have lacked military experience but he understood the tactics of politics.

Caron's chief personal prize was the cavalry school. Quebec already had a small militia cavalry troop, the Queen's Own Hussars, commanded by the minister's friend, Lieutenant-Colonel W.R. Turnbull. A loyal Tory, Turnbull accepted the command. The artillery school at Victoria was deferred until 1887, and the three infantry

schools mattered much less to the minister. Two militia staff officers, Lieutenant-Colonel G.S. Maunsell and Lieutenant-Colonel d'Odette d'Orsonnens, got command of Fredericton and St-Jean respectively. After some delay, Luard's recommendation for Toronto was accepted. Lieutenant-Colonel W.D. Otter had no obvious political affiliation but the Canada Company office clerk had made Toronto's Queen's Own Rifles the best-trained, most presentable militia unit in Canada.⁶

Otter was Caron's sole gesture to efficiency. Otherwise, Luard was ignored. As Caron explained to his Quebec friend, Colin Sewell, the schools "give me a chance of providing for some good young fellows who have a taste for military life."⁷ When Luard complained to the governor general that a militia captain recommended for St-Jean already had a reputation for drunkenness, the prime minister explained that the other nominees were said to be very good and "all my French-Canadian colleagues" supported the exception.⁸ What else could a wise prime minister and prudent governor general do but acquiesce?

Caron spent one of his busiest years in 1883. All the arrangements for the new schools — barracks, furniture, uniforms, recruiting, and publicity — had to be conducted under the strict rules of patronage in three provinces and four different constituencies. Caron needed the collaboration of fellow ministers and local MPs. General Luard had hoped that the new Cavalry School would set an example of efficient unostentatious and inexpensive uniforms. Having long since purchased the costly elaborate, inefficient, but splendid hussar uniforms adopted by his militia unit, Colonel Turnbull turned to Caron to back his preferences for the new School. What did it matter to Caron? To Luard's fury, the Cavalry School would dress like hussars.

That autumn, Luard was soon in even deeper trouble. Autumn camps left rural battalions under-strength since many volunteers preferred to stay home to earn harvest pay. At Cobourg, Ontario, Luard found that the 46th (Durham) Battalion, commanded by one of Caron's pals, Lieutenant-Colonel Arthur Williams MP, had mustered only 156 men. Luard was furious. At a luncheon during his review, Williams rose to accuse the venerable Colonel Casimir Gzowski of insulting Parliament. An indignant and inflamed General Luard

jumped up, told Williams to sit down and shut up, and delivered his own "unparliamentary" thoughts on Parliament. The resulting scandal united both political parties and ended Luard's career in Canada. "[G]lad to be the humble instrument of a cause which certainly requires, in the public interest the highest consideration," Williams had invited the minister to advise him.⁹

Luard's undignified departure was a blow to British influence in Canada and an opportunity to appoint one of several superannuated ex-British colonels and generals who had retired to Canada. This time the War Office worked harder to fit Canada's needs. Colonel Frederick Dobson Middleton was at the end of his term as commandant of the Royal Military College. White-haired, red-faced, and short, he was a model for David Low's cartoon creation, Colonel Blimp, but he had pioneered the idea of mounted infantry, probably to the detriment of his career in a notoriously conservative organization. He had also served in Canada and married Miss Émilie Doucet of Montreal. Surely that would give an entrée in the super-sensitive Dominion. Moreover, Middleton had few private means and needed the \$4,000 a year Canada paid its general. Accordingly, he cultivated the commanders of Caron's new schools when they visited England for professional briefings, cultivated his French-Canadian connections and made himself Caron's preferred choice over the clutch of retired generals in Canada who measured themselves for the post. Once in Canada Middleton busily visited his scattered command and authored the most positive report on the state of the militia anyone had read in a generation. The military schools, he claimed, had already "performed wonders." As for the military college in Kingston, "there are very few institutions of a similar character equal to it in Europe and none that are any better."¹⁰ The outbreak of a variety of imperial crises, ranging from the Mahdist uprising in the Sudan to a Russian war scare over Pendjeh provoked displays of loyalty and eagerness to serve, which Sir John A. Macdonald openly ridiculed and his defence minister generally ignored. Prudently, Middleton said nothing. The British were left as free as any labour contractor to recruit voyageurs for their Nile expedition.¹¹



The first French-Canadian minister of militia and defence — George-Étienne Cartier.
(Library and Archives Canada C-2162)

Such external alarms were forgotten in March of 1885, as Canadians suddenly recognized that they had a real military problem much closer to home in Saskatchewan. The extinction of the vast herds of buffalo that had served as a staple for plains Natives precipitated an inevitable crisis as Métis settlements watched their way of life disappear with the advent of railways to displace much of their work as teamsters for the tide of white settlers destined by Ottawa to populate the region.¹² While a few hundred volunteer militia had been organized at Winnipeg, Ottawa's authority on the prairies was upheld by only a few hundred North-West Mounted Police, by no means at the height of their reputation in the mid-1880s. Militia command in the West belonged to Lieutenant-Colonel C.F. Houghton, a British Columbian. Consulted by his father on Houghton's abilities, Hugh John Macdonald had to confess that the colonel "drinks more than is good for him" and "He has not much head and still less judgment."¹³

Trouble might have dissipated over time, but a delegation of Métis, financed by disgruntled white settlers, summoned Louis Riel, leader of the Red River rising, home from his exile in Montana. The years had been hard on Riel. Were his religious visions a result of deep faith, or a year spent confined in Quebec's notorious Beauport Asylum? Whatever his supporters expected, Riel was bent on reproducing his strategy of 1870, proclaiming his own territorial government, and capturing Canadians as hostages to compel Ottawa to negotiate with him.

Riel seemed unaware that circumstances had changed. The Sioux wars had eliminated the American support Riel could count on in 1869-70. To Macdonald, Riel was a man who had taken a bribe to make himself scarce and reneged on the deal. As he explained to Lieutenant-Governor Edgar Dewdney in Regina, there would no negotiation with a proven scoundrel. If the finances of both the government and the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) were in a parlous state, robust action was the best way to restore them. The NWMP, reinforced to 900 men, should suffice. If it did not, the Dominion had 40,000 militiamen. Mindful of Houghton's deficiencies, on 22 March, Macdonald ordered General Middleton to head to Winnipeg. Meanwhile, the government urged calm. Trouble in the North-West

Territories, claimed the pro-government *Montreal Gazette*, was comparable to "a petty riot" in any well-settled part of old Canada.¹⁴

That kind of complacency soon vanished, especially in Liberal newspapers eager to prove Conservative malfeasance and error. On 26 March, police and volunteers from Prince Albert clashed with Riel, his lieutenant, Gabriel Dumont, and a large party of Métis. When the government forces struggled free, aided by appeals from Riel to stop the killing, they left behind 10 dead. That night, nearby Fort Pitt was abandoned and burned. On 2 April, Crees at Frog Lake murdered nine white men, including two Catholic priests. Panic spread across the prairies with wild rumours of massacres and devastation. Five hundred whites crowded into the little stockade at Battleford. Settlers and hundreds of police fortified themselves in Prince Albert. When Middleton reached Winnipeg via Chicago, he found the prairie city convulsed by rumours, alarms, and even panic over its unprotected state hundreds of miles from the outbreak. General Middleton added temporarily to local terrors by forming up the local militia and moving them by rail to join Houghton at Qu'Appelle to begin plotting his campaign strategy.

After Middleton's departure, no one in Ottawa had much of an idea of how to organize a campaign. With both the government and the CPR on the brink of financial ruin, trouble in the North-West Territories could hardly have come at a worse time. Despite the need for an early solution, Macdonald offered some of his own "crude ideas" on how Middleton should manage his campaign. In true amateur fashion, Macdonald urged his general to do almost everything at once — to guard the railway, protect the frontier with the United States, organize local forces and isolate the insurrection. More sensibly, Macdonald urged him to raise local mounted units: "If you can get men enough from the Prairies, they would of course be much more serviceable than town-bred men who comprise our cavalry."¹⁵

Meanwhile, telegrams poured in from terrified prairie communities, demanding that Caron provide troops, arms, and immediate relief. Others offered their services and even demanded a share of the business the Métis rebellion would obviously generate. Caron personally answered hundreds of messages. He referred appeals for protection to

Middleton and applied himself, early and late, to the task of mobilizing militia units in eastern Canada, equipping and shipping them to the North-West Territories, and arranging for their supplies and maintenance once they got there. Caron's energy galvanized his staff officers, the department's few elderly officials, and its routine-bound civilian clerks. Captain Hamlyn Todd, son of the parliamentary librarian and an officer in the Governor General's Foot Guards, recalled how a sympathetic MP pushed him through a crowd to find Caron, another minister, and the deputy, Colonel Panet, seated at a table and trying to do business. In minutes, Caron had approved Todd's project of recruiting 50 sharpshooters from the local militia.¹⁶ John Stewart, a Calgary rancher, was in Ottawa to meet his brother, the Mayor. Caron sent him home to organize a troop of scouts.¹⁷

Through Middleton, some troops and a lot of ammunition went to the North-West Territories by rail via Chicago. Caron never challenged the CPR's offer to deliver the bulk of the troops to Winnipeg using its unfinished railway line around Lake Superior, covering the remaining four gaps totalling close to 100 miles by using sleighs and the soldiers' own legs to cover the ice and snowdrifts. How better could the government and the CPR prove the line's value to Canadians and the world?

Of course, officials in Ottawa had no idea of the ordeal they imposed on their militia volunteers. Men who days earlier had been clerks or factory hands endured below-zero temperatures, salt-pork, biscuit, and miserable weather. Arthur Potvin, a young medical student in Quebec City's 9th Voltigeurs, recalled that the bitter cold drove him to think of suicide. Another member of the same unit recalled the journey:

There were about fifty of us in each box, packed tightly against one another, streams of rainwater rushing down our backs. For the first time we knew what it was to be truly miserable. There was no means of heating; we barely had the heart to cheer ourselves by singing.¹⁸

Colonel Otter, leading an improvised battalion from Toronto, had the foresight to equip his men with snow goggles but on the 20-mile walk across the ice to McKellar, they did not save him from a snow blindness that afflicted him for the rest of his life. On intervening stretches, soldiers manhandled cannon and supplies onto flatcars and then piled on themselves wherever there was space. The journey took a week, with Caron urging them on. "Wish you to travel night and day," he commanded, "I want you to show what the Canadian Militia can do."¹⁹ He had good reason to urge haste. Despite bitter cold, the spring break-up was coming and perhaps no one would be able to cross northern Ontario.

The CPR certainly made itself useful to the government; however, another corporation was probably more essential. At the end of a long prairie winter, organizing supplies for an army of over 6,000 was a huge undertaking and the Canadian Militia lacked an organization and plan, as well as the means to create them. In no other way was the amateurism of the militia more apparent. Thanks to the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), neither was necessary. After almost a century of operating in the Canadian West HBC had developed a network of stores and posts linked by oxen- and horse-drawn wagon trains and, still experimentally, a number of small river steamers. Under its newly appointed manager, Joseph Wrigley, it provided Caron with a ready-made commissariat, able to provide Middleton's army with supplies and transport in ways which could probably never have been improvised.²⁰ While the CPR would squeeze immense prestige out of delivering the militia to the North-West Territories, the "Bay" neither received, nor perhaps wanted, the credit it earned, since its customers included Métis and Natives who had been victims of its efficiency. In addition, its competitors in the West, many of whom had expected their political connections to guarantee them government patronage at a generous mark-up, roundly denounced the HBC's services.

Although Caron came to accept the HBC's ability to serve the government far better than its noisy competitors could, it was never an easy relationship. Nor did he entirely trust Lieutenant-Colonel W.H. Jackson, the staff officer he sent to Winnipeg to serve as supply and

transport officer. A former Brockville harness-maker appointed by the Liberals, snobbery and party roots made Jackson's judgment suspect to Caron and his colleagues. For their part, Jackson and Wrigley were expected to make plans without knowing how many troops Caron intended to send or for how long.²¹ Prominent Tories made themselves conduits for the patronage complaints of local partisans. "[P]ublic feeling strongly recommends that patronage to some extent be distributed when possible," warned Edgar Dewdney, a former MP and lieutenant-governor of the North-West Territories.²² "[G]reat dissatisfaction," complained Winnipeg MP Joseph Royal.²³ "Orders for supplies going to our opponents' friends," claimed F.D. Barwick, a local Conservative stalwart, "wish them to come through me."²⁴ Others were no less direct. "Will you request Minister Militia to instruct Wrigley to give contract for biscuits and bread to Thomas Chambers," demanded Amos Rowe of the minister of customs, Mackenzie Bowell. He explained, "[T]he man that has it now are [*sic*] Grits and bad ones at that."²⁵ Caron passed all complaints on to Wrigley who meekly replied: "We are buying outside as cheaply as possible with payment, but find that everybody anxious to make money."²⁶

Officially, Wrigley could work through Lieutenant-Colonel Jackson, once he had arrived, but no one sent Jackson the authority to propose orders. Not unreasonably, Caron himself had no idea of the extent of future military operations, but he knew exactly who would be blamed for even an appearance of waste and extravagance. Knowing that he too would be condemned with his employer, Wrigley used his back-channel to the chief commissioner for Hudson's Bay in Canada, Sir Donald Smith in Montreal. In turn, he promptly demanded clarification from Sir John A. Macdonald.²⁷

Meanwhile, perhaps inspired by Winnipeg cattle dealers, Caron interfered with Wrigley's efforts to order 100,000 pounds of canned beef from Armour & Co. in Chicago. "Beware of Chicago tinned meat," Caron wired Winnipeg, "we have had information that it has been poisoned."²⁸ Having raised fears, complete with the familiar nineteenth century bogie of a "Fenian plot," the minister left local officials to solve the problem. Armed with a report from the local government analyst, Jackson and

Wrigley quickly agreed to ship the beef. The troops soon grumbled about their monotonous diet,²⁹ but Wrigley spared them from Caron's persistent attempt to feed them pemmican: it would be "very unacceptable," Wrigley sagely warned.³⁰

An even more pressing problem for the militia minister was supplying arms and equipment to the local levies and home guards recruited across the West. Winnipeg's military stores consisted of worn-out cast offs from the Manitoba Force, the small garrison that had continued from the Red River rising of 1870 until it was disbanded in 1877. Chicago became the source for shipments of rifles, revolvers, boots, shirts, and underwear for the two battalions raised in Winnipeg. When Colonel Denison saw the blankets his men were issued from the militia stores, he demanded three instead of two because there were so many holes.³¹ Thanks to Caron, ammunition was not a problem. In the crisis, the government's little cartridge factory in Quebec produced a million rounds within 10 days, and they were shipped West via the Grand Trunk Railway through Chicago. Finally, Jackson persuaded a Winnipeg firm to transform soda water bottles into canteens for the troops.³²

Soldiers from the East, already weakened by their arduous journey west, were sent to camp on a wet, muddy, and undrained field near Winnipeg's Presbyterian College on Portage Avenue. Soaked by rain and frozen by bitter prairie winds, soldiers blamed Jackson for their suffering. Colonel Amyot of the 9th Voltigeurs not only blamed the staff officer for the two deaths in his battalion but accused him of rifling the pockets of one of the dead to pay for his funeral.³³ "With so many employees, there are always some imbeciles," Amyot complained to Caron, "Jackson is one of them."³⁴

Getting a militia army as far as Winnipeg in 1885 was a stupendous task for which Caron deserved both credit and responsibility. He had selected militia units and senior officers from his knowledge of the Force. Old friends and fellow Conservatives had a prominent place. Over serious obstacles, Caron insisted on mobilizing two long-established Quebec militia regiments commanded by Conservative MPs, 9th Voltigeurs from Quebec and the 65th Battalion of Rifles (Mount Royal Rifles) from Montreal.³⁵ Both units lacked members and recruited most of their

soldiers from civilian volunteers. Dr. Emmanuel LaChapelle, medical officer of the 65th Battalion, reminded Caron that both he and Judge A. Aimé Dugas, the senior major, had been good friends of the younger Riel during their student days and they were not alone. Moreover, since members of the unit believed in the Métis cause, it might be wiser to leave the 65th at home.³⁶ Two companies of the 9th Voltigeurs were composed of Laval students and the University's rector warned that young students summoned to the campaign would risk both their lives and their academic program. Abbé Méthot was not alone. "The poor mothers are in despair and curses rain down upon those who deprive them of their children," warned an anonymous letter.³⁷

Caron's friend and ally from the Luard affair, Lieutenant-Colonel Arthur Williams MP also organized several militia companies from central southern Ontario into the Midland Battalion. Two other Ontario Conservative MPs, Lieutenant-Colonel W.E. O'Brien and Lieutenant-Colonel Richard Tyrwhitt, organized a York & Simcoe Battalion for the campaign. Another of Caron's old friends, Lieutenant-Colonel Oswald of the Montreal Garrison Artillery, won belated permission to take his unit to Regina, travelling so late that the CPR had actually completed the Lake Superior gaps in its line.

Sadly, Caron's francophone contingent won only mixed reviews. Both commanding officers, Lieutenant-Colonel Guillaume Amyot and Lieutenant-Colonel Joseph Aldéric Ouimet, felt free to share their opinions with the minister while he felt compelled to have their battalions moved west from Winnipeg. Pleading poor health and parliamentary duties, both lieutenant-colonels abandoned their troops to return to Ottawa for the parliamentary session. "I think it would have been better not to have given leave to Ouimet," Caron advised Major-General Strange, and the commanding officer of the 65th was soon on his way back to Calgary where he again fell ill. An ailing Major Dugas was replaced by Major Georges Hughes, ex-Papal Zouave, future Montreal police chief, and a much more robust campaigner than his commanding officer.

Nonetheless, the behaviour of the two outspoken French-Canadian military officer-politicians provided ammunition for bigoted critics in

Toronto, notably E.E. Sheppard, the muckraking editor of the *Toronto News* and creator of the magazine *Toronto Saturday Night*. Instead of ignoring Sheppard's abuse, Ouimet and officers of his regiment unwisely arranged to have the scurrilous editor horse-whipped during a visit to Montreal, guaranteeing him added credibility and fame.³⁸

The 1885 campaign offered an opportunity for a number of retired officers to offer their experience and to relive their youth. Most were active Conservatives with enough political influence to reach Caron. Middleton turned to a number of ex-British officers, notably the governor general's military secretary, Lord Melgund, the future Earl of Minto, Captain John French of the NWMP, brother of a British major-general, and Major Boulton, who had once held a British commission. Middleton had no such welcome for elderly veterans like Major-General Thomas Bland Strange whom Caron had known during his 10 years in command of the Canadian artillery in Quebec City. Strange had retired to Calgary, where he established his Military Colonization Ranch to raise horses for the British Army and, incidentally, to wage a private war on local Natives. "Would like to see you to the front again. Trust to you as ever," Caron cabled the old veteran, and he picked him to take command in Alberta.³⁹

Middleton, however, was a little dismayed. To the Duke of Cambridge, the British commander-in-chief, Middleton complained that Strange was "a little odd and does funny things."⁴⁰ However, he directed him to organize a column to secure Edmonton from an attack by Big Bear that was in direct response to panicky calls for relief. Furthermore, since Strange also spoke French, it allowed him to divert his two French-speaking battalions, the 9th and the 65th, to Calgary. "I sent both French regiments to the front knowing you wished it," Middleton explained later to the minister, "but I sent them west as I did not think it wise to bring them where so many French half breeds were to be met about here."⁴¹

Another retired general, Major-General James Wimburn Laurie, had prospered in rural Nova Scotia and cultivated Conservative connections. If restored to his former rank, the British War Office warned, Laurie would have outranked Middleton. Once Laurie agreed to sink his seniority,

the War Office withdrew its reservation and, to Middleton's dismay, Caron "did not think it advisable to refuse."⁴² "He will, I am afraid, be a nuisance and troublesome," Middleton warned, "but I will try him."⁴³ Caron appointed him to command the Lines of Communications where, indeed, Laurie fulfilled Middleton's expectations. Lord Lansdowne, the governor general, restrained his prime minister from trying to run the campaign, but he made little secret of his misgivings about Major-General Middleton. Neither did his secretary, Lord Melgund. "I cannot impress on the General the importance of securing line of communications," Melgund complained to the governor general; Lansdowne replied in kind: "I have always felt that would have been a good thing if we could have dealt with this outbreak without sending the General to the front. His place at such a time is along side of the minister here, and a younger man with more knowledge of military operations should lead on the spot."⁴⁴

As minister, Caron seems to have felt none of these misgivings. Ignoring the "superfluity of caution" urged on him by such prominent Canadians as Sandford Fleming,⁴⁵ Middleton was determined to march on Batoche as soon as he could and long before the bulk of Caron's militia reinforcements could reach the West. On Monday, 6 April, barely 10 days after the clash at Duck Lake, Middleton marched out of camp at Fort Qu'Appelle with only a few hundred Winnipeg militia. By 17 April, his force had reached Clarke's Crossing, the nearest ferry across the South Saskatchewan. Middleton's army had grown to 800 militia and four guns. A supporting force under Colonel Otter assembled at Swift Current, where Wrigley collected the Hudson's Bay Company's little flotilla of steamers to bring the troops down to Clarke's Crossing. From there, the two forces, 1,500 strong, would advance down opposite sides of the river to envelope Riel's stronghold at Batoche.⁴⁶

Middleton recognized that safety for frightened prairie communities depended on closing down Riel's rebellion as rapidly as possible. He was contemptuous of NWMP Commissioner A.G. Irvine, who claimed to be besieged at Prince Albert though Middleton's emissaries entered and left the town with apparent impunity. Despite a virtually direct order from Caron on 31 March to rescue Battleford, Middleton

considered the settlement as safe as Prince Albert. His mood changed after 10 April, when news of the so-called Frog Lake massacre became known. Middleton blamed both local commanders for excessive timidity but, as he explained to Caron, "I fear the chance of their being right."⁴⁷ Accordingly, on 11 April, Middleton ordered Otter to take his troops to Battleford. Next he split his own 800 men between the banks of the South Saskatchewan, using a single leaky scow as a ferry. The task consumed four exhausting days. On 23 April, the reduced and divided force started north again, its strength and progress reported by Jérôme Henry, a Métis spy among Middleton's teamsters.⁴⁸

During Middleton's approach, Louis Riel had devoted himself to prayer, meditation, and designing statutes for his Exovedate or Council. His lieutenant, Gabriel Dumont, had pleaded in vain for permission to attack the Canadians, exploiting their inexperience by a night assault. It was too savage, Riel responded, and besides "We would be faced with the risk of firing on our Canadian friends."⁴⁹ They were hardly friends, grumbled Dumont, if they allied themselves with the English, but he submitted. Instead, his men fortified Batoche. Finally, he would wait no longer. On 23 April, as Middleton moved, so did Dumont, riding south with Riel and 200 Métis and Sioux to Fish Creek. On the way Riel turned back, responding to a rumour that the NWMP from Prince Albert were on the move against Batoche.

Dumont had planned to catch and destroy the Canadians after they descended into the Fish Creek ravine. Alert scouting by Boulton's men discovered Métis posted to close the trap and foiled his plan. Under a Métis fusillade, the Canadians went to ground. Since Middleton could not move them and lacked the troops to outflank Dumont until the scow could ferry them from the west bank of the river, a stalemate resulted. As Dumont's men slipped away, some officers urged Middleton to attack. He refused; it would be too costly and serve no purpose. Instead, as dusk fell, he chose to make camp and withdrew to it with his 10 dead and 45 wounded.

That night, demoralized, rain-soaked, and chilly, and dismayed by the suffering of the wounded, the Canadians feared a deadly attack. Few slept. Only at dawn did spirits revive. "None of us are ever likely to forget

that night of the 24th," Melgund wrote, "close to the deep ravine still holding for all we knew, a concealed enemy, and with us nothing but raw troops, totally unaccustomed to night work and hampered by wounded men ... We thought we had come out for a picnic and it was impossible to help feeling that war's hardships are doubly cruel to the civilian soldier."⁵⁰

As days passed, troop morale rose as steadily as Middleton's spirits slumped. Suddenly the old general realized the risk of taking untrained troops into battle. It had been "a very near thing," he confessed to Caron, and without his example and that of his aides, it could well have been a disaster. "When I had them in hand things became safe but I at once saw that with every inclination to do the best the officers were little or no assistance to me." As usual in war, everything now seemed to conspire against success: "Directly you leave the railway you are subject to all sorts of obstacles and delay," explained Middleton, "Creeks have to be crossed, bad roads to be passed, teamsters are troublesome, ferries won't run, panics seize the teamsters and they won't go without escorts.



An artist's rendition of Poundmaker's attack on Colonel Otter's column at Cut Knife Creek, 2 May 1885. (Library and Archives Canada C-9129)

I am trying to do with as few troops as possible not only to save you money but to prevent the outside world thinking too much of it and thus injure the emigration."⁵¹

The only good news from the campaign was that Otter easily reached Battleford on 24 April. However, after a night of pillaging by members of Poundmaker's Cree band, settler outrage, and his men's desire for action, he was persuaded to attack Poundmaker's reserve at Cut Knife Hill, contrary to his orders. He set out with his best troops on the night of 1 May and dawn found him preparing breakfast next to the Cree camp as warriors headed out to surround him. When firing began, the Canadians again went to ground. His elderly cannon bounced off their rotted carriages and his much-vaunted Gatling Gun blazed away harmlessly into the distance. By noon, Otter had decided to retreat and only Poundmaker's demand that his warriors desist saved the Canadians from a long and disastrous running battle.⁵² Like its predecessors, the third battle of the campaign was a defeat.

As days passed, Middleton's troops became more self-confident and impatient. Their general grew more frustrated. His horse-drawn wagons were at the limit of their 200-mile range, after which the teams ate as much forage as they could carry.⁵³ Nor could Middleton carry his wounded on wagons without exposing them to agony and death. As part of developing coal mines near Medicine Hat, the Galt family had built steamers to carry coal on the Belly River. In the emergency, they rented their fleet to the government. Meeting Middleton's logistics crisis lay with the Galt and Hudson's Bay Company's steamers on the South Saskatchewan but by April, the run-off from prairie snow had already passed down the river, leaving behind a shallow, winding series of mud flats. Navigation could resume when run-off from the Rockies reached the river. Until then, as soldiers on the HBC's *Northcote* complained, the steamer travelled "mostly by land," hauled and lifted over the flats by pure physical labour.

The Galt's tiny Minnow drew only a foot of water and should have done better. Unfortunately, no one had noticed that its skipper was a drunken incompetent who took five days longer than the *Northcote* to reach Clarke's Crossing. Caron in Ottawa and Wrigley in Winnipeg were

as helpless to intervene as Laurie at Swift Current. Their appeals for action led only to hiring more teams at soaring rates. Hay, reported H.P.R. Street of the Half Breed Claims Commission, cost the government \$20 a ton at Qu'Appelle. The round trip to Clarke's Crossing raised the price to \$200 and it cost \$440 to deliver it to Middleton.⁵⁴

Another solution, proposed by Wrigley, was to build barges. A Winnipeg firm was contracted to construct barges capable of delivering 20 tons of cargo. However, when civilian workers refused to sail without a military escort, Laurie fired them and organized militia to take their place. The initial picnic spirit dissolved when river currents swept heavy barges ashore. Oars, boards hurriedly nailed to green saplings, bent and broke, and soldiers had no tools to make new ones. By the time any of the barges reached Clarke's Crossing, Middleton had long since moved on without them.⁵⁵

Given the logistical difficulties created by the climate, terrain, and resources, Middleton was right to complain "those scoundrels have just selected the time when the roads will be almost impassable, the rivers the same, and all the teams are required almost immediately for seeding."⁵⁶ Having decided to ignore the difficulties, Middleton got all the help Caron could manage to get him out of his jam. Indeed, his instinctive reaction to Middleton's problem was that someone must be robbing the government. "There must be no mistake about supplies," he wired Wrigley. "Troops must be provided for and in good time."

A Montreal businessman and former colonel of the Victoria Rifles, Lieutenant-Colonel E.A. Whitehead, was appointed chief transport officer, arriving after hundreds of teams had been hired and the real problem was getting steamers down the river. Whitehead tended to be scornful of local operations and his complaints made Caron more suspicious of the HBC without solving problems for either Middleton or Wrigley. At \$10 a day per team, prairie settlers preferred government cash to the risks of seeding a harvest.

On 6 May, the *Northcote* finally reached Middleton with reinforcements and a long-awaited field hospital for his wounded. Next day, Middleton started for Batoche with 850 troops, four guns, and 150 wagons. By the night of the 8 May he camped nine miles from his objective.

At 0800 hours the next morning, the *Northcote*, fortified and garrisoned, came down river, drew Dumont's fighting men to the riverbank, and crashed into a ferry cable that was hauled tight above the river as a barrier to river traffic. It served its purpose. The cable ripped the little steamer's funnel, masts, and steam whistle. Middleton's column arrived soon after and opened fire with its four cannon. The Métis recovered fast, swarmed up the bank, and opened a hot fire on the militia. His nervous staff urged Middleton to retire to the previous night's camp. Middleton hesitated: any retreat with untrained troops could easily become a rout. Dr. George Orton, a Conservative MP from Winnipeg who was Middleton's chief surgeon, later claimed credit for the general's decision to stay put a mile away from Dumont's defences. There the Canadians lined up their wagons, dug their trenches, and waited for an attack that never came. After a frightening night, 10 May finally dawned, and Middleton sent out his infantry to clear the road to Batoche. He did the same on the eleventh but he also went out himself with his mounted scouts, heading north to get another perspective. He noticed that many of the Métis followed him to alternate defences east of Batoche. Now he had an idea.

The next day seemed to be a repeat of the eleventh. The infantry headed south and west; Middleton, his mounted men and a gun headed north again. So did the Métis. So did a couple of Riel's prisoners, sent to warn Middleton that if he opened fire on the village, all the other prisoners would be killed. Middleton sent them back with advice to put the prisoners in one place under a white flag, and for Riel to accept unconditional surrender. Then he fired his gun as a signal to the infantry to attack Batoche, and rode back to enjoy his victory. To his rage, the infantry had not moved. They had not heard the gun. Leaving them with some harsh words, all that the general could enjoy was his lunch.

Among the infantry, seething with indignation, was Lieutenant-Colonel Williams MP. Would his fellow commanding officers follow his lead and attack? No one said no. Instead, whether on Williams's word or their own, two of the three battalions of Canadian militia soon found themselves tearing through undergrowth towards Batoche over rifle pits still empty since the morning.⁵⁷ Middleton came out of his tent and

organized support as best he could. Some Métis fought back but their ammunition, always scarce, was now gone. Some fled. Ten others, some of them elderly, died.⁵⁸ So did five Canadians; another 25 were wounded. Triumphant soldiers looted the village and, to complete the victory, the *Northcote*, given up for lost, reappeared, hauling the steamer Marquis.

Riel and Dumont had fled. "I do not like war," he had scribbled on an envelope that some of his prisoners brought to Middleton on 12 May. Dumont pleaded with him to flee together back to the United States. Afraid of his fate if captured by Ontario soldiers, Riel was still determined to surrender and continue his fight in another forum. On 15 May, Tom Hourie, Middleton's interpreter, and two of Boulton's scouts, found Riel, armed with Middleton's safe-conduct pass, coming in to give himself up. Hourie smuggled him into the Canadian camp for his own safety and Middleton sent him one of his own overcoats because the poor man was shivering.

Caron had not heard the end of Louis Riel and the campaign was certainly not over. Throughout the months since Duck Lake, Middleton had discounted the threat from Natives and Caron had shared his general's realization that the threat of a Native uprising depended on Riel's success or failure. Once Riel had been dispatched to Regina, rather than Winnipeg where he might have found a more sympathetic and francophone jury, Middleton had to deploy his weary and homesick militia to capture Poundmaker, Big Bear, and others who had led the handful of Native rebels. It was acutely anti-climactic. Near Battleford on 26 May, Middleton arranged a ceremonial surrender for Poundmaker's band, recorded for posterity by a talented artillery officer, Captain James N. Rutherford.

At Frenchman's Butte near the North Saskatchewan, Major-General Strange's column of Winnipeggers and Montrealers met Big Bear's band on 28 May. The brief encounter sent both armies streaming away in opposite directions. The Crees recovered first, collecting their baggage and prisoners, and headed north into swamps, muskeg, and hungry flies. Led by Major Sam Steele of the NWMP, Strange's mounted scouts pursued as far and as fast as they could until the weight of four wounded persuaded Steele to stop. With his band disintegrating, Big Bear finally left them and headed back to the river to surrender.

Back in Ottawa, Caron was now desperate to wind up the campaign and liquidate a huge cash outflow in militia pay, supply and transport contracts, and a variety of schemes designed to benefit prairie settlers and entrepreneurs at Ottawa's expense. Middleton's suspicion that everyone in the West was determined to profit from the rebellion had found a new home in Ottawa. Militia in the field, exasperated by military discipline and routine, bored by the lack of danger and worried about how long employers would keep their jobs for them, bombarded friends and relatives with appeals to get them home. His friend Oswald, whose regiment was doing garrison duty at Regina, complained: "a number of us feel that this loafing is not what we came for."⁵⁹ A Toronto dry-goods merchant warned, "Our Fall trade starts next month and if the hands are not back before the 1st August, their places must be filled."⁶⁰

From a distance, Middleton's pursuit of Big Bear looked extravagant and ineffective. He dispatched four columns north of the North Saskatchewan, each lumbered with teams, wagons, infantry, and full paraphernalia for camping and cooking. Most bogged down in a day or two, abandoned their loads, and tried to get more mobile, without much result beyond impatience and discomfort. "Our grub is disgraceful," a soldier complained to the Opposition leader, Edward Blake, "hard tack and fat pork, — poor tea twice a day, none at noon, with orders not to drink the water. The authorities deserve censure for this treatment." Even the floods of relief supplies collected by women in eastern Canada failed to help morale. Should they go to the units or individuals designated by the women or should they be shared. "Men consider that goods sent by our friends should be divided — share and share alike," complained Rifleman John Forin of the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada.⁶¹ Meanwhile, the Cree chief easily found his way past all who were looking for him and surrendered to an astonished police sergeant at Fort Carleton on 2 July. However, already, on 21 June, Middleton had reported the recovery of the last of Big Bear's white prisoners. The troops could now go home.

It was certainly easier to get the troops home than it had been to send them. The Rockies run-off made the major rivers navigable. And most of the troops were now near a river. Strange's barges, towed by

steamers, brought men down the North Saskatchewan. The CPR line was finally complete and lake passenger steamers connected the Lakehead with railway terminals at Owen Sound and Collingwood. Caron had acquiesced and Middleton had rejoiced in a plan by Winnipeg promoters for a grand final review for the campaign veterans. Lieutenant-Colonel Amyot, whose battalion had already benefited from Caron's agreement to give them a railway excursion to the Rockies, was outraged by a delay at Winnipeg, and he probably spoke for most of the troops, calling it "a local circus called for by Hotelkeepers ... It is a gross political blunder, useless extravagance, cause of demoralization for troops."⁶² Perhaps fortunately, the review was drowned in a torrential rainstorm.

Caron was as eager as Amyot to terminate the campaign. He was not always realistic. To relieve the local relief committees that were funding soldiers' families, Caron asked to have married men sent home first. The problem of stripping them out of units scattered across the Northwest proved insoluble. Although the minister had lumbered Middleton with elderly but influential staff officers during the campaign, he disposed of them quickly once the war was over. At Swift Current, Laurie had made many enemies. A single mild complaint from him allowed Caron to "meet the general's wishes" by relieving him.⁶³ Caron soon wished he could get rid of Colonel Whitehead, who had been sent to Swift Current with a mandate to solve Middleton's transportation problem but, instead, had busied himself accumulating evidence of waste, mismanagement, and greed. It was obviously not hard to find. "Like all armies, the expedition was followed by a lot of speculating suckers who were determined to make all they could out of the affair," reported David MacMillan, an MP from London who had gone west with his city's 7th Battalion.

Many officers had been given authority to issue requisitions for supplies and some had delegated their powers quite widely, particularly in Major-General Strange's command, since the general himself was far away in pursuit of Big Bear. Middleton's transportation problems had already focused Whitehead's suspicions on Major W. R. Bell, whose Qu'Appelle Valley Farming Corporation had supplied many of Middleton's teams. "You are surrounded by thieves," Whitehead had telegraphed Caron on 24 May, "Supplies have been sent forward sufficient for 20 thousand

troops — the waste is ruinous. Your councillors recommended and succeeded in appointing their own employees as transport and supply officers, and rushing carloads to the front without proper requisition.”⁶⁴ With the crisis past, the rate of \$10 a team per day now looked highly extravagant. So did the price of hay, much of it purchased by Bell from Bell’s farm. On 12 August, Winnipeg’s opposition newspaper, the *Free Press*, announced to its readers:

Not a dollar short of a million, we have every reason to believe and do believe, was in effect stolen from the people of Canada by those who are intrusted [sic] by the Government with the transportation of supplies for the troops.

We are not making these charges at random, we want the public to distinctly understand. We now that they are true; we can prove that they are true. We know moreover the Government is fully cognizant of the facts to which we are alluding. They have been accurately informed as to all that has transpired by their own friends. Minister of Militia Caron knows as much, probably more of this matter than we. He, and therefore the Government, knows the names of every one of the gang of robbers who infested the transport service. He knows what each one of them did. He knows who were the thieves and who were the swindlers ...⁶⁵

The *Free Press* claimed to know a good deal more than it did. Harried by allegations and rival claims, Caron shared the same suspicions as the newspaper. In addition to Whitehead, another informant was James Metcalfe, an Ontario Conservative Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) sent west to auction off horses at the end of the campaign. He, too, tangled with Major Bell. “He is a low blackguard,” Metcalfe re-ported, “He struck me when I was not looking at him and when I had a package of money and a book under my arm.”⁶⁶ “This transport business furnishes the greatest field for plunder that has met my gaze for years. It is terrible. The waste is also something enormous. The number of middle men is something terrible.”⁶⁷

During the campaign, Caron had expostulated occasionally but he refused to meddle in his general's arrangements and even protected Bell from his detractors. With the crisis past, he refused to authorize further advances to the Hudson's Bay Company in order to keep a healthy balance when claims were disallowed. That left Wrigley without funds to pay for supplies and teamsters' arrears. With his own career in danger, Caron was prepared to be tough. Vouchers prepared in haste would be examined at leisure. "I am not aware of any contract which obliged Government to pay any claim which had not been previously rendered to Department," Caron warned the HBC. Initially, he proposed to review each invoice personally. Common sense and a sensible desire to spend his summer with his family at Rivière du Loup intervened.

The answer was a war claims commission, headed by Lieutenant-Colonel W.H. Jackson. His obviously poor relations with Wrigley and his Liberal background made him ideal as a foil to a scandal-hungry opposition. So was Colonel Whitehead, already identified as a muckraker in exposing Bell Farms and other profiteers. Caron's own interests would be protected by a third member, Lieutenant-Colonel W.H. Forrest, a militia storekeeper at Quebec, and already a proven ministerial agent. "Every claim must be gone into," Caron commanded Jackson, "and I trust you to cut down without mercy. The country will stand by you and we need not be anxious about any little dissatisfaction arising among those who may be disappointed as to the amount which they shall receive."⁶⁸

Jackson certainly served as a lightning rod. "Col. Jackson had acted in a most ungentlemanly manner not only to me but to other Citizens of Calgary," complained an aggrieved citizen, "It is my intention to have it out with him if it costs me ten times the amount due."⁶⁹ Nor could Jackson prevent direct political pressure. William Boyle, present of The Qu'Appelle Valley Farming Co., and Major Bell's employer, warned Caron: "Being a good Conservative & one anxious to see the 'Great Party' remain in power & returned again with an overwhelming majority, I would say that a great deal of harm is being done here by all those complications over payment of claims."⁷⁰

At the end of 1886, when Colonel Jackson wound up his work, his commission had proceeded over 1,600 claims totalling \$4,265,564.

Between then, Caron and the Commission cut \$501,491. The Hudson's Bay Company collected \$1,737,032 and the Canadian Pacific Railway \$852,431. Major Bell, the Commission concluded, had shipped to Clarke's Crossing "a large quantity of hay at very high prices." Since Middleton had moved on, much of it was left to rot. The Commission granted Bell \$5,139, acknowledging that he may have been motivated by zeal as much as greed. However, the Commission concluded, "It cannot be denied... the people generally in that part of the country adhered to the time-honoured practice of getting all they possibly could out of the Government." Still, there were collateral benefits if the government had been too generous:

the amount so expended in the North-West Territories has gone to our own people, and will be expended mainly in improving and beautifying their homesteads and enhancing their value; and there must be a modified satisfaction in the feeling that since the money had to be expended, it had not been entirely lost but had gone to assist a new and struggling population, and to give an impetus generally to affairs in the North West.⁷¹

Postwar discontent was not limited to western businesses and teamsters. Soldiers, too, claimed that their rewards were disproportionate to their sacrifice. The closing weeks of the 1885 parliamentary session approved 320 acres of prairie land to each volunteer or \$80 in script. The land, their militia pay of 50 cents a day for a private, and the thanks of Parliament were their rewards for months of service.⁷² Hurried promulgated pension regulations allowed a soldier's widow a year of her husband's pay and then half his pay for the rest of her life provided he died in action or, within a year, from wounds suffered in battle. If he died of illness or accident, she would receive only three-eighths of his pay unless she remarried or "subsequently proved unworthy of it."⁷³

Soldiers familiar with British traditions expected at least a campaign medal, and senior militia officers waited for a full-fledged decoration.

Canada's government might have obliged but, as the governor general reminded his ministers, "there could be no delegation of the authority inherent in the Queen as the Fountain of Honour throughout the Empire."⁷⁴ A Colonial Office clerk discovered that 5,000 silver medals would cost the British Treasury £1,500 while the same number in bronze would cost only £500.⁷⁵ The British conceded the silver medals only to have Ottawa demand an additional bar to distinguish between soldiers who had come under fire from those who had spent their time guarding bales of hay. Over the objections of the commander-in-chief, the Duke of Cambridge, who opposed even a medal, some 2,250 clasps were eventually produced at British expense.⁷⁶

What about the senior officers? Ottawa's enormous relief at the early end of the campaign was expressed in a \$20,000 gift to Middleton, a knighthood, and British confirmation of his rank of major-general. Over Sir John A. Macdonald's objections, the British even offered a K.C.M.G. for Caron. "Caron did his work well and with spirit and although he is, as you pointed out to me, a young minister, I am not sure that any of his colleagues not yet honoured with the K.C.M.G. have been brought before the public so conspicuously as he has during the past few months."⁷⁷ By British Army standards, the 1885 campaign had been a minor event, unworthy of a medal much less a flourish of knight-hoods and awards for conspicuous gallantry.

Caron's senior officers felt very differently. This was the only war they would experience in their lifetimes and they waited expectantly for fulsome recognition. Satisfied with his own recognition, Middleton's reports were factual and, except for the luckless NWMP, sparing of both praise and blame. Dr. Orton expected a reward for urging the general not to retreat after the first encounter at Batoche.⁷⁸ Most of the officers involved in the victorious charge on the fourth day expected honours.⁷⁹ Nationalism added fire to the complaints. Middleton reserved any praise for his British subordinates like Lord Melgund. Canadians had obviously been scorned. Colonel Eugene Panet, Caron's deputy minister, wrote to Lieutenant-Colonel Otter to seek details of his battle: "Cut Knife, in my estimation is worth ten Batoches, and it illustrated the fact that Canadians can fight their own



An artist's conception of the capture of Batoche, the final charge 12 May 1885. (Library and Archives Canada C-002424)

battles without any foreign help.”⁸⁰ When Lieutenant-Colonel Williams died of fever on his way home from the campaign, Lieutenant-Colonel George T. Denison blamed the rudeness and insensitivity of Middleton and one of his British subordinates to an officer that Canadian troops regarded as their spokesperson and representative. Since a general was responsible for gaining honours for his subordinates, resentful officers directed their frustration at Middleton.

Late in the campaign, Caron had wired Middleton to bring back a few souvenirs for himself, Macdonald and Langevin. “Leave it to you to select what you consider of interest.” With much else on his mind, Middleton seems to have forgotten the request, though he sent Caron a pony for his children and brought one home for himself. When something jogged his memory, Middleton was near Battleford. Métis fur trader, Charles Bremner, had returned there from captivity in Poundmaker’s camp, armed with a rifle marked as the property of a dead NWMP sergeant. He was arrested, arraigned, and sent to Regina.

Bremner's furs seemed to be booty and Middleton, among others, ordered that some packages be put on his steamer. There they disappeared, presumably stolen by others. Bremner, however, was acquitted, released, and proceeded, with considerable pertinacity, to pursue his furs. In 1887, Middleton denied everything and the issue seemed closed. Bremner persisted and accumulated more evidence. By 1890, he had made a strong enough case to force Middleton to seek a public inquiry from a select committee of the House of Commons. He proved to be a pompous and evasive witness. "I thought I was the ruling power up there," he told MPs, "... and that I could pretty much do as I liked as long as it was within reason."

Members enthusiastically disagreed. Middleton's confiscations were "unwarrantable and illegal."⁸¹ The general, who had planned to retire to the presidency of a Canadian insurance company, found himself friendless and his prospects in ruins. He even published a defence of all his actions, listing the seven officers he had recommended as Companions of the Order of St. Michael and St. George (C.M.G.). As Caron had recognized, Middleton's brief list only refuelled the outrage among Canadian colonels: worse than ignoring them, he was offering such a puny little decoration as a C.M.G.⁸²

Sir Adolphe was easily persuaded to drop his old ally to avoid contamination. "Poor Middleton," he acknowledged, "made an awful muck of it."⁸³ In fact, the old general eventually claimed redemption. In 1896, he accepted the appointment of Keeper of the Crown Jewels at the Tower of London, a rebuke to those who had driven him from Canada as a thief. Middleton was more fortunate than his political master. Defeating Riel made Caron directly responsible for Riel's execution in Regina on 16 November. Flags in his Quebec riding flew at half-mast and merchants draped their shop windows in black crepe. Sir Adolphe survived the political backlash in 1887, but he withdrew down river to Rimouski for the 1891 election. After Sir John A. Macdonald died, he was allowed the less significant portfolio of postmaster general and, like Sir Hector Langevin, he had become sufficiently notorious to be mentioned by name in the Liberal Party's 1893 platform. Caron was dropped from Sir Charles Tupper's ministry in 1896. He won Trois-Rivières in

1896, but lost in Maskinongé in 1900, and died eight years later in Montreal, after making a quiet but prosperous living in his original profession of law.⁸⁴

The 1885 campaign in the North-West Territories remains the only war waged by Canadians in Canada and if military expertise was provided by Major-General Middleton, the over-all manager of the campaign was a young French Canadian who accepted his responsibilities and rose to them in an impressive, if little-noticed fashion. Unlike Sam Hughes, another minister faced with a major war, Adolphe Caron had the good sense not to pretend to be a general. Instead, he used his knowledge of the militia to mobilize its best troops and units representative of the whole of Canada to defend the vision of a country *a Mari usque ad mare* (from sea to sea), which Riel's rebellion, perhaps unconsciously, threatened. If Caron's mind was never far from issues of party and favour, he was acting in character as a conservative, and a practical man. Caron accepted human nature as he found it and ensured, through his carefully collected telegrams, that Canadians would see him performing his job with good sense and energy.

NOTES

1. Desmond Morton, *The Last War Drum: The Northwest Campaign of 1885* (Toronto: Hakkert, 1972), 134.
2. See Desmond Morton, "The Canadian Militia and French Canada," *Histoire sociale/Social History*, Vol. 3 (June 1969).
3. On Selby Smyth, Luard, and Caron, see Desmond Morton, *Ministers and Generals: Politics and the Canadian Militia, 1874-1904* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 43-68.
4. See Fred Strange, Canada, *House of Commons, Debates*, 13 April 1880, 1359-61. On the role of militia colonels in Parliament, see Desmond Morton, "The Militia Lobby in Parliament: The Military Politicians and the Canadian Militia, 1867-1897," in Adrian Preston and Peter Dennis, eds., *Swords and Covenants: Essays in Honour of the Centennial of the Royal Military College of Canada, 1876-1976* (London: Croom-Helm, 1976), 74-88.

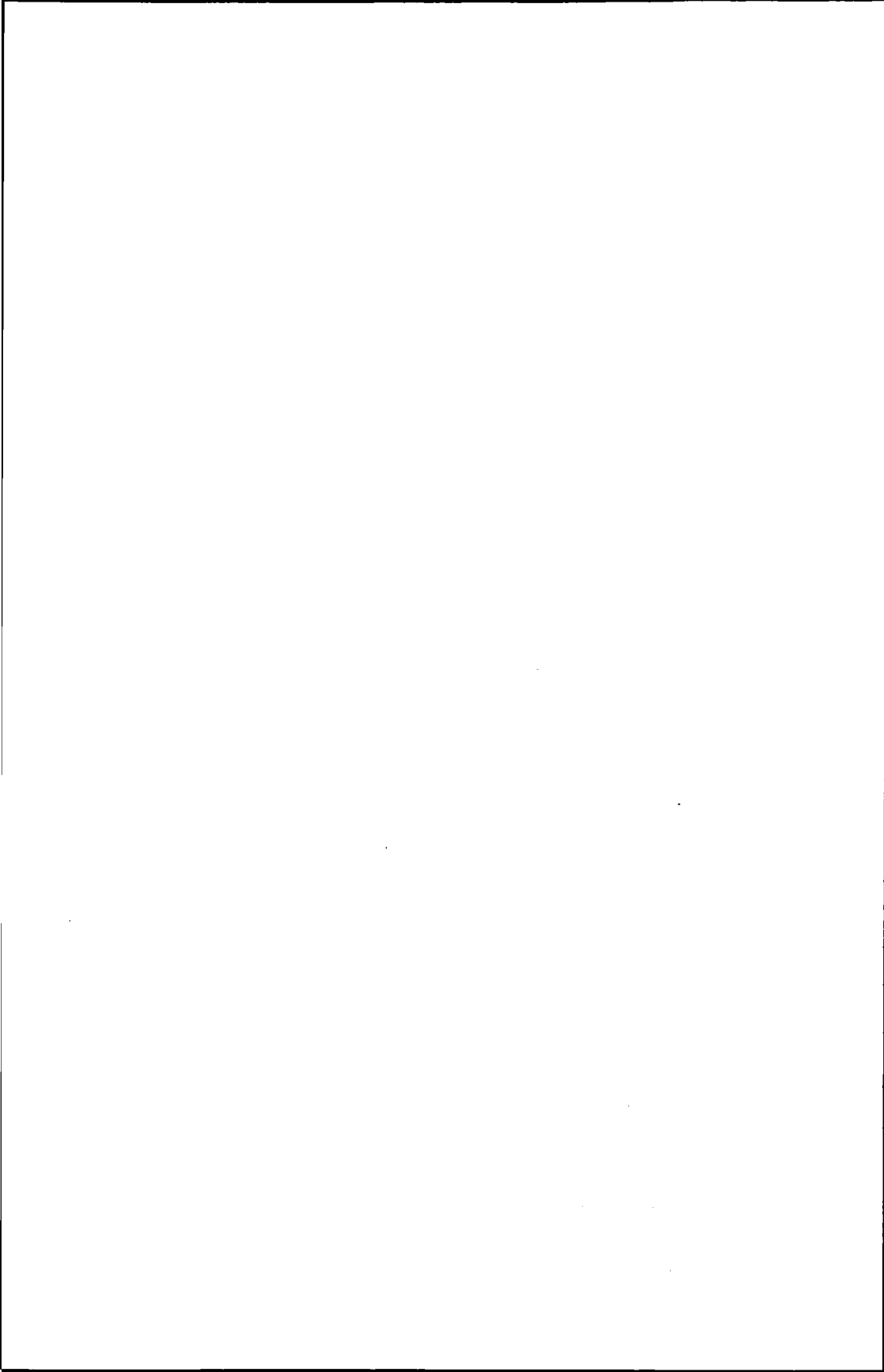
5. See Morton, *Ministers and Generals*, 86–87.
6. Desmond Morton, *The Canadian General: Sir William Otter* (Toronto: Hakkert, 1974) 49–73.
7. Caron to Dr. Colin Sewell, 12 March 1883, Library and Archives Canada (henceforth LAC), Caron Papers, letterbook 4, 576.
8. Luard to Lorne, 21 June 1882, LAC, Macdonald Papers, Vol. 83, 32469; Lorne to Macdonald, 23 June 1883. *Ibid.*, 32465; Macdonald to Lorne, 10 July 1882, *ibid.*, 32473–6.
9. See Lorne to Colonial Secretary, 6 October 1883, Public Record Office, London (PRO) CO 537/108, 93; Caron to Macdonald, 24 October 1884, LAC, Macdonald Papers, Vol. 200, 84610–11. Williams to Caron, 25 September 1883, LAC, Caron Papers, file 6246.
10. Canada, *Militia Report, 1884*, xv–xx.
11. On Middleton, see Morton, *Ministers and Generals*, 69–72.
12. On the background to the North-West Campaign of 1884, see William Beahen and Stan Horrall, *Red Coats on the Prairies: The North-West Mounted Police, 1886–1900/Les tuniques rouges dans la prairie: Le maintien de l'ordre dans l'ouest pionnier, 1886–1900* (Regina: Print West Publishing Services, 1998); Bob Beal and R.C. MacLeod, *Prairie Fire: The 1885 North-West Rebellion* (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1984); C.A. Boulton, *Reminiscences of the North-West Rebellions with a Record of the Raising of Her Majesty's 100th Regiment in Canada* (Toronto: Grip, 1886); Hartwell Bowsfield, *Louis Riel* (Toronto: Oxford, 1970); Thomas Flanagan, *Riel and the Rebellion: 1885 Reconsidered* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1983); G.F.G. Stanley, *The Birth of Western Canada: A History of the Riel Rebellions* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961), "Gabriel Dumont's Account of the North-West Rebellion, 1885," *Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (June 1949), and *Louis Riel* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1963).
13. Hugh John Macdonald to Macdonald, 22 March 1884, 8 July 1884, LAC, Macdonald Papers, Vol. 200, 84653–4.
14. *Montreal Gazette*, 25 March 1885.
15. Macdonald to Middleton, March 29, 1885, LAC, Macdonald Papers, Vol. 526, letterbook 23, 142–5. Though Caron sent town-bred cavalry like Turnbull's Cavalry School from Quebec and Lieutenant-Colonel George T. Denison's Governor General's Bodyguard from Toronto, Middleton left them to guard supplies in the rear while encouraging the Manitoba farmers recruited by Major C.A. Boulton or

- the cowboys and police officers enrolled by John Stewart or by Inspector Sam Steele of the NWMP, to serve with the fighting troops.
16. Captain A.H. Todd, "Account of the Activities of the Guards Coy. of Sharpshooters in the North-West Rebellion, 1885," Canadian Forces Directorate of History and Heritage, Ottawa, file 505.013 (D-8).
 17. Hugh A. Dempsey, "The Rocky Mountain Rangers," *Alberta Historical Review* (Spring 1957), 4.
 18. G.F.G. Stanley, "Journal d'un militaire au nord-ouest," *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (September 1956), 268.
 19. Caron to Lieutenant-Colonel Montizambert and to Lieutenant-Colonel Otter, 31 March 1885, LAC, Caron Papers, Vol. 199, *Telegrams of the North-West Campaign, 1885* (henceforth *Telegrams*), (Toronto: Champlain Society, Vol. 47, 1972) 70, 81.
 20. See Desmond Morton, "Administrative Aspects of the Canadian Campaign in the North-West in 1885," *Canadian Defence Quarterly*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (Summer 1973), 45-56.
 21. See Wrigley to Caron, March 28, March 19, *Telegrams*, 19, 36.
 22. Dewdney to Macdonald, 24 March 1885, LAC, Dewdney Papers, III, 1125.
 23. Joseph Royal to Caron, 7 April 1885, *Telegrams*, 204.
 24. F.D. Barwick to Caron, 6 April 1885, *ibid.*, 202. See also Kenneth A. Mackenzie to Caron, 30 March 1885, *ibid.*, 110.
 25. Amos Rowe to Honourable Mackenzie Bowell, 13 April, 1885, *Telegrams*, 263.
 26. Wrigley to Caron, 29 March 1885, *Telegrams*, 40. See also 14 April 1885, *ibid.*, 270. See also 176-77.
 27. Sir Donald Smith to Macdonald, 5 April 1885; LAC, Macdonald Papers, Vol. 106. 42414.
 28. Caron to Wrigley, 4 April 1885, *Telegrams*, 145.
 29. See Wrigley to Caron, 5 April 1885, *ibid.*, 158. Troops might have preferred live beef but it would have cost considerable time to deliver and to feed at a time when the prairie was a frozen desert and all feed had to be transported. See Lieutenant-Colonel E.A. Whitehead to Caron, 19 May 1885, *ibid.*, 482.
 30. Wrigley to Caron, 4 May 1885, *Telegrams*, 363. See also Caron to Wrigley 13 April 1885. LAC, Caron Papers, letterbook 11, 98.
 31. Caron to Wrigley, 4 April 1885, *Telegrams*, 145.
 32. "Special Report of the Director of Stores, Canada, Department of Militia and Defence, Report Upon the Suppression of the Rebellion in the North-West Territories and Matters in Connection Therewith in 1885" (Canada Sessional Papers, 1886, 6A, 65-67 (hereafter "Rebellion Report").

33. See Wrigley to Caron, 5 April 1885, *ibid.*, 158. Troops might have preferred live beef but it would have cost considerable time to deliver and to feed at a time when the prairie was a frozen desert and all feed had to be transported. See Lieutenant-Colonel E.A. Whitehead to Caron, 19 May 1885, *ibid.*, 482.
34. Amyot to Caron, 19 May 1885, Caron Papers, Vol. 192, 4823. On the "Mud Flats," see Denison, "Soldiering," 280–81; *House of Commons, Debates*, 25 February, 1889, 319–20; Laurids Hyttenrauch, "Recollections of the North-West Rebellion of 1885," *Western Ontario Historical Notes*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (March 1964), 33.
35. On the 9th and the 65th in the North-West Territories, see Georges Beauregard, *Le 9ème bataillon au Nord-ouest; journal d'un militaire* (Quebec City, 1885); J.G. Daoust, *Cent-vingt jours de service actif: récit historique très complet de la campagne du 65e au nord-ouest* (Montreal: Eusebe Senécal, 1886); Desmond Morton, "Des Canadiens errants: French Canadian Troops in the North-West Campaign of 1885," *JCS*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (August 1970).
36. LaChapelle to Caron, 28 mars 1885, Caron Papers, Vol. 192, 4798. LaChapelle stayed home, but Dugas and 16 of the 21 officers listed in the 1885 Militia List accompanied the 65th to the North-West Territories.
37. Anonymous to Caron, 2 April 1885, Caron Papers, Vol. 199, 142.
38. Morton, "Canadiens Errants," 32. See *Toronto News*, 22 April 1885.
39. Caron to Strange, 29 March 1885, *Telegrams*, 44. The NWMP and missionaries who were struggling to keep Crowfoot's Blackfoot neutral warned Middleton of Strange's anti-Native proclivities.
40. Middleton to the Duke of Cambridge, 6 May 1885, Royal Archives, Windsor Castle, Duke of Cambridge Papers.
41. Middleton to Caron, 27 April 1885, Caron Papers, Vol. 192 4932–3.
42. Caron to Middleton, 3 April 1885, *Telegrams*, 138.
43. Middleton to Caron, 14 April 1885, *ibid.*, 138.
44. Lansdowne to Melgund, 6 April 1885, Minto Papers, mfm A-129. Fearing the worst after his first encounter with the Métis at Batoche, Middleton dispatched Melgund to the rear for the sake of his young wife, directing him to bring up British troops if a disaster befell the Canadians at the Métis capital. See Morton, *Last War Drum*, 85–86.
45. Sandford Fleming to Caron, 15 April, 1885, *Telegrams*, 278.
46. On Middleton's plan, see C.P. Stacey, *An Introduction to Military History for Canadian Students* (Ottawa: King's Printer, n.d.), 81, 84.

47. Middleton to Caron, 14 April 1885, *Telegrams*, 270.
48. G.F.G. Stanley, *Birth of Western Canada*, 356.
49. *Ibid.*, 357.
50. Melgund, "The Rebellion in North-West Canada," *The Nineteenth Century*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (June 1885), 322.
51. Middleton to Caron, 27 April 1885 (confidential), Caron Papers, Vol. 192, 4930-3.
52. On the battle, see Morton, *Last War Drum*, 104-08.
53. Middleton to Duke of Cambridge, 6 May 1885, Cambridge Papers.
54. H.H. Langton, "The Commission of 1885 to the North-West Territories," *Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (March 1944), 61-62.
55. Major-General J.W. Laurie, Report of Major-General J.W. Laurie, Commanding Base and Lines of communications upon Matter in Connection with the Suppression of the rebellion in the North-West Territories in 1885 (Canada: Sessional Papers, 1887, No. 9D 9-10, 24-29; Hyttenrauch, *Recollections*, 34-35; *Telegrams*, liv-lv.
56. Middleton to Caron, 28 March 1885, Caron Papers. Vol. 192, 4784.
57. Canadian historians would like to give the handsome Arthur Williams the credit but the other colonel involved, H.J. Grasett of Toronto, 10th Royal Grenadiers, would not cooperate. Middleton blamed Williams for the losses. On the attack, see C.A. Boulton, *Reminiscences of the North-West Rebellions*, 279-85; Middleton, "Rebellion Report," 32-35.
58. Father Moulin's parish register and the monument in the Batoche cemetery recorded 11 Métis, two Natives, and a small child buried during or immediately after the four-day siege. See Black, *Saskatchewan and the Old North-West*, 329 n. Middleton claimed that 59 were found dead but this seems an exaggeration, "Rebellion Report," 33.
59. W.R Oswald to Caron 31 May 1885, Caron Papers, file 6179.
60. P.D. Hughes to Caron, 27 June 1885, *ibid.*, file 6179.
61. R.H. Roy, "Rifleman Forin in the Riel Rebellion," *Saskatchewan History*, Vol. 21, No. 3 (Autumn 1968).
62. Amyot to Caron 11 July 1885, *Telegrams*, 570.
63. (Caron to Middleton 21 June 1885 *ibid.*, 523).
64. Macmillan in *Debates*, 17 July 1885, 3464.
65. *Manitoba Free Press*, 12 August 1885. See also H.H. Smith to Macdonald, 12 August 1885, LAC, Caron Papers, file 6664.

66. Lord Lansdowne persuaded his superiors to meet the cost. Lansdowne to Stanley, 10 July 1885, PRO CO. 42/781, 67; Lansdowne to Macdonald, 28 July 1885, LAC, Macdonald Papers, Vol. 85, 33163.
67. Metcalfe to Caron 2 June 1885, *ibid.*, 5565.
68. Caron to Jackson, 21 August 1885, LAC, Caron Papers, letterbook 13, 125–6.
69. Major George Hatton to Caron, 8 February 1887, LAC, Caron Papers, file 9918.
70. William Boyle to Caron, 25 November 1885, *ibid.*, 7672.
71. “Rebellion Report,” 68–69.
72. See *Statutes of Canada*, 48–49 Vict. cap. 73.
73. The pension regulations may be found in *Militia General Orders*, No. 14, 9 July 1885.
74. The British insisted on providing the medals if Canada paid for them. Stanley to Lansdowne, 22 July 1885 and Lansdowne to Stanley 18 May 1885. PRO, CO, 41/780, 195–96.
75. Lord Lansdowne persuaded his superiors to meet the cost. Lansdowne to Stanley, 10 July 1885, PRO, CO 42/781, 67; Lansdowne to Macdonald, 28 July 1885, LAC, Macdonald Papers, Vol. 85, 33163
76. War Office to Colonial Office, 5 February 1886, PRO, CO 42/785, 206. See also PRO, CO 41/790, 179–95.
77. Lansdowne to Macdonald, 28 July 1885, LAC, Lansdowne Papers, mfm. A-623, letterbook 2, 210; Lansdowne to Stanley, 11 July 1885, RG 7, Vol. 82, 212.
78. Orton to Caron, 10 September, 1885, LAC, Caron Papers, Vol. 193, 5350.
79. The chief among them, Colonel A.T.H. Williams, had died of a fever on his way home from the campaign, a victim, claimed Colonel George T. Denison, of the rudeness and insensitivity of Middleton and his British subordinates. Denison, *Soldiering in Canada* (Toronto: George Morang, 1900), 300.
80. Panet to Otter, 2 December 1885, LAC, Otter Papers.
81. Report of the Select Committee in re Charles Bremner’s Furs Canada, Sessional Papers, April 1890.
82. Sir Fred Middleton, *A Parting Address to the People of Canada* (Ottawa, 1890), 11. On Middleton’s efforts to get decorations for his officers, see Middleton to Caron, 29 December, 1886, LAC, Caron Papers, file 10230.
83. Caron to Lieutenant-Colonel George Maunsell, 20 September 1890, LAC, Caron Papers, letterbook 34, 55.
84. Serge Bernier and Pauline Dumont-Bayliss, *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Vol. 1, 101.



CHAPTER FIVE

The Military Career of Colonel Oscar Pelletier: An Example of French-Canadian Leadership Before the First World War

MICHEL D. LITALIEN

Although few people today know the name of Oscar Pelletier, it can be said without any doubt that that was not the case at the start of the last century. An officer, Pelletier was one of those rare French Canadians who embraced a professional military career.¹ As a veteran of two conflicts, wounded in each, he enjoyed a high profile in French-Canadian society throughout his productive career. With his physique, his martial bearing, and his cultural refinement, he was the incarnation of the military ideal of French Canada.

Oscar Charles Casgrain Pelletier was born, an only son, in Quebec City on 3 May 1862. His mother died giving birth to him, and he was raised at Rivière-Ouelle by his maternal grandmother. Little Oscar was well-born and lacked for nothing. His father, Charles Alphonse Pantaléon Pelletier, a lawyer by profession, was elected to Parliament as the Liberal Member for Kamouraska and sat in the House of Commons from 1869 to 1877. He was subsequently appointed to the Senate, where he served as Speaker from 1896 to 1901. He was lieutenant-governor of Quebec from 1908 to 1911.

Oscar's maternal ancestors, the Casgrains and the Babys, came from old, elite French-Canadian families. His grandfather, Charles-Eusèbe Casgrain,² his uncle, Charles-Eugène Casgrain,³ and his cousin,

Thomas-Chase Casgrain,⁴ all had political careers. Another of his uncles, Abbé Henri-Raymond Casgrain,⁵ was a celebrated author, publisher, historian, and genealogist.



The Honourable Sir Charles Alphonse Pantaléon Pelletier, lawyer, Member of Parliament, and lieutenant-governor of Quebec from 1908 to 1911. (Library and Archives Canada PA-27876)

Following 10 years of classical education at the Petit Séminaire de Québec and studies in law at Laval University, young Pelletier was groomed for a brilliant career in law and politics. However, he was to disappoint his father on this score, because the profession of arms held more attraction for him than the Bar. The well-told tales of the military exploits of his ancestors, the Babys, by his uncle, Abbé Casgrain, perhaps sowed the seeds of this attraction to military life, though there are strong indications that his father played an involuntary role. Charles Alphonse Pantaléon Pelletier had graduated from the School of Military Instruction in Quebec City and had served for several years as an officer of the 9th Battalion, Voltigeurs de Québec, commanding his battalion during the Fenian raids⁶ in 1866.

In September 1881, shortly after leaving the seminary and beginning his law studies, Pelletier initially enrolled in the 10th Queen's Own Canadian Hussars, a Quebec City cavalry regiment of the non-permanent active militia, the uniform of which was apparently most dashing and attractive and, in Pelletier's words, "turned the heads of the fair sex."⁷ He began as a cornet in this regiment but was soon promoted to "Cornet-Major."⁸ Around April 1884, he transferred to the 9th Battalion, Voltigeurs de Québec, in which he obtained an officer's commission together with the rank of second lieutenant.

In June 1884 he was one of the first candidates to be accepted into the Military Infantry School at Saint-Jean, which was commanded at the time by Colonel Gustave d'Odet d'Orsonnens. He took his officer training there and obtained the commission certificates required to confirm his rank of second lieutenant. Shortly thereafter he was promoted lieutenant, and then adjutant of his battalion. Pelletier viewed his time at the Military School in Saint-Jean as the real starting point of his military career and the beginning of a new era in his life.⁹

In March 1885, shortly after completing his training at Saint-Jean, Pelletier moved to Kingston to take courses in topography, elements of engineering, and military administration. However, an unexpected event was to disrupt his studies.

THE 1885 NORTHWEST EXPEDITION

On 6 March 1885, the Battle of Duck Lake between Louis Riel's Métis and elements of the North-West Mounted Police (NWMP) marked the start of the North-West Rebellion. Major-General Frederick Middleton, the British officer commanding the Canadian Militia, who was then in Winnipeg, telegraphed immediately to Sir Adolphe Caron, the Conservative minister of militia and defence, informing him of the serious turn of events and the urgency of deploying regular troops and the urban regiments of the non-permanent militia. Canada was now on a war footing.

The outbreak of the North-West Rebellion did not leave Canadians unmoved, regardless of whether they were anglophone or francophone. According to historian Desmond Morton, "the crisis united the Dominion. English Canadians remembered Thomas Scott and 1870; while French Canadians were horrified by Riel's anti-Catholic apostasy and by the murder at Frog Lake of two Catholic missionaries on April 2."¹⁰

Pelletier could hardly conceal his enthusiasm over the mobilization, as he saw it as an opportunity to advance his career. He had but one objective: to join one of the units that were setting out to conquer western Canada.

As the adjutant of the 9th Battalion, Voltigeurs de Québec, Pelletier could not believe that his unit would be mobilized, when there were so many units of the non-permanent militia much closer to the theatre of operations.¹¹ In the belief that the first units to become engaged in this conflict would be those of the permanent militia, he opted to join the artillery detachment in Kingston, where he was undergoing training.

Since his father was an ardent Liberal, Pelletier could hardly ask him to intercede with the Conservative Government. Then he had a brilliant idea. Even though he was the Liberal member for the constituency of Islet, his uncle, Philippe Baby Casgrain, was on excellent terms with Caron. Pelletier quickly sent him a letter explaining how much Caron's assistance might influence his future. He stressed to his uncle that he must never tell his father of this plan.

On 27 March 1885, "B" Battery, as the artillery detachment stationed at Kingston was designated, received its mobilization order. It was to be ready to move west on a few minutes' notice. There was jubilation and frantic activity in the barracks. Pelletier was impatient: two of his comrades from Québec City received authorization to be attached to this unit of the expeditionary corps, while he continued to wait for a reply from his uncle in Ottawa.¹²

With only hours to go before the departure of the unit, Pelletier was furious to be staying behind. Suddenly, Colonel Montizambert, his commanding officer, summoned him to his office and handed him the long-awaited telegram. Pelletier had finally received permission to join the detachment. He hurried to announce the good news to his comrades and to his teachers at the Royal Military College of Canada. On 28 March 1885, the elements of "B" Battery left Kingston station to an enthusiastic send-off from the crowd.

After a long, tedious journey, Pelletier and his comrades reached Winnipeg, from where they were immediately dispatched further west towards Qu'Appelle. Soon elements of "A" Battery from Quebec City joined them. This battery, which originally thought that it would serve throughout the operations with its sister battery from Kingston, was assigned to "Middleton's column" and redeployed to Batoche. "B" Battery subsequently moved to Swift Current, via Regina, to join the column led by Colonel William Dillon Otter. On 11 April "Otter's column" left Swift Current and marched towards Battleford.

On 23 April after information was received that the Cree Chief Poundmaker and his men were encamped at Cut Knife Hill some 50 kilometres from Battleford, Colonel Otter informed the expedition's commander, Major-General Middleton. Fearing that Poundmaker would unite his forces with those of his acolyte, Big Bear, who had already inflicted serious damage on the colonists he had encountered, Otter proposed a plan of attack, which was summarily rejected by his superior. As a result, Otter proposed a new plan on 26 April. Middleton, however, again dismissed it: Otter was to remain at Battleford to defend the town.

Otter was disappointed that he and his men would not see action before the end of the campaign. However, he was also stubborn. He

decided to send a reconnaissance party of 325 men to Cut Knife Hill. Pelletier was in this group, which left Battleford on 1 May. At dawn the following day, the advance party of the group approached Poundmaker's camp, but the enemy spotted them immediately.

The advance party was met by a substantial volley. The two obsolete 7-pounders and the Gatling gun brought along for the occasion — while effective 9-pound guns remained at Battleford — were pushed forward and immediately opened fire on the enemy. After firing the initial rounds, the fittings fell off the mounts because they were in such bad condition. The recoil blew a gun backwards and overturned it, to the great dismay of the gunners, who were then obliged to manhandle it back onto its mount and tie it down.¹³

The detachment of artillerymen to which Pelletier belonged spread out behind the guns to offer a smaller target for the enemy. These gunners were also to provide an escort in the event the enemy attempted to



The 10th Queen's Own Canadian Hussars with a No. 25 Nordenfelt five-barrel rifle-calibre gun on a galloping carriage, 1887. (Library and Archives Canada C-648)

capture the guns. In the course of this task, a bullet from a hunting rifle hit Pelletier, going through his left thigh without breaking the bone. The military campaign about which he had dreamed so much was over. When Otter fell back, Pelletier was taken back to Battleford, which was an especially painful experience for the wounded.

The North-West Rebellion officially ended on 15 May 1885, and when "B" Battery redeployed to Kingston the train made a brief stop at Winnipeg. During this break in the journey, Pelletier took the opportunity to see his comrades from the 9th Battalion, Voltigeurs de Québec. In the wake of an offer by the commanding officer of this regiment, Lieutenant-Colonel Guillaume Amyot, followed by a telegram to his colleague, the minister of militia and defence, Pelletier was able to return to Quebec City with his comrades from his regiment of the non-permanent active militia.¹⁴ On 21 July 1885, Quebec City gave its Voltigeurs a triumphal reception. Shortly after his arrival, Pelletier went before a medical board to determine whether his wound rendered him unfit for duty. He was recommended for convalescent leave until the fall.

THE SOUTH AFRICAN WAR

Once his convalescence was complete, Pelletier opted to join the permanent active militia in October 1885 to make his career in the profession of arms. He obtained the acting rank of lieutenant in the Royal Canadian Artillery pending his successful completion of the examinations. By happy chance, his first posting was to "B" Battery in Kingston, the unit in which he had served during the North-West Campaign. He was confirmed in the rank of lieutenant in June 1887.¹⁵

During the ensuing years, his military career followed a normal course. In 1893 he was privileged to be chosen as a candidate for a training course in England. In addition to taking an advanced course in artillery, he took part in large-scale tactical manoeuvres over a period of four months. A highly cultured man, Pelletier used his stay to good advantage to visit and learn. He also had the fortunate privilege



Major-General Edward Thomas Henry Hutton, general officer commanding of the Canadian Militia. (Library and Archives Canada C-006359)

of meeting the Empress Eugénie, the widow of Emperor Napoleon III of France, who was then in exile in Great Britain. Upon leaving England, Pelletier spent some time in France.

On his return from Europe in September 1893, armed with a first-class certificate that qualified him as a staff officer in the British Army, Pelletier was assigned to train field artillery batteries of the permanent active militia. In 1897, as a brevet captain, he became acting commander of Military District No. 7, Quebec City. He had to wait until 1901 before his position and his rank to occupy such a position were finally confirmed.

On 5 September 1899, Pelletier received a confidential letter from Major-General Edward Thomas Henry Hutton, who was at the time the British commander of the Canadian Militia. Hutton informed him that a war in South Africa was possible and that Canadian participation in it was probable. In such an eventuality, Hutton proposed to Pelletier that he recommend him for command of an infantry battalion comprising four companies. Command of the Regiment would go to Colonel Otter, his former commander at Cut Knife Hill.¹⁶

Pelletier was flattered when he received this letter, which testified to the confidence that the commander of the Canadian Militia had in him. Hutton, for whom he had great admiration, personified the true soldier. In contrast to 1885, however, Pelletier was no longer as free as he had been to accept such an offer. He had married Alice Archer in 1889, and now had four children. After making sure that his family would want for nothing, he nonetheless agreed to join the Royal Canadian Regiment, specifically the second battalion (2 RCR) which was formed for the occasion under the name of the 2nd (Special Service) Battalion, The Royal Canadian Regiment of Infantry, one company of which was raised at Quebec City. On 30 October 1899, he embarked at Quebec City on the *Sardinian* for South Africa. A large crowd gathered to cheer the Canadian contingent on its departure.

In South Africa, 2 RCR, commanded by Otter, was divided into two components. Half the battalion was designated as the "left wing." It comprised companies whose volunteers came mainly from British Columbia, Manitoba, and Ontario, and was led by Lieutenant-Colonel Lawrence Buchan, who, because of his seniority, was also designated

deputy commanding officer of the regiment. The "right-wing" were companies whose members came from Quebec and the Maritime provinces. Lieutenant-Colonel Oscar Pelletier commanded this element. Although they were lieutenant-colonels, these two members of the permanent active militia served as majors.

Pelletier undoubtedly had the experience and knowledge to command a half-battalion, but there were many who thought that his appointment might have been motivated by political reasons. According to historian Carman Miller, efforts had been made to recognize the bilingual nature of Canada when the contingent was formed for South Africa. French Canadians, Franco-Ontarians, and Acadians were combined in "F" Company. It was thus important that this company, together with the three English-speaking companies from eastern Canada, be under the command of Pelletier, a francophone. The authorities believed, perhaps wrongly, that such a choice might make public opinion among French Canadians more favourable to Canada's participation in a British imperial war.

The initial days in South Africa were monotonous. After too long spent waiting, the Canadians moved inland where they were exposed to the sandstorms on the veldt. Pelletier recommended against being in a sandstorm to anyone who wanted to "experience it as a hobby!"¹⁷ The Canadians had to wait until 8 January 1900, before they received their baptism of fire. If Pelletier had had little opportunity to become familiar with action in the North-West campaign in 1885, he was to be amply compensated in the course of the South African campaign.

Following operations against a group of Boers who were carrying out raids near the village of Douglas, which was close to Belmont, where the Canadians were stationed, the British camp commander decided that a decisive strike was required against the property of the Boer commander, Lubbe, who was suspected of sheltering a group of armed men. Apparently, the assault force commanded by Pelletier had the honour of being the first British force to tread the soil of the Orange Free State since the start of the war.¹⁸

On 12 February 1900, after a stay at Belmont, 2 RCR rejoined the other regiments that made up General Smith-Dorrien's 19th Infantry

Brigade. The forces of the Boer General Cronje had to be prevented at all costs from linking up with those of General Christian de Wet. Therefore, the British and the Canadians had to get to Paardeberg. This was achieved by 18 February, but the Canadians, like their British comrades, were exhausted and worn out by the long march, heat, hunger, and thirst. However, they caught up with and trapped Cronje's withdrawing force at Paardeberg Drift.

Cronje's Boers occupied an advantageous position on the other side of the Modder River. Without a respite, the Canadians were ordered to cross the river and attack the Boer encampment. As soon as they crossed the river and advanced, the Canadians came under fire albeit from spent rounds. Colonel Otter immediately ordered two companies to continue forward as quickly as possible, and get as close as possible to the enemy position. Two other companies were to support the first two. Pelletier was ordered to deploy his half-battalion in reserve for the attack. The Regiment subsequently spent the day in the open under enemy fire. In the late afternoon a British battalion was pushed ahead to try and break the deadlock. However, their ill-advised charge, which swept the Canadians with it, proved disastrous against the Boer wall of lead. The British and Canadian troops all went to ground and lay there until darkness, at which time the order to withdraw came.

The battle for Paardeberg dragged on for over a week. It was no easy victory. Cronje's Boers, although encircled and outnumbered, put up a determined resistance, even though they were shelled daily. On 27 February 1900, a decisive night attack was planned against Cronje's positions, known as the "Cronje Laager." Six companies of the RCR made up the assault wave. Pelletier was in command of three and Buchan commanded the others. When they came within 100 yards of the enemy, the Canadians were hit by a hellish fusillade aimed directly at them.

"F" and "G" Companies, from Quebec and the Maritimes respectively, under Pelletier's command, suffered particularly in this attack, during which most of the losses were sustained in the first 15 minutes.¹⁹ Pelletier himself was wounded in the right arm, near the shoulder, at the start of the action. He was not immediately aware of it, however, as

he was surprised and dazed by the violence of the sudden onslaught. Several minutes passed before he was able to restore order in the disarray caused by the initial volleys. Only then did he realize that he had been wounded.²⁰

Pelletier was afraid of becoming weak to the point where he could no longer retire if the order were given. He crawled, so as not to be hit again, as far as the first dressing station. He did not think his wound was serious, but he was evacuated to Kimberley, some 30 kilometres farther on, presumably because of the potential for infection.²¹

After a few days' convalescence, Pelletier rejoined his Royal Canadian Regiment at Bloemfontein. Incorporated into General Sir Ian Hamilton's column, it advanced on Johannesburg to rejoin the main body of the Army, commanded by Lord Roberts. On the way, the Canadians fought several engagements, including Israel Poort (25 April 1900), where Otter was wounded,²² Zand River (10 May 1900), and Doorkop (29 May 1900).

After Johannesburg, it was Pretoria's turn to fall into British hands. The RCR entered the city on 5 June 1900. Between the capture of Pretoria and the end of the commitment of the Canadian contingent, the regiment took part in a number of secondary engagements, including the protection of strategic points on the lines of communication.

Pelletier was involved in virtually all the operations assigned to the RCR. Assessment of his leadership was divided. Although he took his role as a half-battalion commander very seriously, he failed to win the admiration of his commander, Colonel William Otter. Otter had no great opinion of his two subordinate commanders. He felt that Buchan was unreliable and disloyal and that Pelletier was ineffective.²³

With such subordinates, Otter felt handicapped as commander. Regarding Pelletier, he had no hesitation in describing him as "excitable, worrying, useless; that he had a pitiful character; that he had a tendency to flinch under stress and that he was a perfect child."²⁴ Was this series of insults levelled by Otter at Pelletier justified? Pelletier undoubtedly made some missteps and displayed weakness on a few occasions, notably at Paardeberg when he went to the rear, leaving his company commanders to lead their men in battle. However, it must be said that

Otter trusted only himself, and it is highly probable that any other man commanding either of his half-battalions would have been on the receiving end of similar judgments. Otter, moreover, did not limit his acerbic comments to Pelletier, but included all the members of his contingent. Otter detested Buchan more than he did Pelletier.



Lieutenant-Colonel W.D. Otter, commander First Canadian Contingent, 2nd (Special Service) Battalion, The Royal Canadian Regiment. (Library and Archives Canada C-14234)

Otter himself was criticized by some of his superiors. Laurence Drummond, military secretary to the governor general, Lord Minto, who accompanied the Canadian contingent, unhesitatingly rated Otter a "lamentably weak commander,"²⁵ whereas he had only complimentary terms to describe Pelletier, Buchan and several other officers.

Although he was not admired by his commander, Pelletier was highly regarded by his subordinates throughout the contingent's service in South Africa. Private Lucien Vallée, who was also wounded at Paardeberg, had nothing but praise for his former officer, stating unhesitatingly that Pelletier and the unit's adjutant, John Herbert Cecil Ogilvy, were the bravest in all these battles.²⁶

Newspapers also sang Pelletier's praises. On 11 April 1900, the *Daily Telegraph* of Saint John, New Brunswick, wrote:

The regiment greatly regrets that Major Pelletier, who commanded the right wing half of the battalion, was wounded in the arm, while he was in command on the morning of February 27. Major Pelletier is as brave as a lion and is adored by his soldiers because of his admirable politeness to all.²⁷

THE WARRIOR'S RETURN

After the British took Pretoria on 5 June 1900, many of the Canadian soldiers believed that they had accomplished their mission. For some time the citizen soldiers of the Canadian contingent had worried about the businesses they had left behind, wanted to see their families and friends again, or simply wished to take up their lives again where they had left off. It was time to return to the fold! Despite an apparent facade of solidarity among the members of the contingent, the issue of the battalion's departure for Canada divided the personnel of the Royal Canadian Regiment. Otter was partially responsible for this when he agreed that the regiment would remain longer in South Africa. Only a few members of his staff had been consulted, and the majority were in

favour of extending their presence, but that was not the sentiment of the bulk of those serving in the Regiment.

Discontent increased among the officers and men as a result of the boredom and tedium of rear area protection duties, especially following the discovery of a message from the commander of the lines of communication asking for a list of all the members who did not wish to extend their service voluntarily and who wanted to be repatriated to Canada. The cancellation of this message by Lord Roberts himself added fuel to the flames. Why did the Canadian volunteers have to remain longer in South Africa against their will, when some of their British volunteer comrades had already received authorization to be repatriated?

Otter could not hold out against the discontent of his subordinates for long. With great regret, he informed Lord Roberts that only 300 of his men had agreed to extend their period of service. Only the members of the permanent militia, as well as the reinforcements who had arrived after the main body and who had not yet completed their tour of duty, were obliged to remain in South Africa. Otter delegated to Pelletier responsibility for the operations surrounding the return to Canada by appointing him commander of the main body.

On 1 October 1900, the Canadians embarked on the *SS Idaho* bound for Halifax. The ship stopped at the island of Saint Helena in the South Atlantic to land some 200 Boer prisoners. Feeling duty-bound Pelletier used the opportunity provided by this delay to visit the Longwood plateau, where Napoleon Bonaparte had lived from October 1815 until his death on 5 May 1821.

Upon their return to Canada, Pelletier and his troops received a triumphal welcome from the city's population when the *Idaho* docked at Halifax on 2 November 1900. An ecstatic crowd welcomed the soldiers who had departed a year earlier. As commander, Pelletier had the honour of being the first to set foot on Canadian soil and was given a tremendous ovation. This merely added to his popularity, and his portrait even appeared on the front page of the daily *La Presse*.²⁸

When he reached Quebec City, the city presented its hero with a sword of honour. His name and his exploits were already well-known to the entire French-Canadian population and even among the anglophone

communities in Quebec. Judge Adolphe-Basile Routhier, the author of the anthem "O Canada," unhesitatingly hailed him as the "new de Salaberry, who set out to defend the British flag in Africa" and as the "hero of Canada."²⁹

The Quebec City *Chronicle* wrote of him:

That Colonel Pelletier is the idol of the members of the Contingent is well known. His courage in the face of danger was equalled only by his knowledge of military tactics, which enabled him in many circumstances to save the lives of his men that would have been pointlessly sacrificed by a less experienced and caring officer. Always benevolent, he nonetheless maintains discipline to ensure that his men respect him and obey him unquestionably whatever order is given, thereby ensuring their esteem and their love to the point where they will follow him anywhere. And that is what they did, and it is his leadership that has given us much of the glory that they have earned and which has reflected so much credit on the Dominion.

As a French Canadian, he has proved his loyalty in the most practical way, leaving the ease and comfort of his home for the jagged mountain slopes of South Africa, giving up the position of Commander in Chief of this District.³⁰

After his triumphal welcome in his hometown, Lieutenant-Colonel Pelletier resumed his duties as commander of the Quebec City Military District. Although the South African war was now behind him, there was no doubt whatsoever about his leadership as commander of the district. Whether the criticism levelled at him by his superior was justified or not, Pelletier henceforth enjoyed enormous popularity in French-Canadian society, and the media coverage he received made him the best-known and most celebrated soldier of his generation.

Nonetheless, this veteran of two wars was accustomed to action, and he was disillusioned by the return to normal pre-war life. He felt that a military career had taken on the attributes of a bourgeois profession and

had acquired the reputation of a privileged bureaucracy. The public no longer took the wearing of the uniform seriously,³¹ to the great detriment thereof.

His return as district commander, confirmed in his rank of lieutenant-colonel, left no one unmoved. The success of the promising military careers of Pelletier and his friend François-Louis Lessard caused disquiet among the anglophone military elite. A rumour circulated that one of them would soon take command of Toronto's Military District No. 2, which made headlines:

Some important changes in militia commands are said to be pending ... Col. Otter, at the present DOC [District Officer Commanding] and Inspector of infantry at Toronto, is slated for the position of QMG at Headquarters, in succession to Col. Foster, and, if rumour is to be relied on, either Lieut. Col. Pelletier, at present DOC at Quebec, or Lt-Col Lessard, commanding the RCD, will become DOC of No. 2 Military District, the duties of Inspector of Infantry being assumed by Lt-Col Buchan, who commands the RCRI.

While THE GAZETTE is willing to acknowledge that Lieut.-Cols Pelletier and Lessard are two worthy officers, well fitted for the command in Toronto, it must keep in sight the fact that they are juniors in the permanent force, and, if good work accomplished in the past counts for anything, there are other officers who are certainly entitled to the "plums." The position of DOC at Toronto is the goal of the ambition of all the permanents, and, unless "pull" political or otherwise, is brought to bear, the Minister of Militia, in justice to the men who have spent lifetime in the service and who are in every way qualified, should see that they are not passed over when promotions are being made.³²

Happily for his detractors, Pelletier never became the commander of the Toronto Military District. Pelletier did leave his command in Quebec City, but for a different reason.

On the strength of his war experience, his great reputation, and his skill, Pelletier continued to command at Quebec City. He was feared and highly respected by his unit commanders in the non-permanent militia of Military District No. 7. At the annual summer gatherings of the non-permanent active militia, it appeared that nothing escaped him. According to Georges-Émile Marquis, the historian who commanded the Régiment de Lévis from 1920 to 1925, Pelletier:

conducted the daily inspection of the rows of tents in Lauzon Camp and supervised the drills on the parade ground. His passage always made a great impression, as there was no chatting with him, or casual display, still less dereliction of duty. His movements bore the stamp of a true soldier, and he issued his orders in a powerful voice that carried far; his eagle eye also uncovered any flaw, however slight, in the turnout of the troops.³³

His leadership and his freedom of action nonetheless became more limited from 1904 onward, the year in which it was decided that the Military Districts in each province or region should be regrouped into a single centralized regional command. Following the formation of the Quebec Region Command, Pelletier was appointed chief of staff of the new organization and was obliged to move to Montreal with his family. His position entitled him to a residence, but the cost of upkeep, combined with the overall cost of living in the city, cast a shadow over his time in Montreal. His passion for his horses, which he took with him from Quebec City, was also dampened by disputes with the City of Montreal over special taxes, which he refused to pay.³⁴

The year 1908 nonetheless brought balm for Pelletier's heart. On Quebec City's grandiose tri-centennial ceremonies, Pelletier was temporarily recalled to Quebec City and appointed aide-de-camp to the head of the French Mission, Vice-Admiral Horace Anne Alfred Jauréguiberry, the son of the famous Jean-Bernard Jauréguiberry, who had made his name during the Crimean War and French military operations in Indochina. The excellence of Pelletier's work earned him the decoration

of Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur, but the military authorities of the very British Canadian Militia refused to allow him to wear this foreign decoration.³⁵ After more than a year of tergiversations they relented and Pelletier was finally permitted to wear his Légion d'Honneur.

In 1910, following the reversal back to the former organization of the Military Districts of Montreal and Quebec City, Pelletier was finally able to return to the city of his birth. He was promoted colonel in November 1910, and officially appointed commander of the Fifth Divisional Region, a name newly assigned to the Quebec City Military District, with effect from 1 May 1911. Unfortunately, Pelletier was not able to enjoy his promotion for long, as he began to suffer from deafness, the first symptoms of which had become apparent during the South African campaign, as a result of the sandstorms. The deterioration of his hearing seriously affected the performance of a number of duties. It was with great regret that he made the decision to end his military career in the fall of 1912.

GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

A few days after the declaration of war by Great Britain on Germany, Pelletier, who had been enjoying a peaceful retirement for two years, was precipitately recalled by the military authorities. He was entrusted with a special military mission to Anticosti Island, which was already considered an important strategic point. The mission appears to have been ordered by Canadian Military Intelligence.³⁶

Apart from this special mission to Anticosti Island, the Canadian government never considered calling on Pelletier's services for a command position in the Canadian Expeditionary Corps. Historian Jean-Pierre Gagnon deplores the judgment of Sam Hughes, the minister of militia and defence, in the use he made of experienced men such as Pelletier and Lessard.³⁷ As far as Pelletier was concerned, age and deafness may have been a handicap in his case, although other officers who were older and less experienced obtained commands.

Even if he was not part of the Canadian Expeditionary Corps, Pelletier's reputation meant that he was called upon when the famous 22nd Battalion (French-Canadian) was formed. On 2 October 1914, Pelletier accepted the offer of its founder, Surgeon Captain Arthur Mignault, to come to Montreal to make a speech and lend his assistance in organizing the regiment.³⁸

Although Pelletier's services were not considered for overseas service, two of his 11 children, his son René and his daughter Juliette, donned uniforms and crossed the Atlantic. René, an infantry officer in the 14th Battalion (Royal Montreal Regiment), unfortunately died of wounds he received at Thiepval, France, on 27 September 1916. Juliette served as a military nurse in Salonica, Britain, and France. During the Second World War, she commanded the Canadian Army Women's Division at Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue.

Little is known about Oscar Pelletier's life in retirement after the First World War, except that he divided his time between his home in Quebec City and his summer home in Kamouraska, where he indulged in one of his grand passions, sailing.

In 1940, towards the end of his life, he published his memoirs at the insistence of his friends, in particular his cousin Reverend Major Philippe Casgrain. His work, *Mémoires, souvenirs de famille et récits* (Memoirs, Family, Remembrances and Tales), never reached the bookstores.³⁹ In its pages, readers will discover Pelletier's other qualities, namely his great knowledge and a definite talent for writing.

Even though he had withdrawn from society, Pelletier's reputation remained high long after his retirement. Upon his death at the age of 80 on 28 March 1943, the French-language newspapers in Quebec devoted considerable attention to him, recalling the full span of his career and his great qualities. On the occasion of his funeral in Quebec City on 31 March 1943, the daily *Le Soleil* even put him on its front page. This was indeed unusual in the midst of the Second World War, when the entire attention of the media was focused on news from the front and the war effort.

Pelletier was entitled to a funeral with full military honours. Military, political, and Church dignitaries came in large numbers to pay homage to this man, who had set an example for many French

Canadians. Among them were an old comrade in arms from the South African War, Major-General Sir Eugène Fiset, who had in the meantime become the lieutenant-governor of Quebec;⁴⁰ Major-General Thomas-Louis Tremblay; Brigadier Edmond Blais, commander of Military District No. 5; the former premier of Quebec, Louis-Alexandre Taschereau; and Senator Thomas Chapais. French Canada was well-aware that it had just lost one of its most illustrious leaders.

NOTES

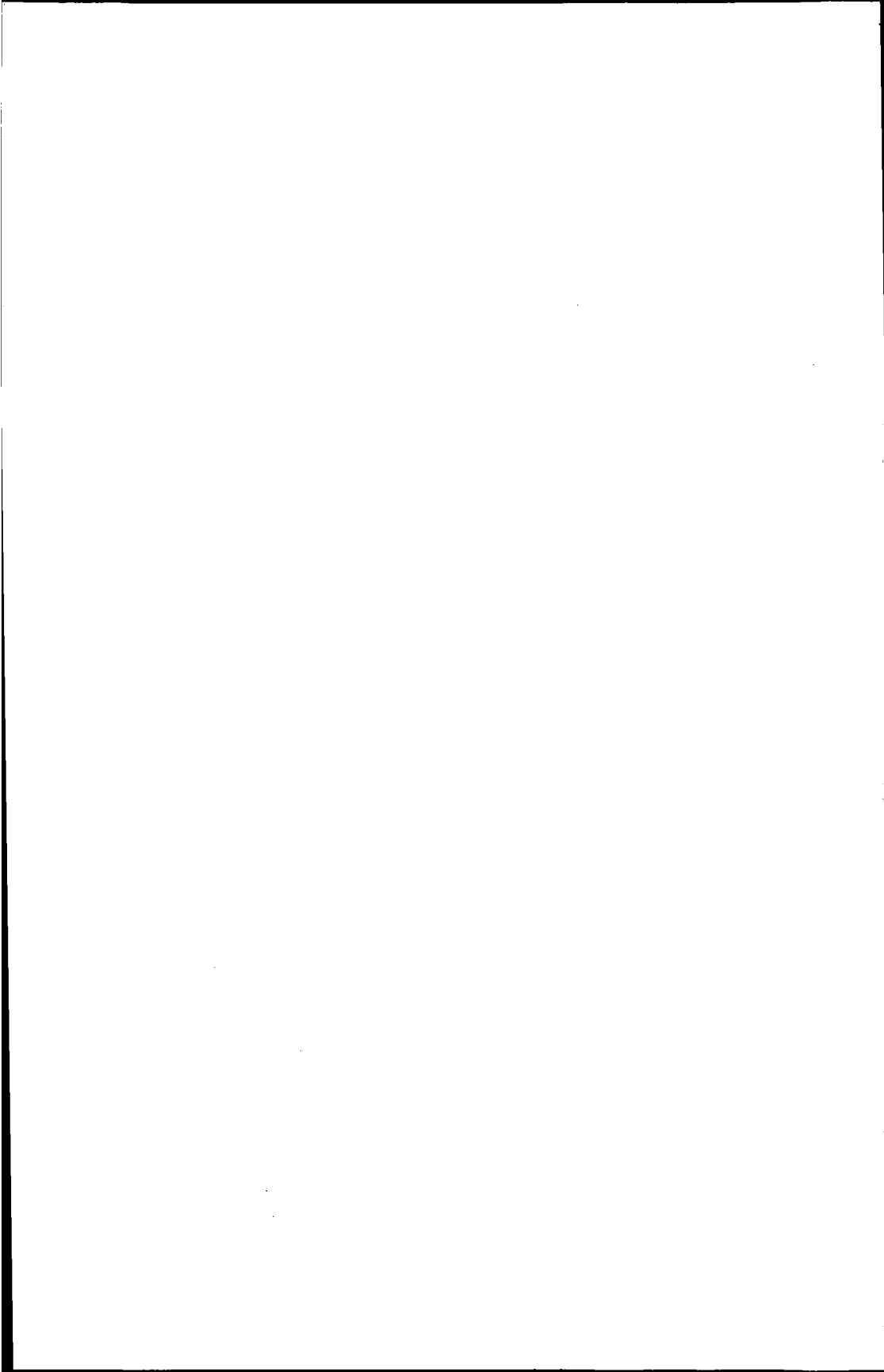
1. During Pelletier's professional career, which stretched from 1885 to 1912, the percentage of francophone officers in the permanent active militia varied between 8.4 percent and 14.2 percent. Jean Pariseau and Serge Bernier, *French Canadians and Bilingualism in the Canadian Armed Forces, Vol. 1, 1763-1969: The Fear of a Parallel Army* (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 1987), 52.
2. Charles-Eusèbe Casgrain (1800-1848) was the MP for Kamouraska from 1830 to 1834. He was a member of the Special Council from 1838 to 1841. His father, Pierre Casgrain, was the *seigneur* of Rivière-Ouelle.
3. Charles-Eugène Casgrain (1825-1907), a physician by training, was a senator from 1887 to 1907.
4. Thomas-Chase Casgrain (1852-1916), a lawyer by training, was elected as the Conservative member for the riding of Quebec City from 1886 to 1890, and then in the riding of Montmorency from 1892 to 1904. He was re-elected unopposed in 1914. He served as minister of the post office in the Borden Cabinet from 1914 until his death in 1916.
5. Born in Rivière-Ouelle in 1831, Henri-Raymond Casgrain opted for an ecclesiastical rather than a medical career. As a result of health problems, he became interested in literature and published numerous works which earned him considerable prestige. He travelled widely in Europe and the United States and was on friendly terms with the heirs to a number of prominent French families. He was a noted man of letters, and also served as Chaplain to the 9th Battalion, Voltigeurs de Québec from 1869 to 1885. Casgrain died in 1904.
6. Adolphe-Basile Routhier, *Québec et Lévis à l'aurore du XXe siècle: Biographies et monographies* [Quebec City and Lévis at the Dawn of the 20th Century: Biographies and

- Monographs*] (Montreal: La Compagnie de Publication Samuel de Champlain, 1900), 89–90. This information does not appear in the various studies and publications about the Voltigeurs de Québec.
7. Oscar Pelletier, *Mémoires, souvenirs de famille et récits* [*Memoirs: Family Memories and Tales*] (Quebec City: unpublished, 1940), 186.
 8. Library and Archives Canada (henceforth LAC), RG 150, 1992–93/167, box 84: “Dossier du quartier-général du colonel Oscar Pelletier” [“Headquarters File of Colonel Oscar Pelletier”]. Letter attesting to the service of Pelletier in the 10th Queen’s Own Canadian Hussars by the former commanding officer of the Regiment, Colonel J. Forsyth, dated 24 October 1911.
 9. The personal references to Pelletier throughout this chapter are taken from *Mémoires, souvenirs de famille et récits* (Quebec City: unpublished, 1940).
 10. Desmond Morton, *A Military History of Canada, from Champlain to the Gulf War* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1992), 101.
 11. The 9th Battalion, Voltigeurs de Québec was mobilized on 29 March 1885. The Voltigeurs de Québec and the 65th Battalion, Carabiniers Mont-Royal were the only two French-speaking regiments in the non-permanent active militia to be involved in the North-West Rebellion campaign. The citizens of Quebec City and Montreal bade farewell to their battalion as it left for the West with considerable enthusiasm. In Montreal, over 10,000 people attended the departure of the 65th Battalion, Carabiniers Mont-Royal, while a procession of people wearing snowshoes and carrying torches provided a splendid ceremony before a large crowd. See also the description in Pierre Vennat and Michel Litalien, *Carabiniers et Voltigeurs contre Louis Riel: Histoire militaire et politique méconnue* [*Carabiniers and Voltigeurs Against Louis Riel: A Little-Known Chapter in Military and Political History*] (Montreal: Éditions du Méridien, 2003).
 12. Pelletier, 205. According to Pelletier, the transfer of his comrades was possible because of their “influence” in high places.
 13. Pelletier, 233.
 14. Lieutenant-Colonel Guillaume Amyot was the Conservative Member of Parliament for the constituency of Bellechasse. In this capacity, he had no hesitation about telegraphing regularly and directly to his colleague, Adolphe Caron, throughout the North-West Campaign, without going through channels. For his part, Caron did the same and regularly intervened on behalf of Amyot’s unit. “Patronage” was a common practice at the time. Caron was no worse than any

- other minister of militia and defence. On this topic, see Desmond Morton, *The Last War Drum: The North-West Campaign of 1885* (Toronto: Hakkert, 1972), 33–38.
15. LAC, RG 150, 1992–93/167, box 84: *Dossier du Quartier-général du colonel Oscar Pelletier* [Headquarters File of Colonel Oscar Pelletier].
 16. Pelletier, 307. E.T.H. Hutton took command of the Canadian Militia in 1898. Shortly after he accepted the role, he realized the extent to which the militia was paralyzed by the favouritism of politicians and had no qualms about making himself heard, provoking the ire of politicians who demanded his recall to Britain. When Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier was slow to take a position with respect to Canada's participation in the war in South Africa, Hutton organized, unbeknownst to Laurier, a Canadian expeditionary contingent. Just before his recall came to a vote in the House of Commons, London recalled him with the offer of a command in South Africa.
 17. Pelletier, 313.
 18. Carman Miller, *Painting the Map Red. Canada and the South African War 1899–1902* (Ottawa: Canadian War Museum, 1993), 80.
 19. Eight of the 13 killed and 19 of 29 wounded in this engagement were members of "F" and "G" Companies.
 20. Pelletier, 325.
 21. Pelletier may perhaps have left the battlefield voluntarily because of the possibility of his wound becoming infected if it were not treated quickly. He was aware of the unsanitary conditions in the British camps and the lack of food, drinking water, and medication facilitated the uncontrollable spread of infection, with epidemics of fever and dysentery. These resulted in more deaths among the troops of the British Empire than did the bullets of the Boers. In regards to the battle, an "authoritative" voice in the night later called out for the troops to retire, and a mad scramble to reach the safety of friendly lines ensued. However, the far left two companies with their engineer support remained and continued to dig in, in the dark. At first light, the Boers were faced by dominating Canadian trenches less than 100 metres away from their front lines. As a result, they surrendered, thus, ending the Battle of Paardeberg.
 22. Command of the regiment passed to Buchan as a result.
 23. Desmond Morton, *The Canadian General Sir William Otter* (Toronto: Hakkert, 1974), 182.
 24. Letters, Otter to his wife, as quoted in Desmond Morton, *The Canadian General Sir William Otter*. See also the William Dillon Otter Collection at Library and Archives Canada.

25. He was not the only one to have this opinion. Letters from Drummond to Minto on 12 January and 10 February 1900, quoted in Miller, *Painting the Map Red*, 69.
26. Letter from Private Lucien Vallée to his mother, dated March 21, 1900. Reproduced in the French portion of the book by Gaston P. Labat, *Le Livre d'or (The Golden Book) of the Canadian Contingents in South Africa with an Appendix on Canadian Loyalty: Containing Letters, Documents, Photographs, Portraits of Queen Victoria; King Edward VII; and the Queen of England* (Montreal, 1901), 113.
27. Quoted in Labat, *Golden Book of the Canadian Contingents in South Africa*, 42 (of the French portion).
28. *La Presse*, 2 November 1900.
29. Adolphe-Basile Routhier, 90–91.
30. Quoted in Labat, *Golden Book of the Canadian Contingents in South Africa*, 42–43.
31. Pelletier, 360.
32. *Canadian Military Gazette*, 5 February 1901, 12.
33. G.-É. Marquis, "Le colonel Oscar Pelletier, troisième commandant du district militaire de Québec, 1897–1912" ["Colonel Oscar Pelletier, the Third Commander of the Quebec City Military District, 1897–1912"], *L'Amicale du 22ième*, Vol. 4, No. 6 (October 1950), 19.
34. LAC, RG 13, A-2, Vol. 143, file 1906–863: *Claim of City of Montreal Against Colonel Pelletier for Taxes on Military Chargers*.
35. LAC, RG 150, 1992–93/167, box 84: *Dossier du Quartier-général du colonel Oscar Pelletier [Headquarters File of Colonel Oscar Pelletier]*. Letter from the Adjutant-General of the Canadian Militia to the Commander of the Quebec Military Region; *Foreign Decoration*, dated 15 September 1908.
36. In his memoirs, Pelletier mentions that the purpose of the mission was to monitor the service of T.S.F. Marconi in this portion of the St. Lawrence River. Pelletier and his team landed at Anticosti, while another group based itself in the Gaspé. In these teams were specialists tasked with deciphering coded messages sent from London. Pelletier accordingly received the message announcing the declaration of war on Germany by Great Britain. Pelletier, 382–383. It is difficult to know exactly how long Pelletier served on Anticosti Island, other than it was from "just before the outbreak of hostilities in 1914 and for a certain period thereafter." LAC, RG 150, 1992–93/167, box 84: *Dossier du Quartier-général du colonel Oscar Pelletier [Headquarters File of Colonel Oscar Pelletier]*. This information is taken from a letter that he sent to the Department of Pensions and National Health in 1933.

37. Jean-Pierre Gagnon, *Le 22e bataillon (canadien-français), 1914–1919: Étude socio-militaire* [*The 22nd Battalion (French-Canadian), 1914–1919: A Socio-Military Study*] (Quebec City: Laval University Press, 1986), 381–82.
38. *La Presse*, 1 October 1914. In his memoirs, Pelletier makes no mention whatever of his involvement in the organization of 22nd Battalion (French-Canadian) of Infantry.
39. *L'Événement*, 29 March 1943.
40. *Le Soleil*, 31 March 1943.



CHAPTER SIX

*The Strength of Character:
Major-General F.L. Lessard*



JOHN MCFARLANE

Courage is not simply one of the virtues but the form of every virtue at the testing point.

— C.S. Lewis¹

Military analysts evaluating leaders consistently rank courage among the most desired characteristics.² Physical courage in the face of danger and moral courage to make difficult decisions do not always go together, but in the case of François-Louis Lessard they certainly did. His military career of 39 years began with the Quebec Garrison Artillery in 1880, and included service in South Africa, five years as the country's adjutant-general, and important administrative appointments in Canada during the First World War. Throughout this remarkable career, he experienced many unique situations that tested his mettle and established him as one of the country's most important military leaders.

Lessard was born in Quebec City on 9 December 1860, to a mother of Scottish background and a father employed as a secretary with the Permanent Building Society. François-Louis, known to his friends as Louis, attended Collège Saint Thomas in Montmagny and the Académie commerciale de Québec. Certainly his roots were well-established in the francophone community; however, he also valued British traditions, a

common characteristic of many francophone military leaders of the time such as Royal Military College of Canada (RMC) graduates Philippe-Henri Duperron Casgrain and Percy Girouard.³ In fact, he would be seen by some as acting more British than the British. In 1901, for example, he played the leading role in introducing the sport of polo to Toronto by bringing 26 ponies from Calgary and serving as the first captain of the city's Polo Club.⁴ It is interesting to note that some soldiers under his command in South Africa thought they recognized a French accent when he spoke English, while others identified it as British.⁵

The young Lessard's exposure to both cultures and respect for British traditions made him an ideal candidate to serve the Army that senior military leaders were hoping to build in Canada. During the final decades of the nineteenth century, as reliance on British professional soldiers was decreasing, attempts had begun to establish a professional Canadian force.⁶ Schools of instruction for those seeking commissions



Canadian scouts, Drietfontein, Transvaal. (Library and Archives Canada C-7987)

had been established since 1863 in Toronto and Quebec and a further step was taken in 1883 with the creation of small regular force infantry and cavalry schools at Toronto, Montreal, and Fredericton. Lessard had joined the Quebec Volunteer Militia Cavalry Squadron as a private in 1878 before joining the Quebec Garrison Artillery, "B" Battery, as an officer of the regular force two years later. In 1884, he transferred to the 65th Battalion of Rifles (Mount Royal Rifles) and a few months later to the Cavalry School Corps, later Royal Canadian Dragoons (RCD), one of the original permanent force units. He was well-aware that Canada's professional Army would be shaped largely by the actions of its first members during these formative years.⁷

The most important test for a soldier is on the battlefield. For Lessard, he would acquire his first experience of active service during the North-West campaign in 1885; however, as the cavalry's role was limited to protecting the supply lines, Lessard's group never came under fire. In 1893, his cavalry corps, which had become the RCD, moved to Toronto where he became Major Lessard the following year and inspector of cavalry in 1896. He was promoted lieutenant-colonel to command the Corps in July 1899, and received high praise from the *Military Gazette* for his enthusiasm and hard work. However, after two decades of service, on the eve of war in South Africa, he had yet to see battle.⁸

SOUTH AFRICAN EXPERIENCE, 1899–1902

On 12 October 1899 forces from the Boer republics of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State invaded the British Cape Colony and Natal, helping London justify an anticipated war in the area.⁹ The Canadian government announced a contribution of 1,000 volunteers and over 6,000 more would follow during the two-and-a-half-year struggle. Canadian support for the war was far from unanimous; however, francophone opposition to the war was not as fervent as some accounts claim, an important point when evaluating Lessard's support for the cause.¹⁰ A leading opponent, Henri Bourassa, admitted privately that

he could not understand why French-Canadian views of imperialism remained "unsettled" and support stayed so high for Canadian Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier, who emphasized a fight for humanity, religious freedom, and civil rights — such as securing the right to vote for subjects of the Crown living in the Boer colonies.¹¹ This was the cause that Lessard intended to defend when he offered his services and when he encouraged his francophone compatriots to volunteer with him.¹²

Lessard would be disappointed when, in accepting the Canadian offer of troops, Britain specified a preference for infantry over cavalry. With no hope of embarking with his own mounted regiment, Lessard volunteered for special service with the First Contingent, consisting entirely of infantry, which sailed at the end of October 1899. After his arrival in South Africa Lessard joined the staff of the commander of the British Cavalry, Sir John French, and he gained some valuable experience, most notably during the relief of Kimberley in February 1900. He would soon have the opportunity to put this to good use in command of his own Canadian mounted battalion.

In December 1899, London accepted a second Canadian contingent. Two battalions of Canadian Mounted Rifles (CMR), consisting of 750 men and three batteries of Royal Canadian Field Artillery (RCHA) totalling 539 men, arrived in late March 1900.¹³ Lessard assumed command of the 1st Battalion CMR, whose manpower nucleus of trained soldiers came from the Royal Canadian Dragoons and Lessard argued successfully for the unit to be known under this designation. Although some of the recent volunteers who now found themselves Dragoons considered the request "rather absurd," the British were impressed, seeing Lessard's persistence as a defence of the regimental system and a commitment to building the traditions that lay at its heart.¹⁴

Lessard was anxious to take his battalion into action when it arrived in South Africa, too anxious for the British who would have preferred a few more weeks of training. He nonetheless had his wish immediately, and led the Dragoons in operations in the Cape Colony, the Orange Free State, and the Transvaal. In addition to scouting, escort, patrol duty, and raiding, the RCD averaged three engagements and five days of fighting

per month from April to November 1900. During this period the Dragoon's experience, the details of which have been well-documented elsewhere, included an impressive victory in a battle at Coetzee's Drift.¹⁵ After fighting disease, the elements, and the enemy, many looked forward to the end of the war. But after the Transvaal's capital, Pretoria, fell in June, the role of mounted infantry became more important than ever, as the Boer commandos adopted a guerrilla-style war.

Horsed soldiers were now essential for escort and reconnaissance duties, and to participate in raiding missions against Boer commandos. The task was not easy for the Dragoons, as the number of men, and horses, had declined to less than half of the original strength.¹⁶ Lessard himself was injured in an accident and spent most of August recovering. As with most casualties, his injury was not the result of enemy fire. After a battle at Witpoort Pass he was returning to camp in the dark over rocky ground when his horse fell on him, spraining his thigh.¹⁷ After his return he assumed command of the 1,400 troops at the Belfast military base. During his two weeks of command in mid-October, Lessard reportedly adopted a



Mounted infantry and Royal Canadian Dragoons crossing a South African river. (Courtesy Royal Canadian Dragoons Archives and Collection)

more aggressive stance than his predecessors, organizing and sending out a large number of expeditions into the surrounding countryside.¹⁸

During occasional confrontations with Boer commandos, Lessard led his fighting patrols with skill — most notably near Wonderfontein (30 August) and Van Wyk's Vlei (3 November).¹⁹ By the time the battalion left South Africa on 12 December, 1900, it had walked 1,700 miles and fought 27 engagements. However, patrols were characterized most often by monotonous routine. Days were long, nights were cold and police actions applying the British "scorched earth" policy — the destruction of farms suspected of hiding saboteurs or expulsion of women and children from their homes to clear the countryside of Boer supporters — were scarcely glorious or inspiring. The most notable exception was at Leliefontein in November 1900.

Major-General H. Smith-Dorrien, commander of the 19th Brigade at Belfast, led an expedition to disperse a Boer commando laagered in the area of Witkloof on the Komati River. Leaving Belfast on 6 November, the advancing troops included a section of the RCHA with two 12-pounder guns commanded by Lieutenant E.W.B. Morrison, and about 95 Dragoons.²⁰ The strength of the Boer forces and his own lack of mobility convinced Smith-Dorrien to return to camp. The following day the forces began to withdraw with the RCD and Morrison's guns, all under the command of Lessard, left behind to cover the retreat near a farm called Leliefontein.

As the Boers realized the British were retiring to Belfast, they raced to reach the strategic ridges that dominated the escape route. Lessard ordered a staggered withdrawal, with each element supporting the other's movement. One gun covered the withdrawal of the second, with the troops formed in a semi-circle on each side. Under increasing Boer pressure Lessard had to evaluate when to use the guns to support the rearguard and when to retreat. At one point when the 12-pounders were threatened, Morrison remembered Lessard galloping up and shouting "for God's sake Morrison save your guns! They are coming down on our flanks."²¹ Eventually the gunners made good their withdrawal, thanks to the assistance of three Dragoons — Sergeant Edward Holland who provided covering fire with his Colt machine gun (highly praised by Lessard),²² and



Saving the guns at Leliefontein. (Courtesy Royal Canadian Dragoons Archives and Collection)

Lieutenants H.Z.C. Cockburn and R.E.W. Turner who rushed to help stave off the Boer attackers. In the process, the leader of the Boer commando, commandant H.R. Prinsloo, and the commander of all Boer troops in the area, General J.C. Fourie, were killed, and the Boer attack lost momentum.

The British heaped praise and awards on the veterans of Leliefontein. Holland, Cockburn, and Turner received three of the four Victoria Crosses (VC) awarded to Canadians during the war for their actions. Morrison won the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) and Private W.E. Knisley of the Dragoons the Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM). The British may have gone somewhat overboard. Some members of the battalion believed that the fight had not been that exceptional. One Dragoon wrote that when the awards were announced “there was strong criticism made by many of the men as to why all of these honours had been awarded.²³ But certainly the Canadians had fought well, and the critics perhaps underestimated the consequences of failure by the rear guard, as well as the importance that the British commanders placed on saving guns.²⁴ Smith-Dorrien recorded in his diary that the “R. Canadian dragoons did splendidly saving 2 guns.”²⁵

Lessard has been praised by many for his role. Morrison echoed the sentiments of others when he wrote that during the fight at Leliefontein “we were holding our own nicely on the rearguard, thanks to Col. Lessard’s excellent disposition of his force.”²⁶ One officer who had served under him wrote, “as a soldier there was none better and we all loved him.”²⁷ Lessard was praised, along with his men, by the British commander-in-chief, Lord Roberts, and by Smith-Dorrien.²⁸ Carman Miller, the leading Canadian authority on the war, has written that “Lessard was superb: courageous, decisive, cool, and insistent, he remained with the rearguard. During the worst of the battle he rode along the ridge, keeping a general view of the engagement, anticipating moves, devising tactics, reassigning troops to shore up weak defences, making difficult decisions, and encouraging his men.”²⁹ Brereton Greenhous affirms, “the column was saved from heavier casualties and the possible loss of the guns by Col. Lessard’s tactical sense and his initiative.”³⁰ Brian Reid credits Lessard’s leadership qualities



Colt machine gun saved by Sergeant Holland. (Courtesy Royal Canadian Dragoons Archives and Collection)

(“he was both liked and respected by his men — a by no means common state of affairs”) for the exceptionally good performance of the Dragoons. “It was in the best traditions of the military profession,” argued Reid, “that he was among the last of his Dragoons to crest the ridge and it is a pity that, by the convention of the time, commanding officers were deemed ineligible for gallantry awards.”³¹

FIGHTING TO IMPROVE THE REGULAR FORCE, 1901–1914

As the regular force in Canada continued to take shape, Lessard was positioned to play an important role. He had proven to be an effective leader in battle, twice earning mention in dispatches, and, along with most commanders of colonial units, received a Companionship of the Order of the Bath (CB). He had acquired important military experience, learning from successes and problems, most notably the need for appropriate reinforcements of men and horses (Lessard emphasized the need to ensure adequate reinforcements as his Dragoons had 52 casualties — nine were killed in action, 16 died of disease, and 27 were wounded).³² After returning to Canada in 1901, Lessard continued to command the RCD in Toronto, and resumed his role as inspector of cavalry. His regiment was the model for the Royal School of Cavalry. As well, a contemporary explained, his courses of instruction “had a great influence upon the efficiency of the mounted troops of Eastern Canada” for in addition to those at the school “there were many others, also, who benefited from the courses of lectures on Military Law, Tactics, Strategy, Staff Duties and Topography, which Lessard delivered at the Military Institute and elsewhere ...”³³

Lessard’s experience in South Africa could thus be seen as having helped advance his career; he became substantive colonel and adjutant-general of the militia, in April 1907, brigadier-general in 1911 and major-general in 1912. However, praise for Lessard was not unanimous. Some accused him of being overly aggressive at Leliefontein when positioning the guns, rather than retreating more quickly.³⁴ In Lessard’s

defence it should be noted that many in his unit had become noticeably impatient with the long periods of inactivity and sought bolder action. Morrison remembered Lessard complaining in October 1900, in "viva-cious style" that "my men, they know how to advance all right, but they do not know how to retire. You cannot get them out of a fight."³⁵ He may have concluded that to order his men to retreat at this critical point of the battle would have undermined their morale.

In private letters during the war Major-General Hutton and Governor General Lord Minto also criticized Lessard's leadership.³⁶ Minto had idealized Sam Steele and the western riders, while questioning the ability of the professional Canadian cavalry.³⁷ The Conservative militia critic Sam Hughes was another who doubted Lessard's abilities. Such views, important because three powerful men shared them, were not widely held.³⁸

Two elements of Lessard's past may help explain the views of his critics. He had risen in the military establishment during the period in the late nineteenth century when key leaders were encouraging greater French-Canadian participation. When the war in South Africa broke out the call to arms clearly had greater appeal for anglophones and no more than 4 percent of the 7,368 Canadian volunteers were francophones, a percentage below the proportion of French-Canadian officers in the Canadian contingents. Those who had encouraged francophones, instead of creating obstacles to their enlistment, felt betrayed and from 1902 to 1914, the percentage of French-Canadian officers in the militia declined constantly.³⁹

Major-General Hutton, the British appointed commander of Canada's militia was one who felt betrayed.⁴⁰ However, outspoken nationalist, politician, and militia officer, Sam Hughes, was not because he had never hidden his francophobia, which only intensified.⁴¹ The prejudice Hughes felt towards francophones may have been sufficient reason to explain his doubts about Lessard.⁴² However, he had a second reason to dislike Lessard, the career officer from the permanent force.

There was a certain amount of tension between the permanent force and the active militia during the first decade of the century and Hughes emerged as the leading representative for the latter. His faith in

the Canadian Volunteer Army was strengthened by the problems he encountered in South Africa. A very enthusiastic supporter of the cause, Hughes had sought to raise his own contingent. He quarrelled with Hutton, who foreshadowed "trouble" should Hughes ever serve with British officers.⁴³ Hughes was incensed when the first contingent sailed with Lessard "attached for instructional purposes" and quick to find a place with the British, while he, "attached for passage" only, was not recommended for military service.⁴⁴ After much effort, Hughes did obtain a spot with the British, but was soon ordered home for violating orders and ended up frustrated with many groups, including French Canadians and the permanent force — British or Canadian.⁴⁵

Hughes carried this attitude with him. He opposed many of the reforms to Canada's Army under Minister of the Militia Sir Frederick Borden from 1896 to 1911 that sought to control political party influence and to encourage professionalism.⁴⁶ When Hughes became minister of the militia in 1911, his fight against the regulars was largely expressed against Lessard, a leading defender of the permanent force.⁴⁷ Hughes immediately began to expand the role of the volunteer citizen-soldier (who could cut through "red-tape") at the expense of the permanent force soldiers ("bar room loafers"), whom he believed should be relegated to instructional roles.⁴⁸

It should be added that Hughes was not a man for whom personalities were unimportant. His nationalism and his philosophical preference for the volunteer were often pretext.⁴⁹ The new minister had several confrontations with Lessard, most notably in April 1912, when Hughes attempted to promote himself to the rank of major-general.⁵⁰ By lining up with the permanent force against Hughes, Lessard ensured that he was not on the minister's list of friends. Lessard was, however, on the side of the British military establishment in Canada, which had concerns about Hughes's approach. The governor general, the Duke of Connaught, for example, reported that Hughes's "treatment of the officers of the PF [permanent force] has caused grave discontent." Hughes could hardly have been impressed with how famously Lessard got on with the British and this provided another reason, at the end of 1912, for Hughes to replace him as adjutant-general with Hughes's Tory

friend Victor Williams. Lessard went to a lesser post in Toronto, the command of Military District No. 2, the position he held at the start of the First World War.⁵¹

OVER HERE, 1914–1918

When Canada decided to contribute an Expeditionary Force (CEF) to support the British in August 1914 a commander had to be named. The Conservative minister of militia and defence considered several candidates to lead the 1st Canadian Division, including himself, while the British commander-in-chief, Lord Kitchener, provided a list of more experienced British officers to his liking. Major-General Lessard was not considered,⁵² despite having strong support. He was “held by many to be the most accomplished officer in the Canadian Forces” in 1914, according to the first official historian of the CEF Colonel A.F. Duguid.⁵³ Premier J.P. Whitney of Ontario, who referred to Sir John French’s praise of Lessard’s service in South Africa, advised Borden that “in my opinion Major-General Lessard should command the First contingent ... I think most people will agree with me that he is the one outstanding man for the position.”⁵⁴ J.F. Cummins, writing in the *Canadian Defence Quarterly* shortly after the First World War suggested that Lessard had been the best candidate to command the 1st Canadian Division because of his age, rank, experience, efficiency, and knowledge of both the francophone and anglophone military establishments.⁵⁵ But despite the protests of some of his supporters, including Chief of General Staff Sir Willoughby Gwatkin,⁵⁶ the major-general received no overseas command — not even a brigade.

Was it perhaps his age that made him ineligible for the position of senior commander overseas?⁵⁷ He was 53 in August, 1914, still younger than the leader eventually selected, Major-General E.A.H. Alderson, who was 55 years old when chosen by Hughes from the list of British officers provided by Kitchener. The commander Hughes later selected to lead 2nd Canadian Division, the western Canadian Major-General

Sam Steele, was 10 years older than Alderson! It was neither Lessard's age nor his rank that prevented Hughes from naming him to an overseas command. Hughes, who appointed few regular force officers to the CEF and paid little attention to professional qualifications,⁵⁸ certainly had no shortage of reasons for disappointing the francophone Catholic permanent force cavalry officer who circulated so comfortably among the British aristocrats.

Despite what the minister of militia believed, the prime minister was ultimately responsible for Canadian policy. Sir Robert Borden considered Hughes an able, energetic minister at times, but was convinced that "on matters which touch his insane egotism he is quite unbalanced." The appointment of officers was one of these matters. Borden regretted that Hughes's "peculiar methods" created so many problems during the initial recruitment period for the CEF in August-September 1914. "His intense vanity and a rather vindictive temper which developed during this period, contributed to the difficulty of the situation," Borden remembered.⁵⁹ Hughes's preference for loyal Conservatives could be even stronger than his preference for Canadian officers over British.⁶⁰ Although Borden recognized Hughes's weaknesses he left him as minister during the critical early years of the war. The blame for not using Lessard, and the disappointment that this and other policies created in Quebec must be shared by Borden who expressed support for the 65-year-old Steele as overseas commander but not for Lessard.⁶¹

Lessard accepted his fate and began the war by continuing his command of Military District No. 2.⁶² Contemporaries of Lessard observed that he had a reputation for asking much from his students — and being able to inspire them to achieve it. One commented that "Military District No. 2 under General Lessard was marked by an unusually advanced standard of training," and another said "we never had a man who was liked more generally. He was a stern disciplinarian, but he was just, and this was recognized by all."⁶³ But problems continued with Hughes who, in November 1914, publicly blasted Lessard's practice mobilization of Toronto militia units and in December, when Lessard was appointed inspector general for eastern Canada, Hughes set up a second inspection service to override Lessard's

militia inspection service. In both cases Borden sided with Lessard, as did military leaders and the Toronto press.⁶⁴

Lessard continued to focus his efforts on grooming young recruits and, in 1916, he visited Europe to report on Canadian troops training in England. He undoubtedly took some pleasure exposing certain problems, noting that too many officers were involved with training and that: "There is a certain amount of dissatisfaction existing among the troops, which is because of the want of coordination between French, English, and Canadian, in all subjects under instruction, with the exception of such of these whose officers in charge have gone to Canada to demonstrate what is really needed at the Front."⁶⁵ He emphasized the importance of the program in Canada evolving with direct input from soldiers at the front who were familiar with the most recent technological developments. Hughes decided not to publish the report. Before Lessard returned from this trip the prime minister asked him to stay in England; Borden was considering Lessard as senior military member of a proposed "Canadian Overseas Council," with Sir George Perley as president, to make promotions and appointments and approve purchases. However, this council, which was intended to improve the chaotic procedures of Hughes, was abandoned as Borden reaffirmed his confidence in his minister.⁶⁶

It is typical of Lessard that when he criticized his minister, always in private, his complaint was not about how Hughes was hurting his own career but rather how he was damaging the Canadian Forces. Lessard stated privately: "I am out for this man's [Hughes's] blood. He is disgracing Canada and jeopardizing relations with the Imperial Government and the Army."⁶⁷ Lessard was not alone. Sir George Perley was concerned that Hughes was damaging Canada's reputation and emphasized to Borden the importance of demonstrating during the war, to people in London, "that we are both sane and capable in the management of our own affairs."⁶⁸ Many senior officers, including Major-General Gwatkin, considered that Hughes was interfering too much in the Army's affairs. On the positive side, their reaction against his impulsive style fuelled the growing desire for greater professionalism in the Canadian Army.⁶⁹

When Hughes was eventually forced to resign in November 1916, Borden was advised by some to appoint Lessard as minister, to strengthen ties in Quebec. E.S. Caswell advised the prime minister that "it would be a popular move on your part to call him into more prominent service," and one Member of Parliament (MP) offered to resign his seat for Lessard if the rumour that the general would replace Hughes was true.⁷⁰ But the prime minister again confirmed his priorities when he preferred the advice of those who sought someone "who could fight the battles of the Conservative Party."⁷¹ Lessard himself continued to hope for an overseas position. On 2 December, after hearing that Major-General R.E.W. Turner had been appointed general officer commanding (GOC) Canadian in England, he reminded Borden that he was available to command a division "and failing this I wish to state that I offer my services for any other position in England or elsewhere and it need not necessarily be a command."⁷²

Passed over for Cabinet, as well as for any overseas positions, the role for which some, during the First World War, best remember Lessard was as leader of the military intervention in the Quebec riots of 1918. Many in Quebec had supported the war effort in 1914, including Liberal leader Sir Wilfrid Laurier and nationalist Henri Bourassa. But francophone volunteers were not as numerous as anglophone volunteers. Many factors contributed to this difference, such as emotional distance from the war (those born in Great Britain volunteered in much greater numbers than did anglo-Canadians), the language barrier, and culturally insensitive recruitment campaigns. Sam Hughes did not help ease tensions; many considered that his treatment of Lessard, the top-ranking francophone general, added to the minister's and the government's anti-francophone reputation. Hughes was replaced by A.E. Kemp, followed by Major-General S.C. Mewburn who remained minister of militia and defence from October 1917 to January 1920. They did convince Lessard to help recruit in Quebec but by 1917, as the government began to consider conscription, this job had become almost impossible.⁷³ After Borden's government introduced the Military Service Act in June of 1917 and won re-election as a Union Government in December, francophones in Quebec felt alienated from their government and their opposition to conscription grew. In late March

of 1918, over-zealous agents of the federal government-seeking defaulters in Quebec City and under-zealous local police slow to intervene against anti-conscription violence led to a dangerous situation.⁷⁴

On Thursday, 28 March, the long Easter weekend began with protestors burning and looting buildings. During the next three nights, crowds of approximately 5,000 roamed the streets and as federal government buildings were prime targets the military became concerned about rumours of plans to storm the armouries.⁷⁵ Borden met with General Gwatkin and they decided to send 1,000 troops (from Toronto) to reinforce the military at Quebec and to send Lessard who arrived at 1700 hours on 31 March to take control of the reaction to the continuing violence.⁷⁶ Warnings had been posted that attacks against military personnel (who had been peppered with rocks and debris), would not be tolerated forever and Lessard published additional warnings to forbid unlawful assemblies, noting that "every measure" would be taken "to maintain order and peace." That evening a crowd of 1,500 gathered and began to bombard one group of soldiers with projectiles and then began firing. The troops returned fire and four young men were killed, between 40 and 75 were injured (including four soldiers) and 62 were arrested (including four for illegal possession of firearms).⁷⁷

Lessard has been criticized for his actions. At the time the nationalist Armand Lavergne affirmed that all was going well and the general should have listened to the many voices asking him not to provoke the crowd by sending soldiers into the streets. Nationalist historians have repeated this argument. Lessard replied that Lavergne had been the only one calling for restraint at the time and that many in Quebec — including the mayor who asked for the military on Friday night — were of the impression that all was not going so well: the local police had received 2,500 calls from citizens asking for protection over the weekend.⁷⁸ Lessard evaluated the riots and estimated that they could best be controlled with more soldiers in the streets and less rioters; certainly he regretted the loss of life but showed no indication that he regretted his decision to apply force to re-establish order. His political and military superiors supported his actions, as did Laurier who congratulated ministers for finally availing themselves of the services of Lessard, adding that "General Lessard should

have been used long ago. If he had been called to service in the early months of the war, perhaps there would be no trouble to quell today in the city of Quebec.⁷⁹

Lessard carried out another unpopular mission when Gwatkin appointed him in February 1918 to temporarily take command of Military District No. 6 at Halifax, in addition to his role as inspector general for eastern Canada. He was praised for his handling of the difficult administrative task of applying Ottawa's plans to reduce the Halifax garrison (to free up overseas reinforcements) and increase the fighting efficiency of the fortress.⁸⁰

The professional standards of conduct, behaviour, and expertise in the Canadian Army developed during the First World War were largely because of the examples provided and experiences gained overseas. As many lives were on the line, merit and competence replaced political patronage as criteria for promotion.⁸¹ But examples in Canada also contributed and Lessard was an important role model. Some considered him too severe and lacking compassion, as when he complained to the Militia Council that men in the streets of Toronto were improperly dressed and setting a bad example for younger soldiers, in contrast to the "great effort" of Canadian officers and men in London to "give a good account of themselves in every way."⁸² Undoubtedly, he had high standards for members in uniform. This was primarily because of his strong identification with the permanent force. This was illustrated when he filled out his attestation paper for the Canadian Expeditionary Force in 1914. He answered only three of the 16 questions: after providing his name he added that his trade or calling was "professional soldier" and that he had previous military experience with the "Permanent Force."⁸³

After his wars, in 1919, Lessard retired to Toronto. He remained honorary colonel of the RCD from 4 April, 1921, to his death in August 1927.⁸⁴ In the following days many testimonials confirmed his contribution to the Canadian Army during two wars and to its development during these early years. General William Otter affirmed that Lessard was "an officer whom any country might be proud" and Major-General S.C. Mewburn added "he was a splendid soldier, a fine type of Canadian

citizen, and was held in high regard by the militia in general.” For the editor of the *Globe and Mail* Lessard “seemed the very embodiment of the professional soldier.”⁸⁵

Evaluating the leadership of F.L. Lessard during the First World War is very different from evaluating the leadership he provided during the conflict in South Africa. In the earlier war, as leader on the battlefield, he adopted an aggressive style and took many risks, while from 1914 to 1918 he was more often in the role of manager, valuing coordination and order. That he received praise for both tasks illustrates several important qualities of leadership, beginning with flexibility. He adapted to different situations to perform his tasks as well as he could but he also did this while respecting his relationship with political decision-makers. As much as he may have disagreed with some Cabinet ministers during the First World War, he accepted his role was not only to inform and influence them, but to implement their decisions once taken. A third important leadership quality that he displayed throughout his career was his ability to inspire others to action, as an instructor or as an example himself, in a variety of situations. Finally, although his critics may have disagreed with some of his ideas of what had to be done and how to do it, none could doubt that when the time came for him to act he did so, consistently, with unfaltering courage.⁸⁶

NOTES

1. C.S. Lewis, in Cyril Connolly, *The Unquiet Grave: A Word Cycle* (London: Hamilton, 1945). Sir Winston Churchill also referred to courage as the essential virtue because “it guaranteed all the others;” quoted in Jon Meacham, *Franklin and Winston: An Intimate Portrait of an Epic Friendship* (New York: Random House, 2004), 367.
2. Hal Klepak, “Quelques réflexions sur les fonctions de général au fil des siècles,” in Lieutenant-Colonel Bernd Horn and Stephen J. Harris, eds., *La fonction de général et l’art de l’amirauté: Perspectives du leadership militaire canadien* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2002), 20. Klepak also quotes Carl von Clausewitz and in the same book see also Bill MacAndrew, “Le métier d’officier canadien: vue d’ensemble,” 40.
3. Casgrain acted as assistant adjutant-general at British Headquarters in South Africa,

- and Girouard as director of railways, and later as governor of Northern Nigeria and, from 1909 to 1912, East Africa Protectorate.
4. Directorate of History and Heritage (henceforth DHH), Lessard, 000.9, (D106); and J.F. Cummins, "A Distinguished Canadian Cavalry Officer Major-General F.L. Lessard, CB," in *Canadian Defence Quarterly*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (January 1926), 128–31.
 5. Library and Archives Canada (henceforth LAC), A.E. Hilder Papers, MG30 E339, "Comrades All," 57–58. E.W.B. Morrison, *With the Guns in South Africa* (Ottawa: Eugene Ursual, 1995; reprint of 1901 edition), 215.
 6. Stephen J. Harris, *Canadian Brass: The Making of a Professional Army, 1860–1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 15, 21, 217.
 7. DHH, *A History of Quebec Cavalry*, 1902, UA 602 Q36H37.
 8. Brereton Greenhous, *Dragoon: The Centennial History of the Royal Canadian Dragoons, 1883–1983* (Belleville, ON: The Guild of the RCDs, 1983), 52; Cummins, "Distinguished."
 9. *Sessional Papers*, Department of Militia and Defence, No. 20, 1900, 11–16.
 10. R.C. Brown and R. Cook, *Canada, 1896–1921: A Nation Transformed* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1974), 39; Brereton Greenhous, "The South African War," in J. Marteinson, ed., *We Stand on Guard: An Illustrated History of the Canadian Army* (Montreal: Ovale, 1992), 56; and Jean Pariseau and Serge Bernier, *Les Canadiens-français et le bilinguisme dans les forces armées canadiennes, tome 1* (Ottawa: Ministère des Approvisionnements et Services, 1987), 12. Carman Miller, "English-Canadian Opposition to the South African War as Seen Through the Press," in *Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. 55, No. 4 (December 1974). Gaston Labat, *Le livre d'or: Canadian Contingents in South Africa* (Montreal, 1901).
 11. LAC, Henri Bourassa Papers, MG27 IIE1, M-721, Bourassa to Golwin Smith, 17 May 1900; Bourassa to Gregory, 15 March 1901. LAC, Laurier Papers, C-722, 40950–70, Sir H. Devilliers, Chief Justice of the Cape Colony, to Laurier, 9 January 1900. LAC, George Denison Papers, MG29 E29, Vols. 9 and 10, Laurier to Denison, President of the British Empire League in Canada, 6 December 1899.
 12. Lessard in *La Patrie*, 14 October 1899, 13–15. See also *La Presse*, 9 October 1899.
 13. *Sessional Papers*, 35a, 1901, 72.
 14. LAC, Richard Turner Papers, MG30 E46, M-300, diary, 5 September 1900. On the British, see Greenhous, *Dragoon*, 87–88.
 15. LAC, RG 9, II, A3, Vol. 32, Dragoon's Diary. *Sessional Papers* 35a, 1901, Lessard Report. Carman Miller, *Painting the Map Red: Canada and the South African War*,

- 1899–1902 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), 152–261. Hugh Robertson, "The Royal Canadian Dragoons in South Africa" (MA Thesis, University of Ottawa, 1982). Greenhous, *Dragoon*, 85–125. Brian A. Reid, *Our Little Army in the Field: The Canadians in South Africa, 1899–1902* (St. Catharines, ON: Vanwell, 1996).
16. LAC, Dragoon's Diary. Miller, *Painting the Map Red*, 240–58. Greenhous, *Dragoon*, 115.
17. LAC, Dragoon's Diary, Lessard to Colonel Aylmer, A.G., Ottawa, Report for 31 July to 14 October 1899.
18. Miller, *Painting the Map Red*, 256–61. LAC, Dragoon's Diary.
19. Miller, *Painting the Map Red*, 258, 266. LAC, Dragoon's Diary.
20. LAC, Dragoon's Diary. *Sessional Papers* 35a, 1901. Lessard Report for week ending 12 November 1900.
21. LAC, RG 9, II, A3, Vol. 32, Morrison's Report of D Battery, RCA, 7 November 1900.
22. *Sessional Papers* 35a, 1901, Lessard Report. Lessard had high praise for the effectiveness and mobility of the Colt.
23. LAC, Hilder Papers, "Comrades All," 81. He added that men were upset that no mention had been made of the casualties. While giving the overall impression that Lessard was a popular leader, Hilder occasionally questions certain decisions: 44, 61.
24. G.W.L. Nicholson, *The Gunners of Canada: A History of the Royal Regiment of Canadian Artillery, Vol. 1, 1534–1919* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1967), 157.
25. Imperial War Museum (henceforth IWM), General Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien files, box 87/41/1, diary 1900, 7 November 1900. I am grateful to Chris Madsen for this reference; for more details see his article "Canadian Troops and Farm-Burning in the South African War," *Canadian Military Journal* (Fall 2005).
26. Morrison, *Guns*, 266. Also LAC, Turner, in his diary, 15 November 1900, was pleased with the performance, comparing it to a "Wild West show." LAC, Hilder Papers, "Comrades All," 58, 73. Reid, *Army*, 137, 172. Miller, *Painting the Map Red*, 441.
27. Quoted in Larry Worthington, *The Spur and the Sprocket* (Kitchener, ON, 1967), 41.
28. Smith-Dorrien, 23 November 1900, in *Sessional Papers*, 35a, 1901. Roberts, LAC, Turner Diary, 15 November 1900.
29. Miller, *Painting the Map Red*, 271. See also 272–76.
30. Greenhous, *Dragoon*, 126, 136. Also on 144: Lessard was "very popular and efficient." See also Charles Marie Boissonnault, *Histoire politico-militaire des Canadiens-français, 1763–1945* (Montreal: Éditions du Bien Public, 1967), 176, 201–07.

31. Reid, "Action at Leliefontein," in Donald E. Graves ed., *Fighting for Canada: Seven Battles, 1758–1945*, (Toronto: Robin Brass, 2000), 235. See also 192, 200–04.
32. *Sessional Papers*, 35a, 1901, Lessard Report, 81–106. The problems with horses included his own being sold at an auction in Toronto. In South Africa of the 345 Canadian horses that departed only 18 remained at the end: 40 died in transit, 287 died or were deemed unfit and left behind. See also LAC, Carman Miller database, MG31 G36.
33. Cummins, "Distinguished," 129.
34. Reid, *Army*, 136. Reid, in "Action at Leliefontein," 202 note 27, refers to comments in the *Canadian Cavalry Association Journal* of 1927.
35. Morrison, *Guns*, 231
36. LAC, Minto Papers, Vol. 17, Hutton to Minto, 30 October 1900. Hutton in letter to Lord Minto, 30 May 1901, quoted in Greenhous, *Dragoon*, 116–17.
37. LAC, MG27 IIB1, Minto Papers, reel A-130, Minto to Lord Roberts, 31 December 1899; Minto to J. Chamberlain, 7 January 1900; Minto to Lansdowne, 2 May 1900. Also Minto to Laurier, 21 November and 5 December 1899.
38. Greenhous, *Dragoon*, 175.
39. In 1895, francophones represented 14.2 percent; in 1905 10 percent, and in 1910, 8.4 percent, according to Pariseau and Bernier, *Bilinguisme*, 53. Also 23–7, and Desmond Morton, "Le Canada français et la milice canadienne, 1868–1914," in J.Y. Gravel, *Le Québec et la Guerre* (Montreal: Boréal, 1974), 45.
40. LAC, Minto Papers, Vol. 17, Hutton to Minto, 18, 28 June, 1899, 10 February 1902. Pariseau and Bernier, *Bilinguisme*, 64–66.
41. Haycock, *Hughes*, 26–27, 114, 218. Morton, "La Milice," 44.
42. Gérard Filteau, *Le Québec, Le Canada et la guerre, 1914–1918* (Montreal: L'Aurore, 1977), 31; Jean Provencher, *Quebec sous la loi des mesures de guerre, 1918* (Montreal: Boréal, 1971), 82. Worthington, *Spur and the Sprocket*, 41.
43. LAC, Minto Papers, Hutton to Minto, 10 August 1899.
44. *Sessional Papers*, 35a, 1901.
45. CWM, Otter Papers, 58A, Vol. 101, Hughes to Otter, 29 September 1899. LAC, Laurier Papers, Hughes to Laurier, C-769–71, 4 October 1899, 27 December 1899. Haycock, *Hughes*, 93.
46. Carman Miller, "Sir Frederick William Borden and Military Reform, 1896–1911," in *Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. 50, No. 3 (September 1969), 265–84; Desmond Morton, *Ministers and Generals: Politics and the Canadian Militia, 1868–1904* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 200.

47. Haycock, *Hughes*, 140, 173, 189. Harris, *Canadian Brass*, 25–27. Greenhouse, *Dragoon*, 161.
48. LAC, RG 7 G21, Governor General's Numbered Files, Connaught to Colonial Secretary, reporting on Hughes's "bar room loafers" comment. Also Haycock, *Hughes*, 98, 135–46. LAC, RG 24C-8, Vols. 4385–97, Adjutant-General Branch records.
49. Desmond Morton, *A Peculiar Kind of Politics: Canada's Overseas Ministry in the First World War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 66. Haycock, 184: describes Hughes's selection methods.
50. LAC, RG 9 IIA2, Vol. 9, Minutes of the Militia Council, 1913. Haycock, *Hughes*, 156–57. On other disputes see also 140, 173, 189. Harris, *Canadian Brass*, 86–93.
51. LAC, Governor General's Numbered Files, Connaught to Colonial Secretary, November 1913. On Williams replacing Lessard see Minutes of the Militia Council, Vol. 8, December 1912. Haycock, *Hughes*, 159.
52. LAC, Perley Papers, MG27 IID 12, Vol. 1, and Borden Papers, reel C-4214, Borden to Perley, 13 August 1914 and Perley to Kitchener, 16 August 1914. Also *Documents on Canadian External Relations*, Vol. 1 and G.W.L. Nicholson, *The Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1914–1919* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1962), 28–29.
53. A.F. Duguid, *Official History of the Canadian Forces in the Great War, 1914–1919*, Vol. 1 (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1938), 62–64.
54. LAC, Borden Papers, reel C-4386, 104132, Whitney to Borden, forwarded to Hughes, 7 August 1914. Also 104302–5, Whitney to Borden, 1–9 June 1916.
55. Cummins, "Distinguished."
56. Harris, *Canadian Brass*, 107.
57. Desmond Morton and J.L. Granatstein, *Canada and the Two World Wars* (Toronto: Key Porter, 2003), 25.
58. Of 44 senior posts only nine were filled by officers of the Permanent Force, and over half had no qualifications for their position: McAndrew, "Métier d'officier," 42. Harris, *Canadian Brass*, 99–100.
59. LAC, Borden Papers, reel C-4214, 12544, Borden to Perley, 19 October 1914. Borden, *Memoirs* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1938), 463, 472.
60. Haycock, *Hughes*, 98.
61. Borden to Acting High Commission in London G. Perley, 15 June 1915, in *Documents on Canadian External Relations*, Vol. 1, 75.
62. LAC, RG 24C-8, Vols. 4276–4410, Military District Records for MD, No. 2.

63. Cummins, "Distinguished," 130. On "disciplinarian" see Colonel John I. McLaren, former CO 19th Battalion CEF, in *Globe and Mail*, 8 August 1927, 3.
64. Barbara Wilson, ed., *Ontario and the First World War, 1914-1918: A Collection of Documents* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), xxvii; Haycock, *Hughes*, 189-91, 211-13; and LAC, Borden Papers, C-4310, 31508-9, 31, Lessard to Borden, 20 January 1915 and Borden to Hughes, 23 January 1915.
65. LAC, Lessard Papers, MG30 E41, Lessard to General Steele and Sam Hughes, May 1916. "Troops Training in England," 2, 39.
66. Morton, *Peculiar*, 67-68. Haycock, *Hughes*, 211. Cummins, "Distinguished."
67. Haycock, *Hughes*, 300.
68. Perley to Borden, May 1915, quoted in Morton, *Peculiar*, 66.
69. Harris, *Canadian Brass*, 103-07.
70. LAC, Borden Papers, C-4228, 13732-3, E.S. Caswell to Borden, 14 November 1916; also 13735, Borden to Sir John Willison, 15 November 1916; and 13746, M.J. O'Leary to Borden, 20 November 1916. On 16 November 1916, 13742, Gaspé MP L.P. Gauthier offered his seat, in a letter to Borden. See also C-4360, 77349, R.S. MacDonald to Borden, 10 October 1917. And C-4314, 35876, T. Casgrain, Postmaster General to Borden, 3 November 1916.
71. P.D. Ross quoted in Morton, *Peculiar*, 92.
72. LAC, Borden Papers, C-4324, 45429-33, Lessard to Borden, 2 December 1916.
73. Morton, *Peculiar*, 92.
74. J.L. Granatstein and J.M. Hitsman, *Broken Promises: A History of Conscription in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford, 1977), 24, 64-90. On Lessard's recruiting role see page 33 and Hélène Pelletier-Baillargeon, *Olivar Asselin et son temps, tome 2: Le volontaire* (Montreal: Fides, 2001), 162; also Robert Laird Borden, *Memoirs*, Vol. 2 (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1969), 125-26 and Laurier in *Canadian House of Commons Debates*, 5 April, 1918, 411.
75. LAC, RG 24, Vol. 4518, MD no. 5, file C-159-H, report of 1 April 1918, 2, 12, 14. Also Vol. 4517, file c-159A, 1 April 1918.
76. DHH, 84-331, Jean Pariseau Papers, box 16, file 157, 23-5. Borden, *Memoirs*, 123. LAC, RG 24, Vol. 4517, file C-159, Lessard to General Landry at Military Headquarters in Quebec, 30 March 1918, asks him to "please report to me in code what is present situation at Quebec." Landry replied that it was worsening and that he would like 1,000 more troops.
77. Lessard's testimony before "Enquête tenue devant le coroner pour le district de Québec

- le 8 avril et les jours suivants sur les causes de la mort de Honoré Bergeron, Alexandre Bussière, Georges Demeule et Edourd Tremblay," Quebec, April 1918, in Provencher, *mesures de guerre*, 96–112, 124. On the crowd attacking authorities and buildings and rumours of plans to steal arms see 48–58, 62, 70–79, 89. Also Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs, 1918*, 462–64; and Nicholson, *CEF*, 348.
78. Provencher, *mesures de guerre*, 100, quoting Police Chief Émile Trudel's testimony.
79. Laurier, *Canadian House of Commons Debates*, 5 April, 1918, 413. Borden replied on page 420 that he had asked Lessard in 1916 to help with recruiting in Quebec, ignoring Laurier's reference to overseas command in 1914. Sam Hughes did the same on page 432. Also LAC, Laurier Papers, C-917, 200277, Jules Dorion to Laurier, 4 April 1918.
80. Roger Sarty, "Silent Sentry: A Military and Political History of Canadian Coast Defence, 1860–1945," PhD Thesis, University of Toronto, 1982, 326–35. Also LAC, RG 24, box 2323, HQS 66, Vol. 10, W.R. Lang, Colonel, General Staff MD 6, 12 December 1918, "Memorandum on the Reorganization and Efficiency of the Defence of Halifax and NS, 11 February to 11 November 1918."
81. Harris, *Canadian Brass*, 137–38, 218–19.
82. LAC, Lessard Papers, Report, May 1916; LAC, Borden Papers, C-4229, 14999. On Toronto, see LAC, RG 24, Vol. 4323, file 2D, 34–1–122, Lessard to the Secretary, Militia Council, 4 January 1917, quoted in Wilson ed., *Ontario*, lviii, 43.
83. LAC, RG 150, Acc. 1992–93/166, Box 5596–62.
84. Greenhous, *Dragoon*, 495.
85. Otter and Mewburn quoted in the *Globe and Mail*, with unsigned editorial, 8 August 1927, 3, 4, 13.
86. See Horn and Harris, *La fonction de général*, for discussion of these qualities, particularly: Lieutenant-Colonel Peter Bradley, "Faire la distinction entre les concepts de commandement, du leadership et de la gestion," 114–19; Klepak, "Quelques réflexions," 36–37; Douglas Bland, "Le commandement militaire au Canada," 129; Lieutenant-Général George Macdonald, "Le leadership à une époque marquée par le changement et la complexité," 175; Lieutenant-Général R.R. Henault, "Le commandant de théâtre d'opérations et le règlement des conflits," 295. See also by the same editors, *Warrior Chiefs: Perspectives on Senior Canadian Military Leaders* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2001), particularly, Serge Bernier, "Hail to the Artist! The Art of Command and General Jean V. Allard," 299, and General (Retired) John de Chastelain, "A Personal Perspective on Command," 353.

CHAPTER SEVEN

From Cadet to Brigadier-General: Thomas-Louis Tremblay and the 22nd Battalion (French-Canadian)

MARCELLE CINQ-MARS

The question of leadership was central to the work of the Somalia Inquiry, which looked into the killing of a Somali teenager at the hands of Canadian soldiers in 1993. In their report, which was published on 2 July 1997, the members of the Commission stated at the outset that “leadership is also a complex and value-laden concept, and its definition is somewhat dependent on context.”¹ In the absence of a standardized definition of leadership, the report emphasized that it comprised “a combination of various qualities which, when taken together, are called leadership.” Leaders are rated as “good” or “bad” based on an assessment of their effectiveness in a given situation. The report also stated that a commander must influence and inspire his troops and becomes a true leader only when his subordinates accept him as such. The commander or leader must be a motivator. He may delegate responsibilities but must not delegate his own overall responsibility.

With the above lead-in as context, the aim of this chapter is to analyze the concepts of leadership as it was understood in the Canadian

Army at the start of the First World War, as well as the way in which it was applied in one battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Corps. This case study will be based on the personal diary of Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas-Louis Tremblay, the commanding officer of the 22nd Battalion (French-Canadian) from 1915 to 1918.

CONCEPTS OF LEADERSHIP IN THE BRITISH IMPERIAL ARMY

Canada had a very small regular Army at the start of the First World War. As such, the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) formed part of the "Colonial" contingent of the British Army. Not surprisingly it was closely modelled on the Britain's Imperial Army. Many Canadian officers took military training courses in the United Kingdom after graduating from the Royal Military College of Canada in Kingston. The British officers who commanded units of the Canadian permanent volunteer militia also left a British heritage. The basic understanding was that Canadian troops were to serve in the defence of the empire when the time came and their training was designed to prepare them for that role.² Thus, the concepts of leadership applied in the British Army at that time were naturally those used on Canadian soldiers.

In 1913, Brigadier-General Richard Cyril Byrne Haking, commander of the 5th British Infantry Brigade, published *Company Training*, in which he offered some advice to officers called upon to command soldiers. Haking (1862–1945) was an experienced officer. He received his lieutenant's commission in 1881. On his return from the Boer War, he rose to the rank of lieutenant-colonel in 1903, and colonel three years later. During this time (1901–1904), he also taught at the Staff College. In 1908, he was a member of the General Staff with the rank of brigadier-general.³ It was, therefore, as an experienced officer that he laid out his views on training and leading soldiers.

Haking stressed the importance of considering "the elements of human nature which have such a powerful influence in war when dealing with the various problems which arise."⁴ Recognizing that in modern war



Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas-Louis Tremblay took command of the 22nd Battalion (French-Canadian) on 24 January 1916. (Library and Archives Canada PA-2666)

(remember that this was on the eve of the First World War) the infantryman cannot be regarded as a machine that will obey solely out of fear of sanctions, Haking relied on “the power that can be exercised over his [infantryman’s] mind by his comrades and by those who are leading him.”⁵ Without using the word *leadership*, Haking emphasized the influence that an officer can exert over his men.

Brigadier-General Haking also highlighted a basic principle that underscores the importance of leadership in the Army. He argued it is not simply a question of meeting the essential needs of the men; they must be led. He wrote:

Content amongst troops in war is dependent upon three main factors — good leading, good food, and sufficient shelter and

sleep. Of these the first is by far the most important, because it has been proved time after time in war that badly fed and badly quartered troops, who have suffered great hardship, will still be content and will fight in the most gallant and vigorous manner provided they are well led.⁶

In Haking's view, a good leader will see to it that the men have the best food and quarters available. He will also not tire his men with unnecessary marches or work, so that "when he does order his men to do anything they know at once that it is necessary and do it cheerfully."⁷

The commanding officer (CO) is also responsible for seeing that discipline is maintained in the ranks. One of the essential elements of discipline is respect, since "this respect engenders confidence in others, and without confidence in their comrades and their leaders troops will rarely gain a badly contested fight."⁸ A soldier's respect for his commanding officer is acquired when the subordinate "respects another man because the latter possesses some good qualities, or excels at some occupation which the former understands."⁹

Disciplinary measures are necessary and will be applied in cases of insolence, negligence, insubordination, and such. The officer's knowledge and leadership qualities, according to Haking, are important levers, which ensure that discipline will be maintained more easily through respect than by punitive measures.

PERSONAL DIARY AND HISTORY

Personal diaries are an invaluable historical source. Through them, events can be viewed from another angle, seen through the eyes of an individual who actually experienced them and left a record. This type of historical document possesses the failings inherent in its qualities: it provides us with the personal view of an individual who is free to say things as he intends and in the way he wants, but who lacks a comprehensive overview.

Due to these inherent shortcomings, other sources have been used to complement and to verify the information contained in the personal diary, even if only on a random basis.

Without comparing T.-L. Tremblay's personal diary with General Sir Douglas Haig's own monumental diary,¹⁰ we should bear in mind that the value of diaries lies in the immediacy of their account of the facts of an event or time period. They are both "play-by-play" accounts. However, one must always remember, as Sir John Smyth, VC, asserted, many commanders have written books about their campaigns several years after the fact, "when time has not only mellowed their thoughts and opinions but has also allowed alterations to be made, obvious errors to be corrected, and perhaps harsh criticisms to be toned down."¹¹

Keeping a personal diary was a common practice among soldiers. However, since such documents contained information that could be useful to the enemy were they to fall into his hands, diaries were subject to regulations:

With a view of minimizing [the] risks, all private diaries will be sent, periodically, through a censor office for safe custody to regimental record offices where they will be stored; in corps not possessing a record office at home, diaries will be sent to the War Office. They will in no circumstances be released before six months after the date of writing or on the termination of hostilities and in neither case without instruction from the War Office. [...] No diaries should be retained in the front line and all diaries should be sent to record offices previous to going into battle or if an attack by the enemy is imminent.¹²

THOMAS-LOUIS TREMBLAY AND THE 22ND BATTALION (FRENCH-CANADIAN)

Thomas-Louis Tremblay was born in Chicoutimi, Quebec, on 16 May 1886. He was the son of a Navy captain, Thomas Tremblay, and Mathilde

Lachance. He attended Mont Saint-Louis School before entering the Royal Military College of Canada (RMC) in Kingston in 1904. This was an early sign of the determined nature of Tremblay's character, as very few French Canadians attended this institution at the time: only 19 French Canadians attended RMC between 1900 and 1914.¹³ It was by no means a well-worn path for francophones.

At the time, RMC was embarking on a new direction that the authorities had set for the institution at the urging of its commandant, Gerald Kitson. Under his administration (1896–1900), the College's mission remained the same: to train officers and civil engineers who would be able to serve in the Army if needed. To achieve this, the curriculum of the college had been revised. In addition, the teaching staff was rejuvenated and there was increased emphasis on basic physical



Members of the 22nd Battalion (French-Canadian) resting in a shell hole on their way to the front, September 1917. (Library and Archives Canada PA-002045)

and military training. In summer, the cadets had to join "A" Battery of the Royal Canadian Artillery.¹⁴ This period of transformation at the college brought the institution up to higher military standards and Thomas-Louis Tremblay accordingly received a superior education.

As a result, logically, Thomas-Louis Tremblay would have inculcated and absorbed the teaching of RMC's doctrine. An elite athlete in his graduating class, he was awarded the distinction of "Best Man at All Arms,"¹⁵ and he always retained the conviction that physical activity and basic training are essential for maintaining esprit de corps and discipline.

After graduating from RMC in 1907 with a degree in civil engineering, Tremblay found a job with the transcontinental railway that same year. He remained with the railway for four years before entering private practice. In 1913 he was appointed Quebec lands surveyor. While carrying out his professional activities, Tremblay remained active in the militia, first with 18^{ème} Régiment Francs-Tireurs du Saguenay and then with 1^{er} Batterie d'artillerie de Québec. When the First World War broke out, Tremblay rejoined the permanent force. He first served as adjutant of the 1st Division Ammunition Column.¹⁶ Then on 11 March 1915, he was appointed second-in-command of the 22nd Battalion (French-Canadian), which was then undergoing training at Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu.

It was at this point that T.-L. Tremblay began writing his personal war diary.¹⁷ The first entry is dated Thursday, 11 March 1915, when he received the news of his transfer to the 22nd Battalion (and the last annotation is dated 20 December 1918, when his brigade was at Bonn as part of the occupation of Germany). A few years later, he referred to the importance with which he held his diary. "I value my war diary," he stated, "more than my eyeballs."¹⁸

Major Tremblay rejoined his unit as it was en route to Amherst, Nova Scotia. The battalion commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Frédéric-Mondelet Gaudet, immediately put him in charge of training the men. As historian Jean-Pierre Gagnon observed, responsibility for training rested with the battalion commanding officer:

However, he [Gaudet] delegated this task to his deputy, Major Thomas-Louis Tremblay, when the latter arrived at Amherst on 16 March 1915. The training sought to achieve four objectives. The most fundamental, the one which gave meaning to the others, consisted of inculcating into all battalion members the moral values that make true warriors: courage, determination, perseverance, initiative; the ability to confront danger and overcome fatigue, privation, difficulties and the horrors of war; as well as confidence in their leaders and comrades.¹⁹

This task was particularly suited to Tremblay. From this point on, the battalion's training was intensified.

Tremblay continued with this task even after 2nd Canadian Division left for England in May 1915. He noted in his diary that he had personally proposed that the men not be left to themselves during the crossing aboard the *Saxonia*:

After visiting the transport [ship], I reported to the Colonel that it was virtually impossible to conduct training on board even by platoon, other than physical training. And having proposed sports as a way to keep our men fit, I now see myself bombarded as Chair of the Sports Committee and, along with Captain Metcalfe of the 25th [Battalion] and Captain Johnson of the Ammunition Column, we set to work immediately.²⁰

Sports have always held an important place in the Armed Forces. According to a 1916 training manual, games prevent monotony, inculcate discipline, and develop speed in decision-making and movement.²¹ Haking himself, in response to criticisms voiced among British troops against sports during the war, recalled that "sports and pastimes are in themselves excellent training for war, engendering habits of initiative and dash, and fitting them body and soul to become good leaders in battle."²² But more than games were needed and T.-L. Tremblay saw to that.



The 22nd Battalion (French-Canadian) bivouacked behind the lines during the Battle of Amiens, August 1918. (Library and Archives Canada PA-002861)

The training intensified once the unit reached England. "From 30 May to 15 September [1915]," Joseph Chaballe, an officer in the 22nd Battalion, noted, "we worked night and day following a well-organized program. There was no inactivity under the enlightened direction of Major Tremblay, who was responsible for fitness; everyone devoted their entire energies and good will to it, in the knowledge that the next test would be in the face of the enemy."²³ In September 1915, the 22nd Battalion landed in France and set out for Flanders.

In addition to training the men, Tremblay was attentive to their welfare. In this regard, he followed Haking's precept that an officer must ensure that his men are properly housed. As such he immediately noted the shortage of straw in the camp located near Kemmel in Belgium. The next day, he wrote, "I did the rounds of our billets...."²⁴ The men do not have sufficient straw. I managed to obtain more for them."²⁵

In January 1916, Lieutenant-Colonel F.-M. Gaudet, the first commanding officer of the 22nd Battalion, was reassigned to other duties in Britain. On 24 January Tremblay was promoted lieutenant-colonel and became the CO of the battalion. The choice appears to have been well-received by the men. "He is perhaps the youngest battalion commanding officer at the front," observed Joseph Chaballe, "But he has the qualities of courage, drive, and judgement needed to command. He is a true leader who knows how to impose his authority and inspire trust in the men."²⁶

As CO of the 22nd Battalion, Tremblay continued to defend his men and to look after their welfare. On 2 April 1916, he noted in his diary that the entire battalion had been vaccinated against paratyphoid and that all the men would be sick for two or three days from the effects of the vaccine. Yet, he received orders to march his men the next day to a location 14 kilometres away. He recorded his reaction in his diary:

I informed the Brigade that, in accordance with the program, the entire battalion was inoculated today and that it was consequently inhuman to ask men to undertake a march of that kind. The intervention on my part was unsuccessful. I made arrangements with the ADMS,²⁷ Col Fotheringham, to have the battalion followed the next day by ambulances, expecting that we would have many laggards. We are all very sick this evening following the inoculation.

The next day, 3 April 1916, the battalion marched out as ordered, despite the physical condition of the men. Tremblay could have used the privilege of his rank and made the march on horseback, but in solidarity with his men, decided otherwise. Tremblay was right when he objected to the order. The entry in the war diary of Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry Regiment for 20 February earlier that year bears testimony to his concerns. "The whole Battalion was inoculated for Para-Typhoid and therefore out of action for 48 hours," it recorded. The entry for the following day added that "many officers and men [are] suffering from effects of yesterday's inoculation."

Tremblay knew what to expect and accordingly warned his soldiers. He confided to his diary:

I spoke to the men on parade this morning to prepare them for this difficult, inhumane march. The battalion will be followed by three "London Buses"²⁸ and two ambulances. We marched out at approximately 0900 hours and reached camp "C" near Vlamertinghe at 1230 hours. We lost only 19 men en route: a real record for physical endurance. I marched myself the entire route at the head of the battalion, followed by my horse. I watched the battalion march past on arrival at the camp; the men were extremely pale. Some shells are falling in our camp, causing a few casualties, but we feel so ill that we couldn't care less that shells are falling on our heads.²⁹

Such manifestations of concern for the men must have made a positive impression on them. However, it is also clear from his diary that Tremblay paid close attention to the battalion's esprit de corps. During the Battle of the Somme, in which 2nd Canadian Division was involved, Tremblay jumped at the chance to obtain a leading role for his battalion from the brigade commander: "I asked for my battalion to do the attack, and the Brigadier-General decided, after a little hesitation, that he would attack with the 22nd up on the right, the 25th up on the left, the 26th in support, and the 24th in reserve."³⁰ Joseph Chaballe quotes from the brief speech of encouragement that Tremblay gave to his men before the start of the assault:

We are about to assault a village called Courcelette. We are going to take it. Once we've taken it, we're gonna keep it and hold it to the last man. It's our first big attack. It must be successful for the honour of all the French Canadians whom we represent in France.³¹

The attack on Courcelette was successful.³² Courcelette and the Battle of Regina Trench a few days later resulted in serious losses for the

22nd Battalion. Following this victory, the unit needed to replenish its ranks urgently with augmentees (replacements) who were then training in Britain.

The old soldiers who survived Courcellette became, in Tremblay's eyes, his "veterans." It is noteworthy that he only began referring to his "veterans" after Courcellette: this battle was undoubtedly a turning point in his war experience. A number of passages show the extent to which he felt appreciated by these men, and he was deeply touched by the respect they gave him. For example, on returning to the battalion after a stay in England, he noted on the subject of the "veterans" that, "All these brave men seem happy to see me back; it's one of the great moments of my life."³³

Only a few weeks later, in November 1916, reports about the discipline of the troops alarmed Tremblay.³⁴ He observed that the augmentees, who had been arriving in large numbers "do not have the esprit de corps that we had developed among our men right up to Courcellette. [Major] Dubuc at last has assured me that the situation is improving, that the battalion is gradually getting back to what it was."³⁵ However, discipline was not quickly restored and in the wake of an unsatisfactory inspection, Tremblay acknowledged in his diary that "the esprit de corps, which was so remarkable in the 22nd before the Somme, does not exist; it is vital that we restore it."

However, factors other than the arrival of augmentees after the Battle of Courcellette fuelled the discipline problems mentioned by Tremblay on 2 March 1917. "The battalion goes to Fosse 10 ('Coalpit 10')³⁶ when it is in reserve," wrote Tremblay. He explained, "[T]he men are very comfortable, but this place is detrimental to the morale of the battalion. There are a large number of women of easy virtue who cause many problems in terms of the battalion's discipline." On the following day, 3 March, he wrote:

Exercises all day in order to tighten discipline. Inspection this afternoon of the training area prepared at Estrée-Gauchy. Special meeting of officers at Battalion HQ. Strict orders were issued reminding officers of each individual's

duty, drawing their attention to the Battalion's lamentable state, indicating the action to be taken to remedy this situation and warning them that severe measures will be taken against officers who do not fully discharge their duties.

It seems the requisite lesson was learned, as Tremblay's diary contains no further criticism of the state of the battalion's discipline.

Clearly, the Battle of Courcelette had profoundly marked the 22nd Battalion (French-Canadian) and its commanding officer. A year later, Tremblay did not miss the opportunity to observe the battle's anniversary. He wrote:

Leave this afternoon to mark the anniversary of the victory at Courcelette, the 2nd anniversary of our arrival in France; it is also exactly a month since we defeated the Jerries on Hill 70. We are celebrating the occasion by giving the men a larger meal and such little treats as are available. This evening, Major Dubuc gave a big dinner in Battalion quarters, inviting all the officers of the 22nd. It has been a very long time since the officers of the 22nd all gathered around a table. What a fine time we had together! After this princely dinner, there was music, singing and some speeches. It was a pleasure to see the fine camaraderie that exists between these men, who may be killed tomorrow.

The celebration that he organized for the officers and men at that time is very much in keeping with Haking's concept of esprit de corps. According to Haking, it is customary to select an anniversary that is important to the unit and to celebrate "in the time-honoured manner of holding regimental sports, etc."³⁷ It is also recommended that a victory be used as an example to encourage the men. T.-L. Tremblay did not miss the opportunity to do so just before taking part in the assault on Hill 70 on 14 August 1917. At this time, recalled one of the soldiers, the CO delivered an inspiring speech:

Lieutenant-Colonel Tremblay, our Commanding Officer, moved forward on horseback and spoke to us: "Officers, NCOs and soldiers of the 22nd Battalion, tomorrow you will again engage in battle. Thus far you have shown yourselves to be valiant and brave. Tomorrow, you will fight as you fought at Courcelette and Vimy and the people back home will be proud of us." Our Commanding Officer is not very eloquent, but all the soldiers of the 22nd Battalion are aware of his legendary bravery and every word he says has a meaning for every one of us.³⁸

While always inspiring his men before battle, Tremblay never failed to defend his men and their reputation. In November 1917, Lieutenant-Colonel Tremblay was in London on leave. At the time the conscription crisis was raging in Canada. The commanding officer of the 22nd Battalion remains silent on this topic in his diary, as he does on all other political issues, except for the occasion on which he met a famous personality in London. This meeting made an impression on Tremblay, who carefully recorded the details in his diary. This excerpt clearly shows how the CO of the 22nd Battalion rose to the defence of his men:

As we left Sir George Perley's luncheon, a man whom I had never met but whom I recognized at once stopped me and the following brief conversation ensued: "How are things at the front?" — "Sorry but I don't know you." — "How are you treated at the front?" — "Sorry you are mistaken I don't know you." — "My name is Lord Beaverbrook Max Aitken." — "My name is L-Col Tremblay, Commanding Officer of the 22nd French Canadian Battalion." — "What do you think of the articles of the British press on the Province of Quebec?" — "I am a soldier and I have nothing to say on the matter." — "Do your men object to them?" — "They would have no soul if they did not." — "I will advise my friend who writes those articles to be less violent." — "I

would advise him, to keep clean of the 22nd Battalion whose men are fighting side by side with the British Tommies, and dying every day for the cause. The vile campaign that your friend is carrying in the British press against the French Canadians is very much resented by every one of us. Your friend has no conscience and no idea of British fair play." — "I will tell him to be more easy." — "Tell him to shut up." — "Good day." — "Good day."

On 9 August 1918, T.-L. Tremblay was promoted to the rank of Brigadier-General and placed in command of the 5th Brigade, which included the 22nd, 24th, 25th, and 26th battalions. In this capacity, he received the battalion commanding officers on 26 August 1918, on the eve of the Battle of Arras. Tremblay was always ready to listen to good ideas. One of the officers who was present described the meeting as follows:

They discussed the situation and Mackenzie⁴⁰ came up with a suggestion which seemed acceptable to everyone. He said, "The Germans are expecting our usual attack at dawn. How about delaying until say 10:00 or 11:00 am and start without preliminary shelling? We might catch them unprepared."

They tossed that around for a while and the Brigade Commander, Brigadier-General Tremblay, agreed to take it up with Corps HQ. We kicked off at 10:00 am.⁴¹

In actual fact, however, as Tremblay explains in his Brigade report for the period 19 to 29 August 1918,⁴² there were other reasons that mitigated starting the attack at 1000 hours, including the distance that had to be travelled from the assembly point to the starting line and the impossibility of getting the tanks there on time. Nonetheless, Tremblay was always willing to support good ideas.



Thomas-Louis Tremblay, general officer commanding the 5th Infantry Brigade, April 1919.
(Library and Archives Canada, PA-004284)

FROM ONE WAR TO THE NEXT

Brigadier-General T.-L. Tremblay returned to Canada in May 1919. Although he returned to civilian life at that point, he maintained his close contacts with the 22nd Battalion, which became a unit of the regular force under the title of the Royal 22nd Regiment. In recognition of his role with the regiment, he was appointed honorary colonel in 1929, succeeding Marshal Foch.

Tremblay returned to his profession of engineering. He held the positions of chief engineer and then general manager at the Quebec City Harbour Commission. He was also involved in numerous organizations, such as the American Water Works Association and the American Harbours Association.

Faithful to the model that he learned at Royal Military College, which sought to train men prepared to support the Army in the event of war, Tremblay rejoined Canada's Regular Force at the outbreak of the Second World War. He held the rank of major-general and served as the Army's inspector general for eastern Canada until the end of the war. He died on 28 March 1951.

At the dawn of the twentieth century, in an era in which the definition of leadership was even less precise than in our own day, Tremblay put into practice the training and the knowledge he had acquired at RMC and his subsequent military service while exercising command of the 22nd Battalion.

His personal diary, as a historical source, has the advantage of proximity to the facts. Furthermore it was not rewritten. This type of source material, however, is limited by the author's subjective selection of the contents. Still, in the case of Thomas-Louis Tremblay, contemporary testimony does corroborate the contents of the document to some degree.

Tremblay's leadership style, as he displays it through the actions that he recounts in his personal diary, consisted of a good dose of leading by example, discipline, and comradeship with his men. While consistent with the contemporary portrait of a leader, as described by British Brigadier-General Haking, there is also no doubt that Tremblay's

leadership had a distinct French-Canadian component. Indeed, the commanding officer of the 22nd Battalion did not hesitate to speak of the battalion as representing French Canadians in France and the only political digression he allowed himself in his diary was to defend the unique character of the regiment.

NOTES

1. Canada. *Dishonoured Legacy: The Lessons of the Somalia Affair; Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Deployment of Canadian Forces to Somalia*, October 1995. The quotations from this report are taken from the version available on the Department of National Defence website at <http://www.dnd.ca/somalia/somaliae.htm>.
2. Stephen J. Harris, "Professionnalisation et instruction de la Milice canadienne, 1880-1914," in Y. Tremblay, R. Legault, and J. Lamarre, *L'Éducation et les militaires canadiens* (Outremont, QC: Athéna Éditions, 2004), 86, 93.
3. War Office, *Army List*, 1910: 72.
4. R.C.B. Haking, *Company Training* (London: Hugh Rees Limited, 1915, 6th ed), v.
5. *Ibid.*, 1.
6. *Ibid.*, 11.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*, 9.
9. *Ibid.*
10. Haig's Diary contains over 700,000 words, while Tremblay's is slightly more than 80,000.
11. John Smyth, *Leadership in Battle, 1914-1918* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1975), 118.
12. War Office, *Field Service Regulations, Vol. 1, Organization and Administration* (London: War Office, 1923), 162.
13. R.A. Preston, *Canada's RMC: A History of the Royal Military College* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), 189.
14. *Ibid.*, 149-178.
15. The title awarded to the best athlete in the graduating class.
16. This was a unit charged with delivering ammunition to the troops of the division.

17. The diary of Thomas-Louis Tremblay is currently being published.
18. T.-L. Tremblay to J. Chaballe, 26 May 1947. Archives of the Royal 22e Régiment Museum.
19. Jean-Pierre Gagnon, *Le 22e Bataillon* (Sainte-Foy, QC: Laval University Press, 1986), 74.
20. Tremblay Diary, 22 May 1915.
21. War Office, *Games for Use with Physical Training Tables and Training in Bombing* (London, 1916), i.
22. Haking, 26.
23. Joseph Chaballe, *Histoire du 22e Bataillon canadien-français* (Montreal: Chanteclerc, 1952), 42.
24. The troops were billeted in the villages by means of requisitions served on local residents. A ticket (*billet* in French) was given to a soldier indicating the house to which he was assigned, hence the noun and verb *billet*.
25. Clearly, the soldiers used straw as mattresses — Diary of Thomas-Louis Tremblay, entry for 16 November 1915.
26. Chaballe, 80.
27. Assistant director medical services.
28. Double-decker buses.
29. Claudius Corneloup did not forget this difficult march: "Dismounted, feverish, with swollen arms, we returned to the vicinity of Ypres" — Corneloup, *L'Épopée du 22e* (Montreal: La Presse/Librairie Beauchemin, 1919), 38.
30. Tremblay Diary, 15 September 1916.
31. Chaballe, 143.
32. After the war, when the battalion received the status of a regular force regiment, it was given permission to choose the battle honours that would appear on its flag: Courcellette figures prominently on it.
33. Tremblay Diary, 14 February 1917.
34. L.-T. Tremblay was then convalescing in England following an operation for a health problem, and Major A.E. Dubuc commanded the battalion in his absence.
35. Tremblay Diary, 15 November 1916.
36. Coal mining country, where the surface pits (*fosses* in French) provided a resting place for the troops.
37. Haking, 13.

38. A.J. Lapointe, *Souvenirs d'un soldat du Québec* (Les éditions du Castor, 1944), 121.
39. Some of the articles that appeared in the British press, in Tremblay's view, depicted French Canadians in a negative light.
40. Commanding officer of 26th Battalion (New Brunswick).
41. A.L. Barry, *Batman to Brigadier-General*, 45.
42. War diary of the 5th Canadian Brigade, Appendix 8, August 1918, Archives of the 22e Régiment Museum.

CHAPTER EIGHT

French-Canadian Leadership in Canada's Navy, 1910–1971



JEAN-FRANÇOIS DRAPEAU

C urrent Canadian Forces (CF) leadership doctrine defines effective leadership as “directing, motivating, and enabling others to accomplish the mission professionally and ethically, while developing or improving capabilities that contribute to mission success.”¹ In a strongly hierarchical structure, such as the military one, the senior officers assume leadership. In the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN), the senior officers are the captains of warships and the high-ranking officers in naval establishments or in the government bureaucracy. The former are the Navy at sea, while the latter are the Navy ashore. In the RCN, the senior officers are in leadership positions.

The Canadian Naval Service was established in 1910 by an act of the federal Parliament. Since then, leadership in the RCN has been the preserve of English-Canadian officers. French-speaking Canadians, for their part, have more often than not been the ones who obeyed orders. This is to say that the RCN is more an English-Canadian than a French-Canadian institution. This pre-eminence of senior English-Canadian officers over their French-Canadian colleagues is readily verifiable.

Historically, the percentage of French-speaking Canadians in leadership positions in the RCN is much lower than their Canada-wide percentage of the population.² To give but a few figures: between 1914

and 1918, according to historians Serge Bernier and Jean Pariseau, only 4 (5.4 percent) of the RCN's 73 officers were French Canadians. On the eve of the Second World War, the percentage of French-Canadian officers was 4.84 percent.³ The statistics kept by the Department of National Defence (DND) contain no official figures on the number of French Canadians who served in the RCN during the Second World War.⁴ In the absence of such figures, the promotion lists that appeared in the newspapers may serve as a guide. Thus, of the 277 officers on the 1943 New Year's promotion list, nine were French Canadians.⁵ On 1 July 1944, *La Presse* announced 333 promotions in the RCN, of which only seven went to French Canadians.⁶ The under-representation of French Canadians in leadership positions did not improve following demobilization. On the contrary, the situation was perpetuated. In 1951, Commander Marcel Jetté reported on the number of French Canadians serving in the RCN. He discovered that 11 percent of the seamen and non-commissioned officers were French Canadian, whereas only nine of the 382 senior officers were francophones, comprising a meagre 2.3 percent.⁷

In the 1960s, there emerged a political will to change the order of things. A regulation in 1971 corrected the situation. This dictum compelled the new Canadian Forces and its Maritime Command (MARCOM), to reserve 27 percent of their ranks for francophones. This requirement applied both to other ranks and to officers and general officers. The regulation was a form of positive discrimination to allow French Canadians access to leadership positions in the Canadian Forces.⁸ While the minority welcomed the regulation, the majority did not remain indifferent. In his book *On the Triangle Run*, James B. Lamb, a veteran of the Second World War, wrote on this question: "Overnight [...] French-Canadian ratings and officers were given accelerated promotion and preferred postings in a bureaucratic 'catch-up' operation, with the inevitable consequences of anger and resentment on the part of their English-speaking contemporaries."⁹

Two questions arise in the face of these figures, which led to the 1971 regulation. Before this regulation was promulgated, what had served to prevent the emergence of French-Canadian leadership in the RCN?



Lieutenant-Commander Stanislas Déry sailing frigid North Atlantic waters. (Musée naval de Québec)

Were there some French Canadians who succeeded in overcoming the problems and climbing the ranks to positions of leadership in the Canadian Navy?

By way of an answer, we will attempt to demonstrate that certain factors inherent in the RCN hampered the emergence of French-Canadian leadership. These obstacles were the prejudices of English-Canadian sailors towards French-Canadian sailors, the British

traditions of the RCN, and the dominance of English as the language of work. We will attempt to see how, in the RCN, a world that was hardly welcoming to their culture, some French-Canadian officers rose to positions of leadership — or failed to do so. We will see that the careers of some officers were thwarted when they encountered these obstacles. This was the case for Lieutenant-Commander Stanislas Déry, who did not rise to a leadership position, despite his abilities, and who received no decorations despite his participation in the sinking of an enemy vessel. Finally, we will see how some other French-Canadian officers overcame obstacles to rise to leadership positions. We will cite a few examples, including those of Victor-Gabriel Brodeur and Louis de la Chesnaye Audette.

Accordingly this chapter is divided into three sections. The first identifies the main obstacles to the emergence of French-Canadian leadership in the RCN. The second is devoted to the career of Lieutenant-Commander Déry, who, having encountered some of these obstacles, never obtained a leadership position in the RCN. The final section of the article gives an account of French-Canadian officers who did succeed in rising through the ranks, despite the obstacles, to leadership positions in the RCN.

THE OBSTACLES TO THE EMERGENCE OF FRENCH-CANADIAN LEADERSHIP IN THE RCN

The number of senior French-Canadian officers who served in the RCN is small, as is amply demonstrated by the figures cited in the introduction. Why is the number of French-Canadian officers so small? This section will discuss the three major obstacles to the emergence of French-Canadian leadership in the RCN. These are the prejudices against French Canadians, the British traditions of the RCN and the domination of English as the language of work.

The Prejudices Against French-Canadian Sailors

The Anglo-Saxon people have an intimate relationship with the sea. Their mastery of the sea is an indisputable historical fact, especially in the nineteenth century, during which the ships of Britain's Royal Navy outnumbered those of other nations. This dominance led to the formation of preconceived ideas about the superiority of British civilization, and of its sailors, the masters of the seas. An observation by Sir Winston Churchill on his first visit to New York City illustrates clearly the stereotyped concept that emerged from the domination of the seas by British civilization. During his visit, Churchill was convinced that "producing good sailors is the monopoly of the Anglo-Saxon race."¹⁰



Rear-Admiral Victor-Gabriel Brodeur had the most prestigious career of the Royal Canadian Navy's French-Canadian sailors in the twentieth century. (Musée naval de Québec)

French Canadians have no maritime tradition comparable to that of the Anglo-Saxons. Although the French-Canadian tradition is solid and rooted in history, it is outmatched. Since their homeland is crossed by the St. Lawrence River and divided by a major river system, their ancestors were obliged to prove their seamanship skills. These precursors include such major figures in the history of New France as Pierre Lemoyne d'Iberville and Pierre-Esprit Radisson. Closer to our own day, we can name Joseph-Elzéar Bernier, explorer of the Canadian Arctic. In our own time, this French-Canadian maritime tradition is perpetuated by, among others, the St. Lawrence River pilots, who relieve the captains of foreign cargo vessels sailing to their destinations on the majestic river.

This imbalance between the maritime traditions of Canada's two founding peoples contributed to the emergence of prejudices against French Canadians. Historians Bernier and Pariseau have shown that, in some parts of the Canadian Army, "French Canadians were considered fit to serve only in the 'catch-all' branch (the infantry), in other words, the one that demanded the lowest IQ from its recruits."¹¹ While pointing an accusing finger at anyone is unproductive, the fact remains that these prejudices proved stubborn. They undoubtedly carried weight. In some cases, they certainly prevented a number of careers from flourishing. "Too much of the metaphysical and not enough of the physical!" was once a common phrase used to belittle the education received by French Canadians.¹² This stubborn prejudice is at times echoed in historical works. For example, in his brilliant *The Sea Is at Our Gates: The History of the Canadian Navy*, amateur historian Tony German explains the small number of successful candidates at the first graduation ceremony from Royal Roads Academy by the lack of training in mathematics and pure sciences received by francophone recruits. German writes, "With an age ceiling and mandatory math and science for entry, graduates of Quebec colleges had small chance of qualifying."¹³ The other extreme, however, also needs to be avoided. Although French Canadians were at times the victims of the majority's prejudices, they were not, argued the editorial writer of *L'Action Catholique*, "the target of an anglophone conspiracy which denied them the opportunity to develop commensurate with their talents."¹⁴ However, as Bernier and Pariseau

put it, "it cannot be denied that in the course of the two centuries following the Conquest, the authorities, Canadian as well as British, were anti-francophone in varying degrees, or at the very least indifferent to the fate of French Canadians."¹⁵

The British Traditions of the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN)

The British traditions of the RCN were another obstacle to the emergence of French-Canadian leadership. Throughout its history, French Canadians viewed the RCN as more a British than a Canadian institution.¹⁶ And this perception is not necessarily false. Historian Serge Bernier revealed, "of our three armed services, our Naval force was undoubtedly the most subservient to Great Britain and its military traditions."¹⁷ This British tradition in the RCN was unlikely to attract French Canadians and encourage them to enrol in the Navy. From the 1960s onward, this view also spread to English Canadians, resulting in the transformation of the RCN.

From its creation in 1910, Canada's Navy has been steeped in British tradition. The RCN was modelled on the Royal Navy, which had dominated the world's seas and oceans for several centuries.¹⁸ In his book *The Corvette Navy*, James Lamb states that the Royal Navy "ranks, with the Catholic Church and the Roman legion, as one of the supreme creations of human organizing genius, an institution which simply defies comparison with its contemporaries."¹⁹

At the time of its creation, the RCN borrowed many aspects from the Royal Navy. *The British Naval Discipline Act* and *The King's Regulations and Admiralty Instructions*, which are the regulations of the Royal Navy, were applied to the RCN.²⁰ The same is true of its traditions, customs, and uniforms. Only the initials HMCS differentiated Canadian sailors from their British comrades.²¹ In order to distinguish between the two services, Canada's minister of the navy and fisheries, Louis-Philippe Brodeur, requested permission from the British Admiralty to allow Canadian ships to fly a green maple leaf in the centre of the *White Ensign*. To the minister's great disappointment,

the Admiralty responded negatively: the ships of the dominions were to fly the same flag as those of the mother country.²²

In the First World War, the Royal Canadian Navy was integrated into the Royal Navy. With its score of ships and 9,000 sailors, its primary mission was to guard the base at Halifax, while the Royal Navy looked after the overall protection of Canada's coastline.²³ During the inter-war years, the British traditions of the RCN solidified. Officer cadets graduating from the Royal Military College of Canada or from a civilian school were sent to England to complete their training.²⁴ They trained on British ships and took staff courses at the Royal Naval College in Greenwich. Some also attended the Imperial Defence College. The officer cadets of the RCN were introduced to the customs of the British Navy and were indoctrinated with the centralization of imperial defence.²⁵ "In addition to acquiring a first class training," explained naval historian Roger Sarty, "Canadian personnel were initiated into a way of life punctuated by rituals and permeated with traditions."²⁶ However, the training of Canadian officers in British schools clearly was not conducive to the emergence of French-Canadian leadership.²⁷

During the Second World War, because of the state of siege in which Britain found herself and of the German threat, the RCN played an important role in ensuring the safety of the convoys that carried food-stuffs, matériel and men from North America to Britain. On 1 May 1943, the first indication emerged of independence on the part of the RCN. At the end of the conference on Atlantic convoys with the United States, the RCN received full responsibility for the North-West Atlantic sector. Vice-Admiral L.W. Murray became the sector operations commander. He was the only Canadian among all the commanders-in-chief in the Allied Forces.²⁸

With the demobilization of the troops, Canadianization of the RCN became a topic of discussion. In 1949, the Mainguy Commission was formed to investigate the case of three mutinies that occurred at sea. In its *Report*, the Mainguy Commission recommended, among other things, the "Canadianization" of the RCN. The naval staff then gave itself eight years to study the issue, and the process was launched.²⁹

By the 1960s, the RCN still maintained its British traditions, although they were beginning to clash with a growing Canadian nationalism. The federal government had embarked on the gradual unification of the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force into a single integrated command, a single staff. This policy of integration was steered by Paul Hellyer, the minister of national defence in the Liberal Cabinet of Lester B. Pearson, who wanted to Canadianize the armed forces. The new structure was passed by both houses of Parliament in 1964. On 25 April 1967, in the centennial year of Canadian Confederation, the House of Commons passed the Canadian Forces Reorganization Act. During the celebrations to mark the centennial, the representatives of the three former armed services "celebrated their vanishing traditions in a giant Centennial Tattoo."³⁰

The integration of the new Canadian Forces took effect on 1 February 1968. The RCN was officially abolished and Maritime Command (MARCOM) appeared in its stead.³¹ In a symbolic act, the single uniform of the new Canadian Forces replaced the uniforms of the three old armed services, including the RCN's navy blue uniform.³² "In a drive to eliminate any vestige, however slight, of links with Britain that might smack of colonialism," wrote James Lamb, "the navy was stripped of its admirals, its ensign, its uniform, its tradition, its name."³³

The Language of Work and the Absence of French-Language Units

The language of work was another obstacle to the emergence of French-Canadian leadership in the RCN. The issue of the language of work was raised when the Canadian Naval Service was founded in 1910. The minister at the time, Louis-Philippe Brodeur, and his deputy minister, Georges Desbarats, wanted the RCN to be a truly Canadian institution with recognition of its bilingual nature. To achieve this, Brodeur and Desbarats asked the staff to take steps to ensure that French Canadians would not be at a disadvantage compared to their English-speaking colleagues. They urged, among other things, that French-Canadian recruits be able to take their admission tests in their own language. They also demanded that the instructors be bilingual.³⁴

However, in August 1910, the minister received a memo from the staff officers of the Canadian Naval Service, all of whom came from the Royal Navy. This memo stipulated, among other things, that French-Canadian recruits would have to take the entrance examination in English only.³⁵ After noting the staff officers' position, Brodeur sent them the following eloquent memo:

Let us not forget that Canada is a bilingual country and that French and English are on the same footing. Consequently, training should be given in both languages in national establishments. The instructors who are to be appointed should know French as well as English. If the rule proposed in the above-mentioned memorandum were adopted, that would mean that young francophones could not be admitted to the Navy. I am sure that this is not the aim of the officers who prepared the examination. I am perfectly aware that the use of both languages has its drawbacks, but that is not sufficient grounds to prevent the true aim of the constitution from being achieved.³⁶

The minister's eloquence, however, made little impression on the staff officers on loan from the Royal Navy. They replied that "any attempt to combine the two languages would be detrimental to the service."³⁷ In so doing, they decided that English would be the only permissible language of work.³⁸ With the option of a bilingual Navy thus dismissed off-handedly, French Canadians who wanted to serve their country in the RCN had first to learn English. In a study produced in 1954, J.M. Hitsman confirmed "thorough knowledge of English was essential."³⁹

Consequently, during the Second World War, French Canadians enrolled primarily in the Army and, to a lesser degree, in the Air Force.⁴⁰ In these services, francophones could always serve in regiments or wings where they constituted the majority. This was the case in Royal 22nd Regiment, founded during the First World War, or the Alouette Wing, a bomber formation of the Royal Canadian Air Force. In contrast to the Air Force and the Army, the Navy did not have a single ship on which

French Canadians were in a majority.⁴¹ Creating such a unit was considered too difficult for administrative reasons.⁴² French-Canadian sailors were accordingly distributed among different ships where English was the language of work.⁴³ As a result, life on board was anything but restful for francophones, who were often forbidden from using their own language.⁴⁴ Those who persisted in speaking French were soon considered troublemakers.⁴⁵ "There was thus no place in the Navy and the Air Force for French Canadians except for French Canadians who spoke English," argued Bernier and Pariseau, "Any unilingual francophone was systematically excluded, whereas it was plain sailing for unilingual anglophones."⁴⁶ In comparison with English Canadians, many French Canadians felt that they were treated as second-class citizens and that their status was inferior.⁴⁷ This is why the famous *Jetté Report* of 1952, which attempted to explain why French Canadians were underrepresented in the RCN, revealed tellingly "the general impression is that the Navy does not want French Canadians in its ranks."⁴⁸

The 1960s saw improvements to the status of French in the RCN. In 1966, General Jean-Victor Allard, a veteran of the Second World War and the Korean campaign, became the chief of the defence staff of the new Canadian Forces. He regarded the unification of the three services into a single command as a unique opportunity to promote the French fact.⁴⁹ A task force was soon established to study the issue. In 1967, this group proposed the creation of francophone units throughout Canada. In September, the minister of national defence, Léo Cadieux, announced the creation of a French-language unit in the RCN: HMCS *Ottawa*.⁵⁰ The ship was launched in 1968. "For the first time in its history," observed naval historian Marc Milner, "the navy sent a major warship to sea with French as its working language."⁵¹

Eventually, in 1969, the federal government passed the *Official Languages Act*.⁵² However, the *Official Languages Act* imposed only institutional bilingualism: in other words, it applied to the departments, agencies, and other bodies of the federal government. The *Official Languages Act* does not impose bilingualism on individuals.⁵³ These measures undoubtedly improved the French Canadians' chances of obtaining leadership positions, but the working language of the RCN

remained English. Promotions were granted primarily to officers who mastered both official languages. In that way, all the francophones would speak English and very few anglophones would be bilingual.⁵⁴

However, "the fact that there were only a handful of Francophone sailors [...]," noted journalist Pierre Vennat, "must not prevent our pointing out the contribution of those French Canadians who served at sea, even if they were few in number."⁵⁵ This is exactly what we intend to do in the following pages. We shall describe the naval experience of a number of French-Canadian officers in the RCN, an institution that was hardly welcoming of francophones. We will show that some, despite an impeccable service record, were unable to rise to command of a ship. That is true of Lieutenant-Commander Déry. On the other hand we will demonstrate how others managed to rise to leadership positions despite the obstacles.

FRENCH-CANADIAN LEADERSHIP QUESTIONED: THE EXPERIENCE OF LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER STANISLAS DÉRY

Déry's career offers a textbook example of a French-Canadian officer in the RCN who did not manage to rise to a command position, despite having absorbed an impressive body of knowledge. Towards the end of the Second World War, Déry was one of the most experienced second-in-commands in the entire RCN, but he was never called upon to command his own ship, which would have been "the logical culmination of his naval career."⁵⁶ In addition, Déry was never decorated for his part in the sinking of the submarine U-877 on 27 December 1944. In short, Lieutenant-Commander Déry, one of the RCN's most brilliant officers, never received the recognition he deserved.

The Stages in a Remarkable Naval Career

The academic training of Lieutenant-Commander Déry, who was born in Quebec City in 1912, is typical of that of French Canadians at

the time, of whom it was said that they knew too much metaphysics and not enough physics. After graduating with a bachelor of arts degree from the Quebec City Seminary in 1932, he entered the Faculty of Law at Laval University. In July 1935 he was called to the Quebec City Bar.

Alongside his studies, however, Déry had a passion for the sea. In 1932, he was hired as a boat captain at the Trois-Pistoles biological station, and two years later as an officer cadet in the Canadian Officers Training Corps (COTC). In 1934, he enrolled as a sub-lieutenant in the RCN Volunteer Reserve (RCNVR). Déry also served as captain of a Royal Canadian Mounted Police patrol boat. Before practising law, Déry completed several training cruises as an officer on board RCN and Royal Navy ships. He was promoted lieutenant in 1936 and he earned a Watch-Keeping Certificate on HMCS *Vancouver*. According to some Quebec newspapers, describing his career at the time of his demobilization, he was one of the first officers in the RCN to qualify as officer of the watch.⁵⁷



HMCS *Prince Henry* in front of Quebec City. (Musée naval de Québec)

In September 1939, Canada entered the war against Germany, alongside England and France. Déry was immediately mobilized by the RCN for the duration. During this period, Déry performed a variety of duties on several ships and at several RCN bases. In 1940 and 1941, he spent 15 months at sea as a lieutenant on board the auxiliary cruiser HMCS *Prince Henry*. The ship was charged with intercepting German merchant ships making the crossing to South America. Déry was thus involved in the capture and destruction of several German cargo ships, including the *Hermonthis* and the *München*. He was already making his mark as a skilled officer who could be trusted with a variety of duties. In a letter to his parents, Déry wrote that he was "aware that he was up to the task [and that] in return [he] believed that [he] received every possible consideration from the Captain."⁵⁸

Subsequently, Déry served briefly in the counter-espionage and intelligence division of RCN Headquarters in Ottawa. He returned to sea for a while on board the corvette HMCS *Chambly*, before being assigned to the Naval Signalling School, HMCS *Saint-Hyacinthe*. In 1943, Déry returned definitively to sea on board HMCS *Prince Rupert* and HMCS *St. Thomas*, where he served until the conclusion of hostilities.

On board HMCS *St. Thomas*, Déry served as first lieutenant, or second-in-command. This is a key position on a naval vessel. According to Hal Lawrence, a veteran and author of *A Bloody War*, "The First Lieutenant, not the Captain, is the centre of all things. He is the Executive Officer. Each head of department [...] has his regular staff who work under him every day."⁵⁹ On 27 December 1944, HMCS *St. Thomas* sank the submarine U-877. Déry played a crucial role in the operation and was given responsibility for the enemy sailors picked up out of the water by the corvette. Four days later, he wrote to his parents, "I shall, I assure you, have lots to tell you when the time comes to describe to you all the emotions we have gone through recently."⁶⁰

At the end of the war, a large number of men who had served under the colours were demobilized. Déry was discharged in July 1945, by which time he was a lieutenant-commander. He resumed his law practice when he returned to civilian life. He became a Queen's Counsel and served as coroner of the Quebec City district between 1976 and 1982.⁶¹

The Elusive Command

Notwithstanding his flawless service record and his deep knowledge of the sea, Lieutenant-Commander Déry was never to command an RCN ship. The prospect was often discussed; numerous passages in Déry's letters to his parents testify to that. However, for Déry, obtaining command of a ship never left the realm of possibility.

It is in a letter written to his parents on 19 July 1941 that Déry first mentions the possibility of his being appointed to the command of a ship. He wrote at the time that he was expecting to be posted ashore "probably to take a course, and then be in a position to take command of a small unit."⁶² During the fall of 1944, Déry again wrote that he was expecting his "command course to take over command of a ship as captain in the spring."⁶³ On 14 October 1944, he wrote to his parents that the captain of HMCS *St. Thomas* and two of its officers were leaving the ship temporarily to take a short training course. Déry wrote, "My turn to take courses will probably come the next time we put into port."⁶⁴ In the end, Déry never had an opportunity to take this much-talked-about course for future captains.

There was increasing talk during the winter of 1945 that Déry would be given a leadership position. Lieutenant-Commander Leslie P. Denny was leaving HMCS *St. Thomas* because of "nervous exhaustion." As first lieutenant, Déry thought there was a slight possibility of his being given command of the ship. He thought it more likely, however, that the position of the new captain would be given to someone other than himself, which would mean that he would be transferred to another vessel. The RCN staff, he thought, would not let him serve under the command of a less experienced captain. He wrote: "They would not keep me as First Lieutenant under the orders of a captain whose seniority was less than mine; it would not be the first time that my seniority has worked against me."⁶⁵

On 27 January 1945, a new senior officer took command of HMCS *St. Thomas*. He was greatly impressed by the naval qualities of Déry, his second-in-command. At their first meeting, he promised him "a very good appointment" in the relatively near future. At the time, Déry was

expecting to be given "command of a ship, probably a frigate, or more likely the second-in-command of something larger, either an aircraft carrier or a cruiser."⁶⁶

During the month of February, Déry's command appointment appeared to be a formality. The captain of HMCS *St. Thomas* was exerting pressure on the officers responsible for promotions. Déry was kept abreast of his superior's initiatives and passed the news on to his parents: "My Captain told me what happened when [...] our boss is supposed to have discovered me. He is supposed to have wrinkled his forehead when he realized the length of my service, and to see me still where I am; to make a long story short, he told my Captain to tell him in return, this time if he would consider me for my own command, and my Captain told him that his decision had been made from the first day that we were at sea together. This decision was that it would be a waste of money to keep me here and to give me my own ship as fast as possible, even without the command course that is normally given to all [...] new captains."⁶⁷

Ultimately, Déry was to remain on HMCS *St. Thomas* until the end of the war and never received command of his own ship, despite the initiatives of his superior officer. In 1961, more than 15 years after the end of hostilities, Déry confided to journalist Maurice Desjardins:

French-Canadian officers were not very numerous in the Canadian Navy. Barely one per cent. I had little chance of becoming an Admiral. If the war had continued, I would have been promoted Captain in July 1945 and I would have commanded a ship.⁶⁸

A Decoration That Never Came

Both the naval career of Lieutenant-Commander Déry, and his contributions to society, were acknowledged on numerous occasions by the award of honorific titles or medals symbolizing the services rendered. Déry received the Atlantic Star, in particular. However, he was

never decorated for his participation in the destruction of the German submarine U-877 on 27 December 1944, whereas the other officers of HMCS *St. Thomas* were.⁶⁹

There is, however, no doubt about Déry's performance during this operation. On the morning of 27 December 1944, north of the Azores, the seven vessels in escort group C3 were accompanying convoy HX 327. Lieutenant Déry was officer of the watch on HMCS *St. Thomas*. From its position to the rear of the convoy, the asdic on the Canadian corvette located an enemy submarine. A few minutes earlier, the ship at the head of the convoy, HMCS *Edmunston*, had signalled the presence of the submarine, but had revised its opinion. Alerted by the asdic operator, Déry immediately ordered that sonar echo-finding continue and so informed his captain, Lieutenant-Commander Leslie P. Denny. Two hours later, U877 was scuttled, destroyed by depth charges from HMCS



A corvette flotilla bound for St. John's, Newfoundland, 1941. (Library and Archives Canada PA-115350)

St. Thomas. Eleven days after the start of the Ardennes offensive, U-877 was on a suicide mission headed for the port of New York.⁷⁰

In a rare occurrence, the 55 crew on board U-877 were picked up by the Canadian ships. In 1987, Déry acknowledged to a journalist that "it was quite some feat of arms to have managed to save the entire crew of the submarine."⁷¹ On board HMCS *St. Thomas*, Déry was put in charge of the 30 or so German prisoners who were taken on board and lived there for eight days before being turned over to the appropriate authorities.⁷²

During the Second World War, the sinking of a submarine was noteworthy. The staff generally decorated or mentioned in dispatches the names of the captain, the second-in-command, the officer-of-the-watch, and the asdic operator of the victorious ship. A few weeks after the sinking of U-877 by HMCS *St. Thomas*, the RCN awarded decorations to the officers and men of the ship that had just distinguished itself. Curiously enough, of all the sailors involved, Déry was the only one to receive neither a decoration nor a mention in dispatches.⁷³

Was this oversight, which is difficult to justify, not tangible proof of the obstacles placed in the way of the emergence of French-Canadian leadership in the RCN? Were these facts not an indication of the attitude of English-Canadian sailors towards French Canadians? These questions are difficult to answer, but the facts as presented leave one perplexed. Throughout his naval career, there is not the shadow of a doubt that Déry experienced a kind of segregation on the part of his superior officers in the RCN. Was Déry's career symptomatic of French Canadians' situation in the RCN?

SOME FRENCH CANADIANS IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

On reading the disappointing experiences of Lieutenant-Commander Déry, it is easy to conclude that there was no place for French Canadians in leadership positions in the RCN. However, there were a few exceptions that would support, not a confirmation, but a contradiction of what would appear to be the rule — namely that French-Canadian officers

could not rise to leadership positions in the RCN because of the prejudices that were circulating about them, the British traditions of the RCN, and the pre-eminence of English as the language of work. Among those French Canadians who did rise to leadership positions in the RCN, the most prestigious names are those of Victor-Gabriel Brodeur and Louis de la Chesnaye Audette.

Rear-Admiral Victor-Gabriel Brodeur

Rear-Admiral Victor-Gabriel Brodeur (1892-1976) had one of the finest naval careers to which any sailor could aspire, especially one of French-Canadian origin. Indeed, Brodeur had the most prestigious career of the RCN's French-Canadian sailors in the twentieth century.⁷⁴ He was the son of Louis-Philippe Brodeur, the minister of the navy and fisheries in the Cabinet of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, the one that was in office when the Canadian Naval Service was established in 1910.

At the time the RCN was founded by his father, Victor-Gabriel Brodeur was part of the first graduating year of cadets at the Canadian Naval College. During the First World War, he served on several Royal Navy ships, including the famous HMS *Dreadnought*. On his return to Canada, he commanded the Halifax Naval Base for a time and subsequently worked at headquarters in Ottawa. In the 1930s, Brodeur became the first captain of HMCS *Skeena*, HMCS *Fraser*, and HMCS *Ottawa*. In 1938, he was appointed commodore of the Canadian Pacific Fleet. At the time, this rank was the equivalent of a brigadier general in the Army, a position to which no French Canadian had risen in wartime. These appointments received by Brodeur show that he was in a true leadership position at that time.

During the Second World War, Brodeur continued to rise through the senior ranks of the RCN, becoming the first Canadian naval attaché in Washington in 1940. Two years later, he was promoted to the rank of rear-admiral and appointed the representative of the RCN in the joint Allied staff located in the U.S. capital. He took an active part in implementing the British-Canadian agreements on maritime convoys.⁷⁵

If Brodeur rose through the ranks, he did so essentially by means of perseverance. During the years he spent on Royal Navy (RN) ships, he had to deal with the taunts of his comrades-in-arms, stemming especially from his French-Canadian accent. "In his young days with the RN he took more than a fair share of the condescension and ribbing that 'colonials' got from many of their British messmates," observes German, "A Canadian accent was one thing, but with his French-Canadian accent Brodeur really stood out. The RN sailors who couldn't fathom it dubbed him 'Scottie'. While others shrugged off the joshing and simply made up their minds to beat the Brits in due course at their own game, Brodeur retained suspicion, if not actual antipathy. He admired the RN as a service, but he was certainly no Anglophile."⁷⁶

Brodeur thus provides the most striking example of the French-Canadian officer who defied the obstacles to the emergence of French-Canadian leadership to climb the ranks of the RCN.

Lieutenant-Commander Louis de la Chesnaye Audette

Lieutenant-Commander Louis de la Chesnaye Audette (1907–1995) is another French-Canadian officer who distinguished himself during the Second World War. Audette is known as the French-Canadian sailor who held the longest command of an RCN ship. Lieutenant-Commander Audette was born either in Quebec City or in Ottawa.⁷⁷ Like Déry, he was a lawyer. During the 1930s, he practised law in Montreal. In 1938, on the eve of the Second World War, he enlisted in the Royal Canadian Navy Volunteer Reserve. When Canada followed Great Britain's lead and eventually declared war on Germany, Audette received his lieutenant's commission in the RCNVR.

During the Second World War, Audette distinguished himself in the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. After surviving the sinking of the corvette HMCS *Saguenay*, in December 1940, he served on the bridges of HMCS *Francis* and HMCS *Pictou*. On 22 August 1942, Audette was appointed commanding officer of HMCS *Pictou*, a "Flower" corvette. He commanded this ship until 19 September 1942, when he obtained com-

mand of HMCS *Amherst*, another "Flower" class corvette, on which he sailed for more than two years. During the last year of the war, Audette commanded the frigate HMCS *Coaticook* and HMCS *St. Catharines*. In July 1945, he was mentioned in despatches for gallantry.⁷⁸

After the war, Audette remained in the Canadian Navy. He commanded HMCS *Carleton*, the Naval Reserve Base in Ottawa. In 1949, he served with distinction as a member of the Mainguy Commission. Subsequently, the former corvette captain transferred to the federal Public Service, in which he had a stellar career. To what did Audette owe his rise to a leadership position in the RCN? Naval historian Marc Milner sheds some light. He describes Audette as, "The son of a French-Canadian father and a Scottish mother, Audette was fluently bilingual, identified strongly with his ancient Québécois roots, and, although an anglophile, was the least enamoured of the stuffy and pompous manners of the Royal Navy."⁷⁹

For his services, Audette was awarded the Order of Canada in 1974. "This Officer," described the *Canada Gazette* of 29 June 1946, "has served for the majority of the war in escort vessels in the Battle of the Atlantic having been in command for the last two years. By his cheerfulness, enthusiasm, and wholehearted devotion to duty, he has set a fine example to those serving under him."⁸⁰ As such, Audette provides a second example of a French-Canadian officer who rose to a leadership position despite the less-than welcoming environment of the RCN.

Other Senior French-Canadian Officers in the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN)

It goes without saying that Victor-Gabriel Brodeur and Louis de la Chesnaye Audette are the most prestigious French-Canadian senior officers in the history of the RCN. They are not, however, the only French Canadians to have held senior leadership positions in the Canadian Navy. Both Lieutenant-Commander Maurice Lévesque and Commander J.-W.-R. Roy commanded Canadian warships during the Second World War. A number of other French-Canadian senior officers in the RCN distinguished themselves in naval establishments and

at headquarters. In fact, the majority of French Canadians in senior leadership positions in the RCN worked in the Navy ashore.

Initially, we will examine two senior officers of the RCN who served at sea. The first is Lieutenant-Commander Lévesque. In 1942, this sailor, who came from Quebec City, became, in the words of journalist and author Pierre Vennat, "the first French-Canadian officer to be given command of a Canadian corvette, the *Sherbrooke*."⁸¹ Lévesque subsequently commanded HMCS *Sorel*. He was mentioned in dispatches in 1944, with the following wording: "This Officer has served at sea for almost the whole of the war, lately as commanding officer of one of His Majesty's Canadian ships (HMCS *Sherbrooke*), in the Battle of the Atlantic. He has at all times set an excellent example by his efficiency and unswerving devotion to duty."⁸²

Another was Commander J.W.R. Roy (1901–1940), who distinguished himself as a senior French-Canadian officer during the Second World War. Originally from Ottawa, Roy had studied at Loyola College in Montreal before doing his naval training in Halifax and England. On his return to Canada, Roy worked at RCN Headquarters as the director of division operations. In 1940, he was appointed captain of the corvette HMCS *Margaree*. However, a tragic fate awaited him. On the night of 22–23 October 1940, the ship collided with a merchant ship and sank. There were many victims: 140 men were reported lost, including Commander Roy.⁸³

The majority of the "rare" senior officers of French-Canadian origin were officers ashore. Lamb notes that there were in fact two navies in the RCN during the Second World War, the Navy ashore and the Navy at sea. He explained, "the real strength of the Big Navy lay ashore [...] It was a tremendous force, embodying some of the best brains in the country and involving a significant proportion of the nation's wealth and manpower."⁸⁴ The men who served the Navy ashore had easier access to promotion, which is generally attained by taking a course.⁸⁵ "Canada's second navy," asserted Lamb, "was a much more different force: a bunch of amateur sailors, recruited from every walk of civilian life, manning ships deemed too small for command by professional naval officers."⁸⁶

Among the senior French-Canadian officers in the Navy ashore was J.-O. Cossette, who enlisted in 1910 as an ordinary seaman third class.⁸⁷

In August 1940, Cossette became "the first French Canadian to be appointed to the position of naval secretary of the Canadian Navy."⁸⁸ The position of naval secretary was at the time the highest administrative position in the RCN. The ranks of these officers of the Navy ashore also included Lieutenant-Commander Renaud Saint-Laurent, the son of Prime Minister Louis Saint-Laurent, who commanded the Naval Base HMCS *Montcalm* until 1943, when he was replaced in that position by Lieutenant-Commander Eugène Noël. Several francophone doctors also rose to leadership positions, including Lieutenant-Commanders Gaétan Jarry and Joseph-Jean-Louis Bouchard.⁸⁹

Seen from this perspective, this list of French-Canadian officers in leadership positions modifies somewhat the argument that is developed in this chapter. Their limited numbers notwithstanding, French Canadians occupied a number of important positions in the Navy ashore. As far as the other Navy — the Navy at sea — is concerned, the presence of French-Canadian officers in its ranks is much more modest. Very few French Canadians had the opportunity to command a crew at sea. The men who had this experience can be counted on the fingers of one hand.

CONCLUSION

The Canadian Naval Service was founded in 1910. Until the situation was changed by fiat in 1971, very few French Canadians rose to leadership positions within the RCN, which was viewed at the time as the national institution that was least welcoming to Canada's francophones. The lack of French-Canadian senior leadership in the RCN at the time was because of the prejudices held by English-Canadian sailors with regard to French-Canadian sailors, the British traditions of the Canadian Navy and the pre-eminence of English as the language of work.

Given the circumstances, many French Canadians would never obtain senior leadership positions, despite their abilities. This was the case with Lieutenant-Commander Déry. Despite a flawless record in the

RCN, Déry was not given command of a ship during the Second World War, and was not awarded a medal for his key role in the destruction of an enemy submarine. Was the failure in Déry's naval career (i.e., his ability to advance and get command) because of the obstacles referred to above? Most probably it was, even though proving it is difficult in terms of linking the experience of one individual to broad general facts.

Nonetheless, the conclusions to which our review of Déry's career leads us must be modified in light of the careers of several other French-Canadian officers in the RCN. Their small number notwithstanding, some francophone officers did rise to leadership positions within the Canadian Navy. The most prominent examples were Victor-Gabriel Brodeur and Louis de la Chesnaye Audette. Several other French Canadians had fine careers in the RCN, especially in the Navy ashore. However, it is fairly clear that institutional barriers did exist.

NOTES

1. Canada, *Leadership in the Canadian Forces — Doctrine* (Ottawa: DND, 2005), iii and 5.
2. The smaller number of French speakers is a structural given in Canadian history. French Canadians became a minority in 1851. By the end of the nineteenth century, francophones represented approximately 35 percent of the Canadian population. In the course of the two world wars, French Canada — not to be confused with the population of the province of Quebec — accounted for approximately 28.5 percent of people living in Canada. Paul-André Linteau, René Durocher, and Jean-Claude Robert, *Histoire du Québec contemporain, Volume I: De la Confédération à la crise 1867–1929* (Montreal: Boréal, 1989), 690.
3. Serge Bernier and Jean Pariseau, *Les Canadiens français et le bilinguisme dans les forces armées canadiennes, Volume 1, 1763–1969: Le spectre d'une armée bicéphale* [*French Canadians and Bilingualism in the Canadian Forces, Volume 1, 1763–1969: The Spectre of a Bicephalic Army*] (Ottawa: National Defence Historical Division, 1987), 106.
4. *Ibid.*, 135.
5. Pierre Vennat, *Les héros oubliés: l'histoire inédite des militaires canadiens-français de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale*, Vol. 1 (Montreal: Éditions du Méridien, 1997), 155.
6. *Ibid.*, Vol. 3, 117.

7. Marc Milner, *Canada's Navy: The First Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 217.
8. Desmond Morton, "La pénurie d'officiers francophones dans l'armée canadienne aux deux guerres mondiales" ["The Shortage of French-Canadian Officers in the Canadian Army in the Two World Wars"], *Bulletin d'histoire politique*, Vol. 3, Nos. 3-4 (1995), 104.
9. James B. Lamb, *On the Triangle Run* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1986), 227.
10. Roland Marx, *Winston Churchill: Enfance et adolescence* (Paris: Autrement, 2000), 53.
11. Bernier and Pariseau, *Les Canadiens français et le bilinguisme*, 23.
12. *Ibid.*, 105.
13. Tony German, *The Sea is at Our Gates: The History of the Canadian Navy* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1990), 240.
14. Morton, "La pénurie d'officiers," 100.
15. Bernier and Pariseau, *Les Canadiens français et le bilinguisme*, 23.
16. Nigel Brodeur, "L. P. Brodeur and the Origins of the RCN," in *The RCN in Retrospect, 1910-1968* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1982), 31.
17. Serge Bernier, "Participation des canadiens français aux combats: Évaluation et tentative de quantification," *Bulletin d'histoire politique*, Vol. 3, Nos. 3-4 (1995), 18.
18. Hal Lawrence, *A Bloody War: One Man's Memories of the Canadian Navy, 1939-1945* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1979), 7-8.
19. James B. Lamb, *The Corvette Navy: True Stories From Canada's Atlantic War* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, n.d.), 99. Lamb also writes that the British Navy "is the mother and father of all the world's navies; there is not, today, a single navy whose organization, uniform, terminology, tradition, and technique does not stem from that of the British Royal Navy."
20. German, *The Sea*, 26.
21. Milner, *Canada's Navy*, 185.
22. *Ibid.*, 22; and German, *The Seas*, 28.
23. Milner, *Canada's Navy*, 45.
24. Roger Sarty, *Le Canada et la bataille de l'Atlantique* (Montreal: Art Global, 1998), 31.
25. W.A.B. Douglas et al., *Rien de plus noble: Histoire officielle de la Marine royale du Canada pendant la Deuxième Guerre mondiale, 1939-1943*, Vol. 2, Part 1 (St. Catharines, ON: Vanwell, 2002), 28.
26. Sarty, *Le Canada*, 32.
27. Vennat, *Les héros oubliés*, Vol. 1, 107.

28. Michael L. Hadley, "Introduction," *A Nation's Navy: In Quest of Canadian Naval Identity* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), 5.
29. Bernier and Pariseau, *Les Canadiens français et le bilinguisme*, 178.
30. Desmond Morton, *A Military History of Canada, 1608–1991*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1992), 253.
31. MARCOM comprises the Navy and the Air Force's anti-submarine squadrons. The other branches of the unified staff are "mobile command for army brigade groups and the RCAF ground support squadrons, training command, matériel command and air transport command; a communications command was added subsequently." *Ibid.*, 356.
32. Separate uniforms were reintroduced by the Government of Canada in 1985. *Ibid.*, 377.
33. Lamb, *On the Triangle Run*, 228.
34. Brodeur, "L.P. Brodeur," 31.
35. *Ibid.*, 30.
36. Quoted in Bernier and Pariseau, *Les Canadiens français et le bilinguisme*, 69.
37. *Ibid.*
38. On this issue of language at the time of the formation of the RCN, see also German, *The Sea*, 28, and Milner, *Canada's Navy*, 22–23.
39. Quoted in Bernier and Pariseau, *Les Canadiens français et le bilinguisme*, 136.
40. Vennat, *Les héros oubliés*, Vol. 1, 101.
41. *Ibid.*, Vol. 3, 121.
42. *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, 103.
43. *Ibid.*, Vol. 3, 419.
44. Linteau, Durocher, and Robert, *Histoire du Québec*, Vol. 2, 149. Bernier and Pariseau, *Les Canadiens français et le bilinguisme*, 158.
45. Vennat, *Les héros oubliés*, Vol. 3, 402. In 1988, Second World War veteran Guy A. Goulet, a photographer in the Royal Canadian Navy, wrote a letter to Pierre Vennat, a journalist with *La Presse*. In this letter, Goulet told how French Canadians who spoke to each other in their own language were regarded as "disruptive elements" by English-Canadian sailors. He added that he and his compatriots had been reprimanded for speaking French by the captain of the ship on which they were serving. The captain had prohibited the use of French on board. See the text of this letter in Vennat, *Les héros oubliés*, Vol. 3, 394–98.
46. Bernier and Pariseau, *Les Canadiens français et le bilinguisme*, 108.

47. *Ibid.*
48. Quoted in *Ibid.*, 166.
49. Morton, *A Military History*, 239.
50. Milner, *Canada's Navy*, 268.
51. *Ibid.*, 268-69. Ultimately, HMCS *Ottawa* was not a ship crewed entirely by francophones. In fact, francophones were in a majority on the ship, although its complement was 40 percent anglophones, half of whom were bilingual. See the article by Serge Bernier, "HMCS *Ottawa* III: The Navy's First French-Language Unit, 1968-1973," *A Nation's Navy: In Quest of Canadian Naval Identity* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), 310-22.
52. Milner, *Canada's Navy*, 269.
53. Bernier and Pariseau, *Les Canadiens français et le bilinguisme*, 5.
54. German, *The Sea*, 306-07.
55. Vennat, *Les héros oubliés*, Vol. 3, 118.
56. Letter from Stanislas Déry to his parents, 13 February 1945, Fonds Déry, P1, S2, D8, P. 20.
57. *L'Événement-Journal*, 4 August 1945, *Le Soleil* and *L'Action Catholique*, 18 August 1945, *La Presse*, 24 August 1945.
58. Letter from Stanislas Déry to his parents, 9 February 1941, Fonds Déry, P1, S2, D3, P. 31.
59. Lawrence, *A Bloody War*, 189.
60. Letter from Stanislas Déry to his parents, 31 December 1944, Fonds Déry, P1, S2, D8, P. 13.
61. This biographical information about Lieutenant-Commander Stanislas Déry comes from Fonds Déry, P1, S1 and P1, S2, D1, and the following newspaper articles: *L'Événement-Journal*, 4 August 1945, *Le Soleil* and *L'Action Catholique*, 18 August 1945, *La Presse*, 24 August 1945.
62. Letter from Stanislas Déry to his parents, 19 July 1941, Fonds Déry, P1, S2, D3, P. 60.
63. Letter from Stanislas Déry to his parents, 7 October 1944, Fonds Déry, P1, S2, D8, P. 1.
64. Letter from Stanislas Déry to his parents, 14 October 1944, Fonds Déry, P1, S2, D8, P. 2.
65. Letter from Stanislas Déry to his parents, 19 January 1945, Fonds Déry, P1, S2, D8, P. 17.
66. Letter from Stanislas Déry to his parents, 27 January 1945, Fonds Déry, P1, S2, D8, P. 18.
67. Letter from Stanislas Déry to his parents, 17 February 1945, Fonds Déry, P1, S2, D8, P. 21.

68. *Le Nouveau Journal*, 10 November 1961.
69. "Mémorandum," Fonds Stanislas Déry, P1, S1.
70. This information comes from the Fonds Stanislas Déry, P1, S2, D8, P.88, 89 and 90, *L'Action Catholique*, 15 March 1945, "The Sinking of U-877: A Radar-Eye View," *The Crow'snest*, 13,5 (1961), 15–16. See also Marc Milner, *The U-Boat Hunters: The Royal Canadian Navy and the Offensive against Germany's Submarines* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 217–21, and Sarty, *Le Canada*, 153.
71. *Le Soleil*, 21 April 1987.
72. *Le Nouveau Journal*, 10 November 1961.
73. This information comes from the Fonds Stanislas Déry, P1, S1.
74. Vennat, *Les héros oubliés*, Vol. 1, 276.
75. On the career of V.-G. Brodeur, see Bernier and Pariseau, *Les Canadiens français et le bilinguisme*, 107; Vennat, *Les héros oubliés*, Vol. 1, 103–04, Milner, *Canada's Navy*, 21; and Douglas, *Rien de plus noble*, 718–19.
76. German, *The Sea*, 61.
77. This information comes from the website *Awards to the Canadian Navy*, <http://www.rcnvr.com> (accessed on 18 March 2005). According to the Archeion website, the Ontario Archival Information Network, <http://archeion-ao.fis.utoronto.ca/> (accessed on 15 March 2005), Louis de la Chesnaye Audette was born in Ottawa.
78. Vennat, *Les héros oubliés*, Vol. 3, 418.
79. Milner, *Canada's Navy*, 193.
80. On Audette's career, see the website *Awards to the Canadian Navy*, <http://www.rcnvr.com> (accessed on 18 March 2005).
81. Vennat, *Les héros oubliés*, Vol. 1, 276.
82. See the website *Awards to the Canadian Navy*, <http://www.rcnvr.com> (accessed on 18 March 2005).
83. Vennat, *Les héros oubliés*, Vol. 1, 106, German, *The Sea*, 82, and Joseph Schull, *Far Distant Ship* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1953), 56.
84. Lamb, *The Corvette Navy*, 7.
85. *Ibid.*, 127.
86. *Ibid.*, 7.
87. Vennat, *Les héros oubliés*, Vol. 1, 182; German, *The Sea*, 28.
88. *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, 104.
89. *Ibid.*, Vol. 3, 153.

CHAPTER NINE

Jacques Dextraze and the Art of Command, 1944–1973



YVES TREMBLAY

Jacques Alfred Dextraze, the second French Canadian to serve as chief of the defence staff, is largely unknown to the public. He never published his memoirs, and no one ever bothered to write his biography. The fact that he has sunk into obscurity may also be attributable to the type of person Dextraze was: a natural, articulate leader who was passionate about commanding men, but who had much less affinity for the written word.

MODEST BEGINNINGS

A rather tall man, Dextraze seemed frail at first sight. He was, in fact, a fitness enthusiast,¹ as a walker and marathon runner. His brown eyes and heavy brows could narrow into an icy stare, be very persuasive, or convey warmth when called for. Jacques Dextraze was born into a modest Montreal family in 1919. Although his mother's family name was English (Bond), Dextraze was brought up in French. With respect to his education, official press releases announcing promotions and retirement postings stated that he was a graduate of Collège Saint-Joseph de

Berthierville (1937) and a night student at the McDonald Business College (1938). However, just after leaving the Canadian Forces (CF), he revealed to a reporter from *La Presse* in 1977, that he had received a basic education from the Clerics of Saint-Viateur in Terrebonne and Berthierville (a business course, apparently), which was complemented by night courses, English courses,² and bookkeeping and stenography courses that he had managed to pay for despite his meagre earnings at Columbus Rubber and Dominion Rubber. In the interview, he said that he had never had the opportunity to go to university and that he had never obtained a degree. He proudly stated that everything he had learned, he had learned at the university of life. He did not elaborate on his career before he entered the military, but he clearly qualified as a model office worker.³



Soldiers from the Fusiliers de Mont Royal clear a street in Falaise, August 1944. (Library and Archives Canada PA-131273)

The young Dextraze was facing the prospect of a mediocre future. He tried to join the Royal Canadian Navy, but was turned away during the medical examination because of his flat feet. He then tried to enlist in the Army, with Les Fusiliers Mont-Royal (Fus MR). Flat-footed or not, this time, he was accepted. It was July 1940; France had fallen unexpectedly, and the Canadian government had announced that all adult males would be liable for conscription and that the youngest among them would be liable for military training. Dextraze was therefore not among the first to volunteer and he had yet to distinguish himself from the masses.

Dextraze joined Les Fusiliers Mont-Royal as a private, even though, up until 1 April 1941, it was possible for a high school graduate to become an acting officer (second lieutenant) upon enlisting.⁴ Nevertheless, he showed enthusiasm and was quickly made acting sergeant. His skills as a trainer were noted. He then tried to become an officer. Beginning on 1 April 1941, non-commissioned officers could be commissioned to serve as officers, following a review by a competent committee.⁵

In the end, the committee members chose not to promote him. Thirty-six years later, Dextraze good-naturedly commented on the setback, explaining that he had been interviewed, that his file had been reviewed, and that, in the end, it was decided that he did not have the leadership skills needed to be an officer. Yet, he noted, the recruit classes he had given had always finished first in drills.⁶

Dextraze was not discouraged and volunteered for active service, agreeing to be part of the Canadian Expeditionary Force in Europe, probably shortly before his second attempt at achieving a promotion to officer.⁷ As an acting second lieutenant, Dextraze took a four-month course at the Officer Cadet School in Brockville, Ontario, and then had a short internship as an instructor in a recruit camp. He became a lieutenant in July 1942 and went overseas a few weeks later.⁸ Before setting off, he married the daughter of the City of Montreal's fire chief.

Lieutenant Dextraze did not participate in the disastrous raid on Dieppe (19 August 1942), where his regiment was decimated.⁹ However, he did arrive in time to be among the first reinforcements to rebuild the unit. There were many vacancies, and the young, resourceful officer

seized every opportunity to distinguish himself. He was made an acting major in February 1944.¹⁰ In two and half years, Dextraze had moved up the ranks at an impressive rate without seeing battle. He was only 24, which was remarkable even considering the circumstances (war normally speeds up promotions, the Fus MR was in the process of being rebuilt, and French-Canadian officers were hard to find). Would battle justify the young officer's rapid rise? There were a great many differences between training exercises and the battlefield, and many soldiers were never able to adapt to what they saw in battle.

NORMANDY

For Dextraze, Northwestern Europe proved to be the perfect campaign: he suffered no injuries, was awarded prestigious decorations, and received a surprising promotion. From that point on, he was a public figure.¹¹ His battle exploits were legendary and are featured in the regimental record.

The Fus MR did not land on 6 June 1944, but joined the Normandy front near Caen on 11 July.¹² Paul Sauvé was deputy commanding officer (DCO) of the Fus MR when it arrived on French soil, and he commanded the battalion beginning on 30 August. Dextraze eventually replaced Sauvé as DCO, and later replaced him again in December 1944. (Sauvé, who had kept his seat in Quebec's Legislative Assembly, returned to Quebec City to serve in Duplessis's Cabinet a few weeks after Duplessis was re-elected. At the Quebec Department of Welfare and Youth, Sauvé established his reputation as a progressive conservative. In exercising his duties, Sauvé also used his influence to lend a hand to old Army buddies in need.)¹³

At the start of summer 1944, the Allies were still stuck at the Normandy beachhead. The battle was hard-fought between them and the German's remaining solid field formations. The Canadians and the British were making no headway, despite thrusts and acts of courage. But the soldiers had opportunities to distinguish themselves. On 24 July,

following a bloody defeat, the Fus MR again tried to capture a stronghold on the German front, the Troteval farm. The battalion was short of men, and the commander had to put together a composite company with the best elements. Although there were only 75 men, they had twice as many machine guns as usual. A sophisticated fire plan based on field and medium artillery, heavy and light mortars, and an armoured squadron was drawn up for the assault. The enemy's strength was estimated at two platoons (50–60 men) and six tanks. Despite the large amount of matériel used in the reduced infantry operation, the operation's success was mitigated. In an interview conducted by an officer with the Historical Section a few days after the operation, Dextraze stated that the objective had been met.¹⁴

However, not everyone shared his view, particularly John M. Rockingham, commanding officer of the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry (RHLI, or Rileys), whose battalion was to have launched the next phase of the operation from the Troteval farm. When the Rileys advanced, the Germans fired on them from Troteval. The RHLI had to first clear the position before using it in the assault on Verrières Ridge (the assault would fail, although the RHLI attained its objectives that day).¹⁵

Be that as it may, Dextraze told the interviewing officer that he had learned many lessons from the engagement. While some were tricks of the trade, they clearly reflected Dextraze's concerns in 1944. For instance, he insisted that officers should always ensure that vehicles were equipped with sandbags, thereby saving lives and vehicles. Other lessons were regurgitations of English-Canadian units, tactical prescriptions of the time: it was essential to take advantage of superior equipment rather than risk lives. It was also better to move in immediately following the artillery barrage and risk injuries, rather than give the enemy time to regroup.

Maxims on command and relationships with subordinates were more typical of the man. For example, the young commander applied a less-than-obvious tactic with regard to his even younger subordinates: Dextraze believed that it was essential to keep the troops in good spirits. If the radio to the chain of command was no longer operational, the men had to be told that everything was fine. He also

believed that soldiers had long memories. The influence an officer had on his men during battle depended on the consideration he had showed them in training. If they respected their commanding officer in training, they would do as they were told in battle.¹⁶

Saint-Martin de Fontenay (two kilometres west of Troteval) was another stronghold that the Canadians had trouble capturing. Canadian divisions were launching yet another attempt to break through south of Caen. Although the Germans were beginning to feel the pressure, they continued to defend their position relentlessly. The village of Saint-Martin, with its fortified church, had to be captured by the infantry so that the armoured divisions could push on towards the south and meet up with the Americans, who were trying to surround German forces in Normandy. Whatever the cost, they had to break through — the reputation of the English-Canadian generals depended on it. The Régiment de Maisonneuve had just failed to take Saint-Martin, like other Canadian battalions before it, and now it was now up to the Fus MR. As the officer commanding "D" Company, Dextraze was in charge. The operation went more smoothly than at Troteval, as German defences had been weakened by the previous attempts.¹⁷

In the historical officer's account two days later, fewer lessons were listed than for the battle at Troteval. One element stood out, however. Dextraze needed non-commissioned officers. During the preparatory briefings, he felt it necessary to give his orders personally to each sergeant and corporal. This was unusual; at that time, officers, particularly those in British-style armies, were often the only ones to know the details of the plan. The disadvantage of this approach was that platoons were often left paralysed if their commanders were no longer able to lead them. This almost occurred during the attack because a lieutenant had been injured. Luckily, his corporal knew what the plan was, took command, and successfully carried out the assault. Another trick Dextraze picked up during the operation was that leaders should scream their lungs out in battle so as to drown out the noise of gunfire, which helped to relax — that's right, relax — their men and keep their spirits up.¹⁸ Dextraze's attention to psychological details was constant, and it would serve him well on more than one occasion.

Although these observations may seem trivial, in the summer of 1944, the Canadian formations showed signs of weakness when faced with seasoned German troops. The small units, platoons, and companies did not always seem to have the drive they needed. Fully aware of this, Dextraze took on the role of teacher, and a realistic one at that. The Canadian infantry had limitations that were largely compensated for with abundant equipment. Awareness of those limitations and a sound understanding of officers' duties improved their chances of success — and survival. Leadership meant getting results using whatever means were readily available and dealing with the circumstances: no frills, just daring and guts.

Dextraze was awarded his first important decoration for capturing the church in Saint-Martin. It was the Distinguished Service Order, a British decoration created in 1886 in recognition of officers' battle exploits in wartime. Later, as a battalion commander, he received the same decoration (or, rather, a clasp) again — a rare occurrence — this time for personal acts of courage in securing the surrender of the Groningen garrison in April 1945.¹⁹

Photographs taken at the time show that Dextraze was camera-conscious, reminiscent of two of the Normandy campaign's most brilliant general officers: Commander-in-Chief B.L. Montgomery, and Guy Simonds, commander of the Second Canadian Army Corps, three slender men sporting berets, sometimes wearing scarves. In official photographs, Dextraze was the image of Simonds, dressed to the nines. Dextraze often emphasized appearance in his orders to the troops.

In May 1945, operations in Europe were over. Dextraze, who had attracted the attention of his superiors, was still hungry for battle and volunteered for the Pacific. He was sent home quickly to take over one of the infantry battalions in the division that Canada was preparing to send to Japan. Dextraze was appointed commanding officer of the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment, an Ontario infantry battalion. While he trained his new unit, Atomic bombs forced the surrender of Japan. The division was disbanded before it was ever truly ready for battle.

What now? Dextraze liked the Canadian Army, but with the rapid demobilization that was under way, militia battalion commanders with

little seniority or administrative experience were out of luck. Dextraze's regular force membership, years of service (too few), and administrative qualifications (completed staff course at a renowned military college) were three elements that were not included in Dextraze's file. In spite of that, luckily for Dextraze, the Army wanted to retain talented young officers who had distinguished themselves on the front line, and it had set aside positions at Kingston's war college for such talent.

There was something special about the students of the 12th cohort (1945–1946), the first peacetime class, of which Dextraze was part.²⁰ They included veterans of operations in Northwestern Europe, rising stars, no fewer than five brigadier-generals (including J.P.E. Bernatchez and J.M. Rockingham), six colonels, 28 lieutenant-colonels (including J.A. Dextraze — college serial number 269), five majors and two captains, with a large majority coming from the Canadian Army overseas. Teaching personnel consisted mainly of lieutenant-colonels. The scene was unusual: officers who had experienced live combat were now being taught by officers who were less experienced than they were, and who simulated combat situations they had survived. Many students had to deal with the critical judgment of teachers who had not lived through the events in question. One can only imagine the tension in the classroom.

The short official biographies of Dextraze say nothing about that period of his life. In fact, Dextraze's name quickly disappeared from student union lists, with the students playing the roles their instructors had invented for them in simulated combat. Rumour had it that Dextraze had become indignant when told of an academic solution that differed from what he had done in the field. Unable to bear his instructors, he left the college. Many other members of the cohort also failed to complete the course.²¹ In any case, by the end of 1945, the Canadian Army had considerably reduced its commissioned personnel, and the loss of an officer, no matter how promising he was, would not change things. Along with hundreds of fellow officers, Dextraze was placed on the general reserve officers' list on 14 November 1945.²² This status allowed only for the vague possibility of being recalled to active duty. Unless another war broke out, the military career of Jacques Dextraze was, essentially, over.

The transition to civilian life proved difficult. Dextraze had to call on his former commander, Paul Sauvé, to help him find an "interesting job."²³ The Singer Manufacturing Company in Thurso, Quebec, hired him. The large U.S. sewing machine manufacturer conducted logging operations over 500 square miles of forest north of Thurso and used the timber to make sewing cabinets. A small, private railway brought the logs from the cutting area to Thurso,²⁴ where they were sawed. Dextraze's duties included overseeing the timber inventory (as the company was in search of hardwood), organizing and supervising logging operations, and culling logs and transporting them from the cutting area to the railway. Dextraze was responsible for hiring, disciplining, and dismissing 50 to 100 men, the equivalent of two to three infantry platoons.²⁵

RETURN TO THE ARMY

In 1950, for the second time in his life, the Canadian Army gave Dextraze the opportunity to escape a life of mediocrity. While regular force members hesitated to volunteer for Korea, the Army launched a recruitment campaign to assemble a special brigade. Ten thousand men volunteered in two weeks, half of whom were Second World War veterans who had returned to civilian life in 1945.²⁶ Dextraze was appointed commander of a battalion with a little help from a friend. One of his superiors in Germany, Jean Victor Allard, intervened in his favour. The Army had asked Allard for a list of reserve officers from which a battalion commander would be chosen. Allard gave only one name, that of Dextraze, who was quickly contacted by Ottawa. He accepted the appointment.²⁷

The designated brigade commander for Korea was John Rockingham. He knew Dextraze from Normandy and still seemed to have a high opinion of the company commander, despite the failure at the Troteval farm. Rockingham was an aggressive leader who did not hesitate to command from the front line. His style may have inspired Dextraze. The two officers went to the front to ensure that the smallest details were looked after. In Korea, which was more like the 1914-18 war of position than



Lieutenant-Colonel J.A. Dextraze, CO, 2nd Battalion, Royal 22nd Regiment, in Korea, November 1951. (Photographer: Paul Tomelin, Library and Archives Canada PA-128847)

the fluid operations of 1939–45, Dextraze ensured that the 2nd Battalion, Royal 22nd Regiment dominated no man's land through the proper positioning of its support weapons (which he sometimes arranged himself), by encouraging his men to be vigilant at all times and

having them conduct offensive patrols to destabilize enemy forces and prevent them from disrupting his sector.²⁸

Korea was an excellent opportunity for officers who had returned to the Canadian Army in 1950 to become part of the regular force. However, military bureaucrats in Ottawa had put up a wall: members of the special force had to sign a 10-month contract and formed a small mercenary army of sorts that operated alongside the regular force. Faced with retention and recruitment problems, though, the Army had to review that policy at the beginning of 1951, and special force volunteers were encouraged to request a transfer to the regular force. Rockingham set the example, and most officers and a third of non-commissioned officers and troops followed suit,²⁹ including Dextraze. Naturally, Dextraze moved to the 1st Battalion, Royal 22nd Regiment.

Despite his performance in the field, the regular force was full of pitfalls. Dextraze was no more part of the circle from which officers generally stemmed at that time than he had been in 1945; officers had often attended the Royal Military College and advanced staff school. Although his service record partly made up for a "weak" résumé, Dextraze still lacked the organizational knowledge, theoretical and administrative vocabulary, and finesse of regular members. For those reasons, Dextraze began a 12-year period during which he would not command a single combat unit and had to content himself with the following appointments: Army Staff College in 1952; deputy adjutant and quartermaster for Land Force Eastern Area Headquarters (Atlantic Region) until 1954; he was then given the rank of colonel and made chief of staff of Quebec Command in Montreal. He managed those appointments well, despite their being dull at times, and was eventually appointed to positions for which he was more qualified at the Infantry School (Borden) and Valcartier. He was then promoted to brigadier and appointed commander of Quebec Region in 1962, a position he held until he was deployed to the Congo at the end of 1963.³⁰

The former Belgian colony of Congo was a chance mishap the Canadian Army could have done without.³¹ Pressed for a troop commitment by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, the Army pulled a tiny contingent of long-distance communications and air-traffic-control

technicians from their National Survival planning program (i.e., response capability in the event of nuclear war) and dispatched them. This was a sort of breakthrough. The UN and Congo had asked Canada on numerous occasions for support for all kinds of projects, notably for developing a military school system. Canada had even been approached about leading the training mission; a brigadier-general was to take charge of it. However, the Canadian Army had worked behind the scenes to derail the mission. As consolation, it offered a brigadier who could serve as chief of staff for the United Nations Operation in the Congo (ONUC). That man would be Dextraze.

When Jacques Dextraze took over the position in December 1963, ONUC was a mere shadow of what it had been two years earlier: barely 7,000 of the 19,000 men remained. In addition, ONUC was to be disbanded on 30 June. Dextraze's mission was clear: plan the withdrawal. The local political climate was bad, the central government was weak, and armed opposition groups and hordes of bandits were rapidly growing in numbers. A shameful retreat was shaping up, as was often the case with UN missions. Despite everything, the circumstances would favour Dextraze: his superior was a lazy, violent drunk and a skirt chaser who shirked responsibility, placing the hyperactive chief of staff in a leadership role. As the rebels were becoming bold and had started kidnapping white missionaries, justifying a highly publicized rescue mission, the Canadian brigadier would have the opportunity to shine in those "favourable" conditions.

In late January 1964, the rebels, vaguely inspired by Maoism and national liberation struggles under way in South America, Asia, and North Africa, kidnapped and terrorized religious missions led by Europeans or North Americans. ONUC no longer had enough personnel to hunt down the rebels. Furthermore, the United Nations and contributing countries did not intend to prolong the adventure. Evacuating the missionaries was the only conceivable course of action, which was made easier by the fact that ONUC still had significant air capabilities. The chief of staff's mission was to provide those in charge of air transportation with the administrative and logistical support and escorts they needed. At least, that was what the average chief of staff would

have focused on. But Dextraze had the temperament of a commander-in-chief, not a chief of staff. He was hungry for action and loved being front-and-centre, confronting danger.

Initially, he planned the operation, entrusting field logistics to a Canadian officer from ONUC Headquarters. However, after a few weeks, Dextraze dismissed the officer he himself had appointed and took over. After all, rescue operations received heavy media coverage.³² And as if that were not enough, Dextraze had the audacity to give the operation an “official” nickname, *Jadex*.³³ The entire operation, which was rather unusual, was well-managed on every level and justifiably earned Dextraze the honour of being named a Commander of the Order of the British Empire (OBE). The OBE citation noted his planning, the exercises carried out beforehand, the control of the operation (from a light aircraft, he commanded ONUC helicopters and Congo’s army forces in the rescue of missionaries), and his acts of personal courage. In short, he was somewhat of a one-man show, in which all of the other actors, namely UN and National Congolese Army soldiers, youth rebels, and missionaries, played a supporting role. Dextraze filled each Force member with his fiery enthusiasm and was generally responsible for the high overall performance and success of the rescue operations.³⁴ At no other moment in his career did Dextraze enjoy such a perfect scenario for his style of leadership. It should be noted that Dextraze had not wanted to be deployed to the Congo, but the need for a French-speaking general of his rank had led the Army to send him there. He would have preferred commanding a brigade in Germany,³⁵ which was the most prestigious posting a combat arms officer could receive.

After the Congo, Dextraze’s superiors deemed him ready for a leading role — his return to an operational command. In August 1964, he finally obtained the command he wanted, or almost. He was not appointed commander of the Canadian brigade located in Germany and mobilized for war, he took command of a reserve brigade at CFB Petawawa. He rose quickly: chief of operations and training at Mobile Command Headquarters in Saint-Hubert, a suburb of Montreal, in September 1967, when he was promoted to major-general; assistant chief of military personnel at National Defence Headquarters in

Ottawa, beginning in January 1969; a promotion to lieutenant-general and appointment to the position of chief of military personnel in December 1970; and lastly, the ultimate posting, that of chief of the defence staff, senior military adviser to the government, in September 1972. He was now a four-star general.³⁶

CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE STAFF: REFLECTIONS ON COMMAND AND LEADERSHIP

Leaders cannot distinguish themselves without opportunities to lead. That was true in 1944–45, when Les Fusiliers Mont-Royal were at war in Europe, in 1950–51 with Royal 22nd Regiment in Korea, and in 1964 in the Congo. This was also true with respect to bureaucratic warfare in peacetime, especially in the early 1970s when the Canadian Forces were in an existential crisis. Three major problems were pressing: budget cuts dating back to the 1960s that were becoming more serious under the Trudeau governments; the shock of unification, which had occurred at around the same time; and the language issue.³⁷

Dextraze had published two documents that were widely distributed when he took over command of the Canadian Forces. They could have been bland inaugural messages, but instead bore the mark of a general who, in his youth, had personally led small groups of men in combat.

The first of these documents, published in November 1972, consisted of a message setting out the new chief of the defence staff's general objectives.³⁸ Dextraze quickly segued into the budget crisis: the armed forces were subject to the civil authorities, whom they could advise but had to obey, carrying out their mandates to the best of their ability with the resources allocated to them. Considering past, present, and future cuts, creativity was needed. Dextraze also warned troops to stop undermining the institution's credibility by airing the military's dirty laundry in public. He also insisted on the Canadian Forces' duty to abstain from politics, and denounced ambition. While ambition was



Lieutenant-Colonel Dextraze (left) in discussion with the CO of the 1st Battalion, Royal 22nd Regiment, Lieutenant-Colonel Trudeau, in Korea, 1951. (Library and Archives Canada PA-184311)

legitimate — Dextraze would not have been where he was without it — it was harmful when the focus was on self-advancement. This man, who had moved up the ranks, because of his effectiveness in training and leading men in combat, was disgusted with careerism and bureaucratic schemes.

The rest of his message was similar to those he had written in 1944, consisting of an overview of the making of a leader and the art of command. Dextraze believed that there were five basic, timeless rules:

- The system had to be fair — deserving individuals had to be rewarded, undesirable ones dismissed. Officers needed to ensure that their men were treated fairly, especially with respect to their well-being.

- Excellent administrators did not necessarily make excellent leaders. Only a leader could win at war. Dextraze added that he was interested in the art of leadership and would devote a good portion of his time to discussing, studying, and promoting leadership qualities.
- Respect for others was essential, especially superiors' respect for their subordinates. In make-or-break situations, it was essential that troops had confidence in their commanders. Subordinates needed to be given the leadership they deserved, which involved earning their respect and loyalty.
- Commanders had to have confidence in themselves. That confidence could stem from their experience and knowledge, ranging from military trade expertise to international affairs.
- It followed that the art of command and training went hand in hand. Without the appropriate training, an army was nothing but a mob.

The warnings that followed, that were reminiscent of the orders of the day in 1939–45 and 1950–53 (emphasis on physical fitness, the dangers of drugs and alcohol) were just as crucial. Dextraze planned to deliver his message personally to all Canadian units around the world. He was still a troop leader, despite being the country's top-ranked military official. Montgomery's memory once again served as inspiration. Consequently, under Dextraze, the administration would report to the vice-chief of the defence staff, thereby giving Dextraze the time to keep in contact with his troops.

Dextraze's 1972 inaugural message included only a few paragraphs on the chief's role. The following year, Dextraze would elaborate on his ideas on command, drawing from lessons learned in infantry combat in 1944–45. *The Art of Leadership* (1973) could very well be the most polished article of Dextraze's long career. It is based on a speech given in 1959 when he was a commander at the Infantry School. The tone of the



General Dextraze, chief of the defence staff, visiting troops on exercise in the Canadian Arctic, 1975. (Department of National Defence IS-75-559)

article is very personal, with the chief of the defence staff recalling memories and writing in the first person.

Upon rereading his article, Dextraze was struck by the fact that his views on leadership had changed very little over the years. He believed that his ideas, which had been addressed to future platoon commanders, were still just as pertinent for the master-corporal airman who maintained aircraft and the admiral who commanded a fleet of warships. Fundamental, universal, and unchanging — those principles were the basis for his message in 1972.

While Dextraze insisted that he was not original, he spoke from authority and experience. His definition of leadership was simple: “Leadership is the art of influencing others to do willingly what is required in order to achieve an aim or goal.”³⁹ It was an art as opposed to a science, which entailed knowledge through learning. Scientific methods were adopted for the purpose of repetition, whereas leadership

was learned over time and in contact with the troops. Although scientific findings had nothing to do with the self, the same could never be said for leadership — relationships with subordinates were at the core of leadership. Consequently, leadership involved doing work on oneself *as well as* on others.

Dextraze wrote that leaders needed to have four qualities, namely loyalty, competence, integrity, and courage. Competence and courage seemed self-evident for military leaders, but Dextraze insisted that they were not innate qualities. Competence was acquired through reflection, study and experience, requiring mental and physical effort throughout one's entire career; courage did not mean that one was immune to fear, but was rather a question of self-control. Although courage was physical, as was often evident in wartime, it was also intellectual and moral — and it was precisely such courage that was needed in peacetime.

The main quality of a leader, however, was loyalty, which Dextraze believed manifested itself in two ways: first, and most importantly, as loyalty to one's superiors, government, and country, and second, as loyalty to one's subordinates. The contradiction resulting from the simultaneous application of both forms of loyalty was not lost on Dextraze. He believed that a real leader would find a way to maintain the fine balance between the two. However, if that proved impossible, Dextraze proposed the following golden rule: all disputes needed to be resolved in favour of one's superiors or country.⁴⁰

In his discussion of loyalty, Dextraze alluded to some incidents at the time, whereby Canadian Forces members had stolen or made public secret documents for reasons he did not disclose. That raises the question of integrity, the quality that Dextraze refers to the least. He likens it to honesty, keeping one's word, and the confidence a leader must inspire, meaning no embellishments and shouldering one's responsibilities.

As was often the case in Dextraze's writings, he ended his message with a list of lessons that he called essential leadership rules. Many of the rules stemmed from or were inspired by the lessons he had learned in 1944. They included the following:

- Be attentive to the well-being of subordinates under your command.
- Be accountable to your superior for your subordinates' shortcomings.
- If a subordinate has to be reprimanded, deliver the reprimand in private, unless serious circumstances give you no choice but to do so in public.
- Never assume that a task has been carried out; always check and re-check that it has been completed.
- Leadership is not a popularity contest.

Another one of his maxims was addressed to high-ranking officers: do not abuse the inherent privileges of rank; give and accept privileges parsimoniously. His time spent at staffs and headquarters no doubt led the general to add the latter.

Dextraze first addressed the issue of bilingualism when he was chief of military personnel. He was being pressured by General Allard, then chief of the defence staff, who was a strong proponent of bilingualism and was anxious for results.⁴¹ The Laurendeau–Dunton reports (1965–71) had been very critical of the Canadian Forces in this regard. The CF had to respond quickly and implement a plan to make the environment more welcoming to francophones. The 1969 *Official Languages Act* made the situation that much more critical.

The objectives had been set by the political agenda at the time (and the will of General Allard, who would continue to lobby effectively for francophones in the Canadian Forces after his retirement): increase the number of francophones in the CF from 17 percent to 28 percent and create units that operated in French, especially in the Air Force and Navy. According to Armand Letellier, who was primarily responsible for developing the policy on bilingualism in the late 1960s and in the 1970s, Dextraze was committed to attaining those objectives, from the time he was chief of personnel and after he was appointed chief of the defence staff in 1972. Two years later, Dextraze personally intervened to amend the promotion list (established by his successor at Military Personnel) for Air Force generals, which did not include any francophones. In fact

no French speaker had been a general officer in the Air Force for long. Dextraze added the name of Colonel Danny Gagnon, who became a brigadier-general (and who would himself play an important role in entrenching bilingualism in the CF a few years later).⁴²

However, Dextraze was not a proponent of integral bilingualism. According to Letellier, he had said on a number of occasions, including the fall of 1973, that English should be the only operational language, even in French-speaking units, for the purposes of efficiency and safety. At the suggestion of subordinates and given the pressure he was under, he nevertheless agreed to include a clause in the Canadian Forces order on official languages (CFAO 2-15), published in 1974, allowing French to be an operational language in some circumstances.⁴³

Dextraze had acquired some managerial experience at Singer, notably through managing the railway traffic of the company's Thurso subsidiary, where he "commanded" only a few dozen men. The chief of the defence staff was now in charge of a much bigger and more complex organization that was in the grip of a financial crisis and major restructuring (integration of the three branches of the armed forces). Together, these two very different experiences would justify his appointment to the head of the largest Canadian company at the time: Canadian National Railways (CN).

In September 1977, Dextraze became chair of CN's board of directors. In name, he was the company's chief executive officer, though in reality, he did not run the company on a day-to-day basis. That was left to his second-in-command, the chief operating officer, who was the real boss. An important factor reducing Dextraze's control was that he had been the second choice for the job. Senior CN officials had torpedoed Pierre Elliott Trudeau's first choice, Paul Gérin-Lajoie, a former Quebec minister. Apparently, CN management feared Gérin-Lajoie's reformer spirit, particularly because he was a proponent of the French fact. Dextraze was a more acceptable francophone for a management team that shied away from the issue. Running CN therefore proved to be complicated for various reasons: government interference had to be limited; the company's debt, which was growing by the minute because of rising interest rates, had to be reduced; operations and Montreal

headquarters had to be Frenchified; and disputes with railway employees had to be resolved. When Dextraze officially retired in May 1982, the company had somewhat Frenchified its operations, but its financial and labour relations issues remained unresolved.⁴⁴

Dextraze had developed a taste for playing a leading role and receiving media exposure. Following his official retirement, he gave a persuasive account in the McKenna brothers' controversial Second World War documentary, which aired on CBC in 1992.⁴⁵ He died the following year.

CONCLUSION

The conclusions that can be drawn from this profile are superficial and provisional; we still know very little about what shaped Jacques Dextraze's *personality*. However, we do have a better idea of the *public figure* he was. While Dextraze's beginnings were modest, the rest of his career was anything but dull. Dextraze loved to play leading roles. His mission in the Congo is a prime example, but many other events could also have served to illustrate this facet of his personality, including the surrender of Groningen in the last days of the Holland campaign in 1945, an event that others have often recounted in detail.⁴⁶

Publications are also part of the public domain. Dextraze was extremely discreet in this regard. Although he loved being in the heat of the action, he was never interested in literary monuments singing his praises. Dextraze may have left few documents, but, fortunately, they truly reflect the man he was.

Two things are striking when it comes to Jacques Dextraze's career. First, his career path was unusual for an officer who became the country's top-ranked military official: he started in the reserves, was not on active duty between 1945 and 1950 (a long break), and never attended a prestigious military school — three strikes against him in a world dominated by career officers. While this makes his rise to the top that much more remarkable, it is not inconceivable. Dextraze knew how to take

advantage of opportunities. In 1941–42, when the Army was recruiting officers from the ranks, he was there. In 1950, when Brigadier Rockingham was looking for seasoned volunteers, he threw his hat in the ring. In the Congo, while his superior shirked responsibility, Dextraze took the helm. Last, in 1972 when Trudeau needed a firm, respected general to sell the integration of the three branches of the armed forces and the *Official Languages Act*, Dextraze took on those rather unpleasant tasks.

The other striking thing is his ongoing personal development. While his epaulettes carried greater and greater weight, the man always spoke a language and had a manner that reflected his experience. He changed what he could, kept learning throughout his entire life, with learning spurts just before needing to rise to a new challenge: becoming an officer or battalion commander within a few months, learning the job of chief of the defence staff, changing his position to make it more comprehensive with every promotion, without altering its substance. His knowledge grew through his personal experiences, self-training, and common challenges.

This is why Dextraze's leadership was based not on ethereal principles, but on tactical maxims learned on the job and backed by experience — maxims that eventually served as the management principles of a soldier/manager who was first a soldier. In this sense, academic studies on leadership, leadership institutes, and experts, and books on leadership written for an intellectual audience, as opposed to talks in the field and brief notes on or lists of lessons, were relatively new and therefore not included in Dextraze's speech as chief of the defence staff. The more academic approaches lack the passion that is required of the man of action.

In a way, the message conveyed in Dextraze's 1972 and 1973 articles has gone unheeded. Budgetary concerns and the successive reviews of defence policy in the decades that followed would increasingly take up the time and energy of chiefs of the defence staff, who were engaged in bureaucratic warfare for the CF's survival. Dextraze's successors would become obsessed with that bureaucratic warfare. It was only after the Somalia debacle (1994–95) that the issue of military leadership would

resurface,⁴⁷ though it would differ from what Dextraze had advocated. Vision papers, the Leadership Institute, and other such things were too much like management school trends. By adopting that approach, the CF distanced itself from a strong leader who was proud of his record, set administration aside, travelled the country to hear what CF members had to say, sought new ideas, and encouraged the troops to come up with appropriate solutions themselves.⁴⁸

Dextraze was ambitious and did what he had to do to satisfy his ambition. He shouldered his responsibilities, even the most unpleasant ones. The man was tough. He took every opportunity to distinguish himself. He often ruffled feathers. He loved to win, but stuck to what he knew best. All of his qualities, and perhaps even his faults, drove his passion for commanding.

NOTES

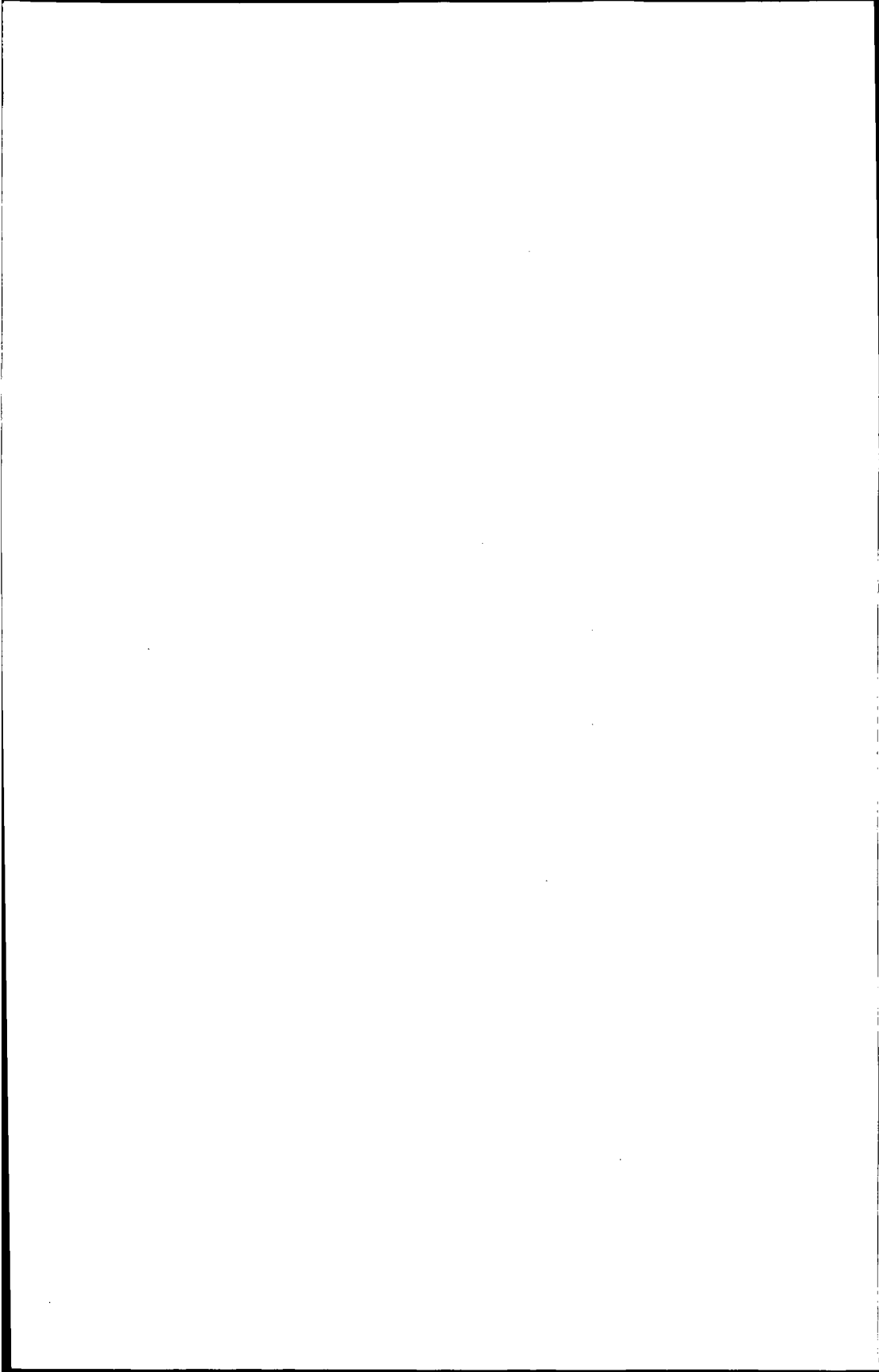
1. Arthur Bishop, *Salute! Canada's Great Military Leaders from Brock to Dextraze* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1997), 244–45. Otherwise poor biographical article.
2. All evidence shows that he was bilingual before he joined the Army. His spoken English can be heard in the third part of the Brian and Terence McKenna's documentary, CBC, 1994 (see *infra*).
3. Interview granted to Fernand Beaugard, shortly after the announcement of Dextraze's appointment as CN Chair, *La Presse*, 25 August 1977, C2. Dextraze spoke little of his family background or education. Practically nothing is known about his years in training. The short bureaucratic biographies and interviews granted to the media have to be reviewed thoroughly to piece together the experiences that marked his long career. See articles in a small biography file (BIOG collection) gleaned by archivists and historians with the Directorate of History and Heritage (Department of National Defence) over the years. The file essentially includes press releases and newspaper clippings from the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, and a few copies of his obituary in 1993. Dextraze's personnel file remains inaccessible to the public (20-year rule), as do the few papers he left in a manuscript group deposited with the National Library of Canada and National Archives of Canada (now Library and Archives Canada, henceforth LAC).

4. J.C. Newlands, "The Policy Governing the Finding and Selection of Officers for the C.A.S.F. (Later C.A.[A.])," Report No. 37, Historical Section (G.S.), Army Headquarters, 28 June 1950, conserved at the DHH or online at www.forces.gc.ca/hr/dhh/frgraph/home_e.asp.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *La Presse*, 29 August 1977, C2.
7. It is believed that Dextraze did not immediately volunteer for active duty, owing to the fact that he did not join his regiment overseas until the second half of 1942, whereas the Fus MR had been deployed in July 1941. See J. René Paquette et al., *Cent ans d'histoire d'un Régiment canadien-français: Les Fusiliers Mont-Royal, 1869–1969* (Montreal: Éditions du Jour, 1971), 95.
8. Even without his personnel file (see *supra*), the young Dextraze's career path can be traced through the *Routine Orders and Supplements with Indices* of the Army in Canada, the *Canadian Army Overseas Routine Orders* and the *Gradation List, Canadian Army, Active*.
9. *Cent ans d'histoire d'un Régiment canadien-français: Les Fusiliers Mont-Royal*, 133–148 (the raid), 149 *et seq.* (rebuilding of the unit), 391 (date of Dextraze's arrival in England), 162 (Dextraze's integration in the Regiment [October 1942]).
10. *Gradation List*, March 1944.
11. The Army's Communications Branch announced major promotions and decorations in the media. Such clippings on Dextraze are found in the Department of National Defence archives.
12. *Cent ans d'histoire d'un Régiment canadien-français: les Fusiliers Mont-Royal*, 191.
13. On Sauvé the soldier, see Paul Labonne, *Paul Sauvé: Désormais, l'avenir 1907–1959* (Montreal: Point de Fuite, 2003), Chapter 3. On patronage to soldiers, by the same author, "Paul Sauvé, le volontaire anticonscriptionniste," presentation given at the conference "10 ans d'histoire militaire en français au Québec," Université du Québec à Montréal, 12 November 2004.
14. "Acct of a coy attack on Troteval farm by Fus MRs on 23 Jul 44 given to Capt Engler by Maj Dextraze at Caen, 30 Jul 44," DHH, 145.2F1.011(D5). Dextraze was wrong about the date; Troteval was captured in the night of 24–25 July.
15. William Johnston, *A War of Patrols: Canadian Army Operations in Korea* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2003), 5–6; Terry Copp, *Fields of Fire: The Canadians in Normandy; The 1998 Joanne Goodman Lectures* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 169–70.

16. "Acct of a coy attack on Troteval farm by Fus MRs on 23 Jul 44," 3–4 for maxims. Unofficial translation.
17. *Cent ans d'histoire d'un Régiment canadien-français: Les Fusiliers Mont-Royal*, 211.
18. DHH, 145.2F1.011(D6), "Account of Attack on Church in St-Martin-de-Fontenay as Given by Maj JA Dextraze to Capt Engler, 3 Aug 44," 3–4.
19. The operations in which Dextraze participated are set out in *Cent ans d'histoire d'un Régiment canadien-français: Les Fusiliers Mont-Royal*, 189–265.
20. *Report of the Department of National Defence for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 1946* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1946), 33. The report mentions the last war course, begun 20 August 1945 and lasting 24 weeks. However, as of August, a five-week course on headquarters' functions was added, because the Department felt that most candidates would be employed in "static formations" now that they were in peacetime (*ibid.*).
21. See list of students for visits and union groupings in DHH, 171.009 (D107). At the suggestion of Major Paul Lansey, Heritage Officer at DHH, I visited the group — one more thing for which I am indebted to him. Dextraze was only on the lists for July and September 1945. His name was not on the December list. A veteran of Royal 22nd Regiment, which Dextraze had joined in 1950, told me about the rumour that had been going around at the time.
22. *Supplement to Canadian Army Routine Orders*, No. 6251, published 6 December 1945, 6.
23. *La Presse*, 29 August 1977.
24. See www.singermemories.com and www.railways.incanada.net, accessed on 22 June 2005. Timber limits were a provincial jurisdiction. The Thurso railway had a Quebec charter.
25. DHH, BIOG file, undated biography likely from 1978; interview conducted by Jean Morin with Douglas Simpson, a former Singer employee, 30 June 2005 (author's collection).
26. Johnston, *A War of Patrols*, 27.
27. Jean V. Allard and Serge Bernier, *Mémoires du général Jean V. Allard* (Ottawa: Les Éditions de Mortagne, 1985), 237–38.
28. Johnston, *A War of Patrols*, 224–25. The first chapter argues that Rockingham's experience in Normandy determined the leadership style and selection of personnel for the Special Force. It should be noted that Rockingham conducted a reconnaissance at low altitude in broad daylight aboard a small observation aircraft over

- Verrières Ridge, a key position south of Caen relentlessly defended by the Germans (*ibid.*, 3). Dextraze would conduct the same type of reconnaissance in the Congo in 1964 (see *infra*).
29. Johnston shows that the Army had implemented the 18-month contract because it felt that it would have been disgraceful to keep on “soldiers of fortune,” who were thought to be undesirable, violent, and undisciplined and who were needed in Korea, in peacetime. Johnson takes the opposing view of this prejudice, affirming that members of the Special Force had been more professional than regular members during the second and third rotations. He refutes the pretensions career soldiers have always had with regard to citizen soldiers (*ibid.*, 24–26, 50–51), thereby dismissing the sophisticated argument that career soldiers are in essence professionals of their craft.
 30. Based on the short biographies in the BIOG file. As it is impossible to cite Dextraze’s personnel file, Dextraze’s performance was likely deemed above average, given his promotions.
 31. Sean Maloney, *Canada and UN Peacekeeping: Cold War by Other Means* (St. Catharines, ON: Vanwell, 2002), 111–17. Maloney underestimates the Army’s hostility at having to deploy a contingent to the Congo. See LAC, RG 24, B-1, Vol. 21, 484 to 21,487, file 2137:3 (general file on the Congo of the Chiefs of Staff Committee).
 32. The events surrounding the missionaries’ rescue and Dextraze’s role are set out in the military intelligence file in Ottawa (LAC, RG 24, B-1, Vo1. 21, 331, CSC1733:3, Part 13). Also see Sean Maloney, “‘Mad Jimmy Dextraze’ ou un commandant sur la corde raide au Congo,” in Bernd Horn and Stephen Harris, eds., *Warrior Chiefs: Perspectives on Senior Canadian Military Leaders* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2002), 345–65. Maloney often lacks objectivity.
 33. According to Bishop (*Salute!*, 245), the mission’s nickname stemmed from Dextraze’s habit of initialling documents that came across his desk with “JDX.” Dextraze would have “JDX” letterhead made; the letterhead insignia featured a sword above the initials within the Canadian Army’s stylized maple leaf.
 34. The citation for Commander of the Order of the British Empire (military division) is included in the BIOG file at the DHH. Unofficial translation.
 35. Maloney, “‘Mad Jimmy Dextraze,’” 351.
 36. I refer to the biographies in the BIOG file.
 37. See J.L. Granastein, *Canada’s Army: Waging War and Keeping the Peace* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), Chapter 10. Despite being pro-Armed Forces, the book provides indispensable information.

38. Side-by-side English–French format (November 1972), 7. Separate from the BIOG file. The vocabulary and style of the message indicate that professionals revised the text, much more so than the message of 1973 (*infra*).
39. I have corrected the translation.
40. Quotes from *The Art of Leadership* were taken from the reprint in the *Canadian Army Doctrine and Training Bulletin*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (November 1998), 23–27.
41. *Mémoires du général Jean V. Allard*, Chapter 14.
42. Armand Letellier, *DND Language Reform: Staffing the Bilingualism Programs, 1967–1977* (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 1987), 131–32. Apparently, during the time he served as chief of personnel, Dextraze had even favoured a type of affirmative action to double the proportion of francophone officers, who represented 8 percent of the Forces, to ensure the proportional representation of francophones in the CF. At least, that is what historians on bilingualism in the CF believe (Jean Pariseau and Serge Bernier, *French Canadians and Bilingualism in the Canadian Forces, Volume II, 1969–1987. Official Languages: National Defence's Response to the Federal Policy* (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 1991), 92–94.
43. I refer to the specific memories of Letellier, *DND Language Reform*, 181–83.
44. Donald Mackay, *The People's Railway: A History of Canadian National* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1992), 278.
45. *The Valour and the Horror*, Galafilm, NFB and CBC co-production, 1992, Part 3, “In Desperate Battle, Normandy 1944,” 103 minutes.
46. The regiment's account is set out in *Cent ans d'histoire d'un Régiment canadien-français: les Fusiliers Mont-Royal*, 259–61.
47. See the report by the Commission of Inquiry into the Deployment of Canadian Forces to Somalia, *Dishonoured Legacy — The Lessons of the Somalia Affair*, 1997, Vol. 16. The scandal accounts for the reprinting of *The Art of Leadership* in 1998.
48. I have paraphrased a passage on page 2 of the 1972 message.



CHAPTER TEN

Balancing Between Autocratic and Democratic Leadership: The Career of Major-General Claude LaFrance



SERGE BERNIER

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is based in part on a videotaped interview, approximately two hours in length, conducted with Major-General (Retired) Claude LaFrance by the Royal Air Force Memorial Museum (located in Trenton, Ontario) on 23 December 2004. The interview focused mainly on the technical aspects of the general's role as a fighter pilot, including the airplanes he flew, the characteristics of some of those aircraft, and his exploits in Korea, as well as a few biographical details. On 3 June 2005, the Department of National Defence (DND), or more specifically its Directorate of History and Heritage (DHH), conducted an audiotaped interview with Major-General LaFrance, which concentrated on the positions he held during his career and the different styles of leadership he encountered and/or had to exercise. These two distinct and separate interviews have been combined to provide a perspective of leadership as seen and practised by Major-General LaFrance. Of note, throughout his professional career, the general was called upon to exercise two forms of leadership that are almost polar opposites, which he refers to as autocratic and democratic (or in more current doctrinal terms — participative). And as one might well imagine he often had to subtly blend the two, depending on the situation.

A MILITARY LEADER IN THE MAKING: THE EARLY YEARS

Claude LaFrance was born on 1 July 1929 in Quebec City. Second World War newsreels featuring fighter pilots made a strong impression on the young LaFrance and he decided he wanted to become a pilot himself. His father volunteered as a field engineer in 1940 and was demobilized in 1945. In July 1947, Claude turned 18 and enlisted shortly after, graduating from the Académie de Québec. His dream was about to come true. At the recruiting centre, the military staff determined he met the basic physical requirements. Similarly, Wing Commander Lecompte conducted his pre-selection interview and confirmed that he possessed the intellectual ability to become an Air Force officer, as was required of all Canadian pilots.

Having passed the preliminary screening, the young LaFrance then had to learn English while surviving training. He obtained his pilot's wings in August 1948 at the Centralia Air Station. In attendance was his proud mother, who had made a long journey by train to be present for the ceremony. LaFrance was now a fighter pilot and he was earmarked to train on the De Havilland Vampire aircraft.

During our interview with Major-General LaFrance in June 2005, we asked him whether, to his knowledge, there was a theory of leadership in the Air Force at the time he joined. Interestingly, he stated no such theory existed in the sense that we understand it today, and especially not in the way leadership is taught today. The authorities had decentralized the initial selection process in the hope that the officer selection unit would get the job done. Because the Air Force was trying to predict whether a given person would become a pilot — and therefore an officer — it was important to determine very early in the process whether the applicant had the required ability. If the selection unit made bad choices, the pilot school suffered the consequences. Thus, the initial and subsequent steps were designed to screen out candidates who did not have the necessary potential to be fighter pilots, and to some degree leaders.

Pilots had to have a certain amount of aggressiveness, not like that of a street fighter, but a professional aggressiveness that would enable a pilot to handle a plane in any circumstances and get maximum performance



A young Claude LaFrance poses with his Vampire fighter aircraft.
(Courtesy Major-General [Retired] Claude LaFrance)

out of it. The ability to fly was critical. However, the issue of leadership was hardly touched on during initial training. As a result, during that stage of his career, LaFrance was taught very little about human behaviour, although some parts of his theory courses touched on the responsibilities of a leader, especially concerning mechanics. Not surprisingly, there was a great deal of talk about teamwork, but the focus was the relationship between pilots and their ground crew. Major-General LaFrance acknowledged that all the pilots he knew respected the mechanics' skills.

In the late 1940s, discipline in the Air Force left a lot to be desired. There were still quite a few pilots who had served in the Second World War, and the habits they had learned in wartime were difficult to change. The reliance on, and adherence to, rules and regulations differed greatly between a wartime and a peacetime environment. However, many of the veteran pilots left in the 1950s, and gradually discipline appropriate to the operational realities of the time was established.

Even in the postwar period, more was required of pilots than just physical abilities. To enter the junior officer ranks, up to the level of squadron commanding officer (CO), they had to pass (with rare exceptions) examinations covering world geography, strategy, and great military thinkers. It was the individual responsibility of each officer to prepare for the examinations. Young Canadian pilots of the time underwent training during the tensest years of the Cold War, and the authorities had to ensure that the pilots understood how their role fit into the Western allies' overall strategy.

It was not until 1949, after his arrival at 410 Fighter Squadron at Saint-Hubert, that LaFrance began to develop some ties with the troops. But those links were still limited, as he was the youngest pilot in the squadron and the newest arrival. In such circumstances, it would have been imprudent to make too many waves. Rather, it was an opportunity to round out what he had learned in training. Moreover, it was the time to become knowledgeable about how a fighter squadron operated.

LaFrance certainly demonstrated excellent flying skills. Two years later he was appointed as an instructor at the fighter pilot school in Chatham, New Brunswick. From that point on, he began to exercise a somewhat autocratic style of leadership with the pilots-in-training — who, he sometimes liked to say, were there to try to kill their instructor.

KOREA

The young LaFrance soon faced the hard reality of a Cold War theatre of combat. In 1952, he switched from the Vampire fighter aircraft to the

American F-86 Sabre, a number of which were built in Canada. The Canadian Air Force arranged with its American counterpart for several Canadian fighter pilots to serve in American flights in the Korean theatre: each Canadian pilot would complete a six-month rotation and be replaced by another Canadian. In 1952, LaFrance was the only instructor in his group who had no combat experience. His colleagues had served in the Second World War. Consequently, he pleaded with his squadron CO to send him to Korea immediately to correct this deficiency. His CO agreed.

After spending some time at Travis Air Force Base in the United States to adapt to American methods of aerial combat, LaFrance crossed the Pacific to Japan, and then Korea. In May 1952, he joined a squadron of the U.S. Air Force's 39 Fighter Interceptor Wing, which was part of 51 Fighter Interceptor Group, and logged a dozen hours of practice flights over Korea in a Canadian-built Sabre that he continued to use after the war. The fighter pilot's mission was to intercept enemy fighter planes — MiG-15s — that shadowed the route taken by American bombers. However, this task had its challenges. MiG-15s could fly higher than Sabres, therefore, the only way to engage them was to force them to reduce altitude. But the Sabre was also required to accelerate to almost top speed, which made them difficult to control. As if this was not enough of a challenge, LaFrance's station was on the Manchurian border. This meant that he had to fly all the way across North Korea, carrying auxiliary fuel tanks that weighed down and slowed his aircraft, before he could begin his operation.

In Korea, all the Allied pilots noticed a significant difference between the skills of the good and bad enemy pilots. There were unquestionably some excellent pilots, generally Russian. However, there were also bad ones, the vast majority being Chinese or North Korean. On the United Nations (UN) side, abilities varied little between the less skilled and the aces. In confrontations between enemy planes, the score was roughly one Sabre shot down for every 14 MiG-15s.

Before returning to Canada at the end of his six-month tour, LaFrance completed 50 missions (including one in a T-33, or T-Bird). He was promoted from flying officer to flight lieutenant and



Claude LaFrance in his F-86 jet, Korea 1952. (Courtesy Major-General [Retired] Claude LaFrance)

commanded a patrol and a squadron. He also shot down a MiG. On 5 August 1952, while leading a patrol of four, he encountered a plane that, because of its position, he knew to be the leader of an enemy patrol. Taking advantage of errors committed by the enemy pilot, LaFrance shot down the plane and clearly saw the pilot eject. Then, with the other members of his patrol, he was able to chase the rest of the enemy aircraft back across the Yalu River, which separates China from North Korea. He barely made the return flight to South Korea, as he was extremely low on fuel.

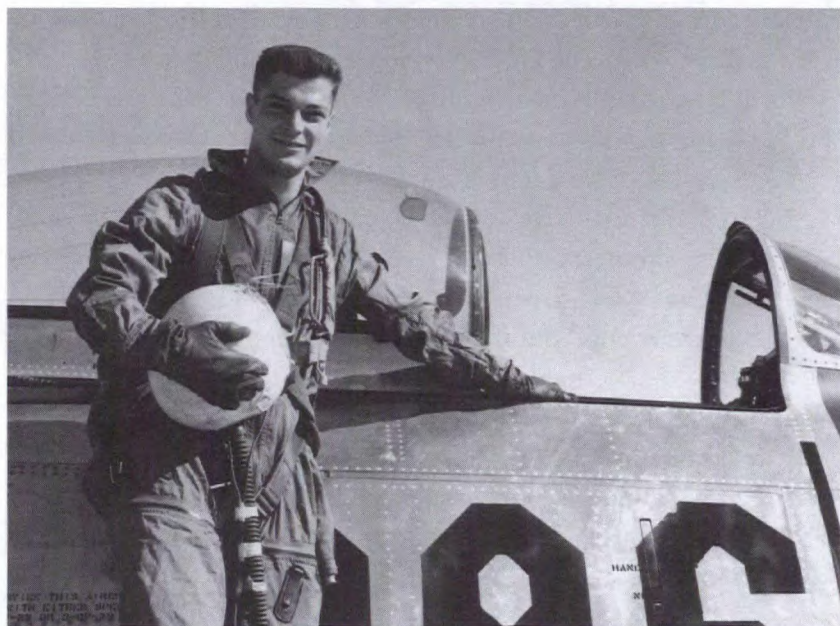
His success in this mission earned him the U.S. Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC). In addition, towards the end of his tour, the

American government awarded him the Air Medal for the quality of his work with 39 Wing. The DFC was not presented to him until February 1957, while he was serving in France. However, because the president of the United States did not present the Air Medal, unlike the DFC, LaFrance could not wear it on his uniform.

Before LaFrance arrived in Korea, his only experience of air combat had been simulated. Once in theatre, he realized that most of the American pilots were Second World War veterans with considerable air combat experience. But they had flown turboprops and had developed habits that did not transfer well to jet aircraft. Conversely, LaFrance had always flown jets. As a result, he achieved success very early in his operational tour and was rewarded with his first medal. Having proven himself highly skilled at commanding a four-aircraft patrol, he was subsequently tasked to prepare four other such patrols for combat.

One of the things that impressed LaFrance during his tour with the Americans was that, after shooting down an enemy plane, the pilot was required to hold a meeting with all the squadron mechanics in the big tent and describe the action to them. Hearing about the events almost immediately afterward made the mechanics feel that they had played a part in the exploit. This procedure reminded pilots to pay attention to the morale of the ground troops, whose work was integral to the success of any mission.

During this period, the young pilot, the only Canadian in the squadron, shouldered some significant responsibilities. The missions were many and the days were long. The pilots often had to get up at 0300 hours in the morning to plan the day's work. Although alcohol was available, the situation, waging war in a high-technology environment, meant that moderation was in order. According to LaFrance, the secret of a leader's success lay in the seriousness with which he prepared for a mission. As a result, LaFrance relied upon the exercise of autocratic leadership during his preparations, and even more so when in flight with his formation. He was particularly proud of the fact that he never lost a pilot during all the missions he led.



By the time he returned to Canada at the end of a six-month tour in Korea, Claude LaFrance had flown 50 combat missions. (Courtesy Major-General [Retired] Claude LaFrance)

TEN YEARS OF PROGRESS

Glowing from his success in Korea, LaFrance returned to Chatham, New Brunswick. In the years that followed, he commanded a section of 431 Squadron at Bagotville, then transferred to 441 Squadron, with which he served briefly in the United Kingdom and the Federal Republic of Germany. However, most of his time with 441 Squadron was spent at Marville, near Metz, France. During a one-month detachment to the French Air Force at Dijon, he had the opportunity to fly a Mystère fighter aircraft. In February 1957 he became executive assistant to Air Marshal H.B. Goodwin, commander of the Canadian Air Division in Europe, detached to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

In 1960, he was sent to the officer selection centre at Centralia, where he became a sort of apprentice to more experienced officers.

However, he thought their methods of evaluating the potential of young men who were interested in the profession of arms were too mechanical, based too much on instructions that tried to cover every eventuality, and thus, inevitably caused some candidates to be overlooked. Eager to further his education, LaFrance started working towards his bachelor's degree in psychology at the University of Western Ontario in the early 1960s and obtained it a few years later. Subsequently, he managed the Centralia selection unit and was promoted to acting squadron CO, with the rank of major.

At Centralia potential recruits had to undergo three phases of evaluation in two days. The first phase was individual, involving a meeting and questionnaires. That alone was more in-depth than the evaluation he himself had undergone when enlisting. The second phase took place in groups, either in a classroom or during exercises that involved physical participation. No leader was designated in advance; the idea was to note how each individual behaved, which ones had a tendency to lead the others and why. For example, the instructors had to determine whether the group tended to follow a given person merely because he spoke well and loudly, even though he might steer the group in the wrong direction when carrying out the exercise.

During the third phase, a group was presented with a problem, and a leader was assigned to solve it with the help and participation of all the group members. This process already existed when LaFrance arrived, but once he took over control of the centre, he saw to it that the standard processes for analyzing the results became less mechanical and were adapted to particular circumstances.

The three services (i.e., Army, Navy, and Air Force) had somewhat different operational requirements. The Army, after sending a general observer to the selection centre, had decided not to get involved. On the other hand, the Navy had agreed to become part of the effort, which meant that by the time LaFrance left Centralia, he had naval officers serving under him.

THE 1960S

As often happens in a military career, LaFrance had to adapt his leadership style to the circumstances. Thus, during air combat or even combat simulations, he had to lead autocratically. Decisions were made in a fraction of a second and had to be acted upon immediately. People followed a leader because they had confidence in him. In Korea, for example, when LaFrance commanded his fighter patrols, he was the only Canadian, the only francophone, and the youngest.

Unlike most of his fellow pilots, he had no combat experience before arriving in Korea, yet, the other pilots quickly came to trust him. After seeing him in action, they knew what he was capable of, and none of the members of his team had any problem obeying his orders before or during a mission. They knew there was a very good chance that, under his leadership, the mission would be accomplished without any losses.

Conversely, at headquarters, whether of the Air Force or that of the unified forces, LaFrance shifted his leadership style from autocratic to democratic (participative), as his work there involved consulting different stakeholders and taking their views into consideration before making a decision. Autocratic leadership only worked when one had the power to enforce it. In a headquarters environment staff officers lacked this clout. Moreover, once a decision had been made, it had to be implemented. Therefore, execution was always easier if all concerned had a hand in the deliberations.

Another consideration for staff was the fact that officers of any rank, especially when serving on the staff of a very high-ranking commander, were frequently called upon to deal with senior officers, to whom they had to convey the commander's wishes. A subtle diplomatic dance normally ensued, in which someone higher up the chain of command might be questioned by a subordinate (i.e., staff of the commander) in regards to non-compliance. The subordinate had to accomplish the mission entrusted to him by his commander without alienating someone of higher rank who might later be in a position to intervene in the subordinate's career. Clearly, a more diplomatic approach was required.

In 1963, at the age of 34, LaFrance was accepted at the Air Force Staff College, where officers with potential were sent to prepare for further advancement in their military careers. To be admitted to this institution applicants had to pass examinations designed to test their general knowledge of the world. To top off this battery of tests, the candidates had to write for three hours on a subject given to them on the spot. They could prepare by studying general topics but did not know what specific question they would have to answer until they sat down to write the exam.

For LaFrance this requirement posed additional challenges. The three-hour exam had to be written in English. Because he would be judged by the same standards as anglophone university graduates, LaFrance knew that he would have to begin preparing well in advance, so he added nine classes in English literature to the psychology classes he was already taking. Not only did he strive to express himself in correct English, he also wanted to immerse himself in English-language culture.

In order to be selected for the Staff College, applicants did not have to achieve a specific mark on the examinations; college administrators would simply accept the number of students required, always taking those with the best results. The year that LaFrance wrote the examinations, only 10 percent of the candidates applying were accepted. He was one of them.

LaFrance graduated from the Staff College with a mark well above the class average. The college recommended that he be transferred to the Air Force Policy Office; no doubt he had been identified as someone with a knack for articulating and communicating policies. He stayed in that position for about a year, before the unification and integration of all the headquarters. He then became a lieutenant-colonel in the Air Force, working for an Army colonel, Henri Tellier, on joint planning. Shortly afterward, when Lieutenant-General Jean-Victor Allard was seeking a bilingual executive assistant, Tellier suggested that LaFrance, in whom he had full confidence, fill the billet. LaFrance later followed Allard as he advanced to three other positions: chief of operational readiness, commander-in-chief of mobile command, and chief of the defence staff.

By the late 1960s, when Allard was called upon to stand up a number of French-language units, LaFrance had already been working for him for almost three years. LaFrance's service record was more than satisfactory, but both men knew that a military career was not made in offices, and that this was an extraordinary opportunity.

During the Second World War, the French-language 425 Bomber Squadron had been created. The squadron's service record had been remarkable in a number of respects, but the attempt to use French as the language of work within the squadron had not been entirely successful. There had been several anglophones in 425 Squadron, not all of them Canadian.

However, times had changed. In 1968, 433 Fighter Squadron, which was to fly CF-5s, was stood up. It was a French-language unit that included francophones and bilingual anglophones. It used French as its language of work. The task of forming and commanding this squadron was entrusted to LaFrance, after he had completed a stint at the Air Warfare College in the United Kingdom. LaFrance immediately identified two main focuses of his work. The first was to create a squadron that would be worthy of recognition from an operational point of view. The second was to ensure that the squadron functioned in French.

On the operational level, there were several people qualified to command the new squadron. When he was appointed to the position, LaFrance was told by an envious anglophone colleague that if LaFrance had not been a francophone, he (the colleague) would have been chosen as CO. But, as LaFrance reminded his colleague, by the time the other man earned his wings in 1954, LaFrance had already had his for six years, come under enemy fire in Korea, fired on enemy planes and shot down several of them, and commanded American combat formations. That put an end to the discussion. It was important for LaFrance to emphasize his operational competence and the fact that he had proven himself in combat, to make it clear that command of the squadron had not been handed to him merely because he spoke French — a criticism that was heard frequently at the time concerning a number of the new French-language units.

LaFrance approached the human resources (HR) office for help in putting together his squadron. Above all, he wanted to find people with operational experience. At first, he was told that there were not enough French Canadians with the right qualifications, but LaFrance knew that to be untrue. He told the HR specialists that he knew of many qualified people, and that if their office did not want to provide him with a list, he would go through the files himself to find them. Like magic, a list of names was produced, from which he was able to fill the available positions with men who had all the required operational skills, as well as the ability to speak French.

The second objective was much more critical. The French Canadians who were gradually arriving at Bagotville had to demonstrate that the French language was adaptable to Air Force operations. Many of these francophones had, until then, worked only in English, and they believed that it was the universal language of aviation. But although English would continue to be used for air traffic control and external communications, LaFrance quickly made his intentions clear and set up a system for working in French within the squadron.

Initiating the use of French within the squadron was one thing; making people outside the squadron understand that this was the way things would henceforth be done was another. LaFrance put forth two arguments to justify this. First of all, 433 Squadron would be a unit where French Canadians could work in their first language from time to time during their careers. Was that too much to ask, given that English Canadians could spend their entire careers working in their mother tongue? Second, since the government was promoting bilingualism, the French-language squadron would give anglophones a chance to learn French, or upgrade what they already knew, which certainly would not hurt their career prospects. Given how important this aspect has become today, it appears in hindsight that LaFrance had the right idea. But of the two main arguments, the second was less well-understood in 1969. It is important to note that LaFrance was not the only one who faced these problems. In the Navy, and even in some of the new French-language Army units, the new COs were experiencing the same thing.



Claude LaFrance (centre) was appointed CO of the newly created francophone 433 Fighter Squadron in Bagotville in 1968. (Courtesy Major-General [Retired] Claude LaFrance)

A SUCCESSFUL MILITARY CAREER: THE FINAL YEARS

In 1970 LaFrance was promoted to colonel and became deputy commander of 10 Tactical Air Group, based at Saint-Hubert as part of Mobile Command Headquarters. Two years later, he left to command Canadian Forces Base Winnipeg, where, among other responsibilities, he had to introduce bilingualism — not an easy task. He ensured that the policies were applied, but did not push the issue any farther than necessary, as he faced persistent opposition that sometimes went to ridiculous extremes. When a shiny new plaque inscribed with “Mess des Officiers” was hung, it made the old “Officers’ Mess” one beside it look shabby, and official complaints were received that French was taking precedence over English. And when LaFrance requested that the base’s

typewriter balls be replaced with bilingual ones to facilitate the use of French, some people objected. They argued that since only about 30 percent of Canada's population was francophone, only that percentage of balls at the base should be changed.

Of course, during his tenure at CFB Winnipeg, other issues besides bilingualism demanded his attention. Notably, there were many personnel management problems to be dealt with. But LaFrance was well-prepared, as he always liked to be, and knew where to look in the administrative orders to find ways to get rid of a few bad apples.

He also showed that he trusted those who served under him and respected them as professionals. In the end, LaFrance's subordinates always realized this, and in general they reciprocated his trust. For example, during his tenure at CFB Winnipeg, the flying bonus for air navigators was eliminated, and the reaction was widespread discontent. LaFrance appealed to the navigators' pride, professionalism and love of their work to gain the cooperation of some who were furious at the decision.

Two years later, Colonel LaFrance pursued further education at the Royal College of Defence Studies (the former Imperial Defence College) in the United Kingdom, an institution where senior officers studied world issues in greater depth, especially from a geopolitical and economic perspective. Upon his return to Canada, LaFrance was promoted to brigadier-general on 1 July 1976 (his birthday) and appointed to the position of director general (current policy) in the office of the assistant deputy minister (policy). Subsequently, he assumed command of 10 Tactical Air Group, where he had served eight years earlier.

As commander of this tactical group, which flew CF-5 "Freedom Fighters" and helicopters, LaFrance maintained his technical pilot skills. This was something he had always done. During his time as deputy commander of the same formation, he had flown a CF-5 to Winnipeg to meet with the base commander he was about to replace. Upon his arrival there, a mechanic who saw him getting out of the aircraft was heard whispering that the new commander must know what he was doing. Thus, as a brigadier-general and commander of 10 Tactical Air Group, LaFrance continued to pilot CF-5s — which, incidentally, U.S. Air Force

generals could not do. In his new position, Brigadier-General LaFrance reverted to a more autocratic leadership style than he had exercised during the previous three years. As the commander, he had the position power to enforce his will.

But LaFrance did not stay long at Saint-Hubert. He was promoted once again, to major-general, and became deputy chief of staff for plans and programs at North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) headquarters in Colorado Springs. With 137 military personnel and civilian employees working under him — most of whom were American officers, including his assistant, a brigadier-general — he soon switched back to a more democratic style of leadership. He served at NORAD headquarters for two years, long enough to observe that the Americans did not have a very good command of the English language and often buried simple ideas in incomprehensible prose. LaFrance spent a great deal of time revising documents submitted to him and meeting with their authors to clarify what they were trying to say. The English courses he had taken in the 1960s were still coming in handy.

A SECOND CAREER

In 1981, at the age of 52, LaFrance was approached by Treasury Board, and he agreed to leave the military after 34 years of service. He joined Treasury Board's temporary transfers group and was detached to the Secretariat of State. But he was soon appointed assistant deputy minister (aviation) at Transport Canada, where he discovered decisions were generally made by consensus.

He had been "parachuted" into his position, which meant that some people were less than happy about it. It also meant that he had to establish his credibility. He also arrived during a major transition, and all department employees were on tenterhooks. For example, he had to cut his branch's staff, which was spread out over seven regions across the country, from 12,000 to 10,000 personnel. On the organizational level,

commercial operation of airports had just been transferred to local management bodies, while operational aspects such as control towers and airport technical standards were still LaFrance's responsibility.

After accomplishing the staff reductions, LaFrance had to resist pressure from the Public Service to make further cuts to his branch. Transport Canada had been targeted by the accountants at Treasury Board because it had several times more employees than the Secretariat of State or External Affairs. At one point, Treasury Board wanted to eliminate the jobs of approximately 500 of the 800 pilots for whom LaFrance was responsible. To prevent this, he had to present a detailed rationale for every one of the positions.

On another occasion his pilots threatened to go on strike. LaFrance met with them, after his usual thorough preparation. By having answers to all the questions raised and proposals made by the pilots' union, he was able to mollify the pilots and avert the strike.

After eight years with the Public Service of Canada, LaFrance joined the board of *Aerospatiale Canada* and became a consultant for the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). He handled three major mandates for ICAO, including the issue of smoking on aircraft and in airports. First it had been bilingualism; now he was in the thick of another controversy. Next, he became president of *Aerospatiale Canada*, and then, in 2000, headed the Canadian branch of European Aeronautic Defence and Space, from which he retired in April 2005. Today he is honorary colonel of 1 Wing, which replaced 10 Tactical Air Group, based in Kingston. He has had the satisfaction of bringing his military career full circle, back to the unit where it all began.

CONCLUSION

When Claude LaFrance joined the Air Force, unlike some of his colleagues (who were also successful), he had no career plan and was not thinking about becoming a general. He had only one goal in mind: to become the best pilot he could be. He was open to other possibilities, of

course, but at the time, he could not, for example, have knowledgeably discussed such topics as geopolitics.

This review of LaFrance's career reveals that his stature as a leader grew thanks to his judgment and intelligence, but most of all to his love for his work, the dedication with which he applied himself to it, his perseverance, and his drive to overcome all obstacles in his path. Importantly, his flexibility in adapting his leadership style to the circumstances is characteristic of all successful military leaders.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

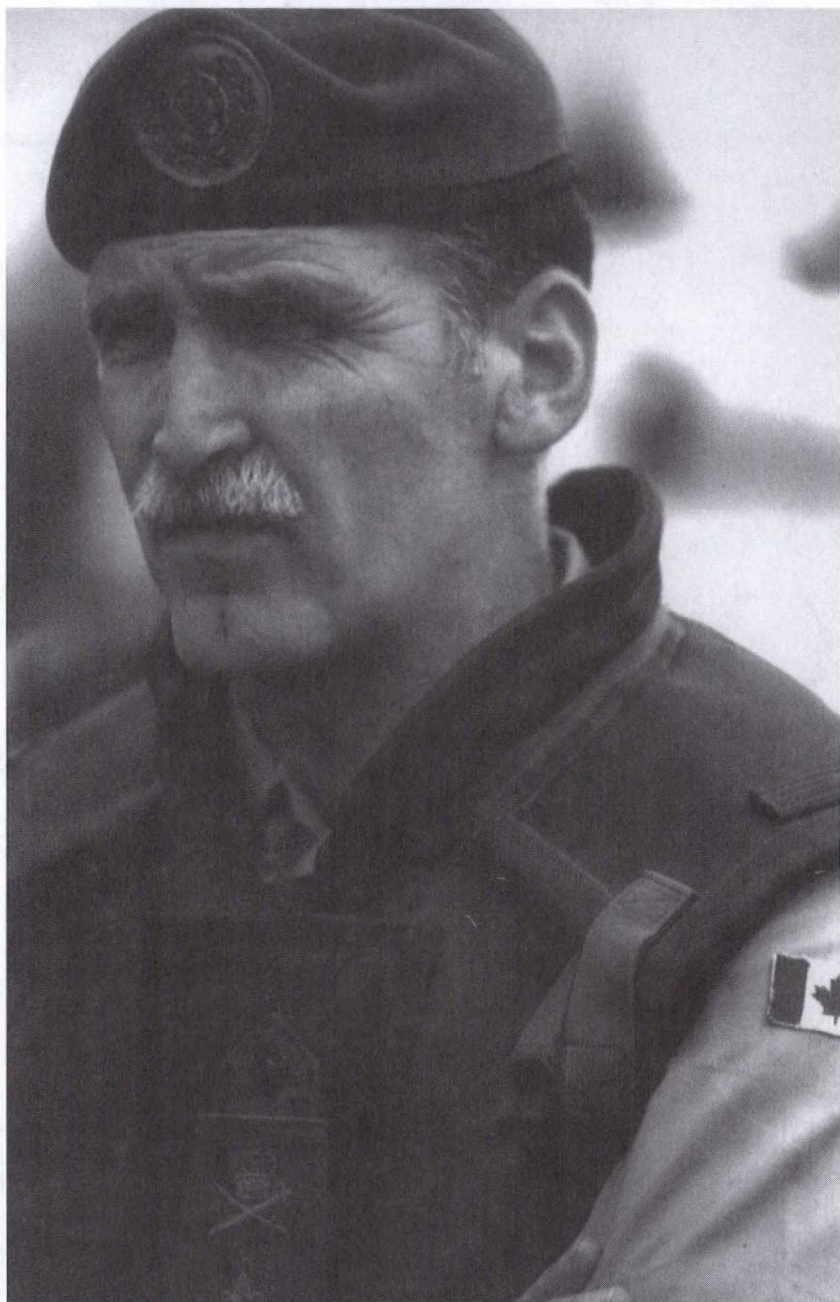
Do the Right Thing: Lieutenant-General Roméo Dallaire in the 1990s¹

CAROL OFF

Common military wisdom dictates that it is much more difficult to lead in peacetime than in war. But it's equally as true that no one can really see the merits of an officer outside of the very activity for which he or she is trained — armed conflict. Officers may have the best education money can buy; they may be perceived as “the right stuff” by their peers and superiors; they may be highly disciplined and focused, but only within the theatre of war can one see their true mettle.

The career of Lieutenant-General Roméo Dallaire as an artillery officer with the Canadian Army spans three decades. His resume as a senior officer is not unlike that of his colleagues, with one exception: Roméo Dallaire was tested in a way that few Canadian generals in peacetime have ever been tested. His strengths and weaknesses were exposed in a way that few in the Canadian Forces (CF) have ever experienced.

This chapter dwells primarily on General Dallaire's role as force commander for the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR), an engagement that has been the subject of dozens of articles, books, documentaries, judicial inquiries, and parliamentary reviews throughout the western world and Africa. Yet, despite all the ink that has been used to analyze the mission and its failures, it's impossible to evaluate Dallaire's performance as leader except by examining it against



Brigadier-General Roméo Dallaire in Rwanda. (Department of National Defence file photo)

the moral principals and ethics that guided him in his decisions. This chapter attempts to do that.

It was on 6 April 1994 that Roméo Dallaire discovered what all the years of training and education had ostensibly prepared him to face: he was in the middle of a war. At 2030 hours, a Falcon 50 aircraft with a three-person French crew attempted to land at Kigali airport. They were returning the presidents of Burundi and Rwanda from an intense day of meetings aimed at bringing stability to the troubled region. As the Falcon made its final decent towards the runway, unknown assailants fired off two rockets — with professional precision — from a location near the airstrip. They scored a direct hit: the jet went down in a ball of flames, killing everyone on board.

Was it an act of sabotage? Was it a coup d'état? Roméo Dallaire subsequently spent the night trying to figure out just what he was up against. "I was very anxious to know with whom I was doing business," Dallaire says of the moment. As the force commander for UNAMIR, he had been in Kigali for the past six months trying to implement the Arusha Accords — a peace agreement that was to bring the rebel Tutsi-led militia, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), into a co-governing arrangement with the Rwandan government of President Juvenal Habyarimana. With the president now dead, it was clear to Dallaire that was now not going to happen.

Dallaire had decided months earlier that one of his priorities was to protect the country's VIPs. Nowhere in his mandate was he instructed to do this but long before the plane crash, Dallaire and his UNAMIR headquarters had received warnings and intelligence about a possible massacre of all political opponents of the Habyarimana dictatorship. Dallaire determined that the legitimate politicians of Rwanda — who had declared to the international community that they wanted peace — were his thin line of defence for the UNAMIR project. If they were killed, there would be no more mission.

Dallaire had assigned a handful of peacekeepers to act as bodyguards for each prominent politician he considered vulnerable. But with the death of Habyarimana, Dallaire determined those VIPs were even more in danger. On the night of 6 April, as he watched the brutal

Presidential Guard and the paramilitary *Interahamwe* establish roadblocks throughout Kigali, he worried not only about the security of the VIPs but of the city as well.

Dallaire's biggest problem since the inception of UNAMIR was the appalling weakness of his force. The 2,500 soldiers assigned to him were hardly enough for the task at hand but within that force, only a few contingents were capable of defending themselves — or anyone else. Before he left for the Africa mission, Dallaire had been told he would have a full battalion of Belgian paracommandos: instead, he got 450 soldiers. His only full battalion was of Bangladeshis — troops Dallaire had determined could not function as boy scouts, let alone as peacekeepers in a conflict situation. They were a motley crew, pulled from different units of the Bangladeshi armed forces, led by a professor from their military school who would accept only written orders submitted well in advance. The Bangladeshis had no ability to be out for more than 12 hours — they did not even have sleeping bags.

Now, with the possibility of a coup — or a civil war — Dallaire dispatched his only reliable peacekeeping contingent — the Belgians — to secure the premises of key politicians, in particular the country's prime minister, Agathe Uwilingiyimana. Madame Agathe, as everyone called her, was the one person Dallaire believed could restore order to the country — if she lived.

A section of 10 highly capable Belgian peacekeepers arrived at the home of the prime minister in the early morning hours of 7 April. They immediately found themselves under fire from the Presidential Guard who had come to kill Madame Agathe. First Lieutenant Thierry Lotin radioed back to contingent headquarters: "I think they're going to lynch us, my colonel." Their commander, Joe Dewez, thought Lotin was exaggerating. Colonel Dewez told them not to surrender their guns, but two had already done so. Dewez determined the others could do the same. After all, they were peacekeepers, in Rwanda to work with the authorities, not fight against them. The paracommandos were captured immediately. Dewez would recognize his mistake only hours later, when it was too late.

On that same day, 7 April, General Dallaire made hundreds of snap decisions, many of them life and death ones. He had no idea

what he was facing in Kigali, but he heard that a high-level Rwandan military strategy meeting was to be held in the middle of town that morning. Dallaire knew he had to be at that meeting, even if he was uninvited.

Dallaire had also heard that the Belgian paracommandos, who had been sent to Madame Agathe's, had gone missing. En route to the meeting, he took a small detour past the Rwandan Army base of Camp Kigali where he had suspected his soldiers were held captive. Dallaire immediately understood the depth of the trouble his mission was in. At the gate of the camp, he saw two peacekeepers down on the ground. He ordered the driver — a Rwandan Army officer — to stop the car, but the man refused. It was too dangerous.

In that moment, Roméo Dallaire discovered what all the training of his past three decades had been about. He had to decide instantly: what should he do about the Belgian prisoners? He had 2,500 peacekeepers under his command — all of them lightly armed and many of them grossly under-trained and inexperienced. He had hundreds of UN observers in Kigali and throughout the countryside, and he knew there were thousands of expatriates — especially Belgians — living in Rwanda. To stage a rescue operation would bring his peacekeepers into combat with the Rwandan Armed Forces. What would become of everyone else in the mission, particularly the other Belgians?

"I had to make a nanosecond decision," says Dallaire today. "This is what all your years of training are all about," he added. Dallaire determined that a rescue operation would never succeed. He had too much at stake. Only negotiations could possibly free those soldiers, and even that was a remote possibility. Unless the Rwandan Army voluntarily released the soldiers, they would be lost. There would be no rescue mission. Dallaire would have to live with the enormous consequences of that decision for the rest of his life.

He proceeded to the military meeting where, after the session concluded, Dallaire attempted to negotiate the release of the Belgians. The man in charge, Colonel Theoneste Bagosora reassured Dallaire that he would try, but Dallaire suspected nothing would come of it. He already had a good idea that Bagosora was ordering the political assassinations.

By the end of the day, Dallaire finally gained access to his Belgian paracommandos. They were piled in a heap at the hospital morgue, all dead, many of them showing signs of brutality and torture, some with their testicles severed. He also learned that Madame Agathe had been murdered along with most of the other protected VIPs. Dallaire was devastated. His Belgian contingent was outraged and shattered. The mission was disintegrating around them.

The day of 7 April descended into chaos and war. The RPF punched out of their compound in Kigali and confronted the government forces in all-out combat. Roméo Dallaire was in the midst of a genocide of the Tutsi people. He sent a message to New York — “Do I still have a mandate?” New York’s Department of Peacekeeping Operations dithered but Dallaire had already decided that he did: “I called it operation counter-crimes against humanity,” says Dallaire. And he worked under that self-made mission for the next two months.



UNAMIR troops watch a Rwandan Patriotic Army unit enter Kigali as part of a peace agreement that soon began to unravel. (Courtesy Brent Beardsley)

New York's Department of Peacekeeping Operations, taking instruction from the secretary-general and the UN Security Council, could make no decisions about the future of the UNAMIR mission. Dallaire's orders were merely to seek a cease-fire between the two armies, something everyone in UNAMIR knew to be academic. The genocide was the problem, not the combat, and it would not end until one side or the other — probably the RPF — had won the war.

The Belgian government ordered the rest of its soldiers withdrawn in the days immediately following the death of the commandos. Dallaire subsequently ordered the Bangladeshis out of the country, since they were simply a liability. With a remaining force of 450 African peacekeepers, Dallaire and his deputy, Ghanaian Brigadier-General Henry Anyidoho, literally held down the fort. The UN wanted most of the other soldiers to leave Rwanda as well, but Dallaire and Anyidoho refused the order. The small, reduced force remained in Kigali for the duration of the war, and took responsibility for safeguarding a number of security zones housing as many as 30,000 refugees. Canadian Hercules pilots flew daredevil missions into Kigali almost daily, with the only supplies of food and equipment UNAMIR, and the Rwandans, would see until the genocide ended.

In addition to the relief flights, Canada contributed 12 officers to bolster Dallaire's mission staff. While the Ghanaians — and other African troops still in UNAMIR — were rock solid under fire, they lacked the skills and leadership abilities of Canadian-trained soldiers. Dallaire had been asking Canada to send reinforcements since before the war even began. Dallaire knew his own soldiers at Valcartier were ideal for the mission — bilingual, capable, disciplined. These were the skills he needed now. He never got the battalion he had asked for, but he did get the officers.

Dallaire's concern for those under his command led him to the belief that he should not allow them to think about the circumstances they were in. "I conducted forced stress," he explained later. Dallaire describes this form of management as "ruthless but fair." The textbook on leadership would dispute Dallaire's methods — popular wisdom dictates that soldiers should have opportunities to think and reflect, that their stress should be steamed off as often as possible. But one

objective outsider, who watched Dallaire in action during those months of war, saw method in his madness.

James Orbinski is a doctor with Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) who was based at the Amahoro Hostel where UNAMIR had its headquarters. Orbinski had seen every hellhole in the world by the time he arrived in Kigali in May of 1994. But here he found just about the worst conditions possible. Dallaire and his peacekeepers were surrounded by corpses, filth, and garbage. Wild dogs fed upon the cadavers clogging the streets and doorways while soldiers cooked their bad food in the midst of it all. Water was scarce, and toilets had long ago ceased to function. They were shelled frequently. They had almost no petrol and only a handful of functioning vehicles.

"People were profoundly traumatized," recalls Orbinski. "But Dallaire was clear, firm, strong and uncompromising." Orbinski recognized immediately what the general was doing within his command role: "I had been in Somalia, Zaire, Afghanistan — everywhere. What people needed was the semblance of clarity. What are you trying to do here? Dallaire knew and acted upon it." Orbinski says that UNAMIR mission had to maintain a charade. "When you are a handful of UN soldiers with a lorry full of people and you come up against this veil of force [the Hutu Power death squads], your operating with the tenuous promise of support from the international community that you know, and they know, is a delusion. And you are standing against 30 or 40 *Interahamwe* who are drunk and have more equipment than the peashooter that's on your shoulder — the last thing you want to do is shatter the delusion"

Dallaire kept sending his men out into the danger and, even when they returned traumatized, they had to write up their reports. The headquarters was as strictly regimented as any normal mission would be, with *reveille*; morning prayers; specific hours for meetings and debriefings. But all of this amidst — not only a combat zone — but the wholesale slaughter of civilians. The bodies of dead Rwandans littered the fields, filled the streets, and floated ashore in the river.

In late June, Dallaire presented a series of medals to his soldiers and commended them for their work. But he added: "It must be pointed



The Rwandan Patriotic Army welcomed Brigadier-General Dallaire and the UN members of a reconnaissance mission in August 1994 with an honour guard composed of traditional warriors. (Courtesy Brent Beardsley)

out ... that there are blurred moments ahead of us. I can only advise that you all hold your composure and continue to perform your duties to the best of your ability. I am always ready and willing to give direction that will lead to the attainment of the mission goal.”

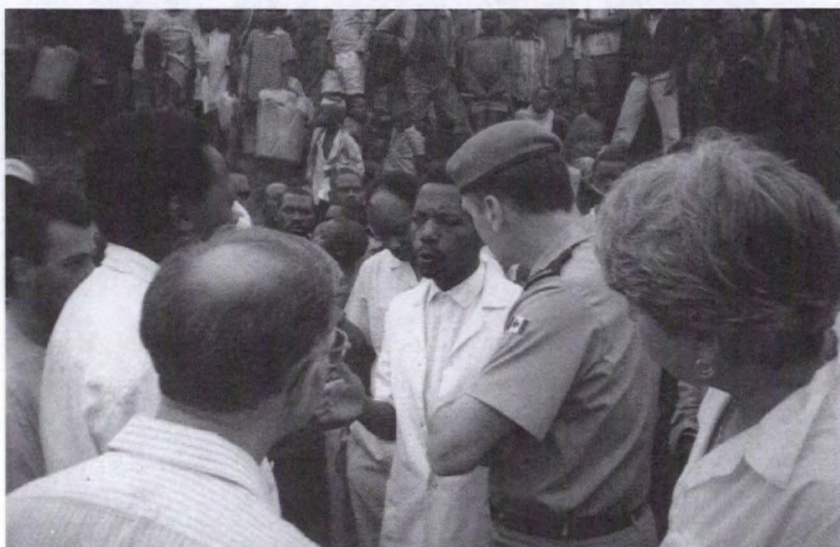
Throughout the three months of slaughter, Dallaire spent all the hours he could spare devising a military plan to stop the genocide. In the immediate days following the president’s assassination, Dallaire told New York that he would need 5,000 equipped and well-motivated soldiers to stop the killing. The UN turned him down. He continued to revise the strategy and later requested a Chapter VII mission with a force capable of blowing through the Hutu Power barricades, securing the countryside, holding firm in downtown Kigali, and sabotaging the Hutu Power radio broadcasts, which gave hourly instruction to the Rwandan citizenry in their “work obligation” to destroy the Tutsi. The Security Council, particularly the United States, decided that Dallaire’s

plan was ill-conceived. Long after the war, a panel of experts, assembled by the Carnegie Commission, would determine that Dallaire's plan would have worked and probably could have saved hundreds of thousands of lives. It's doubtful that the UN even seriously considered it.

On 4 July, Colonel Paul Kagame and his RPF concluded its cleverly manoeuvred sweep through the countryside and arrived in Kigali to join their fellow rebels. The war was over. The genocide ended as well and the perpetrators fled the country. Within weeks of Colonel Kagame's victory, Dallaire contacted General John de Chastelain, chief of the defence staff in Ottawa and informed him that he was incapable of continuing in the position. He had to leave, even as the reinforcements he had asked for finally began to arrive. By the middle of August, Dallaire's horrific adventure in Rwanda had come to its conclusion.

Major-General Roméo Dallaire (he was promoted to the new rank while he was still in Rwanda) was back at work in Canada on 3 October 1994. He took over the position of deputy commander of the Army just as the Somalia affair was beginning to explode. Dallaire had no idea what a mess that mission had become: a Canadian peacekeeper had tortured to death a Somali youth among other questionable occurrences of the mission — and the Department of National Defence (DND) was accused of trying to cover it up. Successive budget cuts to the DND had decimated the entire organization and that, as well as a series of scandals, sent the senior ranks into self-preservation mode. Dallaire was completely unprepared for the bureaucratic, political, and legal battles the Canadian Forces (CF) now faced.

It was not just problems with leadership that plagued the CF. By 1996 the UN had established 24 new peacekeeping missions — six more than the total for the preceding 43 years combined. Canadians served on almost all 24 of them. Dallaire was extremely conscious of how ill-prepared Canadian soldiers were for these often violent and nasty missions. Rwanda had been his first experience in peacekeeping, but he had visited his soldiers on their own missions in Bosnia and elsewhere. Dallaire was developing a sense of where the Canadian Forces were headed — into more and more missions such as the one he had just faced.



General Dallaire discusses living conditions with the leaders of the Nygondore Displaced Persons Camp, August 1994. (Courtesy Brent Beardsley)

At the 1995 Vimy Awards, where Dallaire was honoured for his service in Africa, he poured out his anguish over what he had witnessed in Rwanda, describing his days in the genocide and confrontations with the “Dante devils” of the death squads. “I have seen fear in the eyes of officers and watched soldiers cower in mortal dread. I was — as others were — on occasion left for lost in battle behind belligerent lines. Many Canadian military personnel are living these types of experiences. These experiences have matured our army, have scarred all those involved, and created a new, more serious, more withdrawn no-nonsense soldier ethos. These peacekeepers are the new breed of full-fledged veterans of Canada.”

In 1996, Roméo Dallaire was promoted lieutenant-general and appointed chief of staff (personnel) and later assistant deputy minister Human Resources — Military (ADM HR-Mil). His most onerous task in Ottawa was the high-profile initiative called the Quality of Life project. This was a Canadian Forces wide examination of the living conditions of

Canadian service personnel and their families that revealed the central rot and decay of an organization with personnel living in poverty who had completely lost faith in their leadership. Dallaire's new position should have been an opportunity to change things, but it was one of the most depressing assignments of his career. Though the project ultimately produced some results, the CF was in a crisis: the downsizing continued under the command of a risk adverse leadership. "It was very, very nasty" recalled Dallaire.

As funding dried up through successive budget cuts, the leadership became even less willing to take chances. The Department of National Defence was supposed to bring the Canadian Forces into the twenty-first century. However, the CF was stuck in the dark ages, as far as officers like Dallaire could see, and the command structure was all wrong. "I was trying to move a 1960s philosophy into a modern one, attempting to change things from a tight central control to giving authority to those in the field."

Dallaire argued that the emphasis for the forces should be on peace-keeping — a controversial issue in its own right — and he insisted that officers needed better and different education, with an emphasis on subjects like, military history, sociology, philosophy, and anthropology. "Soldiers need to know more about the places they are going into," Dallaire argued. It was a marked contrast from the institutional thinking at the time. Ironically, in 1992, Major-General Lewis MacKenzie told the Royal United Services Institute that: "The last thing that a peacekeeper wants to know is the history of the region he's going in to. It complicates the task of mediation."

Dallaire was criticized frequently by those who worked under and around him of being "all over the map." He spouted a plethora of ideas on how to fix the forces but seemed unable to focus on any one. It was, in part, the difficulty of trying to change a conservative and often reactionary organization. But even those who wanted to follow found the general difficult to pin down.

In his scattergun approach, Dallaire struggled against the institutional thinking, insisting that the Canadian Forces had to be prepared for complex and confusing peacekeeping missions and operations other

than war (OOTW) where they would encounter impenetrable social situations, high levels of violence, and the constant scrutiny of the international media. He wrote: "I maintain that commanders who insist on clear mandates and unambiguous decision processes should not be involved in conflict resolutions, because the challenges they will face will be too complex and subtle to be explicitly addressed through simple short-term tactics and readily definable milestones."

To an outsider, it is difficult to assess what effect Lieutenant-General Dallaire's interventions and arguments had on the groupthink of the CF at the time. But it was becoming clear what effect the experiences of the UNAMIR mission in Rwanda were having on General Dallaire. In the latter half of the 1990s, the general slid into depression and despair. His condition was hardly a new one, but it was something that the CF was only just learning about in any detail. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is surely an illness soldiers have suffered from since there were wars. As Dallaire sank into its grips, he remembered, as a boy, that he would visit his father at the legion hall, only to see one or more men quietly crying into his beer. The others maintained a respectful silence as the veteran suffered his moment. He now knew what they had been suffering.

If he would have no other influence on the CF, Dallaire decided at least he would not quietly drift off into early retirement without making a big noise about the condition from which he — and countless others in the forces — were suffering. A number of CF personnel contributed disturbing testimony for a CDS-commissioned in-house video called *Witness the Evil*. Dallaire gives one of the most powerful interventions in the film, describing his condition and admitting publicly that he had contemplated suicide. He urged those who had been traumatized by the missions of the 1990s to seek professional help. The plea was meaningful but hardly therapeutic: his condition persisted.

Within the PTSD, Dallaire began to review every decision, every moment of his time in Rwanda, and concluded that he had failed to do enough to prevent the disaster. Ironically, Dallaire never second-guessed any of his decisions or orders that were in the interest of protecting the Rwandan people and its legitimate political leaders. His

regrets were almost exclusively directed at what he failed to do to get more help for them.

The one decision he never doubted was his order to send the Belgian peacekeepers to Madame Agathe's house that day, and the subsequent nanosecond decision not to send in a rescue mission. It's astonishing that he could remain so adamant, given his condition of self-doubt and the fact that the Belgian government was then lashing out at Dallaire and the United Nations for the death of the 10 peacekeepers. A military panel in Brussels ordered a court martial of Colonel Luc Marchal, Dallaire's deputy in Rwanda, and the panel regretted that the force commander, as a Canadian, was beyond their jurisdiction.

Dallaire's actions as force commander in Rwanda are perplexing not just to personnel in Belgium, but to many in the Canadian Forces as well. They have been the subject of review from Washington to Nairobi. Why did Dallaire make the decisions he made? Why did he dispatch the Belgians? Another force commander may have ordered his troops back to barracks immediately following the crash of the president's plane — declaring that there was no longer a mandate. But Dallaire did not. Did this demonstrate good judgement or bad? Was it model generalship or failed generalship?

The answer depends entirely on what is regarded as the necessary attributes of a military leader.

In all of his writing, and in interviews with Lieutenant-General Dallaire, it appears he believed he had a moral obligation to act as he did. His decisions and commands were based on an ethical position — that he had the security of the Rwandan state to consider and he had to take all the calculated risks possible to secure the area under his mandate, even if it resulted in the death of his soldiers. While his orders may have been strategic and informed by his military training, Dallaire acted according to his conscience. Can a leader be effective and not be ethical? Dallaire would argue that he cannot. This ethos lies deeply in an old-fashioned concept of public service in which Dallaire was indoctrinated by first his father and then his father-in-law, both Second World War veterans. The Belgians argue that Dallaire was reckless with the lives of their peacekeepers: he counters that his priority was civil security.

Dallaire asked a group of officers a few years after he returned from Rwanda a provocative question: "Is Canada at war?" Not in a traditional way, was his own answer, but perhaps there is a war against tyranny which is no less relevant than the great wars. "We're on a terribly steep learning curve in this village," Dallaire told a CBC interviewer. "We fought the Second World War because there was a threat to us. Now we've gone to, 'We have to do something because there's a threat to humanity.' That's a big step." Correctly or not, Dallaire saw his role in Rwanda as a battle against tyranny no less relevant than that of the great wars. And he acted accordingly.

Dallaire's final position within the CF was to act as special adviser to the CDS where he, and a small staff, prepared a forward-looking document that was to be "a blueprint for future officer training." *Canadian Officership in the 21st Century* embodies many of the ideas Dallaire has for a better-trained and -educated officer corps that is prepared for the evolving role of the Canadian Forces. But the one characteristic Dallaire knows cannot be taught or trained into an officer is, simply, a sense of what is right and wrong. Dallaire refused to withdraw the peacekeepers serving under him in Rwanda, even when he was told to be the United Nations. He created his own self-styled mission and followed it. Dallaire has said that he could not have looked himself in the mirror had he done otherwise and he assumed — correctly or not — that those who served under him felt the same way.

Lieutenant-General Roméo Dallaire once remarked, "No one is ever ready for war, especially the one they end up fighting." He made this quip at a Royal Military College dinner in 1991, two and a half years before he would find himself in a devastating war. Yet Dallaire learned that the properly trained officer is ready: the training and discipline does not fail you. Dallaire relied on it every moment that he was in Rwanda during those chaotic months in 1993 and 1994. But Dallaire fell back on something else during that 100 days of slaughter that he witnessed: a personal sense of right and wrong. He made his leadership and command decisions based on his own moral convictions. It saved neither the people of Rwanda, who were murdered in the hundreds of thousands, nor his own sanity. But it raised a crucial question for the

Canadian Forces and for the military of many other countries as well. What are we willing to risk in the interest of human rights?

Lieutenant-General Dallaire resigned from the Canadian Forces in April 2000, leaving another generation to answer the question.

POSTSCRIPT

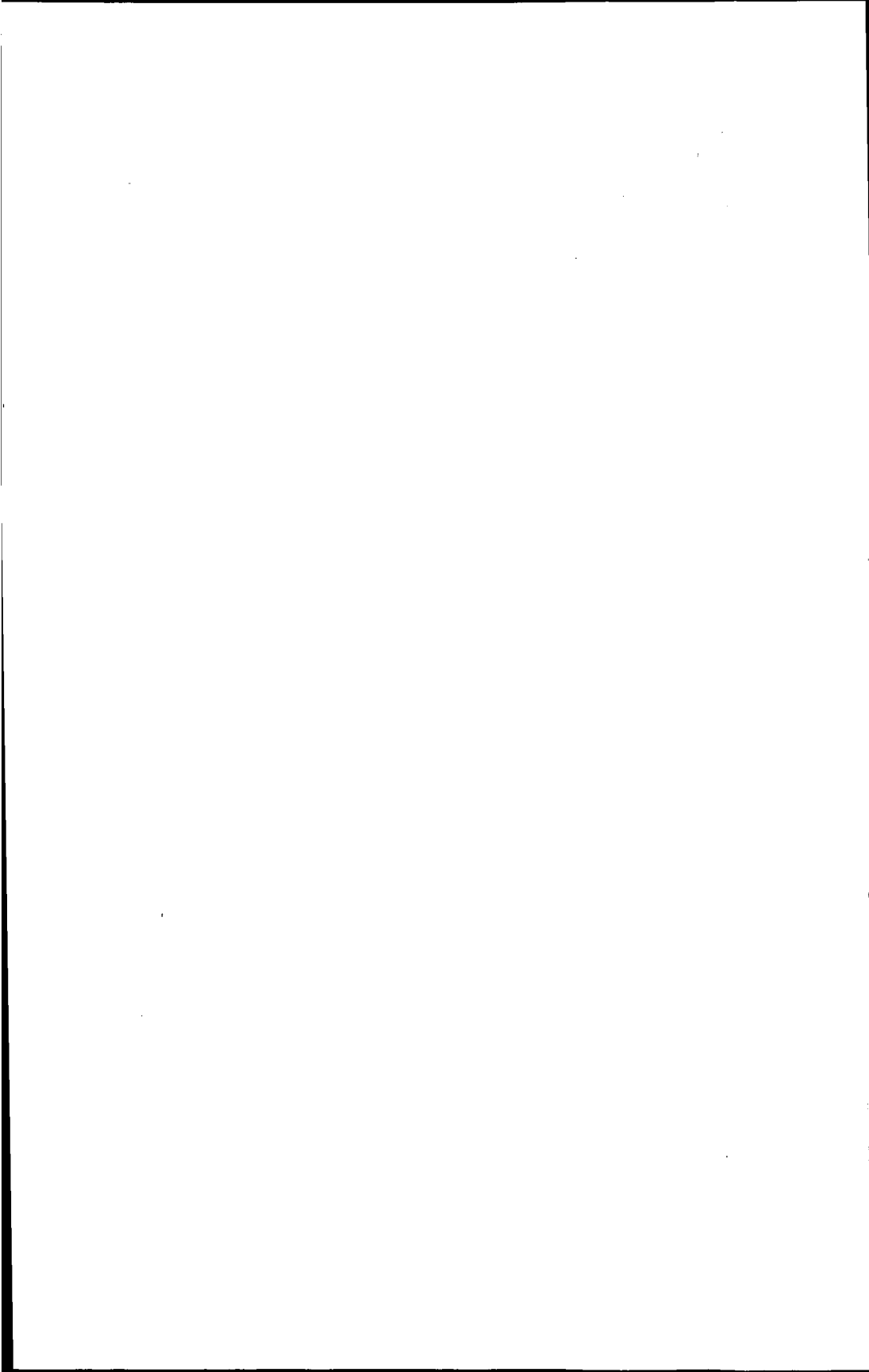
Since retiring from the Canadian Forces, Lieutenant-General (Retired) Senator Dallaire has held a wide variety of public and private appointments. He has acted as a special adviser to the ministers of foreign affairs, national defence, international development, and veterans affairs on a wide range of issues. He has served as Canadian special ambassador for war-affected children and small-arms proliferation. He speaks around the world on matters relating to strategic leadership, the Rwandan Genocide, twenty-first-century conflict, child soldiers, and human rights. He has authored a best-selling memoir of his Rwanda experience entitled *Shake Hands with the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda*, which won the 2004 Shaughnessy-Cohen Award for best political writing of the year and the 2004 Governor General's Award for Non-Fiction.

Senator Dallaire has received honorary degrees from over 15 Canadian universities and has collaborated in the production of three documentaries on the Rwandan Genocide. From 2004–2005 he held a fellowship at the prestigious Carr Centre of Human Rights at Harvard University. In the spring of 2005, he was appointed by the Government of Canada to the Senate and was appointed as a special adviser to the prime minister on the Canadian response to the ongoing human crisis in Darfur and as champion of the new Veterans Charter.

NOTES

1. This chapter is a reprint from Bernd Horn and Stephen Harris, eds., *Warrior Chiefs: Perspectives on Senior Canadian Military Leaders* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2001). The material for this chapter is derived from interviews with

dozens of people from Rwanda, Belgium, and Canada who were directly involved in the events. It is also the result of correspondence and conversations with Lieutenant-General Roméo Dallaire conducted over the spring and summer of 2000 for the purposes of writing a book. I have also borrowed heavily from a few excellent accounts of the Rwandan crisis, particularly Alison Liebhafsky Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story: Genocide in Rwanda* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1999), and Dr. Jacques Castonguay, *Les casques bleu au Rwanda* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1998).



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I N D E X

- Abenakis, 52, 54, 66, 71
Abercromby, Major-General James, 69–70, 81, 83–85
Acadia, 64
Acadians, 176
Aircraft, 277, 281, 289, 293, 294, 296–299, 302, 304, 307, 309, 313, 324
CF-5, 304, 307
F-86 Sabre, 297, 298
MiG-15, 297, 298
Mystère, 300
T-33 Trainer, 297
Vampire, 294–296
Albany, 23, 41, 43–44, 46–47, 71
Alderson, Lieutenant-General E.A.H., 204
Algonquin, 23, 34, 64, 75
Allard, General Jean Victor, 216, 247, 273, 283
Alouette Wing, 246
American Revolution (*see also* American War of Independence), 87, 102–103, 111
American War of Independence, 7
Amyot, Lieutenant-Colonel Guillaume, 142–143, 153, 163–164
Anticosti Island, 185, 190
Anyidoho, Brigadier-General Henry, 317
Argenson, Voyer d', 29
Art of Leadership, The (1973), 280, 291
Audette, Lieutenant-Commander Louis de la Chesnaye, 240, 255–256
Bagosora, Colonel Theoneste, 315
Bagotville, CFB, 300, 305–306
Baie-des-Puants, 64, 81–82
Barre, Governor General de la, 31, 36, 38
Batoche (Saskatchewan), 145–146, 149–150, 157–158, 163–164, 171
Battleford (Saskatchewan), 138, 145–146, 148, 151, 158, 171–173
Beauport Asylum, 137
Beauport (Quebec), 45
Belgium, 225, 324, 327
Belmont (South Africa), 176
Big Bear, 126, 144, 151–153, 171
Bloemfontein (South Africa), 178
Boer War, 11, 218
Boers, 176–177, 189, 198
Borden, Sir Robert Laird, 187, 203–208, 213
Boston, 44–46
Boucher de Boucherville, René-Amable, 91, 97, 113, 116
Bougainville, Colonel Louis Antoine, 61, 65, 69, 79–81, 85
Bourassa, Henri, 195, 207
Braddock, Major-General Edward, 74, 78
Bremner, Charles, 158–159, 165
Britain (*see also* Great Britain and England), 34, 36, 42, 49, 75, 103, 112, 131, 186, 189, 196, 218, 226, 228, 241, 244–245
British Army — Formations and Units
5th British Infantry Brigade, 218
19th Infantry Brigade, 176–177
60th Regiment (British), 102, 103
Brock, Major-General Sir Isaac, 112
Brodeur, Rear-Admiral Victor-Gabriel, 240–241, 255–257, 260
Buchan, Lieutenant-Colonel Lawrence, 175, 177–180, 183
Byrne, Phillipe, 101–102, 113, 116
Cadioux, Léo, 247
Caen, 268, 270, 290
Callières, Chevalier de, 47
Canada — Formations and Units (*see also* specific regiments)
Land
“B” Battery, Quebec Garrison Artillery, 195
“A” Battery, Royal Canadian Artillery, 171, 223
“B” Battery, Royal Canadian Artillery, 171, 173
1st Battalion, Canadian Mounted Rifles, 196
1er Batterie d’artillerie de Québec, 223
1st Canadian Division, 204
1st Division Ammunition Column, 223
1st Montreal Battalion, 91, 113, 114, 115
2nd Battalion, Royal 22nd Regiment, 274
2nd Canadian Division, 204, 224, 227
2nd Montreal Battalion, 91, 113, 114, 115
2nd (Special Service) Battalion, The Royal Canadian Regiment of Infantry, 175, 176, 179
4th Battalion of York County, 94
4ème Chasseurs canadiens, 130

- 9th Battalion, Voltigeurs de Québec (9th Voltigeurs), 130, 139, 142, 143, 169–170, 173, 187–188
- 10th Queen's Own Canadian Hussars, 169, 172, 188
- 14th Battalion (Royal Montreal Regiment), 186
- 18ème Régiment Francs-Tireurs du Saguenay, 223
- 22nd Battalion (French-Canadian) (*see also* Royal 22nd Regiment), 186, 191, 218, 219, 221–23, 225–226, 228–231, 233–234
- 65th Battalion of Rifles (Mount Royal Rifles/Carabiniers Mont-Royal), 142, 143, 188, 195
- 84th Royal Highlands Emigrants, 103
- Air
- 10 Tactical Air Group, 306, 307, 309
- 410 Fighter Squadron, 296
- 425 Bomber Squadron, 304
- 431 Squadron, 300
- 441 Squadron, 300
- Canada Gazette*, 257
- Canadian Defence Quarterly*, 204
- Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF), 209, 218, 267
- Canadian Forces (CF), 12, 33, 204, 206, 237–238, 245, 247, 266, 278, 282–284, 306, 311, 320–322, 324–326, 329
- Canadian Forces Reorganization Act (1967), 245
- Canadian Mounted Rifles (CMR), 196
- Canadian Naval College, 255
- Canadian Naval Service, 237, 245–246, 255, 259
- Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), 137, 156
- Cape Breton Island, 64, 67
- Cape Colony, 195–196, 211
- Carignan-Salières Regiment, 29, 36–38, 56, 77
- Caron, René-Édouard, 131
- Caron, Sir René-Joseph Adolphe, 16, 125–129, 131–135, 137–149, 151–160
- Cartier, George-Étienne, 129–130, 132, 136
- Casco, 44, 52, 60
- Casson, Dollier de, 25
- Cavalry School Corps, 133, 195
- Cayuga (*see also* Five Nations), 23, 75
- Centralia (Ontario), 294, 301
- Chaballe, Joseph, 225–227
- Chagouamigon, 63–64
- Chambly Battalion, 91, 99, 108
- Chambly (Quebec), 46–47, 91, 102, 110
- Champlain, Samuel de, 15, 19–22, 54, 75
- Chastelain, General John de, 230
- Château Saint-Louis, 35
- Châteauguay, Battle of, 97, 99–100
- Chicago, 138–139, 141–142
- Chickasaw, 64
- Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS), 16, 247, 265, 278, 281, 283–284, 286, 303, 320
- China, 298
- Churchill, Sir Winston, 210, 241
- Clarke's Crossing, 145, 148–149, 156
- Cockburn, Lieutenant H.Z.C., 199
- Coetzee's Drift, 197
- Cold War, 8, 296
- Colorado Springs, 308
- Compagnie France du Nord (*see also* North West Company), 39
- Compagnies Franches de la Marine, 31–33, 36, 39–40, 45–46, 61–62, 79, 86–87, 96–97
- Congo, 275–278, 285–286, 290
- Courcelle, Daniel de Rémy de, 57, 59, 63
- Courcellette, 227–230, 237
- coureurs de bois*, 61
- Cree, 65, 126, 148, 151–152, 171
- Cronje, General, 177
- Crown Point, 71–72
- Cut Knife Creek, 147
- Cut Knife Hill, 148, 171–172, 175
- Dalhousie, Lord, 112
- Dallaire, Lieutenant-General Roméo, 16–18, 311–327
- De Wet, General Christian de, 177
- Deerfield (Massachusetts), 60, 78
- Denison, Lieutenant-Colonel George T., 142, 158, 165
- Denny, Lieutenant-Commander Leslie P., 251, 253
- Denonville, Governor General, 36
- Department of National Defence (DND), 238, 287, 293, 320, 322
- Déry, Lieutenant-Commander Stanislas, 239–240, 248–254, 256, 259–260
- Desbarats, Georges, 245
- Desrivières, François, 110–111, 113
- Dextraze, General Jacques Alfred, 16, 265, 267–288
- Dewdney, Lieutenant-Governor Edgar, 137, 141
- Dieppe, 267
- Directorate of History and Heritage (DHH), 287, 293
- Dollard des Ormeaux, Adam, 29
- Doreil, André, 66–67
- D'Orsonnens, Colonel Gustave d'Odet, 134, 169
- Duck Lake, 126, 145, 151, 170
- Duguid, Colonel A.F., 204
- Duke of Connaught, 203
- Dumont, Gabriel, 138, 146, 150–151
- England (*see also* Great Britain and United Kingdom), 4, 11, 35, 39, 48, 84, 120, 135, 173, 175, 206–207, 224–225, 228, 235, 244, 250, 258
- Europe, 27, 29, 31, 35, 38, 49, 82–83, 103, 107–108, 135, 175, 187, 206, 267–268, 271–272, 278, 300
- Fenian Raids, 129, 169
- Filion, Lieutenant-Colonel Antoine, 95, 116
- First World War, 11, 16, 167, 186, 193, 204, 207, 209–210, 218–219, 223, 244, 246, 255
- Fiset, Major-General Sir Eugène, 130, 187
- Five Nations, 23, 33, 75
- Fort Beauséjour, 67
- Fort Carillon (*see also* Fort Ticonderoga), 69
- Fort Chambly, 46–47, 76, 110
- Fort Charles, 41
- Fort Edwards (*see also* Fort Lydis), 66
- Fort Frontenac, 31, 35, 38, 82
- Fort Lydis (*see also* Fort Edwards), 66
- Fort Niagara, 67, 78, 82
- Fort Richelieu, 25, 27
- Fort Ticonderoga (*see also* Fort Carillon), 79, 84
- France, 7, 21–23, 29–33, 38–39, 42, 46, 48–49, 52–53, 63, 70, 77, 79–80, 84, 87, 97, 104, 108, 119–120, 123, 175, 186, 225, 227, 229, 234, 250, 267, 299, 300

- French, Sir John, 204
 French Revolution, 103, 123
 Frog Lake, 138, 146, 170
 Frontenac, Governor, 31, 38, 42–45, 48, 77, 82
- Gaudet, Lieutenant-Colonel Frédéric-Mondelet, 223–224, 226
 Germany, 50, 185, 190, 223, 250, 256, 273, 277, 300
 Goodwin, Air Marshal H.B., 300
 Grand-Pré, 64
 Grant, Charles William, 100, 110, 113, 116, 123
 Great Britain (*see also* United Kingdom and England), 49, 78, 102, 130, 175, 185, 190, 207, 243, 256
 Great Peace of Montreal, 48
 Gwatkin, Sir Willoughby G., 204, 206, 208–209
- Habyarimana, Juvenal, 313
 Haig, General Sir Douglas, 221, 234
 Haking, Brigadier-General R.C.B., 218–220, 224–225, 229, 233
 Halifax, 132, 181, 209, 216, 244, 255, 258
 Hamilton, General Sir Ian, 178
 Harwood, Robert Unwin, 92, 94, 114, 117, 120
 Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment, 271
 Hellyer, Paul, 245
 Héroux, Pierre, 89, 114, 117
 Herse, Jacques-Clément, 89, 114, 117
 Hertel, Daniel de, 15, 19, 110, 113, 116
 Hertel de la Frésnière, Joseph-François, 15, 19, 37–38, 41–44, 48, 52
 Hertel de Rouville, Jean-Baptiste Melchior, 15, 19, 91, 97–98, 104, 114, 117
- HMCS *Amherst*, 257
 HMCS *Carleton*, 257
 HMCS *Chambly*, 250
 HMCS *Coaticook*, 257
 HMCS *Edmunston*, 253
 HMCS *Fraser*, 255
 HMCS *Margaree*, 258
 HMCS *Montcalm*, 259
 HMCS *Ottawa*, 247, 255, 263
 HMCS *Pictou*, 256
 HMCS *Prince Henry*, 249–250
 HMCS *Prince Rupert*, 250
 HMCS *Saint-Hyacinthe*, 250
 HMCS *Sherbrooke*, 258
 HMCS *Skeena*, 255
 HMCS *St. Catharines*, 257
 HMCS *St. Thomas*, 250–254
 HMCS *Vancouver*, 249
- Holland, Sergeant Edward, 198–200
 Houghton, Lieutenant-Colonel C.F., 137–138
 House of Commons (*see also* Parliament), 159, 167, 189, 245
- Huault de Montmagny, 25
 Hudson Bay, 39–41, 43, 60
 Hudson River, 23
 Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), 39, 41, 128, 140, 145, 148, 155–156
 Hughes, Sam, 160, 185, 202–207
 Huron, 23, 25–26, 54, 75
 Huronia, 26–27
 Hutton, General Edward T.H., 174–175, 189, 202–203
- Iberville, Pierre Le Moyne d', 37, 39, 43, 242
 Île aux Noir, 71
 Île d'Orléans, 45
 Île Royale, 34
Interahamwe, 314, 318
 International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), 309
 Iroquois (*see also* Five Nations), 20, 23, 25–31, 33–38, 41–43, 46–48, 50–54, 56–58, 60, 72, 75–77
 Irvine, Commissioner A.G., 145
- Jackson, Lieutenant-Colonel W.H., 140–142, 155
 Jesuit Missionaries, 76, 83
 Jetté, Marcel, 238
Jetté Report (1952), 247
 Johnson, John, 114, 117
 Joliette, Barthélémy, 93, 114, 117
- Kagame, Colonel Paul, 320
 Kigali, 313–320
 Kimberley, 178, 196
 King's Royal Regiment of New York, 102, 120
 Kingston, 31, 38, 133, 135, 169–171, 173, 218, 222, 272, 309
 Kirk Brothers, 22
 Kitchener, Lord, 204
 Kitson, Gerald, 222
 Korea, 273–275, 278–279, 290, 293, 296–300, 302, 304
 Korean War, 247, 273–275, 296–300
- La Jonquière, 64, 82
 La Malgue, Joseph Marin de (*see also* Marin), 15, 54, 62
la petite guerre, 8, 15, 21, 53–54, 58, 60–62, 64–65, 67, 71–72
 La Salle, Robert Chevalier de, 36
 Lachine (Quebec), 42
 Lacroix, Joseph-Hubert, 92, 114, 117, 120
 LaFrance, Major-General Claude, 6, 16, 293–310
 Lake Champlain, 57, 68, 82–83
 Lake George, 65, 68, 102
 Lallemand, Father, 26
 Lambert, Eustache
 Langevin, Sir Hector, 125, 128, 131, 158–159
 Langis (*see also* Langis Montegron or Langy), 15, 53–55, 62, 67–72, 74–75
 Langis Montegron, Jean-Baptiste Levrault de (*see also* Langis and Langy), 54
 Langy (*see also* Langis Montegron or Langis), 54, 62, 84
 Laurendeau–Dunton Reports (1965–71), 283
 Laurie, Major-General James Wimburn, 144–145, 149, 153, 189
 Laurier, Sir Wilfrid, 130, 189, 196, 207, 208, 216, 255
 Laval University, 189, 249
 Lavaltrie, Pierre Paul Margane de, 91–93, 97, 114–115, 118
 Lawrence, Hal, 250
 Le Moyne, Charles, 37–39, 45, 48
 Leliefontein, 198–201, 213
 Lemoyne de Longueuil, Baroness Marie-Charles-Joseph, 110, 123, 124
 Lemoyne de Longueuil, Joseph-Dominique-Emmanuel, 97, 110, 114, 117, 123
 Léry, Louis-René Chaussegros de, 92, 113, 116, 120
 Les Fusiliers Mont-Royal (Fus MR), 267–270, 278, 288

- Lessard, Major-General François-Louis, 16, 183, 185, 193-198, 200-208, 212, 216
- Lévesque, Lieutenant-Commander Maurice, 257-258
- Lévis, Brigadier-General François-Gaston Chevalier de, 70
- London (England), 96, 159, 189-190, 195-196, 206, 209, 227, 230
- Longueuil (Quebec), 45, 124
- Louis XIV, 29, 48, 59, 63, 121
- Lower Canada, 87, 90-91, 93, 96-97, 99-104, 107, 110-111, 113, 119, 123-124, 129
- Luard, Major-General R.G.A., 131-135, 143
- Macdonald, Sir John A., 125, 129, 131-133, 135, 137-138, 141, 157-159
- Mackenzie, Alexander, 130-131, 141, 231
- Mainguy Commission, 244, 257
- Maisonneuve, Paul Chomedey de, 26
- Marchal, Colonel Luc, 324
- Marchand, Lieutenant-Colonel Louis, 108, 114, 118
- Marin (*see also* La Malgue), 15, 53-54, 62-68, 72, 74-75, 77, 81-84
- Maritime Command (MARCOM), 238, 245
- Maryland, 67, 73
- Massachusetts, 23, 33, 36, 43, 45, 52, 78
- McKenzie, John, 110-111, 115, 118
- Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), 318
- Melgund, Lord, 144-145, 147, 157, 163
- Metcalfe, James, 154
- Métis, 16, 126, 128, 137-138, 140, 143, 146, 150-151, 158, 163-164, 170
- Mewburn, Major-General S.C., 207, 209
- Michilimackinac, 95, 101
- Middleton, Colonel Frederick Dobson, 135
- Middleton, Major-General Fred, 126, 128, 137-140, 144-160, 164-165, 170-171
- Mignault, Surgeon Captain Arthur, 186
- Military District No. 2, 183, 203-205
- Military District No. 6, 209
- Military District No. 7, 175, 184
- Military Gazette*, 195
- Military Service Act, 207
- Militia, 5, 15-16, 29, 31, 34, 36, 38-39, 43, 45, 47-48, 59, 63, 73, 77, 82-83, 87-113, 115-116, 119-120, 122-123, 126-143, 145, 149-152, 154-156, 160, 169-170, 173, 175-176, 181, 183-185, 187-190, 195, 201-207, 209-210, 218, 223, 271, 313
- Militia Act (1868), 129
- Militia of the Holy Family Mary-Jesus-Joseph, 29
- Minister of Militia and Defence, 127, 129, 136, 170, 173, 185, 189, 204, 207
- Minister of the Navy and Fisheries, 243, 255
- Minto, Governor General, Earl of, 144, 180, 190, 202
- Modder River, 177
- Mohawk River, 23
- Mohawks (*see also* Five Nations), 46, 76
- Mondelet, Jean-Marie, 94, 104, 115, 118, 121
- Monk, George Henry, 100-101, 115, 118
- Montagnais, 23, 54
- Montcalm, Louis-Joseph de (Marquis de/Major-General/Lieutenant-General), 61-62, 68-69, 71-72, 79-81, 84-85, 102
- Montgomery, Field Marshal Bernard Law, 271, 280
- Montreal, 15-16, 19, 25-27, 29, 35-37, 41-44, 46-48, 62, 64-65, 71-72, 77, 79-80, 82-83, 85, 87, 89, 91-98, 101-102, 104-109, 111-113, 120-123, 133, 135, 141-144, 149, 160, 184-186, 188, 256, 258, 265, 267, 275, 277, 284
- Murray, Major-General James, 11, 110, 123
- Murray, Vice-Admiral L.W., 244
- Natal, 195
- NATO (*see also* North Atlantic Treaty Organisation), 13
- New Brunswick, 67, 129, 133, 180, 296, 300
- New England, 34, 36-37, 43-44, 48, 51, 83
- New France, 8, 12, 15, 20, 33-34, 36-37, 42, 44, 47-48, 51, 53-55, 57, 60, 62, 64-65, 70-72, 74-78, 82-83, 87, 92, 111, 242
- New York City, 241, 254, 316, 317, 319
- New York (Colony and State), 20, 23, 33, 42-44, 46, 60, 64-67, 75, 81, 102, 120, 122
- Newfoundland, 34, 101-102, 122, 253
- Non-Permanent Active Militia, 169, 173, 184, 188
- NORAD (*see also* North American Air [Aerospace] Defense Command), 308
- Normandy Campaign, 271
- North American Air (Aerospace) Defense Command (NORAD), 308
- North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (*see also* NATO), 13, 275, 300
- North Korea, 297-298
- North West Company (*see also* Compagnie France du Nord), 111
- North-West Mounted Police (NWMP), 126, 137, 144-146, 151, 157-158, 161-163, 170
- North-West Rebellion (*see also* Riel Rebellion), 16, 170, 173, 188
- Nova Scotia, 101, 129, 144, 223
- Nova Scotia Fencibles, 100
- Official Languages Act (1969), 247, 283, 286
- Ojibwa, 64-65
- Oneida (*see also* Five Nations), 23, 75
- Onondaga (*see also* Five Nations), 23, 46, 48, 75
- Ontario, 38, 41, 129, 131, 133-134, 140, 143, 151, 154, 175, 204, 267, 271, 293, 301
- Orange Free State, 176, 195-196
- Orton, Dr. George, 150, 157
- Oswego, 65, 81
- Ottawa, 126, 128-129, 137-139, 143, 148, 152, 157, 171, 209, 250, 255-258, 273, 275, 278, 320-321
- Ottawa River, 25, 29
- Otter, Lieutenant-Colonel/Major-General William D., 134, 140, 145-148, 157, 171, 173, 175, 177-181, 183, 209
- Ouimet, Joseph Aldéric, 143-144
- Paardeberg, 177-178, 180, 189
- Panet, Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Eugène, 130, 139, 157
- Papal Zouave, 130, 143
- Parliament (*see also* House of Commons), 130, 134-135, 156, 167-168, 188, 207, 237, 245, 311
- pays d'en haut*, 63, 82
- Pearson, Lester B., 245

- Pelletier, Charles Alphonse Pantaléon, 167–169
 Pelletier, Colonel Oscar Casgrain, 16, 167, 169–173, 175–190
 Pennsylvania, 67, 73
 Perley, Sir George, 206, 230
 Phipps, Admiral Sir William, 44, 46, 52
 Port Royal, 34
 Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), 323
 Pouchot, Captain Pierre, 60, 72, 78
 Poundmaker, 147–148, 151, 158, 171–172
 Pretoria, 178, 180, 197
 Prevost, Lieutenant-General Sir George, 108
 Prince Albert (Saskatchewan), 138, 145–146
- Qu'Appelle (Saskatchewan), 138, 145, 149, 171
 Qu'Appelle Valley Farming Company, 153, 155
 Quebec, 12, 19, 22, 65, 89, 110, 120, 125–126, 128–131, 137, 167–168, 187, 205, 207, 216, 221, 223, 230, 242, 260, 268, 273, 275, 284
 Quebec City, 19, 21–22, 31, 35, 42–44, 46, 57, 67, 71, 82–84, 95, 120, 125, 128, 130–134, 139, 142, 144, 155, 159, 161, 167, 169–171, 173, 175–177, 181–188, 193, 195, 207–209, 223, 233, 248–250, 256, 258, 268, 294
 Québécois, 125, 129, 257
 Queen's Own Hussars, 133
 Queenston Heights (Ontario), 112
- Red River, 137, 142
 Régiment de Maisonneuve, 270
 Regina Trench, 227
 Richelieu River, 25, 44, 47, 82
 Richelieu Valley, 54, 57
 Riel, Louis, 125–126, 128, 137–138, 143, 145–146, 150–151, 159, 170
 Riel Rebellion (*see also* North-West Rebellion), 126, 145, 160
 Rigaud de Vaudreuil de Cavagnial, Pierre de, 60, 64, 80, 82
 Rimouski (Quebec), 129–130, 159
 Roberts, Field Marshal Lord, 178, 181, 200
 Robertson, Daniel, 95, 102–103, 110, 115, 118
 Rockingham, Brigadier J.M., 269, 272–273, 275, 286, 289
 Rogers, Major Robert, 66–69, 71, 84, 86
 Rogers's Rangers, 66, 68, 71
 Routhier, Adolphe-Basile, 182
 Roy, Commander J.-W.-R., 257–258
 Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF), 246, 262
 Royal Canadian Dragoons (RCD), 183, 195–198, 201, 209
 Royal Canadian Navy (RCN), 237–241, 243–251, 254–260, 262, 267
 Royal Canadian Navy Volunteer Reserve (RCNVR), 249, 256
 Royal Canadian Regiment (RCR), 175–180
 Royal Canadian Volunteers, 97, 110
 Royal Hamilton Light Infantry (RHLI), 269
 Royal Military College of Canada (RMC), 171, 194, 218, 222–223, 233, 244
 Royal Navy (RN), 34, 70, 83, 241, 243–244, 246, 249, 255–257
 Royal Nova Scotia Regiment, 100
 Royal Proclamation of 1763, 97
- Royal 22nd Regiment (*see also* Canada — Formations and Units), 233, 246, 274–275, 278–279, 289
 Rupert House (*see also* Fort Charles), 41
 Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), 313
 Ryswick, 48
- Saint Charles River, 45–46
 Saint-Hubert, 277, 296, 306, 308
 Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, 223
 Saint-Martin de Fontenay, 270
 Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré, 45
 Sainte-Hélène, 45
 Sainte-Marie among the Hurons, 26, 27, 50
 Sainte-Marie-de-Monnoir, 102
 Salaberry, Lieutenant-Colonel Charles-Michel, 97, 99, 114, 117, 182
 Sauvé, Paul, 268, 273
 Schenectady (New York), 43, 60
 Schuyler, Major Peter, 46–47
 Second World War, 11, 16, 130, 186, 233, 238, 244, 246–248, 254–258, 260, 262, 273, 285, 294, 296–297, 299, 304, 324–325
 Sedentary Militia (*see also* Militia), 89–90, 94–96, 98–99, 102–105, 107–108, 111–113, 116, 129
 Select Embodied Militia (*see also* Militia), 97, 99, 102
 Seneca (*see also* Five Nations), 23, 36, 60, 75
 Seven Years' War, 65, 73
 Sevestre, Pierre-Paul Neveu, 91, 115, 118
 Sheaffe, Major-General Sir Roger, 112
 Sieur de Le Ber, 47
 Sieur de Varennes, 47
 Simonds, Lieutenant-General Guy, 271
 Simpson, Lieutenant-Colonel John Simpson, 94, 115, 118
 Sioux, 64–126, 137, 146
 Smith-Dorrien, Major-General Sir Horace, 176, 198–200
 Somme, 227–228
 Sorel, 25, 95, 121–122
 South Africa, 175–176, 180–182, 189, 193–198, 201–204, 210, 213
 South Korea, 298
 St. Lawrence River, 19, 57, 72, 89, 190, 242
 Steele, Major-General Sam, 151, 162, 202, 205
 Strange, Fred, 132
 Strange, Major-General Thomas Bland, 143–144, 151–153
 Swift Current, 145, 149, 153, 171
- Taschereau, Louis-Alexandre, 187
 Todd, Hamlyn, 139
 Toronto, 134, 140, 144, 152, 183, 194–195, 201, 204–206, 208–209, 213
 Tracy, Lieutenant-General Alexandre de Prouville de, 29, 30, 57
 Transvaal, 194–197
 Tremblay, Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas-Louis, 16, 187, 217–219, 221–233, 235–236
 Trois-Rivières (Quebec), 19, 27, 37–38, 43, 123, 159
 Troteval Farm, 269, 273, 288–289
 Troyes, Chevalier de Troyes, 39
 Turnbull, Lieutenant-Colonel W.R., 133–134, 161
 Turner, Lieutenant/Major-General R.E.W., 199, 207

- U-877, 248, 250, 253-254, 264
 United Kingdom, U.K. (*see also* Great Britain, England), 218, 300, 304, 307
 United Nations (UN), 275-277, 297, 311, 324-325
 United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR), 311, 313-314, 316-318, 323
 United Nations Operation in the Congo (ONUC), 276-277
 United Nations Security Council, 317, 319
 United States (U.S.), 52, 96, 130, 138, 151, 187, 244, 297, 299, 319
 Uwilingiyimana, Agathe, 314
 Valcartier (Quebec), 275, 317
 Vaudreuil (*see* Rigaud de Vaudreuil de Cavagnial, Pierre de), 60, 62, 64, 68, 71, 73, 80, 82
 Verchères, Madeleine de, 47
 Victoria Cross (VC), 199
 Viger, Captain Jacques, 98-99, 115, 118
 Villiers, Nicolas-Antoine Coulon de, 64
 Villieu, Lieutenant de, 45-46
 Virginia, 23, 73
 Voltigeurs, Canadian, 97-99, 130, 139, 142-143, 169-170, 173, 187-188
voyageurs, 39, 41-42, 135
 War of 1812, 7, 96-97, 99, 102, 111-112, 124
 Washington, D.C., 255, 324
 Whitehead, Lieutenant-Colonel E.A., 149, 153-155
 Winnipeg, 137-143, 145, 148-151, 153-154, 170-171, 173, 306
 Winnipeg, CFB, 306-307
 Witpoort Pass, 197
 Wolfe, Major-General James, 61, 78
 Wrigley, Joseph, 140-142, 145, 148-149, 155
 Yalu River, 298
 Ypres, 235



French Canadians have a long, proud history of serving their nation. Nowhere is their legacy of loyal service better represented than in the profession of arms. From the earliest beginnings, French Canadians assisted in carving out and defending the nascent country. They were critical as defenders and as allies against hostile Natives and competing European powers. In the aftermath of the conquest, they continued, albeit under a different flag, to defend Canada. As such, this book examines the service of a number of French-Canadian leaders and their contributions to the nation during times of peace, crisis, and conflict spanning the entire historical spectrum from New France to the end of the twentieth century.

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