

**FIGHTING IT OUT: CANADIAN TROOPS AT HONG KONG AND IN MEMORY**

**Bradley St Croix**

Thesis submitted to the University of Ottawa  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
Doctorate in Philosophy Degree in History

Department of History  
Faculty of Arts  
University of Ottawa

© Bradley St Croix, Ottawa, Canada, 2021

## ABSTRACT

### **Fighting It Out: The Canadian Troops at Hong Kong and in Memory**

**Author:** Brad St.Croix

**Supervisor:** Galen Roger Perras

2020

This dissertation examines how the Battle of Hong Kong's negative legacy has developed in Canada. By using the concept of "zombie myths," which was first introduced in *Zombie Myths of Australian Military History*, this study will examine how many individuals, including historians, journalists, and authors, contributed to these myths' creation and propagation for starting from the Second World War and continuing today. The study draws its conclusions from official texts and histories, personal recollections, newspaper articles, popular historical works, and academic monographs and articles, all relating to the battle.

This thesis is separated into two halves. The first part of the study focuses on the history of the battle by exploring several myths that surround it. One of the most contentious myths concerns why the Canadian troops were sent to the colony in the first place. The relationship between the British and Canadian armies from 1914 to 1941 plus the defence planning of Hong Kong from 1841 to 1941, are two crucial elements that will be analyzed in order to vital context about the Canadian reinforcement. The selection of the units of "C" Force and their training are subject to many myths that seek to present the Canadian units as untrained. These will be dispelled through an investigation of training records. The memory of the battle itself has been influenced by overtly nationalistic myths that seek to blame the other nationalities in the garrison for the fall of the colony while simultaneously presenting one's own national troops as the garrison's best fighters. Canadian authors and historians are no exception to this trend. Records created by various soldiers, including British, Canadian, and Indian sources, demonstrate that the

Canadians at Hong Kong fought just as well as the rest of the garrison. The second part of the dissertation focuses on the memory of the battle. Discussions of the Hong Kong Inquiry and the television miniseries *The Valour and the Horror* bookend a discussion of the factors relating to the battle's legacy since the Second World War including the Canadian government's treatment of the Hong Kong veterans and the lack of official recognition.

This study delivers a much-needed re-examination of the battle and its legacy in Canada. By explaining and dispelling the numerous myths related to the Battle of Hong Kong, a clearer understanding of the battle's legacy can be achieved.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks are allowed to my supervisor, Dr. Galen Roger Perras. His agreeing to take me on as a PhD student changed my life and for this I will forever be thankful to him. His constant support in recommending sources, what archives to visit, and his patience in editing my writing made this project what it is. Completing this dissertation would not be possible without his insights and help. All errors, omissions, or lapse in judgement, of course, remain my own

Also, thanks are due to my internal examiners committee members from the University of Ottawa. Professors Damien-Claude Bélanger, Richard Connors, and Serge Durflinger each brought unique insights from their various subfields of history to my dissertation, greatly improving its quality. Thank you to my external examiner Professor John Ferris of the University of Calgary. His experience and knowledge on the various topics covered in this dissertation undoubtedly made it better than it could have been without him. The financial support given to me by the history department at the University of Ottawa allowed me to travel to United Kingdom to visit numerous archives. The opportunity to teach an undergraduate class was an experience I will not forget and will always be thankful.

Without the wealth primary material I consulted, my project would simply have been a redo of the past works on the Battle of Hong Kong. The staffs of the archives at the Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives at Kings College London, Library and Archives Canada in Ottawa, The National Archives in Kew, and the Imperial War Museum London deserve praise and thanks for their work that allowed me to do mine. The staff at the Canadian War Museum deserve special thanks as they helped for years and used their knowledge to help me whenever I asked.

There is a large group of historians who have helped me whether through quick chats at conferences or museums to others whose contribution was crucial to the completion of the

project. Tim Cook and Jeff Noakes at the Canadian War Museum always were willing to give me advice, suggestions on sources, or just to listen to the challenges I faced. Dan Byers gave me insights into the training of the Canadian Army and sharing his thoughts on J.L. Ralston. Tony Banham provided excellent insight into rarely used sources. Roger Sarty answered my questions about C.P. Stacey and provided invaluable insight about Canada's Official Second World War historian. Thanks to Mike Bechthold for making the excellent map on the Christmas day assault on Stanley Village.

My family and friends have been a constant source of support throughout this process. My parents, Brad and Lisa, supported my choice to go back school and pursue this degree. I would not have been able to make this change or go through other large changes that happened over the past few years without them. My fiancée's parents, Jim and Anna, have helped in any way they can from editing work to providing excellent food. None of this would be possible without my fiancée Alison. She is my rock, confidant, soundboard, my everything. I can not wait to spend the rest of our lives together.

This dissertation is dedicated to the defenders of Hong Kong.

## CONTENTS

Abstract .....	ii
Acknowledgments.....	iv
Contents .....	vi
Abbreviations and Acronyms .....	vii
Introduction.....	1
Part I: Myths about the Battle of Hong Kong.....	54
Chapter 1 — British Through and Through: Canadian-British Military Relations Prior to the Reinforcement of Hong Kong 1914–1941.....	55
Chapter 2 — To Be Held as Long as Possible: Defence Planning for Hong Kong 1841–1941....	81
Chapter 3 — Demand for Sensational Action: Canada Accepts the Hong Kong Request.....	119
Chapter 4 — Ready for War? The Selection and Training of the Royal Rifles and Winnipeg Grenadiers .....	152
Chapter 5 — Unto the Breach: The Battle of Hong Kong.....	187
Part II: Mythmaking and Entrenchment .....	223
Chapter 6 — An Act of Political Theatre: The 1942 Hong Kong Inquiry .....	224
Chapter 7 — From This Day to the Ending of the World: The Legacy of the Battle of Hong Kong From 1942 to Present .....	252
Chapter 8 — The Struggle for History: The Battle of Hong Kong and <i>The Valour and the Horror</i> .....	285
Conclusion .....	320
Appendix.....	334
Bibliography .....	335

## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

2 i/c	Second in Command
ADM	Admiralty
AG	Adjutant-General
AQMG	Assistant Quartermaster-General
BDE	Brigade
Bn	Battalion
Brig	Brigadier
CAB	Records of the Cabinet Office (UK)
CASF	Canadian Active Service Force
Capt	Captain
CBC	Canadian Broadcasting Corporation
CEF	Canadian Expeditionary Force
CGS	Chief of the General Staff
CID	Committee of Imperial Defence
CIGS	Chief of the Imperial General Staff
C-in-C	Commander-in-Chief
CMHQ	Canadian Military Headquarters
CO	Commanding Officer
Col	Colonel
COS	Chief of Staff
Comd	Commander
Coy	Company
CWM	Canadian War Museum
DHH	Directorate of History and Heritage, Department of National Defence
DMO & I	Director of Military Operations and Intelligence
DMT	Director(ate) of Military Training
DMT & SD	Director of Military Training and Staff Duties
DND	Department of National Defence
DO	Dominions Office
DOC	District Officer Commanding
DVA	Department of Veterans Affairs
FECB	Far Eastern Combined Bureau
Gen	General
GHQ	General Headquarters
GOC	General Officer Commanding
GOC-in-C	General Officer Commanding-in-Chief
GSO	General Staff Officer
HKVA	Hong Kong Veterans' Association
HKVCA	Hong Kong Veterans Commemorative Association
HKVDC	Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps
HMS	His Majesty's Ship
HQ	Headquarters
IDC	Imperial Defence College
IJA	Imperial Japanese Army

Inf	Infantry
JPC	Joint Planning Committee
LAC	Library and Archives Canada
LCol	Lieutenant-Colonel
LMG	Light Machine Gun
Lt	Lieutenant
Maj	Major
MD	Military District
MG	Manuscript Group or Machine Gun
MGen	Major-General
MND	Minister of National Defence
MP	Member of Parliament
MT	Mechanical Transport or Motor Transport
NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer
NDHQ	National Defence Headquarters
NFB	National Film Board
NPAM	Non-Permanent Active Militia
NRMA	National Resources Mobilization Act
OC	Officer Commanding
OIC	Officer in Command
Op(s)	Operation(s)
ORs	Other Ranks
POW	Prisoner of War
Pte	Private
QMG	Quartermaster-General's Branch
RAF	Royal Air Force
RCAF	Royal Canadian Air Force
RCN	Royal Canadian Navy
RFC	Royal Flying Corps
RG	Record Group
RMC	Royal Military College
RN	Royal Navy
RRC	Royal Rifles of Canada
TNA	The National Archives (United Kingdom)
TOET	Test(s) of Elementary Training
Tps	Troops
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNHRC	Human Rights Committee
USS	United States Ship
VC	Victoria Cross
WD	War Diary
WO	War Office
WG	Winnipeg Grenadiers



## INTRODUCTION

Defeat looms large in the history of the Allied nations of the Second World War. The early years of the war were marked by defeat after defeat. Much of western Europe had fallen, including Britain's primary ally France, to the Nazi war machine by spring 1940. German troops were at the gates of Moscow by late 1941, while Japan conquered European colony after colony in East Asia in 1941-1942. Despite the difficulties such losses caused, many nations, choosing to find positive elements from those defeats, present such as strategic withdrawals or even victories. Dunkirk was presented as a victory in its immediate aftermath and is hardly viewed as a defeat in Britain today. In writing about the morale of the British people in the immediate aftermath of the evacuation from the French coast, British historian Daniel Todman wrote that:

just as Churchill was insisting to the Commons that "We must be very careful not to assign to this deliverance the attributes of a victory", the daily morale report began by arguing that this was exactly what was taking place: "in general terms ... the retreat is accepted as a "victory", as a "lasting achievement", as a sign that "we cannot ultimately be beaten", that "we shall always turn a tight corner to our advantage".<sup>1</sup>

Australian historian Robin Prior noted that Dunkirk was never a victory, "but considering that the Germans were operating further from their bases than the British, it hardly amounts to the overwhelming success claimed at the time." Something positive can be taken from the evacuation as "Nevertheless, Dunkirk was at least some kind of success. The vast bulk of the BEF had retreated in good order and had been rescued from the beaches in the teeth of German military superiority."<sup>2</sup>

Another Allied tactical defeat, Pearl Harbor, was used as a rallying cry to unite Americans to fight in the war. The America First Committee, working against American

---

<sup>1</sup> Daniel Todman, *Britain's War: Into Battle, 1937-1941* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 385-386.

<sup>2</sup> Robin Prior, *When Britain Saved the West: The Story of 1940* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2015), 135.

intervention into the war since late 1940, ceased operations in the aftermath of the attack.<sup>3</sup>

Famed American naval historian Samuel Eliot Morison best expressed this sentiment, claiming that “before even the fires burning in battleships were quenched by the waters of Pearl Harbor, the United States had become virtually unanimous in entering the war, grimly determined to win it...” Unity had come from the drags of defeat. To Morison, the events of Pearl Harbor seemingly needed to occur as “The loss of brave men and gallant ships on 7 December might in Homeric terms be called a necessary sacrifice to appease the neglected gods of war and of the sea; to dissuade Mars and Neptune from exacting a holocaust later.”<sup>4</sup> The surprise attack created a symbol that still carries power in the United States to this day. By taking something positive from the jaws of defeat, the defeats at Dunkirk and Pearl Harbor became symbols of defiance by nations under attack and rallying cries in dark days of war.

Canada did not try to accentuate the positive from its setbacks in the Second World War. The Canadian Army’s first major defeat was the Battle of Hong Kong. The nearly 2,000 Canadians sent to reinforce the British colony suffered 290 dead (almost 800 casualties) during the battle, including prisoners killed by the Japanese. The deplorable conditions that the soldiers faced in prisoner of war camps and forced labour in Japanese shipyards and mines killed 318 more.<sup>5</sup> The 1942 raid on Dieppe plus the assault on Verrières Ridge in Normandy in 1944 also are examples of Canada’s defeats that receive much attention but are remembered mostly as bloody catastrophes possessing little redeeming value.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Maury Klein, *A Call to Arms: Mobilizing America for World War II* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2013), 284.

<sup>4</sup> Samuel Eliot Morison. *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II. Volume Three: The Rising Sun in the Pacific, 1931-April 1942* (Edison, New Jersey: Castle Books, 2001), 209-210.

<sup>5</sup> C.P. Stacey, *Six Years of War: The Army in Canada, Britain and the Pacific* (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 1955), 488–489.

<sup>6</sup> Dieppe is the exception, but the historiography on this battle has undergone changes in the last ten years. The work of David O’Keefe is one example of this shift in interpretations.

So why does Canada view its defeats in the Second World War so negatively? The Canadian memory of the First World War offers an explanation for such a question. Canadian historian Tim Cook, in his book about the Second World War's legacy in Canada, argued that Canadian battlefield success in the First World War explains the Canadian focus on defeat in the Second World War.<sup>7</sup> Cook is not the only Canadian historian to hold such views. In his seminal work on Canadian memory and the First World War, historian Jonathan Vance highlighted that “even Canada’s social memory of the Second World War, as just a war as the modern world has seen, is dominated by overtones of negativity. Notions of individual heroism, self-sacrifice, and fighting in a good cause have been pushed to the background by a dominant memory that has come to emphasize mismanagement, injustice, failure, and cupidity.”<sup>8</sup> The Canadian experience of the victories of the First World War left an indelible mark on Canadians’ view of war.

The commemoration of the Battle of Vimy Ridge, and Canada’s participation in the world wars, offers insight into one why Canadians view the losses of the Second World War in such negative ways. As Vimy came to represent all of Canada’s First World War, victory came to represent Canada’s experience of the Great War. Cook explored how Vimy “became a focal point of remembrance and an icon of Canadian identity.” The Canadian Corps took 10,602 casualties in four days of fighting at Vimy, yet this battle, despite its considerable cost, is celebrated as a great victory and is the symbol of Canada’s First World War. It is important to note that casualty levels apparently do not affect how Canadians view a battle. Winning is the crucial part.

---

<sup>7</sup> Tim Cook, *The Fight for History: 75 Years of Forgetting, Remembering, and Remaking Canada’s Second World War* (Toronto: Allen Lane, 2020), 237.

<sup>8</sup> Jonathan F. Vance, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997), 10.

The Canadian memory of the Second World War lacks a centralized battle to coalesce around, a stark contrast to the First World War. This lack of focus of commemoration was also due to the global nature of the war. Cook wrote “Lacking a unifying symbol like Vimy—impossible for this war because of the global nature of the fighting—it became over time to focus on a single region or victory to use as an anchor for the Canadian story.”<sup>9</sup> The lack of a centralized symbol has left the memory of the war adrift, with many elements often simply forgotten. Also contributing to a lack of focus on Canadian martial achievements was the lack of commemoration after 1945. Cook has argued that the Second World War faded from Canada’s social memory quickly after the conflict’s end. Lacking a coherent narrative, memories of success lost out to negative remembrances about defeats at Hong Kong and Dieppe, the government’s internment of Japanese Canadians, and bitter debates about overseas conscription. However, by the end of the twentieth century, Cook has argued, this trend began to reverse as veterans began to discuss their service and Canadians commemorated, and even celebrated, Canada’s victories in the war. Cook referenced the Battle of Hong Kong as part of the forgetful general trend toward the Second World War that has undergone a change in social memory since the mid-1990s.<sup>10</sup> This dissertation will depart from Cook’s assertion by arguing that in contrast to most events of the war, the legacy of the Battle of Hong Kong is still overwhelmingly negative, if it is recalled at all.

One major element of this negative outlook is the assignment of blame for the loss of Hong Kong in 1941. To properly understand the Canadian experience of the war, we need to be able to move past our urge to blame and deflect blame. From individuals who fought in the battle, to historians and politicians, many have sought to place the blame for Hong Kong on

---

<sup>9</sup> Cook, *Fight for History*, 79.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 10, 436.

someone else.<sup>11</sup> Authors and historians have faulted the British and the Canadian governments for sending the troops to Hong Kong, often citing an imperial conspiracy to endanger Canadians. Nationalistic boasting is part of the process of blaming. As many authors and historians have contended that their nation's soldiers were the best in the garrison, the defeat must have been the fault of the other troops. This exercise has accomplished little and should not be part of any serious study of the battle. This dissertation is not a call to absolve the government in any way—government leaders and officials must be criticized for their decisions as well—but the negative tone created around the battle persists. To condemn and castigate others willy-nilly, including our own leadership, does little to help understand our past. Placing responsibility for mistakes is an entirely different matter than simply blaming certain individuals. We must strive to understand why the defeats happened instead of solely trying to place the responsibility elsewhere.

Canadian historian Gregory A. Johnson has claimed that the majority of the works written on the Battle of Hong Kong after 1948 “tended to be presented as a tragic but gallant fight against insurmountable odds.”<sup>12</sup> While Johnson's assertion is valid, it underplays how dominant negativity has permeated discussions of the battle. Books about the battle such as *The Damned*, *Betrayal*, and *Not the Slightest Chance* illustrate how the Canadian experience at Hong Kong has been presented.<sup>13</sup> This negativity extends beyond history books. On the seventy-fifth anniversary of the battle, tragedy was a major focus. In an opinion piece from December 2016 in

---

<sup>11</sup> All war diaries from the units that fought at Hong Kong were written after the battle as the originals were purposefully destroyed during the fighting.

<sup>12</sup> Gregory A. Johnson, “The Canadian experience of the Pacific War: Betrayal and Forgotten Captivity,” in *Forgotten Captives in Japanese-Occupied Asia*, eds. Karl Hack and Kevin Blackburn (London: Routledge, 2008), 128.

<sup>13</sup> These phrases come from in order from, Nathan M. Greenfield, *The Damned: The Canadians at the Battle of Hong Kong and the POW Experience, 1941–45* (Toronto: Harper Collins, 2010). Terry Meagher, *Betrayal: Canadian Soldiers Hong Kong 1941* (Kemptonville: Veterans Publications, 2015). Tony Banham, *Not the Slightest Chance: The Defence of Hong Kong, 1941* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003).

the *Red Deer Express*, the author opined, “unfortunately, there has been virtually no remembrance of the horrific Battle of Hong Kong. . .”<sup>14</sup> The battle and its aftermath were undeniably horrible for those who experienced it. Many began to see these terrible events as something best not discussed or as someone else’s mistake. In a 2016 *New York Times* article, Craig S. Smith, a Canadian journalist, wrote about the battle’s casualties without providing proper context. Discussing the death of “C” Force commander Brigadier J.K. Lawson, Smith wrote, “Remembrances of war are worth noting not just for the lives lost but for the bad decisions that led inexorably to the waste of those lives. Mr. Lawson [Brigadier Lawson’s son] need not have grown up without a father, but misinformation, poor planning and simple incompetence left him with little more than a pocketful of ornaments instead of a man.”<sup>15</sup>

What does a negative legacy mean in the context of the Battle of Hong Kong? Historian Kwong Chi-Man claimed in *Time Magazine* in 2017 that December 8 had become Canada’s equivalent of Australia’s Anzac Day which commemorates the disastrous 1915 Battle of Gallipoli.<sup>16</sup> Though the sentiment behind these words is warmly and genuinely meant, it is simply untrue. Unlike Anzac Day, the Battle of Hong Kong is either ignored by Canadians, dismissed as a tragedy that befell the garrison, or seen as a defeat brought on by British duplicity. Few Canadians gather on 8 December to mourn the fallen and remember what happened all those years ago. Canada has no national day of remembrance of the Hong Kong defeat, nor is this ever likely to occur.

---

<sup>14</sup> “Remembering the Battle of Hong Kong,” *Red Deer Express*, 28 December 2016, <https://www.reddeerexpress.com/opinion/remembering-the-battle-of-hong-kong/>.

<sup>15</sup> Craig S. Smith, “A Doomed Battle for Hong Kong, With Only Medals Left 75 Years Later,” *The New York Times*, 23 December 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/23/world/canada/a-doomed-battle-for-hong-kong-with-only-medals-left-75-years-later.html>.

<sup>16</sup> Kevin Lui, “How Untrained Canadian Troops Fought and Died in the Defense of Hong Kong,” *Time Magazine*, 17 January 2017, <https://time.com/4635638/battle-of-hong-kong-canada-winnipeg-grenadiers-royal-rifles/>. All quotes are left in their original style.

Canadian historian Galen Roger Perras has championed the cause of re-examining the Battle of Hong Kong by averring that a new work on the battle needed to be written “that will critically examine the complicated prewar context, the battle itself, and the political and historical battles that have yet to abate.”<sup>17</sup> My dissertation is an answer to this call. To frame this dissertation, I will explore how the Battle of Hong Kong has developed a negative legacy in Canada by examining the issue cited by Perras. One cannot escape an examination of the poor choices that were made in relation to “C” Force and the suffering that the troops subsequently endured. But such issues need not be the only elements to be discussed in relation to the Battle of Hong.

These myths about Canada’s reinforcement of Hong Kong, the battle, and its sad aftermath are defined by their lack of context, an emotional appeal to the suffering of the garrison, and the use of hindsight to blame and hurl abuse. These myths gained their power by presenting the decision to send troops to Hong Kong as an immoral one. The brutalities inflicted on the garrison’s survivors once they entered Japanese captivity as prisoners of war (POWs) are a prime example. Such views are illustrations of the “poor bloody infantry” stance that pities common soldiers for the poor treatment meted out to them by politicians and generals. Many popular studies of Hong Kong make such claims in order to exploit the reader’s emotions and support poorly constructed arguments. If we are to properly understand the context of Canada at war, we must avoid focusing on the morality of the decision to send Canadians to the British colony. While hindsight tells us that sending troops to Hong Kong was a mistake, Canada did the right thing by reinforcing Hong Kong in late 1941 in an attempt to deter the expansionist and merciless Japanese Empire. While we must remember the sacrifices made and mourn the dead of

---

<sup>17</sup> Galen Roger Perras, “Defeat Still Cries Aloud for Explanation: Explaining C Force’s Dispatch to Hong Kong,” *Canadian Military Journal* 11, no. 4 (2011): 46.

Hong Kong, we cannot permit this battle to become a permanent negative memory in Canada's collective historical consciousness. If this trend continues, those who fought in the battle will have their stories submerged in a sea of bitterness about British perfidy or Canadian callousness that prevents Canadians from properly understanding the battle. A more positive legacy will allow all elements to be further examined and better understood. The negativity leaves little room for further discussion on the battle or more nuanced approaches to be offered.

### Methodology

This dissertation focuses on the myths that persist about the Battle of Hong Kong. Examining what these myths are and how they developed is a good starting point in an effort to change the discourse. A loose theoretical framework about the persistence of myths will be used to understand the negative legacy of the Battle of Hong Kong. In *Zombie Myths of Australian Military History*, historians discussed ten of the most durable Australian military zombie myths. Zombies, though perhaps an odd choice to frame an academic work, are a fitting metaphor for these myths. Craig Stockings, Australian historian and editor of the collection, has described zombies as acting “on instinct. They lack vitality and freshness. Instead, they are rotten and usually display a number of outward signs of decay. Despite this, they are strong and surprisingly resilient.”<sup>18</sup> A more fitting description of the Hong Kong myths cannot be found. Using this book as its model, this dissertation, by departing from the many different works about the Battle of Hong Kong, will offer much needed context and nuance so often missing from discussions on the battle.

The Battle of Hong Kong has received varied levels of interests, ranging from front page news receiving national attention to discussions among academic military historians. But the

---

<sup>18</sup> Stockings, “Introduction,” 1.



attention has never completely disappeared. Interest in the battle is cyclical. Like the proverbial zombie, the myths never die, and the stench of decay is powerful. Vietnamese-American scholar Viet Thanh Nguyen evoked the poem “The Dead Shall Be Raised Incorruptible” by Galway Kinnell when he wrote, “the refusal to discuss the [Vietnam] war can still be seen in light of the war itself. Somewhere the corpse continues to burn...and even if we avert our eyes and pretend we cannot smell it, the odor lingers, its flickering shadow occasionally leaping into our peripheral vision.”<sup>19</sup> As Stockings added, “This is not a harmless phenomenon. Zombie myths are as hazardous to our intellectual health as their ‘real’ counterparts would no doubt be to our physical form.”<sup>20</sup> Describing the same sentiment, American historian Robert S. Weddle has argued that “Historians’ keenest perception and utmost concern for truth is demanded to correct them [historical factual errors], regardless of the inconvenience.”<sup>21</sup> The truth must be known, no matter how painful or uncomfortable it may be. The myths surrounding the Battle of Hong Kong linger in the Canadian collective memory and they need to be disposed of. This dissertation will contribute to the historiography of the Battle of Hong Kong by challenging the myths by examining their origins and offering corrections to them. This dissertation contributes something new to the historiography of the Battle of Hong Kong as its legacy is rarely studied in academia and will offer new insights into how the myths developed and how the legacy became what it is today. It also provides a framework for the legacy of other Canadian defeats to be studied.

Before delving further into this topic, several definitions must be provided for the crucial concepts employed throughout this dissertation. “Myth” is the most important term to define. In

---

<sup>19</sup> Viet Thanh Nguyen, *Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam and the Memory of War* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2016), 213.

<sup>20</sup> Stockings, “Introduction,” 2–3.

<sup>21</sup> Donald E. Chipman and Robert S. Weddle, “How Historical Myths Are Born...And Why They Seldom Die,” *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 116, no. 3 (2013): 252.

his seminal work on Canadian memory and the First World War, historian Jonathan Vance has “employed ‘myth’ to refer simply to the particular conception of the Great War that that is my central concern. I do so, not because that conception conforms strictly to any of the definitions of myth that have been proposed by scholars working in the field, but because the word seems to capture the combination of invention, truth, and half-truth that characterizes Canada’s memory of the war.”<sup>22</sup> I also use this definition of myth in this dissertation. “Negative legacy” is another important term to define. Negative is a lack of positivity marked by features of hostility, withdrawal, or pessimism. The lack of positivity is the key part of the definition for my arguments. Legacy as defined as something transmitted by or received from an ancestor or predecessor or from the past. Finally, “influence” must be also understood to examine how myths take hold and integrate into our historical understanding. As this is a difficult term to define, I cite American philosopher W.T. Jones who argued that similarity is useful to define influence as in “b in some respect similar to a.” This definition will be used when discussing for example the influence newspapers had over the Canadian public’s understanding of the battle by spreading myths. Jones also contended that the “basis for asserting influence to have occurred in cases where the owner of b, so far from reproducing identically any aspect of a, has reacted against a.”<sup>23</sup> This definition of influence will be used for discussion on works, such books, articles, documentaries, and other secondary sources, and they interact with each other. Rejection of previous ideas and arguments forms an important element in the Hong Kong historiography.

---

<sup>22</sup> Vance, *Death So Noble*, 8.

<sup>23</sup> W.T. Jones, “On the Meaning of the Term ‘Influence’ in Historical Studies” *Ethics* 53, no. 3 (1943): 200

## The Battle of Hong Kong Historiography

Before delving into the battle's historiography, a brief overview of the events leading to the Canadian reinforcement of Hong Kong and the fighting in December 1941 introduces the key individuals and dates. The immediate cause for the despatch of Canadians to Hong Kong can be attributed to Brigadier Arthur Edward Grasett, the General Officer Commanding of Hong Kong. While travelling through Canada on his way back to Britain, Grasett met with General Harry Crerar, the Chief of the General Staff (CGS) of the Canadian Army,<sup>24</sup> in Ottawa in late summer 1941. Upon reaching Britain, Grasett suggested to the British Chiefs of Staff that Canadian troops could reinforce Hong Kong. On 19 September 1941, the Dominions Office cabled Ottawa, asking for Canadian troops to be sent to Hong Kong. Canada said yes, and Canadian soldiers left for Hong Kong in late October. "C" Force was comprised of two infantry battalions, the Royal Rifles of Canada and the Winnipeg Grenadiers, plus assorted support units. This force augmented the Hong Kong garrison made up of the 2nd Battalion, the Royal Scots; the 2nd Battalion, 14th Punjab Regiment; the 5th Battalion, 7th Rajput Regiment; the 1st Battalion, Middlesex Regiment; the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps (HKVDC); and various artillery units and support troops.<sup>25</sup> The Japanese assault struck on 8 December. The garrison stubbornly resisted the attack until Christmas Day 1941, when Governor of Hong Kong Mark Young and garrison commander Major-General C.M. Maltby surrendered the colony.

While some works have created myths about the Battle of Hong Kong, others have amplified those myths to larger audiences. To borrow a phrase from historian Jane E. Calvert, the

---

<sup>24</sup> Despite the Canadian ground forces not being called the Canadian Army until 1940, this dissertation will use that title throughout to avoid confusion. If the Canadian Militia is discussed, this said use will be explicitly stated.

<sup>25</sup> Kwong Chi Man and Tsoi Yiu Lun, *Eastern Fortress: A Military History of Hong Kong, 1840–1970* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2015), 165–166.

Battle of Hong Kong has “both a history problem and a historiography problem.”<sup>26</sup> My dissertation will address this issue by correcting the myths while identifying the primary prognosticators of these myths. Although a historiographical piece about “C” Force exists, it failed to mention the revisionist historians who emerged after the release of the highly controversial documentary series *The Valour and the Horror*.<sup>27</sup> In his piece on the historiography of “C” Force, historian Tony Banham contended that narratives on Hong Kong composed after 1960 fit into a national bifurcation along British and Canadian lines. Banham has asserted that British accounts tend to lump all units into the British garrison while also being “somewhat disparaging of the Canadian involvement.” By contrast, Canadian writers often have focused on their countrymen who are presented as fighting in isolation from the garrison’s other nationalities. Critical of this “Canadianisation” of the battle, Banham accused Canadian historians of “single-mindedness” despite their claims that their studies were far more broad.<sup>28</sup> Banham’s allegation has some merit. Arthur Penny’s 1962 short regimental history *The Royal Rifles of Canada*, a seldom cited source, was named as the text that began this nationalist schism. Despite Banham’s assertion, just two of the major studies on Hong Kong—Carl Vincent’s markedly anti-British book *No Reason Why: The Canadian Hong Kong Tragedy, An Examination*, and Grant Garneau’s *The Royal Rifles of Canada in Hong Kong, 1941–1945*—have cited Penny’s work. Further, Banham failed to note Canadian historian Terry Copp’s 2001 article on the Battle of Hong Kong which focused on the entire garrison’s experience. While some of these historians who have written about Hong Kong or the Far East generally include

---

<sup>26</sup> Jane E. Calvert, “Myth-Making and Myth-Breaking in the Historiography on John Dickinson,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 34, no. 3 (2014): 467.

<sup>27</sup> There are two versions of revisionism connected to the Battle of Hong Kong. The first is the popular history revisionism defined by the rejection of official histories on the battle. This group includes authors such as Carl Vincent and the documentary series *The Valour and the Horror*. The second version of revisionism is by defined by academic historians who rejected the claims made by Vincent and in *The Valour and the Horror*.

<sup>28</sup> Tony Banham, “A Historiography of C Force,” *Canadian Military History* 24, no. 2 (2015): 239.

Canadians who were educated in Britain and are experts on British imperial and military history, Banham makes no room for these historians in his assessment. But the division between popular and academic histories of the battle is a more striking division than the one along national lines. These two groups employ vastly different methodologies, while popular historians often have a large audience than their academic counterparts. This situation will be discussed in depth below.

My analysis occurs in a loose chronological order. Each phase shared distinct views, given the available sources and prevailing attitudes at the time of their publication, thus allowing for a clearer organization of the historiography. The time periods overlap as well. The first section, from 1948 to 1957, was defined by official histories and reports. The findings, assumptions, and omissions made by official historians, using the academic standards, greatly influenced the work of those who came after them. The second period, from 1953 to 1991, marked by popular histories and a limited number of academic works, witnessed the beginning of a reassessment of the official histories' conclusions on the Battle of Hong Kong. The third section covers the release of the documentary series *The Valour and the Horror* in 1992 to the present. That series was a watershed moment in the battle's legacy for the documentary inspired a revisionist movement that reacted against the series' historical errors and poor interpretations. All of these works discuss some or all of the major events of the Battle of Hong Kong including the Canadian reinforcement, the battle itself, and the short- and long-term aftermath of the fighting. The final historiographical section will examine numerous academic works that discuss Britain's policy and defence planning in the Far East during the prewar period. While some of these works did not deal directly with Hong Kong, they offer important insights into why the colony was reinforced in 1941. Examining these works allows the literature on Hong Kong to be placed in the broader context of the historiography of the Second World War in the Far East. The

dichotomy of academic versus popular history and how they assess the Battle of Hong Kong is one of the reasons why the legacy of the battle remains so strongly negative.

Many of the deleterious myths began with a supplement to *The London Gazette* which was published on 29 January 1948. This Despatch was written by Major-General C.M. Maltby, Hong Kong's commander in December 1941. Submitted to the Secretary of State for War on 21 November 1945, Maltby stated that the Canadian battalions were improperly trained and unable to fight properly in Hong Kong's hilly terrain. Citing failed Canadian counterattacks and poor decisions made by Canadian commanders, Maltby indirectly blamed "C" Force for the problems that led to Britain's defeat. Still, Maltby asserted that "strategically we gambled and lost, but it was a worth while gamble."<sup>29</sup> However, this version of the Despatch was edited at the insistence of the Canadian government and C.P. Stacey, the Canadian Army's official historian. Any sections that unfairly depicted Canadian troops were altered or redacted. Despite the changes, Canadians still were presented as incompetent soldiers. Maltby's Despatch caused much controversy upon the releases of both its edited and unedited versions. These controversies will be further examined in relation to the battle's overall legacy.

The Canadian and British official histories of the Battle of Hong Kong laid the foundation for future historical work on the subject. As Louis Morton, official historian of the United States Army's war in the Pacific, has noted:

Much of this new literature deals with World War II and is the product of professionally trained historians employed by the governments of most of the major powers, rather than of military men as had previously been the case. The British have their official history, prepared largely by civilians, as do the Australians, the Dutch, the Canadians, the Russians, and others. In the United States, also, the official historians are mostly professionally trained civilians...they are fully qualified members of the profession.<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup> C.M. Maltby, "Operations in Hong Kong from 8th to 25th December, 1941," *Supplement to The London Gazette*, 27 January 1948, 701, 720, 700.

<sup>30</sup> Louis Morton, "The Historian and the Study of War," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 49 (1962): 607.

The Canadian Army's official account of the war with Japan was released in various forms, all spearheaded by Stacey and the Historical Section of the Canadian Army General Staff. Published in 1948, the first incarnation, meant for a more popular audience, was entitled *The Canadian Army 1939–1945: An Official Historical Summary*.<sup>31</sup> It contained no citations but still relied on primary documents, ranging from official reports to recorded personal recollections, collected over the course of the war to give a brief overview of the Canadian Army's Second World War.<sup>32</sup> The first volume of the Army official history of the war, *Six Years of War: The Army in Canada, Britain and the Pacific*, followed in 1955, with an entire chapter about Hong Kong. While this iteration was more academic in tone and structure than the first account, it had extensive citations and it lacked the typical analysis present in more traditional academic works. Both of Stacey's works covered the British troop request, the Canadian government's decision to send the troops to Hong Kong, and the battle itself.

In his memoirs, Stacey called Hong Kong the most difficult historical problem that he faced in his long career.<sup>33</sup> Despite the limitations caused by the need to protect reputations, Stacey questioned the lack of intelligence gathering and analysis:

Canada had at this period no intelligence organization of her own capable of making a fully adequate estimate of the situation in the Far East; essentially, Ottawa depended upon London for such information. Nor was any military appreciation requested of or prepared by the Canadian General Staff as to the situation of Hong Kong in the event of war with Japan. The Canadian Government had not been told of Mr. [British Prime Minister Winston] Churchill's earlier doubts. It was of course amply clear however that the garrison's position in war would be most perilous. The Government's decision

---

<sup>31</sup> Tim Cook, *The Fight for History*, 118.

<sup>32</sup> C.P. Stacey, *The Canadian Army 1939–1945: An Official Historical Summary* (Ottawa: The King's Printer, 1948), vii.

<sup>33</sup> C.P. Stacey, *A Date with History: Memoirs of a Canadian Historian* (Ottawa: Deneau Publishers, 1983), 238–239.

was evidently made mainly upon the upon the circumstances as presented in the Dominions Office cable.<sup>34</sup>

While the reinforcement obviously did not deter the Japanese attack, Stacey argued that “we can see today that the decision to reinforce Hong Kong was a mistake.”<sup>35</sup> Stacey’s explanation of Hong Kong laid the foundation for future works to build upon and provided questions to further explore, although historian Kenneth Taylor maintained that Hong Kong “represents a prime example of the inadvisability of continuing to accept the Official Histories as the definitive works they purported to be.”<sup>36</sup> My work will differentiate itself from Stacey’s by making use of the unedited Maltby Despatch. Official histories, far from being the final word on a subject, are just a beginning. Providing insight into the development of the discourse on the battle, Tim Cook has suggested “It has been the official historians of the Department of National Defence [DND] who, for much of the twentieth century, have controlled the academic writing on the world wars...”<sup>37</sup> As a result, popular works about the Battle of Hong Kong dominated the discourse as academic historians did not write works on the battle for many years. This development allowed myths to spread through the Canadian consciousness of the battle, tainting its legacy.

The British official history of the war in the Pacific, authored by Major-General S. Woodburn Kirby and released in 1957, repeated many of the themes found in other official accounts as Kirby relied heavily on the Maltby Despatch to discuss the Canadian units fighting at Hong Kong: “Neither battalion had had the opportunity for the type of intensive tactical training so vital to success in battle. Indeed, it was understood both in London and Ottawa that they were

---

<sup>34</sup> Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 441–442.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 490.

<sup>36</sup> Kenneth Taylor, “The Challenge of the Eighties: World War Two from a New Perspective, the Hong Kong Case,” in *Men at War: Politics, Technology and Innovation in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Timothy Travers and Christon I. Archer (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2011), 197–198.

<sup>37</sup> Tim Cook. *Clio’s Warriors: Canadian Historians and the Writing of the World Wars* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006), 3.



intended for garrison duty only.” Despite the focus on training deficiencies, the Canadian units were not singled out as being worse than the garrison’s other defenders. Instead, Japanese fighting abilities were credited, while prolonged garrison duties, a lack of combat experience, and malaria among the Royal Scots all had weakened the British units. While the reduction in men available for battle caused numerous problems, Kirby concluded “there was however no lack of good and gallant leadership. Though disaster befell some detachments, men of the British, Canadian and Indian battalions fought well, in circumstances which were always discouraging and were soon recognized to be hopeless.”<sup>38</sup> Kirby maintained that the Canadians had done the best they could under very difficult circumstances. The academic nature of these official histories did not fully return to works on Hong Kong until the 1990s.

Academic military history occupies a unique position in the divide between academic and popular history. This gulf is very evident within the Hong Kong historiography. Louis Morton has discussed the development of academic military history and its connection to the reading public:

Only later, in the latter part of the [nineteenth]century, was its purpose broadened to include the enlightenment and education of the reading public. It is not surprising, therefore, that the academic historian with deep roots in the traditions of his profession should regard military history as an alien branch of his own discipline, as narrow and technical in approach, didactic in character, and unrelated to the broad stream of historical writing.<sup>39</sup>

Furthermore, academic historians have become far less interested in writing for a wider public.

As American historian Peter Novick has noted, “No dramatic controversies marked historians’ abandonment of the aspiration to achieve a dominant position in providing history for the general

---

<sup>38</sup> S. Woodburn Kirby, *The War Against Japan: Loss of Singapore* (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1957), 113, 146, 150.

<sup>39</sup> Morton, “The Historian and the Study of War,” 612–613.

reading public. There was merely a continuing decline, accompanied by occasional, and increasingly ritualistic, headshaking.”<sup>40</sup>

An explanation of the differences between popular and academic historical works is needed in this dissertation, as most of the works that influenced Hong Kong’s legacy are popular works of history. Historian Eric Arnesen has provided important insights into the difference between academic and popular history in his article on the historiography of British abolitionism:

The worlds of academic scholarship and popular understandings of the past are two distinct if sometimes related phenomena. In the best of circumstances, the work of professional scholars, based on years of painstaking research and conceptualization, finds its way into the hands of those outside the academy. Ideally, academic research and arguments inform or define not just what our students might think but what the broader public does as well. But the “best of circumstances” is one of those phrases that might be misleading, for the occasions when academic scholarship decisively shapes larger interpretations and understandings occur far too rarely. Under more commonly prevailing circumstances, academic historians’ work forms a kind of backdrop against which historical popularizers, with access to larger reading markets, can paint their own distinct pictures; to mix metaphors, academic work constitutes building blocks that can be selectively arranged to suit the popularizers’ purposes.<sup>41</sup>

Arnesen also has noted that academic historical works are not intended for broader audiences, while popular historians have larger reading bases, in part, because they “reject scholarly jargon, disregard academic obsessions and (usually) analyses, and ignore historiographical hair splitting. Instead, they aim at producing compelling and dramatic narratives that will hold the interest of non-professional readers.”<sup>42</sup>

Popular history is heavily inspired by journalistic techniques, while academic history relies on the interpretation of documents and sources. Popular history mostly rejects

---

<sup>40</sup> Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The “Objectivity Question” and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 372.

<sup>41</sup> Eric Arnesen, “The Recent Historiography of British Abolitionism: Academic Scholarship, Popular History, and the Broader Reading Public,” *Historically Speaking* 8, no.6 (2007): 22.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

historiography, even though historiography is crucial to proper understanding of historical context. Academically trained public historian Nick Sacco has noted that these differences come down to the interpretation of the past versus the reporting of it. “Some of the more popular works of history I’ve come across tend to do more reporting of ‘what actually happened’ rather than closely examining primary and secondary source documents for new ways of interpreting the past or questioning common understandings of historical events.”<sup>43</sup> The questions that each of these two groups seek to answer are an important part of who forms their audiences. Discussing the kind of questions explored by both groups of historians, American historian Michael Robinson has concluded “I think that most audiences would prefer these works to the ones we [academic historians] produce, in part because we are often interested in a different set of questions. Should the public find our questions interesting? Perhaps. But ultimately I think it is our responsibility as historians to make the case.”<sup>44</sup> David Greenberg, a professor of history and journalism, has argued that “professional historians select their areas of research not by looking at history but by surveying the historiography. . .then staking out a new sliver of the established academic terrain.”<sup>45</sup> Popular historians select topics based on their own interests and what is likely to have wide appeal whether or not it has been explained many times before.

Opinions on the value of both academic and popular history by those within the academy are decidedly split. Many believe popular historians have little of value to offer and in some cases are outright menaces to history. Gordon Wood, a leading academic historian of the

---

<sup>43</sup> Nick Sacco, “Can a Distinction Be Made Between ‘Academic’ and ‘Popular’ History?,” *Exploring the Past* (blog), 16 October 2014, <https://pastexplore.wordpress.com/2014/10/16/can-a-distinction-be-made-between-academic-and-popular-history/>.

<sup>44</sup> Michael Robinson, “Popular vs Academic History,” *Time to Eat the Dogs* (blog), 4 May 2008, <https://timetoeatthedogs.com/2008/05/04/who-should-write-about-exploration/>.

<sup>45</sup> David Greenberg, “That Barnes & Noble Dream,” *Slate*, 18 May 2005, [http://www.slate.com/articles/news\\_and\\_politics/history\\_book\\_blitz/features/2005/that\\_barnes\\_noble\\_dream/are\\_popular\\_histories\\_vapid.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/history_book_blitz/features/2005/that_barnes_noble_dream/are_popular_histories_vapid.html).

American Revolution, made his opinion clear by stating that “nonacademic historians who unfortunately often write without much concern for or much knowledge of the extensive monographic literature that exists. If academic historians want popular narrative history that is solidly based on the monographic literature, then they will have to write it themselves.”<sup>46</sup> But Nancy Isenberg and Andrew Burnstein have gone further, contending that “frankly, we in the history business wish we could take out a restraining order on the big-budget popularizers of history (many of them trained in journalism) who pontificate with great flair and happily take credit over the airwaves for possessing great insight into the past.” Claiming to speak for all historians, they asserted that “journalists doing history tend to be superficial and formulaic. To the historian’s mind, they don’t care enough about accuracy.”<sup>47</sup> Many academic historians have displayed arrogance and elitism in critiquing popular history. Novick has well described this attitude: “for the most part best-sellerdom in history was reserved for amateurs like Walter Lord, Cornelius Ryan, William L. Shirer, John Toland, and Barbara Tuchman, whom most professional historians, justly or unjustly, regarded as the equivalent of chiropractors and naturopaths.”<sup>48</sup> Yet the media’s influence upon the Canadian public’s understanding of history is undeniable. It is, therefore, important to look at popular print media, such as newspapers and magazines, to determine how these myths about Hong Kong are spread to the public. Newspaper circulations increased in the second half of the twentieth century in Canada therefore increasing their ability to provide history to the masses. Wilfred H. Kesterton had noted that “the average daily boasted about 5,000 subscribers in 1901, average circulations had grown to approximately

---

<sup>46</sup> Gordon Wood, “In Defense of Academic History Writing,” *Perspectives on History*, 1 April 2020, <https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/april-2010/in-defense-of-academic-history-writing>.

<sup>47</sup> Nancy Isenberg and Andrew Burstein, “America’s Worst Historians,” *Salon*, 19 August 2012, [https://www.salon.com/2012/08/19/americas\\_worst\\_historians/](https://www.salon.com/2012/08/19/americas_worst_historians/).

<sup>48</sup> Novick, *That Noble Dream*, 372.

25,000 in 1940, and 40,000 in the 1960's." This increase was due to the concentration of the Canadian population that allowed for more daily newspapers and better technology to print more newspapers.<sup>49</sup> As the media continues to influence how Canadians view the battle, journalistic techniques and work cannot be ignored.

Sacco has offered a more neutral position in the debate on popular versus academic history, stating that "the more I think about it, the more unsure I become of this academic-popular divide. In the end I think all historians can learn a lot from each other about method, content, style, tone, and organization without putting each other into boxes based solely on book sales."<sup>50</sup> David Greenberg has provided suggestions as to how academic historians can reach a wide reading audience: "If a book is conceived with only historiography in mind...it's unlikely to succeed in the public realm. If it's conceived without historiography in mind, it's unlikely to succeed as scholarship. I'd propose what might be called a Goldilocks approach to historiography."<sup>51</sup> This Goldilocks approach requires a blend of academic and popular approaches in where historiography is present in a historical work but only indirectly by appearing in citations or separate appendices.

Popular history works can be both bad and good history. Unfortunately, much of the discourse about Hong Kong demonstrates the bad type of popular history as the lack of academic rigour and analysis in these works has furthered many myths surrounding the battle. Few scholarly works about the battle were released until the 1990s. This is not entirely the fault of academic historians for official records were not released to the general public until several decades after the war's end.<sup>52</sup> However, there has been ample time to write such history since the

---

<sup>49</sup> Wilfred H. Kesterton, *A History of Journalism in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1967), 71.

<sup>50</sup> Sacco, "Can a Distinction Be Made Between 'Academic' and 'Popular' History?."

<sup>51</sup> Greenberg, "That Barnes & Noble Dream."

<sup>52</sup> Cook, *Clio's Warriors*, 6.

release of the records, and yet, a work of this nature is still missing. Thus, we require a new work about the Battle of Hong Kong that blends the narrative structure of popular works with the coverage of historiography and attention to historical principles that is found in academic history.

Popular works about the battle were published soon after the war. Released in 1953, *A Record of the Actions of the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps* by Evan Stewart, was one of the earliest non-official works on the battle. Stewart, a major in the HKVDC, had fought in the battle. Relying on the Maltby Despatch, though Stewart focused primarily on the HKVDC, he gave attention to other units, including the Canadian battalions. He also supplemented his own memories of the battle with accounts by Japanese commanders. But as Stewart's account blended ground-level observations with top-level decision-making, it is an invaluable source about the battle. Fifth columnists featured predominantly in Stewart's account of the battle, an element largely overlooked by later accounts. Stewart observed that while the Canadians had little time to acclimatize to their surroundings, they fought just as well as other garrison troops. He provided an insight into morale during the battle as some soldiers wanted to surrender to avoid further bloodshed while their commanders believed that the Allied war effort would benefit from continued resistance.<sup>53</sup> Disagreements of this nature had a major impact on the battle's legacy.

*The Fall of Hong Kong*, a popular history book by Tim Carew, a British Second World War veteran, was published in 1960. A polemic and poorly crafted, the book describes "C" Force as being a poor addition to the colony's defence. While he focused mostly on the Middlesex Regiment, when Carew discussed Canadian units, he criticized the Royal Rifles' leadership and the unit's inconsistent attitudes to combat while also highlighting supposed drunkenness. Carew claimed that the Canadians lacked combat readiness as many troops had been serving for less

---

<sup>53</sup> Evan Stewart, *Record of the Actions of the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps in the Battle for Hong Kong December, 1941* (Hong Kong: Ye Olde Printerie, 1956), 4, 47.

than six months. Using recollections by other soldiers in the garrison, Carew presented the British troops as superior to non-British troops.<sup>54</sup> Carew's work suffered from multiple issues, notably a complete absence of citations or a bibliography, poor research, and outright plagiarism. Carew's work has many historical errors, unsupported assertions, and plagiarized passages that its historical scholarship cannot be taken seriously. *The Fall of Hong Kong* initiated a series of poorly researched and argued books on the battle. Further examples will be discussed below.

In 1977, W.A.B. Douglas and Brereton Greenhous, two Canadian military official historians, co-authored *Out of the Shadows: Canada in the Second World War*, in which they took a more critical stance toward Canada's war effort. This work was "an attempt to give a popular overview of the events that comprised Canada's part in the Second World War."<sup>55</sup> While written by academically trained historians, the work relies heavily on secondary sources. "C" Force's despatch to Hong Kong received much of the limited space devoted to the battle. Noting that Britain's Chiefs of Staff had long recognized Hong Kong's indefensible nature in a war with Japan, the authors, failing to provide context to the decisions that led to Canadians being sent to the colony, concluded:

There were two good reasons why this [the Canadian reinforcement] should not be done, the first being the vulnerability of Hong Kong and the second that there were no adequately trained and uncommitted troops in Canada at the time. However, the Canadian prime minister's comprehension of strategy and logistics was not very profound and in this essentially military situation his customary political insight deserted him.<sup>56</sup>

Claiming that it was "less easy to find excuses" for Minister of National Defence J.L. Ralston and General Crerar, they put the blame on them, as well as on Prime Minister William Lyon

---

<sup>54</sup> Tim Carew, *The Fall of Hong Kong* (London: Pan Books, 1963), 22.

<sup>55</sup> W.A.B. Douglas and Brereton Greenhous, *Out of the Shadows: Canada in the Second World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 6.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

Mackenzie King. The authors described the fighting capability of “C” Force as “an academic question” given the circumstances that developed at Hong Kong. But they also argued “not even Panzer Grenadiers or Guardsmen or Marines in such meagre numbers could have withstood for long the blow that was about to fall on Hong Kong.” Little more was said about the garrison’s fighting abilities.<sup>57</sup> Douglas and Greenhous’ work offers analysis without the vital research to support their claims.

In 1978, British historian G.B. Endacott offered a far more academic look at Hong Kong during the Second World War. In *Hong Kong Eclipse*, Endacott covered the entire period of Hong Kong’s war, starting before the Japanese attack and through to reconstruction efforts after Britain reoccupied the colony in 1945. Briefly discussing how Canadians came to reinforce Hong Kong, while Endacott noted that Brigadier Grasett had travelled across Canada, he made no mention of his vital meeting with Crerar although Grasett urged the Canadian government to send two battalions to Hong Kong. While this account does not accurately depict the series of events that led to “C” Force’s despatch, the basic details are covered. Endacott labelled the Canadian reinforcement as a “tragedy.”<sup>58</sup> As disorganized garrison forces lacked proper communications and failed to successfully counterattack the Japanese, “the impression left is that on the British side the battle lacked that close direction and planning necessary to hold the Japanese for any length of time. But it has to be admitted that they were fighting a battle that could not be won, and many must have felt this.”<sup>59</sup>

Oliver Lindsay, a British Army officer who served during the Cold War, published *The Lasting Honour: The Fall of Hong Kong, 1941* in 1978. This popular work offered a more

---

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 106.

<sup>58</sup> G.B. Endacott, *Hong Kong Eclipse* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1978), 59.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 109.



balanced approach to the Hong Kong controversy. According to Lindsay, Grasett “deserves no gratitude for convincing in turn both the Canadian and British CGSs that additional battalions would make ‘all the difference’ to the defence of Hong Kong.”<sup>60</sup> Yet Lindsay also concluded that Britain, for moral and political reasons, had to defend Hong Kong to bolster China and to avoid “a sordid act of appeasement” for abandoning Hong Kong could have destroyed American faith in Britain.<sup>61</sup> Lindsay’s conclusions about the Canadians are striking:

Canada deserves infinite gratitude for sending reinforcements to Hong Kong, when the international situation was so precarious. Nevertheless there was no justification for the Canadian CGS sending two battalions well-known to be untrained for anything other than mundane garrison guard duties. Trained and uncommitted battalions, impatient for action, were available, but were not chosen because the urgency was not understood. In an event it can be seen today that the decision to reinforce Hong Kong at the eleventh hour was a mistake. The arrival of two extra battalions was expected to be a strong deterrent, but had no such effect.<sup>62</sup>

Lindsay’s 2005 work, *The Battle for Hong Kong 1941–1945: Hostage to Fortune*, which repeated many of the same points from *The Lasting Honour*, again attributed the decision to send Canadians to Hong Kong to Grasett. But this time Lindsay also critiqued Brigadier Cedric Wallis, calling him “the most controversial soldier in the battle for Hong Kong.” According to Lindsay, Wallis had been “seriously mentally unbalanced” in his dealings with Canadians. Very sympathetic to the troops of “C” Force, Lindsay concluded that “The Canadians did their best in the most adverse circumstances.”<sup>63</sup>

Canadian civilian books and articles on the battle, many of them popular history works, have fixated on the suffering of the garrison after the fighting had ended. As such, official

---

<sup>60</sup> Oliver Lindsay, *The Lasting Honour: The Fall of Hong Kong, 1941* (London: Sphere Books, 1980), 199.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 201.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 114, 200.

<sup>63</sup> Oliver Lindsay, *The Battle for Hong Kong 1941–1945: Hostage to Fortune* (Staplehurst, United Kingdom: Spellmount, 2005), 54, 60, 138, & 51.

explanations for Canadian troops being sent to Hong Kong, regarded by many authors as cynical cover-ups meant to trick the Canadian public, constituted a betrayal of the Canadian troops. In his 1980 work *Desperate Siege: The Battle of Hong Kong*, one of the earliest Canadian civilian works about the battle, Ted Ferguson wrote a popular history narrative account of the battle that lacked citations while its bibliography was hardly extensive. The fighting quality of the British and Indian battalions was mentioned along side Canadian exploits. Other nationalities were covered in equal measure, including those who lived in the colony before the attack began. Anti-British sentiments were still expressed through the words of John Fonesca, a man of mixed birth and thus an outsider in Hong Kong high society.<sup>64</sup> Blaming Grasett for the despatch of Canadians to the colony, Ferguson also criticized Canada's government, as "nearly two thousand Canadian soldiers were committed to the defense of an isolated British enclave without anyone in Ottawa fully realizing the enormity of the task awaiting them."<sup>65</sup> The author's journalistic background is clear given his accessible writing style that relied heavily on quotations from the battle's participants. As Bantam stated in his historiography article on "C" Force, "published before the big backlash sparked by 'No Reason Why' and the release of the unabridged version of Maltby's report, this is arguably one of the best-balanced books to come from Canadian sources."<sup>66</sup> While Ferguson's work maybe better balanced than other Canadian offerings, it has too many issues to be considered a reliable account of the Battle of Hong Kong. *Desperate Siege* was an entry into the continuum of the poorly researched and argued books about the battle that began with Carew's *The Fall of Hong Kong*.

---

<sup>64</sup> Ted Ferguson, *Desperate Siege: The Battle for Hong Kong* (Toronto: Doubleday, 1980), 1.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 5, 7.

<sup>66</sup> Banham, "A Historiography of C Force," 244.

Carl Vincent, a Canadian archivist, presented the events of December 1941 as a British conspiracy, with Canadian government support, to put Canadian lives in danger. His polemical and overtly nationalist 1981 work, *No Reason Why: The Canadian Hong Kong Tragedy, An Examination*, was the literary culmination of the Hong Kong continuum begun by Carew. In a poorly crafted public history publication masquerading as an academic book, Vincent blamed numerous government and military officials, particularly Grasett, for sending Canadian troops to Hong Kong. Canadian troops should have never been sent to Hong Kong as they were not ready for combat, with Vincent averring that “There was no reason why Canadian troops should have been despatched to the doomed outpost of Hong Kong—but through a combination of British cynicism and Canadian thoughtlessness, they were sent anyway.”<sup>67</sup> Vincent wrote this book as “a reaction to the melange of myth, rumour, unfounded accusation, one-sided accounts, and official whitewash...” While Vincent claimed that his book was based “to a great extent on primary sources,”<sup>68</sup> in fact, his research into the context of the Canadian reinforcement was incredibly thin, relying on just thirteen British primary documents found in British archives, only six of which warranted a citation. By using so few sources, Vincent, unable to fully understand the geopolitical context of the time, did not accurately present the strategic situation that led to Canadian troops fighting in Hong Kong.

Relying more on emotion than actual historical research, Vincent’s work was firmly entrenched in the “poor bloody infantry” school. Vincent claimed that the battle did little to affect Japan’s war effort and that Japanese casualties were not excessive for the gains made. He claimed that though the Canadians were ill-trained for their task, they fought well.<sup>69</sup> Little

---

<sup>67</sup> Vincent, *No Reason Why*, 9, 35, 43.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 209, 249.

attention was paid to *No Reason Why* at the time of its release. Academic historians did not weigh in on Vincent's conclusions until after *The Valour and the Horror* aired as its Hong Kong episode relied heavily on Vincent's book.<sup>70</sup> Despite the heavy criticism directed toward him in the aftermath of the release of *The Valour and the Horror*, Vincent is still regarded as an authority on Hong Kong. In a 2015 piece in *Legion Magazine*, his opinion on whether Canadians should have been sent to Hong Kong was cited along renowned Canadian historian J.L. Granatstein's.<sup>71</sup> Undoubtedly, the controversy surrounding *The Valour and the Horror* has ensured that Vincent's subpar work remains prominent in any discussion of the battle.

The release of *The Valour and the Horror* brought the myths about the Battle of Hong Kong to their largest audience yet. This series was the ultimate culmination of the continuum that began with Tim Carew and continued by Ferguson and Vincent. The series was written by documentary filmmakers, journalists, and brothers Brian and Terence McKenna. The program originally aired on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's (CBC) television channels. An estimated 4,500,000 to 6,000,000 people watched each episode on the English-language network, while an average of 350,000 to 400,000 tuned in to the French-language network, Radio-Canada.<sup>72</sup> Archivist Ernest J. Dick observed that *The Valour and the Horror*'s "18–20 per cent audience share...out of all Canadians watching television—is exceptional for any Canadian

---

<sup>70</sup> Perras, "Defeat Still Cries Aloud for Explanation," 40. Johnson, "The Canadian Experience of the Pacific War," 128–129.

<sup>71</sup> Legion Magazine Staff, "Face To Face: Should The Canadian Government Have Sent Troops To Hong Kong?" *Legion Magazine*, 1 January 2015, <https://legionmagazine.com/en/2015/01/face-to-face-should-the-canadian-government-have-sent-troops-to-hong-kong/>.

<sup>72</sup> Ernest J. Dick, "'The Valour and the Horror' Continued: Do We Still Want Our History on Television?," *Archivaria* 35 (1993): 266. David Taras, "The Struggle over 'The Valour and the Horror': Media Power and the Portrayal of War" *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 28, no. 4 (1995): 725. Graham Carr, "Rules of Engagement: Public History and the Drama of Legitimation," *The Canadian Historical Review* 86, no. 2 (2005): 31.

programming, let alone historical documentary programming.”<sup>73</sup> The series’ reach was undeniable.

The first episode in the series, entitled “Savage Christmas,” which aired on 12 January 1992, chronicled the battle and the years the Canadians spent in Japanese captivity. The series brought the Hong Kong story into the mainstream in a dramatic way that few, if any, print books could. This series was a “bad” piece of history akin to Gar Alperovitz’s book *Atomic Diplomacy* in that both works, by inciting more revisionist scholarship, changed the field for the better but likely in ways neither Alperovitz nor the McKennas had intended.<sup>74</sup> The McKennas claimed at the beginning of the episode that “This is a true story. In some cases actors speak the documented words of soldiers and nurses. There is no fiction.”<sup>75</sup> As such, this documentary needs to be held to a high standard of historical rigour. The series raised questions regarding truth, journalistic independence, and who can create history. As this series was so controversial, and as this dissertation examines the legacy of the Battle of Hong Kong, “Savage Christmas” is an important part of how the battle is viewed as it repeated many of the false claims and myths made by others, albeit to a much larger audience. Additional analysis of this episode and its aftermath is needed and I will do so by examining the academic revisionist response in detail along with what Brian McKenna has done since this series.

The claim that the episode had no fictional elements was a lie for the McKennas created most of the supposedly documented words. The decision to send Canadian troops to Hong Kong

---

<sup>73</sup> Dick, “‘The Valour and the Horror’ Continued,” 266.

<sup>74</sup> Gar Alperovitz, *Atomic Diplomacy: Hiroshima and Potsdam The Use of the Atomic Bomb and the American Confrontation with Soviet Power* (New York: Vintage Books 1965).

<sup>75</sup> *The Valour and the Horror*, episode 1, “Savage Christmas,” directed by Brian McKenna, written by Terence McKenna and Brian McKenna, aired 12 January 1992, on CBC, [https://www.nfb.ca/film/savage\\_christmas\\_hong\\_kong\\_1941/](https://www.nfb.ca/film/savage_christmas_hong_kong_1941/).

to bolster the colony's garrison was presented as an imperial conspiracy concocted in London and approved by Ottawa. One such dramatic scene summed up the series' thesis:

Men like Roger Cyr blame the Canadian government for sending them on the hopeless mission to begin with. "As a soldier, I have no problem with being sent to war. Doesn't bother me. What frightens the daylight out of me is the thought that my government would have not only willingly, but very actively, placed itself in a situation where it would knowingly offer a couple of thousand of its young men as lambs to the slaughter in order to meet some sort of political expediency."<sup>76</sup>

It is not disputed that Cyr may have said something very similar to the filmmakers. He had every right to be angry with the Canadian government after spending almost four years in captivity and having benefits denied to him after the war. However, nowhere in Cyr's interview transcript can these words be found.<sup>77</sup> Cyr's supposed quote was used twice in the episode, undoubtedly, to drive home the filmmakers' claims of betrayal.

Despite the numerous problems with the series, some of its interpretations were correct. One example is the references made to the mistakes made by the Canadian government in relation to military intelligence: "Incredibly, Canada answered England's call without making an independent assessment of the peril, accepting the mother country's assurance that the men would not be in harm's way."<sup>78</sup> As Canada did little in terms of assessment, the sentiment of the first part of the claim is essentially correct despite the dramatic and unfounded accusation that Britain said Canadians would be safe. Given that *The Valour and the Horror* changed the conversation about the Battle of Hong Kong, it will receive the required attention in its own

---

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> S.F. Wise, "The Valour and the Horror: A Report for the CBC Ombudsman," in *The Valour and The Horror Revisited*, eds. David J. Bercuson and S.F. Wise (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), 17.

<sup>78</sup> *The Valour and the Horror*, episode 1, "Savage Christmas."

chapter. The errors presented in “Savage Christmas,” mostly related to the battle itself, will be addressed—an area that is lacking in the previous literature on the Battle of Hong Kong.

A popular history book with the same title accompanied the series and repeated the documentary’s errors. Written by Merrily Weisbord, a writer and a documentary filmmaker, and Marilyn Simonds Mohr, a fiction writer, the book lacked citations or a bibliography. Citing the theme of betrayal, the authors asserted that “The Battle of Hong Kong contained the elements of a classic tragedy: badly trained inadequately supplied soldiers thrust innocent and ignorant into a garrison about to be attacked by a disciplined, technologically superior army that outnumbered them five to one.”<sup>79</sup> Unsubstantiated claims litter this work. The authors claimed, inaccurately, that the Royal Rifles are made up of mostly French-Canadian farm boys. In fact, the regiment were known colloquially as the “Million Dollar Regiment” for many of its members were drawn from the Anglo-Québec elite, including the son of Cabinet Minister C.G. Power.<sup>80</sup> The authors claimed that the Canadian troops were woefully unprepared for combat as they had received almost no training. They also asserted, without offering evidence, that “twenty percent of the men called up for garrison duty in Hong Kong had never fired live ammunition from a rifle; 40 percent had never manned a machine gun. The Rifles had a little practice throwing dummy grenades; The Grenadiers had tossed none at all. Few of these soldiers had ever seen a mortar shell.”<sup>81</sup> The book, providing even less historical value than the documentary series, represents the various problems that plague public historical works.

---

<sup>79</sup> Merrily Weisbord and Marilyn Simonds Mohr, *The Valour and the Horror: The Untold Story of Canadians in the Second World War* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 1991), 12.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid. Tim Cook, *The Necessary War: Canadians Fighting the Second World War 1939–1943* (Toronto: Penguin, 2014), 70.

<sup>81</sup> Weisbord and Simonds Mohr, *The Valour and the Horror*, 11.

The outcry against the series led to an official CBC Ombudsman Report prepared by William Morgan. Asserting that *The Valour and the Horror* did not meet CBC standards, Morgan used reports from academic historians to reach this decision. These reports, plus responses from other historians, were collected in a book, *The Valour and the Horror: Revisited*, which brought much needed academic attention to the Battle of Hong Kong. Canadian historian John Ferris, in his response to “Savage Christmas,” claimed that “this program was the one least criticized by veterans and historians; indeed, except for three minutes of a 104-minute presentation, “Savage Christmas” showed nothing to which any reasonable person could object.”<sup>82</sup> This three-minute period covered the decision to despatch troops to Hong Kong. As Ferris’ expertise lies in diplomatic history, the combat portion of the episode was not his focus. Correcting the errors related to the despatching of Canadians to Hong Kong made in *The Valour and the Horror*, Ferris disputed claims there were no reasons to send Canadians to Hong Kong. Citing English Canadian pressure on Prime Minister W.L.M. King’s government to do more for the war effort, Ferris concluded that “Canadians went to Hong Kong because Canadians and their government wanted to do their part.” As Canadians viewed Britain’s war as their own, sending troops to Hong Kong seemed normal in 1941.<sup>83</sup> Ferris vehemently rejected any notion of a conspiracy theory involving both Hong Kong and Pearl Harbor. Instead, “Stupidity, not conspiracy, dispatched 2000 Canadians to Hong Kong and the American Pacific Fleet to the bottom of the sea.”<sup>84</sup> Ferris believed that Canadians went to war for the wrong reasons—primarily to defend a not-so-benevolent British Empire—but ultimately this decision produced the right result, the defeat of Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan. Sending troops to Hong Kong

---

<sup>82</sup> John Ferris, “Savage Christmas,” in *The Valour and The Horror Revisited*, eds. David J. Bercuson and S.F. Wise (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1994), 111.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 118–119.



was simply another part of this fight against evil. Ferris has assigned blame for the events at Hong Kong to an unlikely villain in this story, prewar Canadian society. The lack of funding and support for the Canadian military during the interwar years coupled with the fact “C” Force was sent to the fight the Japanese for reasons of protecting British interests is the reason for Ferris’ claim.<sup>85</sup> Ferris’ work opened the door for more revisionist historians to present differing views of the Battle of Hong Kong than that of the producers of *The Valour and the Horror*.

A series of academic revisionist works followed in the wake of *The Valour and the Horror*. Canadian revisionists rejected unsophisticated, nationalist assaults, notably the anti-British sentiments of Vincent and *The Valour and the Horror*. As so much distortion of the discourse resulted from the Vincent/McKenna works, the historians who viewed the Battle of Hong Kong in much the same way as the original official histories have been labelled revisionists. In *Zombie Myths of Australian Military History*, Australian historian Peter Stanley tackled the myth that Australia faced invasion by Japan during the Second World War: “The irony is that among historians the orthodox view has been, and remains, that Japan neither invaded nor planned to invade. Extraordinarily, to contest this popular assumption or belief is now to be labelled a ‘revisionist.’”<sup>86</sup> A similar line of thought can be applied to the legacy of the Battle of Hong Kong. This should not be the case, yet the negativity surrounding the legacy of the battle has made this necessary.

One of the first sound academic revisionist arguments about why Canada agreed to reinforce Hong Kong was provided by Galen Roger Perras in 1995. According to Perras, “strengthening Hong Kong was a reasonable act that in hindsight has acquired an unworthy

---

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 122.

<sup>86</sup> Peter Stanley, “Dramatic Myth and Dull Truth: Invasion by Japan in 1942,” in *Zombie Myths of Australian Military History*, ed. Craig Stockings (Sydney, Australia: University of New South Wales, 2010), 142.

moral taint. Many who have criticized the reinforcement have not given enough credit to the context in which that choice was made.” Perras highlighted the lack of consensus concerning Hong Kong’s defences even as many others asserted that British military leaders had definitely concluded that Hong Kong was a military liability by August 1940.<sup>87</sup> Perras remarked that it was not until Grasett’s September 1941 recommendation that the British Chiefs of Staff Committee considered reinforcing Hong Kong. And while the Grasett-Crerar meeting has assumed particular importance for why Canada was asked to provide reinforcements for Hong Kong, that meeting remains shrouded in mystery. Perras wrote that “we simply do not know what was said, but it would have been strange indeed for the two generals to have discussed Hong Kong’s military plight at some length without any suggestion that Canada might do something to remedy that situation.”<sup>88</sup> As to why Canada accepted the request, Perras noted the strong connections that many Canadians, especially Canadian soldiers, felt toward Britain. “When it seemed clear in late 1941 the Americans could be counted on to support Britain, and Grasett presented the possibility of employing Canadians, the British swallowed concerns about Hong Kong in favour of a risky strategy that sought to deter Japanese attack with a minimal effort.”<sup>89</sup> Context—that crucial element missing from many popular works—was finally given its due.

Canadian historian Christopher Bell’s 1996 academic article, “Our Most Exposed Outpost: Hong Kong and British Far Eastern Strategy, 1921–1941,” directly challenged many myths surrounding Hong Kong’s security during the interwar period. Providing important context to the Hong Kong reinforcement debate, Bell asserted that “the underlying assumption that Hong Kong’s position was always hopeless and should have been recognized as

---

<sup>87</sup> Galen Roger Perras, “Our Position in the Far East would be Stronger without this Unsatisfactory Commitment’: Britain and the Reinforcement of Hong Kong, 1941,” *Canadian Journal of History* 30 (1995): 233, 245.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 248, 249.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 251, 233.

such...distorted our understanding of British Far Eastern policy. In particular, the offensive nature of British plans for war against Japan during the 1920s and early 1930s and the vital role of Hong Kong as a naval base during this period have been widely overlooked.” Bell noted that while it was apparent that Hong Kong’s defence would be no easy task, it was not always seen as impossible.<sup>90</sup> Bell contended that as the policy between 1938 and early 1941 was to maintain Hong Kong’s garrison at the lowest possible level, the sudden reversal of this strategy in late 1941 was “commonly viewed with bewilderment; not surprisingly, it has led to conspiracy theories”—*The Valour and the Horror* being but one prominent example.<sup>91</sup> Bell mentioned that except for requesting Canadian help, Grasett’s arguments added nothing new to Hong Kong’s reinforcement debate. Instead, the British desire to match American actions in the Far East by late 1941 was the new element in a decades-long debate about Hong Kong’s security. As Bell has asserted, “Carl Vincent’s conclusion that there ‘was no reason why’ two battalions of Canadian infantry were sent to Hong Kong in the autumn of 1941 does not stand up. There was, in fact, an abundance of reasons.”<sup>92</sup>

Not all academic responses to *The Valour and The Horror* were negative. One example is Brereton Greenhous’ 1997 book, “*C* Force to Hong Kong: A Canadian Catastrophe, a nationalist tome that merely repeated what others had said before. Citing Vincent’s book as the best Canadian monograph on the Battle of Hong Kong, Greenhous’ work was built on assumptions, symbolism, and emotional responses to the garrison’s suffering. For example, he claimed the Gin Drinker’s Line was unfortunately named because of the “connotations of

---

<sup>90</sup> Christopher Bell, “Our Most Exposed Outpost: Hong Kong and British Far Eastern Strategy, 1921–1941,” *The Journal of Military History* 60, no. 1 (1996): 61.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 75–76.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 86–87.

sybaritic idleness.”<sup>93</sup> Intent on assigning blame for the Canadian reinforcement and the battle’s dismal outcome, Greenhous made British leaders a prominent target, claiming that Britain chose to reinforce Hong Kong only if Canadians were put in danger. Crerar was also castigated for sending the Canadian troops to Hong Kong due to his ambitious, sycophantic nature and his need to impress British military leaders. As Crerar should have known that war with Japan was coming, troops should not have been sent to Hong Kong.<sup>94</sup> Despite the difficulties facing “C” Force, as Japanese troops admitted that the Canadians fought well, Greenhous claimed that Canadians had fought far better than most of the garrison:

As for effectiveness, the best criterion is the loss rate inflicted on the Japanese, and in that respect the Canadians seem to have done better than anybody else. In such confused fighting as developed on the island it is certainly not possible to allocate enemy casualties upon a specific national basis, but after reviewing the observations of the Japanese commanders in statements given to British authorities—“strong opposition,” “fierce fighting,” “heavy casualties,” “65 per cent losses”—the reader is struck by the fact that these kinds of comments occur when the fights under review were primarily with the Canadians, and not against other British or British-led troops.<sup>95</sup>

Nationalist boasting was a prominent part of Greenhous’ work—views that might be explained by his contrarian, argumentative style. Tim Cook has called him “an accomplished if quarrelsome historian.”<sup>96</sup> Indeed, Greenhous’ official history study about Bomber Command also offered the same kind of anti-British tropes found in *The Valour and The Horror*.<sup>97</sup>

The revisionist trend allowed scholars and historians to re-examine different elements of the battle in greater detail. Wai-Chung Lawrence Lai, a Hong Kong-based architecture professor, applied academic principles to his 1999 article about the British garrison’s combat effectiveness.

---

<sup>93</sup> Brereton Greenhous, *“C” Force to Hong Kong: A Canadian Catastrophe, 1941–1945* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1997), 19, 4.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 16, 15, 41.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 109–110.

<sup>96</sup> Cook, *The Fight for History*, 324.

<sup>97</sup> Bomber Command was the Royal Air Force branch tasked with strategic bombing raids over Germany; Cook, *Clio’s Warriors*, 252.

He disputed the idea that Hong Kong was pointless to hold, as the prevailing Chinese opinion was that Hong Kong must be defended against Japan.<sup>98</sup> Employing a statistical comparison between the defence of Hong Kong with British garrisons that defended Crete in May 1941 and Singapore in February 1942, he concluded “if we weigh the relative loss rate of the British garrison by its relative strength vis-a-vis the invaders for each battlefield, then we might come to the conclusion that the Hong Kong garrison was most effective in inflicting disproportionate casualties upon the invader.”<sup>99</sup> Further, Crete’s defenders did the most damage when German paratroopers were descending to the ground or when gliders landed on the rocky terrain. Once in force, the Germans quickly overwhelmed Crete’s garrison.<sup>100</sup> Facing experienced Japanese light infantry, Lai demonstrated that Hong Kong’s defenders fought better than previously assumed, a situation likely ignored without the application of academic principles and the revisionism that assailed the myths about the battle.

In a 2001 article that broadly examined the Battle of Hong Kong, Terry Copp asserted that “It is not difficult to ask questions about the defence of Hong Kong it is just answers that are hard to come by.” Explicitly mentioning Grasett as the reason for the Canadian reinforcement, Copp harshly critiqued the Canadian and British governments for buttressing Hong Kong:

The Canadian troops sent to Hong Kong were grievously handicapped by their lack of training, poor equipment and shortages of ammunition. They were poorly served by their own government which had for so long avoided spending the sums of money necessary to prepare the Canadian forces for a global war which Canadian public opinion would demand that they fight. Their lives were also endangered by Churchill and his Cabinet who were prepared to sacrifice British and Commonwealth forces in the Far East rather than jeopardize hopes of a major victory in North Africa.<sup>101</sup>

---

<sup>98</sup> Wai-Chung Lawrence Lai, “The Battle of Hong Kong: A Note on the Literature and the Effectiveness of the Defence,” *The Journal of the Hong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 39 (1999): 118, 121.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 124–126.

<sup>100</sup> John Keegan, *The Second World War* (New York: Viking, 1989), 165, 171.

<sup>101</sup> Terry Copp, “The Defence of Hong Kong: December 1941,” *Canadian Military History* 10, no. 4 (2001): 6, 19.

Contradicting Banham's historiographical argument, Copp provided examples of non-Canadian units that had fought well. Copp discussed the Rajputs' stand on the mainland which, without having prearranged artillery support, inflicted some of the heaviest Japanese casualties of the battle.<sup>102</sup> Citing the Grenadiers' "D" Company's stand at Wong Nei Chong Gap, Copp argued that "their courageous stand, which according to Japanese accounts led to heavy Japanese casualties, delayed the advance of 230th Regiment but the 229th succeeded in reaching Deep Water Bay and splitting the island early on 20 December." Despite the garrison's efforts, it surrendered on Christmas Day when the prospect of Japanese troops nearing the Fortress Headquarters caused Maltby and Young to lose their nerve.<sup>103</sup> Copp presented a sympathetic view of Hong Kong veterans without creating a "poor bloody infantry" narrative.

As British-educated Canadian historian Kent Fedorowich remarked in his 2003 article, "similarly, the controversy over the defence of Hong Kong has not abated in particular regarding the last minute decision to reinforce the colony with Canadian troops. Since the 1960s a variety of work ranging from the sensational to the scholarly has been written on the fall of Hong Kong."<sup>104</sup> Averring that change was a constant in plans for the colony's defence, the Canadian reinforcement was simply another change, albeit a poorly timed one. Gregory A. Johnson's 2008 chapter "The Canadian Experience of the Pacific War Betrayal and Forgotten Captivity," was an excellent first offering on aspect of the battle's legacy. Johnson's focus was not solely on the Battle of Hong Kong, but instead centred on the "Canadian understanding of the experience of the Asia-Pacific war."<sup>105</sup> Johnson's well crafted chapter called for more to be known about the

---

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 16, 19.

<sup>104</sup> Kent Fedorowich, "'Cocked Hats and Swords and Small Little Garrisons': Britain, Canada and the Fall of Hong Kong, 1941," *Modern Asian Studies* 37, no. 1 (2003): 113.

<sup>105</sup> Johnson, "The Canadian Experience of the Pacific War," 126.

Canadian POWs in the Pacific and not the legacy itself. Luckily, Johnson's call was heeded, and more academic works have been written on the POWs.<sup>106</sup> While Johnson brought together all the elements of the Canadian reinforcement, the battle, and its legacy, this study will expand upon areas Johnson considered to give a fuller discussion of the battle's legacy. The existing works on the battle and its legacy have only scratched the surface of this topic.

Canadian historian Nathan Greenfield's popular history book, *The Damned: The Canadians at the Battle of Hong Kong and the POW Experience, 1941–45*, is evidence that the Canadian focus on the garrison's suffering has not been supplanted by revisionist views. Greenfield said little about why Canadians were sent to Hong Kong in late 1941 beyond an assertion that domestic pressures on King compelled him to send Canadian soldiers.<sup>107</sup> While Greenfield has blamed Grasett and Crerar for the decision to send the troops. Most of the book is focused on the individual soldier's exploits in the battle. Exploiting emotional appeals to craft arguments, Greenfield also relied heavily on Vincent's monograph.<sup>108</sup> Greenfield passed over the number of casualties on both sides, as "numbers tell us only so much. Battle is struggle—with the enemy, of course, but also with the elements, the hills and, as day followed day, exhaustion. Battle is seeing your buddies blown apart."<sup>109</sup> Employing veteran's accounts of the events, Greenfield believed that "C" Force's troops had military training, which if not meeting the standard found later in the war, indicated the Canadians were hardly an untrained rabble.<sup>110</sup> But while noting that many of "C" Force's leaders had First World War combat experience, Greenfield offered no conclusion about the fighting effectiveness of the Canadian troops.

---

<sup>106</sup> Matthew Schwarzkopf's "The Second Mission: Canadian Survival in Hong Kong Prisoner-of-War Camps, 1941–1945" is an excellent study of the POWs' time in the Japanese camps. (MA Thesis, University of Ottawa, 2019).

<sup>107</sup> Greenfield, *The Damned*, 13.

<sup>108</sup> Perras, "Defeat Still Cries Aloud for Explanation," 44.

<sup>109</sup> Greenfield, *The Damned*, 21.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 14–15.

Greenfield presented the POW years as a second battle for survival that continued long after 1945 for government payments to the veterans, which did not arrive until 1998, was caused by “bureaucratic delays and wilful political blindness.”<sup>111</sup> Greenfield’s work simply offers a starting point for understanding how the veterans were treated upon their return to Canada.

Perras’ article from 2011 has provided a historiographical look at the Battle of Hong Kong, especially the revisionist shift that began after *The Valour and the Horror*. He claimed that a larger work exploring why Canadian troops were sent to Hong Kong that reinterprets the political context behind the decision was still needed. Perras emphasized the need to move past blame: “For this reason, and more, we still need a monograph that avoids nationalist ‘fingerpointing and grudge settling,’ is interpretatively innovating, and mines multinational archival sources.”<sup>112</sup> He raised questions about Canadian connections to the British military and argued that the depth of Canadian integration into the education structure of the British military before the Second World War needs to be better understood. Understanding how Canadian military leaders thought about imperial defence would highlight why they supported the request from Britain for troops. Perras also explained that the creation of the Canadian official history of “C” Force was influenced by politics and a need to protect reputations.<sup>113</sup> As personal connections can affect how history is created, Perras was right to point this out in the context of Hong Kong. While reputations were protected, history likely had suffered. Impressed by Lai’s findings, Perras called the work an example of a new method in “getting the story right.”<sup>114</sup> Perras’ support for correcting myths on the Battle of Hong Kong is clear.

---

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 22, xxix.

<sup>112</sup> Perras, “Defeat Still Cries Aloud for Explanation,” 37.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 45–46.



Terry Copp's 2011 article provided another revisionist and academically sound examination of the Canadian reinforcement. Copp argued, "with Churchill now pursuing a policy of deterrence through symbolic acts there could be no question of changing the decision to send "C" Force to Hong Kong." Australia enthusiastically received the news of the Canadian reinforcement, while a suggestion to send a Canadian brigade to Malaya was made but the war in the Pacific began before this idea could be assessed. As Copp noted, "when Carl Vincent wrote his oft quoted study of the Canadian role at Hong Kong he chose to title his book *No Reason Why*. In fact, there were many reasons why the Canadians were in Hong Kong. This is clear when the actions of the Canadian government and its military advisors are examined in the context of 1941 without the benefit of hindsight."<sup>115</sup>

Kwong Chi Man and Tsoi Yiu Lun have offered an important perspective on "C" Force in their military history of Hong Kong. Published in 2014, *Eastern Fortress: A Military History of Hong Kong, 1840–1970* placed "C" Force's deployment within the broader context of the defence schemes for Hong Kong. Discussing the Canadians as simply one part of the garrison without presenting them as martyr/victims of British imperialism, the authors explained the defeat through the lens of almost 100 years of defence plans and strategic shifts. The authors have argued that colonial defence was maintained to preserve British imperial prestige for British officials in London and Hong Kong wanted to present strength to enemies and allies alike.<sup>116</sup> The authors tracked changes in the defense focus, prior to 1941, from one based on a naval-first doctrine to a land-based defence system. Kwong and Tsoi's work revealed the planning and decisions that went into the Canadian reinforcement. Sending the Grenadiers and Royal Rifles

---

<sup>115</sup> Terry Copp, "The Decision to Reinforce Hong Kong September 1941," *Canadian Military History* 20, no. 2 (2011): 11, 13.

<sup>116</sup> Kwong and Tsoi, *Eastern Fortress*, 64.

was neither a snap judgment nor part of some devious imperial plan to sacrifice colonial troops. The meeting between Crerar and Grasett produced “C” Force’s despatch, even though Crerar and Grasett refused to admit that such a discussion occurred. The authors attributed Hong Kong’s quick fall to the decisions made during the battle itself, not to the overall planning of its defence. Indeed, they claimed, “Compared perhaps to other British and Allied possessions in Asia, Hong Kong was better prepared, despite its ultimate fall.” They also noted that “C Force, often denigrated as inexperienced, inflicted heavy casualties on the Japanese forces on several occasions.”<sup>117</sup> This conclusion was based on in-depth research that placed the battle into a much broader context than most works.

In his 2012 book *The Necessary War: Canadians Fighting the Second World War 1939–1943*, Tim Cook took issue with conspiracy theories surrounding the reinforcement of Hong Kong in late 1941. According to Cook, a naïve Canadian government, not a malicious one, sent Canadians to Hong Kong. The lack of an independent Canadian intelligence agency was highlighted as the reason for the poor understanding of the geopolitical situation in the Far East, a claim Granatstein made in a book about conscription in the Second World War, a contention I take issue with below.<sup>118</sup> Aside from the lack of intelligence, the troops sent to Hong Kong were no different from other soldiers put in the line of fire elsewhere. Further, countering any notion of imperial conspiracy, Cook cited Britain’s despatch of the HMS *Prince of Wales* and HMS *Repulse* and the fact that the British had many more of their own troops at Hong Kong.<sup>119</sup> While Cook touched upon the theme that the Canadians were poorly trained, he used Japanese accounts to demonstrate that the Canadian troops fought with skill and determination. Blame for Hong

---

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 136, 159, 223.

<sup>118</sup> J.L. Granatstein, *Conscription in the Second World War, 1939–1945: A Study in Political Management* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1969), 51.

<sup>119</sup> Cook, *The Necessary War*, 93, 70.

Kong's poor defence was placed on Maltby's decisions during the battle, in particular, Maltby's failure to create a central reserve both on the mainland and on the island. Cook has blended elements of revisionism and orthodox Canadian narratives of blaming the British for the fate of "C" Force.

Several non-historians from Hong Kong have written works on the battle that do not fit in any previously identified category of historiography.<sup>120</sup> These important sources from the past ten years on the plans of defence of Hong Kong and the battle itself have been neglected. Academic articles on the construction of the Gin Drinker's Line, determining the location of pillboxes, and an earlier iteration of the Gin Drinker's Line have demonstrated that invaluable field-work has been conducted.<sup>121</sup> The information provided by these articles will be used in this dissertation to explore defence planning and the events of the fighting, something that is often absent in other secondary works about the battle.

#### The Historiography of Far East Intelligence and the War against Japan

Many of the popular history works about the battle neglect the important academic historiography that had discussed Britain's geostrategic position in the Far East before the Battle of Hong Kong. This dissertation will not make the same miscalculation. The intelligence failures of the prewar period are an important part of this section on the historiography of the Far East.

One such work is Antony Best's 1995 book, *Britain, Japan and Pearl Harbour Avoiding War in*

---

<sup>120</sup> This group includes Wai-Chung Lawrence Lai, Rob Weir, Chi Man Kwong, Tim Ko, and Y.K. Tan.

<sup>121</sup> See Wai-Chung Lawrence Lai et al., "The Gin Drinker's Line: Reconstruction of a British Colonial Defence Line in Hong Kong using Aerial Photo Information," *Property Management* 27, no. 1 (2009): 16. Rob Weir, "A Note on British Blockhouses in Hong Kong," *Surveying and Built Environment* 22, no. 1 (2012): 8–18. Chi Man Kwong, "Reconstructing the Early History of the Gin Drinker's Line from Archival Sources," *Surveying and Built Environment* 22, no. 1 (2012): 19–36. All articles provide important details of the development of the Gin Drinker's Line and why it fell so quickly to Japanese forces.

*East Asia, 1936–1941*. Best has provided important insights when it comes to discussing the topic of the war in the Far East:

However, to come to any true understanding of the events of 7–8 December 1941 it is important to clear the mind of any preconceived notions of responsibility, with all the moral connotations that word implies. History is fundamentally a process of understanding; it should not be an excuse to indulge in finger-pointing. The idea of blame is dangerous because it encourages the historian to take short cuts. The desire to attribute blame exaggerates the natural and almost inescapable tendency to study historical events through the prism of hindsight.<sup>122</sup>

Not trying to shift the blame for the Pacific War from Japan to Britain, Best's work instead sought "to understand the motivations that lay behind the Anglo-Japanese confrontation and to rise above the issue of blame."<sup>123</sup> Best's findings regarding the road to war in the Far East covered two important points about British policies in the prewar period: Britain's use of deterrence toward Japan; plus attempts to encourage the United States to back Britain fully in any war with Japan. Contending that British policy before war's outbreak was designed to weaken or deter Japan, not to provoke it, Best has argued that "In fact it could be said that Britain was in a state of hostility, if not hostilities, towards Japan from October 1940 onwards. Faced with increasing evidence of Japanese collaboration with the Axis Powers in the economic, diplomatic and military fields, Britain had no choice but to pursue a policy of containment which would limit the assistance Japan could give to its partners and also reduce its ability to go to war." Describing Britain's policy toward Japan was "a kind of 'death by a thousand cuts,'" and Best concluded that by 1941, "British policy towards Japan was still primarily based on the need to avoid war and it was assumed that this could only be achieved by a rigid

---

<sup>122</sup> Antony Best, *Britain, Japan and Pearl Harbor: Avoiding War in East Asia, 1936–1941* (London: Routledge, 1995), 2.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 201.

policy of deterrence.”<sup>124</sup> Hong Kong’s reinforcement was undoubtedly part of this process.

American actions played a vital in determining Britain’s policy toward Japan in 1941. Best has noted that after Japan seized southern French Indochina, America suspended all trading with Japan and froze all Japanese assets in the United States, policies that Britain speedily duplicated. Britain used its policy of deterrence while also showcasing displays of strength in order to gain American support. Churchill “wrote to [American President Franklin] Roosevelt assuring him that a ‘considerable Battle-squadron’ would be available for use in the Indian and Pacific Oceans before Christmas. The Prime Minister and [Anthony] Eden had thus achieved an important victory which was designed not only to bolster Britain’s position in South-East Asia but also to encourage American resolve.” By autumn 1941, emboldened by the strengthening of the American military position in the Philippines, Britain increased the numbers of troops and aircraft sent to Malaya.<sup>125</sup>

In his 2000 book, *Intelligence and the War against Japan: Britain, America and the Politics of Secret Service*, British historian Richard J. Aldrich has explored the influence of British and American intelligence organizations on the war in the Pacific. Exploring the rivalry between British and American services as well as competitiveness amongst British secret services, Aldrich has noted that:

the intelligence failures of 1937 to 1941 owed much to a colonial *mentalité*, which prompted the West to focus on internal colonial stability rather than external threats, and also encouraged the underestimation of Japan. Thereafter, it suggests that the course of the Far Eastern War witnessed the development of separate and divergent “foreign policies” by numerous secret services, some poorly controlled.<sup>126</sup>

---

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 16, 195, 196.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 165, 174–176.

<sup>126</sup> Richard J. Aldrich, *Intelligence and the War against Japan: Britain, America and the Politics of Secret Service* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 2.

The British intelligence services in the Far East experienced much upheaval in the prewar years, thanks to:

a shift in British strategic thinking. The Admiralty had accepted that they could not fight the German, Italian and Japanese Navies simultaneously. The defence of Hong Kong and French Indochina looked increasingly impossible, and even Singapore would receive no relief for many months. This pessimistic outlook dictated the removal of the main British intelligence centre from Hong Kong, replaced by a new inter-service intelligence organisation at Singapore in August 1939 entitled the “Far Eastern Combined Bureau” (FECB).<sup>127</sup>

Once war broke out in Europe, the British intelligence services, not unnaturally, focused on Europe and the Middle East. However, intelligence gathering against Japan did not suffer. Instead, Aldrich has noted that the FECB gathered good intelligence, but it was often ignored: “There was no intelligence disaster at Singapore; instead there was a stubborn failure of command at several levels to accept warnings.” This problem extended to Hong Kong for its commanders believed that the Imperial Japanese Army (IJA) was weak, something that intelligence operatives familiar with the IJA did not aver.<sup>128</sup> Intelligence did not fail Britain in the Far East; instead, its commanders failed to use the intelligence provided to them.

John Ferris also has focused on intelligence services in the Pacific, particularly the FECB. In 1993, in an article on British perceptions of the IJA, including insight into the fighting at Hong Kong, Ferris argued that “forms of military ethnocentrism, not racism, were the single greatest cause for mistaken expert estimates of the I.J.A.”<sup>129</sup> These views led to poor preparations against the Japanese offensives in December 1941. Ferris commented that though the FECB had two officers that spoke Japanese, all agents were overworked and their findings

---

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 40, 52, 61.

<sup>129</sup> John Ferris “‘Worthy of Some Better Enemy?’: The British Estimate of the Imperial Japanese Army, 1919–41, and the Fall of Singapore,” *Canadian Journal of History* 28 (1993): 231.

about the IJA were often overlooked. Thus, “it is difficult to determine how far the local underestimate of the I.J.A. stemmed from stupidity as against incompetence.”<sup>130</sup> Contending in a 2012 article for reassessment of the FECB’s prewar work, Ferris wrote that the FECB’s objectives were “‘to give timely warning of impending hostilities in its area’ and to provide operational intelligence in war.”<sup>131</sup> Discussing FECB influence over Singapore’s defence, Ferris wrote:

Conversely, just before the attack, it did encourage [Commander in Chief, China Station, Admiral Geoffrey] Layton, [Admiral Tom] Phillips [Layton’s successor] and [Air Chief Marshal] Brooke-Popham to misconstrue their danger. Britain received the worst of both worlds from the FECB. It rejected the FECB’s assessments of Japanese capabilities, which were accurate enough to enable effective preparation, while accepting views on intentions which were wrong, and shaped by enemy deception.<sup>132</sup>

Hong Kong’s defence, like Singapore’s, was also negatively affected.

### Dissertation Organization

This dissertation is organized into two parts. The first part, consisting of Chapters 1 through 5, will explore persistent myths about the Canadian participation in the Battle of Hong Kong. In the vein of *Zombie Myths of Australian Military History*, I will offer analytical scholarship about each myth to counter false assertions. The second part explores the legacy itself and will examine the events and processes of how the myths were created and why they have developed such strong staying power.

Chapter 1 is framed around the myth that because Canadians had no connection to Hong Kong, they should not have been there to defend it. This claim will be dispelled by examining the strong relationship between the Canadian and British armies and how this situation offers a

---

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 247–248.

<sup>131</sup> John Ferris, “‘Consistent with an Intention’: The Far East Combined Bureau and the Outbreak of the Pacific War, 1940–41,” *Intelligence and National Security* 27, no. 1, (2012): 10.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 26.

partial explanation as to why Canada accepted the request for its troops to garrison Hong Kong. Many senior Canadian officers, notably Generals Arthur Currie, Andrew McNaughton, and Harry Crerar, fought for stronger links to the British Empire. Some of these leaders took this position given a sense of duty to the Empire, others emphasized the connection for Canada's benefit. This connection had negative outcomes for Canada with the reinforcement of Hong Kong being one of the worst. Canada was not duped or betrayed by Britain into reinforcing Hong Kong. Rather, the ingrained sense of a connection to the British created blinders that influenced Canadian decision-making. This chapter establishes the long-term context surrounding the connection individuals felt toward the British Empire, a vital context oft absent in the literature about the battle.

Chapter 2 looks at the myth that as Hong Kong was deemed indefensible well before the Canadian reinforcement, "C" Force should not have been despatched. The changing of plans was a constant factor in the colony's defence. The Canadian reinforcement was one more in a long string of second guesses and political battles. Examining the defence planning for Hong Kong from 1841 to 1941 is crucial to understanding the Canadian reinforcement for events dating before the 1930s influenced this decision. The long-term context about why Hong Kong was reinforced in 1941 is lacking in other Canadian works on the topic, a troubling failure. Also, new information will be provided on the much lauded Grasett-Crerar meeting as well as British attempts to permanently acquire the New Territories. Further, I will provide fresh insights into the racially motivated defence policies in Hong Kong.

The Canadian acceptance of Britain's request to reinforce Hong Kong is the subject of Chapter 3 as some of the most persistent myths about the Battle of Hong Kong revolve around this topic. The decision has been presented as a cold-blooded sacrifice of troops so that the



Canadian government, or specific individuals, could benefit from the situation. To provide short-term context, all the major players involved in the decision and why they supported the reinforcement of Hong Kong will be investigated. A vital factor in the decision was the role of frustrated Canadian public opinion and a hectoring Canadian press that wished to see Canadian troops more involved in the war. Also, this chapter offers new insights related to the Canadian acceptance of the request. The debates surrounding the Hong Kong reinforcement were short in comparison to discussions on the Canadian garrisoning of other British-held possessions and territories, including the despatch of Canada's Second Division to Iceland in 1940. For the first time in a work about the Battle of Hong Kong, the link between a series of articles in *The Globe and Mail* published over the summer of 1941 and King's decision to support the reinforcement will be examined. A deeper analysis of Ralston and Power's roles in creating "C" Force—one based on research, not conjecture—will be presented.

Chapter 4 will address the myth that the troops of "C" Force were poorly trained for combat. The selection of the Royal Rifles and Grenadiers became controversial because of this supposed lack of training, and therefore a new examination of the entire process of their selection and training is needed. As the literature on the course of events of the selection is confused and unclear, a correction will be provided. Political pressures and personal relationships that influenced this decision form a key part of the analysis in this chapter, notably C.G. Power's largely neglected role in the despatch process. The training of the Royal Rifles and Grenadiers will be examined in richer detail than any other previous work. The level of training and experience of the other soldiers who were added to these battalions to bring them up to strength also will be discussed in detail for the first time.

Chapter 5 explores two popular opposing myths related directly to “C” Force’s performance in the Battle of Hong Kong. In the first myth, Canadians are presented, mostly by non-Canadian popular history writers, as ill-disciplined fighters whose poor performance led to Hong Kong’s fall. In contrast, the second myth portrays the Canadians as the best fighters in the whole of the garrison, a notion pushed mostly by Canadian writers. Neither of these myths accurately represent reality. The troops of “C” Force were given a task that they carried out to the best of their abilities under difficult conditions. Kirstin J.H. Brathwaite’s combat effectiveness model, which assesses the willingness of the troops to fight plus their combat skills, is used to determine the Canadians’ fighting performance. This chapter will demonstrate that “C” Force’s performance did not rank below the other units that fought at Hong Kong, nor were Canadians superior to the other nationalities present in the garrison. A far more ambiguous conclusion on their performance will be offered in contrast to other works. Chapter 5 explores the battle in more detail than previous revisionists and makes use of new British sources on the Canadian performance in the battle.

Chapter 6 covers the Hong Kong Inquiry of 1942, which was the first major event to present several myths about the battle to the Canadian public. This will be the first comprehensive account of the Inquiry and its aftermath that is not part of the framework of another topic, such as biographical pieces on the Commissioner of the Inquiry and Chief Justice of the Supreme Court Lyman Duff. Many of the myths, notably British perfidy and claims of conspiracy to conceal the truth, began during the Inquiry. The origins and the processes of the Inquiry are covered in detail. The political events and actions tied directly to the Inquiry will receive attention, as will the press reaction to the Inquiry itself and its immediate fallout. Another

addition to the historiography is an analysis of Ralston's January 1942 investigation into the transport issues faced by "C" Force, a topic not well discussed elsewhere.

Chapter 7 looks at the legacy of the Battle of Hong Kong from the Second World War until the present. Over the decades, many individuals and groups presented the battle negatively for either political or personal gain. The protection of reputations and careers motivated the leaders of the garrison to record the history of the battle as quickly as possible in a way that was favourable to them. In relation to this war of reputations, Stacey's opposition to the release of an unedited Maltby Despatch will be investigated. The difficulties the veterans faced upon returning home and the lack of proper compensation and recognition from the government also will be considered, including new insights into the awarding of Pacific campaign pay to "C" Force members as well as various medical studies conducted about veterans' health. The media's impact on the legacy will also receive a thorough examination.

Finally, Chapter 8 examines *The Valour and the Horror's* overtly negative assertions, the controversy the series caused, and the battle's legacy after the series. The problematic nature of the McKenna brothers' series will be closely analyzed. An exploration of the errors relating to the battle made in "Savage Christmas" is missing from the literature, as the context behind the Canadian reinforcement received the majority of the scholarly attention. Such an analysis will be provided in this chapter. The various investigations by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and the Canadian Senate that the series spawned will be explained. The press reaction to the series will form an important part of the chapter, as will the academic revisionism that formed in direct response to the series' claims.

Perras has provided excellent insight into why "C" Force was sent to Hong Kong, which helps to frame a discussion of the battle's legacy: "They were big losers in this high stakes

wager, but their sacrifice was not futile. Had the gamble worked, a war with Japan might have been postponed until the West was in a better position to fight it or avoided entirely.”<sup>133</sup> “C” Force was not sent to Hong Kong with any malicious intent nor as a part of any grand conspiracy as many of the myths allege. The conditions existing at the time of the decision in September 1941, such as increasing British and American presence in the Far East aimed at deterring Japan, led to, in part, to the Canadian acceptance of the British request. Domestic factors also played an important role in the Canadian decision. While Hong Kong was a difficult place to defend, the efforts of the Canadian government, along with its allies, to deter Japan was a commendable action. This is unlikely to provide little solace to those who suffered at the hands of the Japanese or lost loved ones but re-examining the Battle of Hong Kong, but such a line of discussion allows the myths about the battle to be challenged by providing a starting point to correct the overarching negativity that clouds the perceptions of the battle in Canada.

This dissertation attempts to answer the question why the focus on the Battle of Hong Kong has been mostly negative. To accomplish this goal, I will integrate numerous new findings related to the battle and its legacy to revise standard views and perceptions of it. My conclusions bring much needed nuance to the existing historiography of the battle. A proper academic study of the battle’s legacy does not yet exist. The intention behind this work is to provide such a study. It is not intended to be a sweeping account of all the events related to the battle but a revisionist effort to deal with myths, false claims, and misunderstandings that so often appear in popular works and media. The legacy of the Battle of Hong Kong in Canada is overwhelmingly negative in the collective memory of Canadians due to the widespread nature of the myths surrounding the defeat. To correct this situation, the myths must be first understood and

---

<sup>133</sup> Perras, “Our Position in the Far East would be Stronger without this Unsatisfactory Commitment,” 259.

dismissed with proper academic study. Such a change will create a more positive legacy for the Battle of Hong Kong in Canada, which will in turn improve our understanding of the battle and offer a guide for further study into Canadian defeats in the Second World War.

## PART I: MYTHS ABOUT THE BATTLE OF HONG KONG

Apparently, myths become truths if upheld long enough.<sup>1</sup>  
—Eric Chaisson, American astrophysicist

Myths plague our understanding of history, invading our collective memory to push agendas and steering the direction of the discourse. They often carry an air of legitimacy based upon how they are delivered and who is discussing them. Military history is particularly susceptible to historical myths as the confusion of battle, the desire to protect reputations, the tragic loss of human life, plus nationalism are just some of the elements that often cloud our historical understanding. Furthermore, myths often are spread through popular and academic history, furthering their reach and entrenching them in the collective memory. The legacy of the Battle of Hong Kong suffers greatly from this combination of influences.

Historians must do all they can to correct myths and falsehoods. As such, the Battle of Hong Kong needs a re-examination. Myths associated with the battle can only be challenged when they are corrected. The first part of this dissertation will do just that. The legacy of the battle cannot be changed until the myths are dispelled. Canada's role in the Battle of Hong Kong should not be seen as a national shame, a symbol of gross government incompetence in war, or another episode in the long-running series of anti-British antagonisms in Canadian military history. To move forward with our understanding of the Battle of Hong Kong and Canada's early involvement in the Second World War, these myths must be deprived of their power.

---

<sup>1</sup> Eric Chaisson, *Epic of Evolution: Seven Ages of the Cosmos* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 418.

## CHAPTER 1

### **BRITISH THROUGH AND THROUGH: CANADIAN-BRITISH MILITARY RELATIONS PRIOR TO THE REINFORCEMENT OF HONG KONG 1914–1941**

One of the most persistent myths about Canada's participation in the Battle of Hong Kong is that because Canada had little or no connection to the British Empire in the Far East, Canadian willingness to reinforce Hong Kong was unnecessary and wrong. For Nathan Greenfield, "the defence of Britain's Asian Empire did not loom large in the Canadian consciousness as Europe lurched toward the Second World War."<sup>1</sup> While this may be technically true, especially in Canadian government circles, the need to buttress empire defence was an important consideration for Canadian Army leaders who, believing that Canada had a strong connection to Britain, acted accordingly, sometimes to Canada's advantage. But the imperial bond was so strong that Canadian officers felt no need to independently assess situations for British and Canadian interests were explicitly linked. Carl Vincent demonstrated that connection, seemingly without realizing it:

Of all possible theatres of employment for Canadian troops, the last to cross anyone's mind before the summer of 1941 would probably have been Hong Kong. Anyone, that is, except for one man, Major General A.E. Grasett, former General Officer Commanding at Hong Kong. The twin circumstances of his Canadian birth and his responsibility for the defence of Hong Kong between November 1938 and July 1941 can be held largely responsible for the chain of events culminating in the despatch of Canadian troops to the colony.<sup>2</sup>

But Greenfield and Vincent have ignored the connection that many Canadians, including important decision-makers in the Canadian military and government, felt toward the British Empire. Even the authors of the companion book to *The Valour and the Horror* recognized the

---

<sup>1</sup> Nathan M. Greenfield, *The Damned: The Canadians at the Battle of Hong Kong and the POW Experience, 1941–45* (Toronto: Harper Collins, 2010), 8.

<sup>2</sup> Carl Vincent, *No Reason Why: The Canadian Hong Kong Tragedy, An Examination* (Stittsville, Ontario: Canada's Wings, 1981), 24.

vital factors behind the decision by calling the encounter between General Harry Crerar and Grasett, an “old boys meeting.”<sup>3</sup> Grasett’s suggestion that Canadians could reinforce Hong Kong would have had little power but for the strong sentiment many Canadians had for Britain.

I contend that the decision to send Canadian troops to Hong Kong demonstrates that the connections between the Canadian and British armies ran deep as they were the part of a bedrock of pro-British Canadian imperialism. Canadian historian Douglas Delaney argued that the British War Office, after the South African War, wanted the armies of Britain, India, and the dominions to be trained and equipped similarly to permit better battlefield cooperation. This “imperial army project,” Delaney believed, in the long term, “can hardly be viewed as anything but a success.”<sup>4</sup> Though that conclusion is not disputed here, Delaney did not discuss the negatives that befell the dominions, notably Canada’s overreliance on British intelligence to reach a decision on the Hong Kong reinforcement. The connection to Britain created a form of mental paralysis that limited Canadian military thinking. This chapter will explore how this mindset developed by examining the letters and writings of many key leaders of the Canadian Army, including those involved in the decision to send Canadians to Hong Kong.

### Canada’s Connection to Britain

The connection that many Canadian officers felt for Britain was complicated by much nuance in opinion and reality. The notion of a growing Canadian identity, one increasingly separate from Britain, was born on the bloody battlefields of France and Flanders in the First World War. The majority of those who influenced Canada’s interwar army, and were directly involved in the Hong Kong decision, experienced these events firsthand. Despite the power that

---

<sup>3</sup> Merrily Weisbord and Marilyn Simonds Mohr, *The Valour and the Horror: The Untold Story of Canadians in the Second World War* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 1991), 13.

<sup>4</sup> Douglas E. Delaney, *The Imperial Army Project: Britain and the Land Forces of the Dominions and India, 1902–1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 5, 305.



this legend of growing Canadian nationalism gained in the decades after the war, a strong Canadian emotional and intellectual connection with Britain did not simply disappear once the guns fell silent in Europe. Carl Berger's *Sense of Power* provides an excellent framework to examine why some Canadians felt a strong link to Britain even as such ties were supposedly waning. Berger argued that in the Canadian context, from 1867 to 1914, imperialism meant a "movement for the closer union of the British Empire through economic and military co-operation and through political changes which would give the dominions influence over imperial policy."<sup>5</sup> But this effort failed, as Canada and Britain did not become closer during this period, with Berger concluding that "the First World War killed" Canadian imperialism. The intellectual underpinnings of Canadian imperialism did not simply disappear thanks to the war. Berger recognized this fact, claiming that while it was easier to date the end of Canadian political imperialism, no one event or time marked the death of the "imperial ideal in Canada."<sup>6</sup> Canadian writer George Grant argued that one outcome of the Western Front's carnage "was to destroy Great Britain as an alternative pull in Canadian life."<sup>7</sup> But the ideas of closer ties to Britain lived well past the Great War in the Canadian Army, producing many instances of subservience during the interwar period, even though many politicians worked to increase Canadian political independence from Britain. Discussing the interwar years in his memoirs, General Maurice Pope commented that "Our army was indeed British through and through with only minor differences imposed on us by purely local conditions."<sup>8</sup> This statement became even more true once war broke out in 1939.

---

<sup>5</sup> Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism 1867–1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 3.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 264–265.

<sup>7</sup> George Grant, *Lament for a Nation: The Defeat of Canadian Nationalism* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1965), 72.

<sup>8</sup> Maurice Pope, *Soldiers and Politicians: The Memoirs of Lt.-Gen. Maurice A. Pope*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962), 53.

Understanding how Canadian Army officers felt about the British Empire and the British Army over their careers is required to understand the context behind the Canadian reinforcement of Hong Kong. Generals Arthur Currie, Andrew McNaughton, and Harry Crerar played an influential role in maintaining the pro-British Empire environment in the interwar Canadian Army. Currie, seeking some Canadian military independence during the First World War while still working within an imperial framework, set the stage for the officers that followed him. McNaughton has often been portrayed as a Canadian nationalist; Brigadier J. Sutherland “Buster” Brown labelled him a “little Canadian” given his reputed anti-imperialism.<sup>9</sup> Despite this pejorative misnomer, McNaughton remained pro-imperial through the interwar period. Historian J.L. Granatstein called Crerar “unquestionably the most important Canadian soldier of the [Second World] war, whose support for the British Empire is often argued as being stronger than his support for Canada.”<sup>10</sup> Despite this persistent myth, Crerar’s pro-imperial views often were motivated by the benefits that relationship offered to Canada. While not all of these leaders were involved in the decision to send Canadians to Hong Kong, they all had an influence upon the culture of the Canadian Army that still wanted to defend the British Empire, to a fault, in 1941.

#### Canadian-British Army Relations Prior to the First World War

For most of Canada’s history, British and Canadian military needs were seen as one, even when such support did nothing for Canada’s interests or even ran counter to them. The outpouring of support for the First World War was a prime example of this trend. Despite the strong connection to Britain, Canada sometimes sought to steer its own course in foreign policy and military affairs—often inconsistently and mainly in peacetime—since gaining its dominion

---

<sup>9</sup> Galen Roger Perras and Katrina E. Kellner, “‘A Perfectly Logical and Sensible Thing’: Billy Mitchell Advocates a Canadian-American Aerial Alliance against Japan” *The Journal of Military History* 72, no. 3 (2008): 814.

<sup>10</sup> J.L. Granatstein, *The Generals: The Canadian Army’s Senior Commanders in the Second World War* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1993), 83.

status in 1867. But Canada's independent streak only went so far for a true break from the British Empire was never a real possibility. Even as constitutional shifts occurred in the 1920s, opinions were slower to develop as demonstrated by the 1930s debate concerning whether Canada could be neutral if Britain was at war. Historian David A. Lenarcic has contended that imposing neutrality legislation on Britain in a possible war where Canada remained on the sideline "would have been exceedingly distasteful to the majority of Canadians who loyally revered their tie with the mother country, and for whom imperial solidarity in times of crisis was a given."<sup>11</sup>

The Canadian connection to the British Army began well before 1914. European regular troops, whether they were French or British, and Canadian militia had been responsible for Canada's defence from the earliest days of European colonization until after Canadian Confederation.<sup>12</sup> Prior to the 1770s, defence in British North America was a local responsibility. After the American Revolution, the British Army's influence on the Canadian militia intensified as Britain assumed responsibility for Canada's defence.<sup>13</sup> With Responsible Government's advent in the Province of Canada in 1849, questions arose about whether Britain or Canada was accountable to defend Canada, an unclear situation that extended past Confederation. Cooperation existed, such as the 1863 opening of schools of instruction for the militia that were taught by British regulars. After 1867, Canadians wanted to control their military forces while still relying on British protection. As historian Richard Preston has contended, "They [Canadians] wanted to eat their cake and keep it: to be free of British influence, but to have the

---

<sup>11</sup> David A. Lenarcic, "Bordering on War: A Comparison of Canadian and American Neutralist Sentiment during the 1930s," *American Review of Canadian Studies* 24, no. 2 (1994): 224–225.

<sup>12</sup> British troops remained at Halifax and Esquimalt. J.L. Granatstein, *Canada's Army: Waging War and Keeping the Peace* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 25.

<sup>13</sup> Desmond Morton, *Ministers and Generals: Politics and the Canadian Militia, 1868–1904* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 3.

backing of British strength.”<sup>14</sup> Concerns abounded that when the British regulars began to leave Canada in the 1870s, the bonds of Empire would be weakened. These fears were unfounded. As the Canadian Militia lacked experienced officers to run the defence organization efficiently, it relied on British officers.<sup>15</sup> In 1875, a British regular officer, Major-General Edward Selby Smyth, was named the General Officer Commanding of the Canadian Militia, the first in a long line of British officers tasked with running the Militia.<sup>16</sup> Canadians eagerly welcomed some of the British influence—such as regimental customs and dress, with highland uniforms being particularly popular—which remains to this day.<sup>17</sup>

Despite Canadian desire to be independent of Britain while relying on British protection, Confederation’s advent saw some Canadians wanting to take more responsibility for the country’s defence. George-Étienne Cartier, Canada’s first Minister of Militia and Defence, believed “that a state, if it wished to claim mastery in the conduct of its own affairs, must possess armed strength and control it.” Preston argued that Canada had different concerns than the rest of the Empire given its land border with the United States, concerns that created conflict within the Empire.<sup>18</sup> The oceanic nature of the British Empire naturally created a difference of focus between Canada and Britain, while Australia and New Zealand often strongly backed Britain’s position. The Canadian government had a more independent streak with its military, beginning in the early twentieth-century with the establishment of its own Militia Council in 1904.<sup>19</sup> Still, Canada towed the imperial line once the First World War began in 1914.

---

<sup>14</sup> Richard A. Preston, *Canada and “Imperial Defense”: A Study of the Origins of the British Commonwealth’s Defense Organization, 1867–1919* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), 44, 64.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 63, 80.

<sup>16</sup> Granatstein, *Canada’s Army*, 27.

<sup>17</sup> Preston, *Canada and “Imperial Defense”*, 217.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 54, xiii.

<sup>19</sup> Delaney, *The Imperial Army Project*, 34.

## The First World War

J.L. Granatstein has written that “the central shaping event of the Canadian army in the Second World War was the Great War of 1914–18.”<sup>20</sup> An understanding of the Canadian and British relationship in the First World War is an important foundation for an examination of Canadian actions during the interwar period and into the Second World War. One consequence of the Great War was that the Canadian Army began to distance itself, ever so slightly, from the British Army. While the Canadian Corps eventually played a vital role in the British Expeditionary Force (BEF), it simply was one corps amongst many others in the various British field armies. Canada’s famed war victories could not have been possible without the extensive support provided by both the British logistical and combat arms. Given agreements between the dominions and Britain about uniformity in Empire equipment and training achieved in 1907 and 1909, the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) was equipped and organized on the same lines as the British forces.<sup>21</sup> At the war’s start, as the Canadian military lacked experienced staff officers, British officers filled these important roles. As the war progressed, Canadians trained for staff positions, thus enhancing direct Canadian control over CEF’s operations. Such changes resulted in a rise in confidence of Canada’s ability to manage its own fighting forces. Canadian independence, asserted often during the war, culminated in the Statute of Westminster in 1931 which gave British dominions the option to independently control their foreign policy. Despite this monumental change, the bonds between the Canadian and British armies remained strong.

The CEF was very British in the early years of the First World War. Sixty–five percent of the other ranks in the first contingent were born in the British Isles or other parts of the British

---

<sup>20</sup> Granatstein, *The Generals*, 5.

<sup>21</sup> Delaney, *The Imperial Army Project*, 41, 74, 228.

Empire.<sup>22</sup> But many soldiers born and raised in Canada also considered themselves British. Maurice Pope, born of a French-Canadian mother and Ottawa-raised, believed that “having been brought up by one who has instilled into my boyish, and later my youthful mind that the county of Carleton in Ontario was as much a part of the King’s dominions as was the county of Surrey, I realized that a great hour had struck, and I resolved to do whatever lay in me to help the Mother Country in her hour of need.”<sup>23</sup> Pope was one of thousands who believed the First World War was Canada’s fight just as much as it was Britain’s.

The 1st Canadian Division’s first commander was British regular soldier Major-General E.A.H. Alderson.<sup>24</sup> He led the division through the Second Battle of Ypres in April 1915. Once the 2nd Division, led by Canadian Major-General Richard Turner, arrived in France in September 1915, the Canadian Corps was established under Alderson, while Arthur Currie took command of the 1st Division. The 2nd Division got its first taste of battle at the St. Eloi Craters in March 1916. After this Canadian attack failed, accusations of incompetence were levelled in the Canadian Corps. Alderson requested that Field Marshal Douglas Haig, BEF commander, remove Turner from divisional command. But fearing political repercussions in Canada and a string of resignations in the 2nd Division if he fired Turner, Haig instead replaced Alderson in December 1916 with British General Julian Byng.<sup>25</sup> This tableau demonstrated that while Canadian political considerations influenced the process, the British still had the ability to change the commander of the Canadians, with government acquiescence.

---

<sup>22</sup> G.W.L. Nicholson, *Official History of the Canadian Army in the First World War: Canadian Expeditionary Force 1914–1919*, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationery, 1962), 212–213.

<sup>23</sup> Pope, *Soldiers and Politicians*, 24.

<sup>24</sup> Nicholson, *Official History of the Canadian Army in the First World War*, 29.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 114, 145–147.

The attack on Vimy Ridge in April 1917, a seminal moment for increasing Canadian control over CEF operations, is much mythologized as the beginning of a distinct Canadian identity. Yet Vimy demonstrated the Canadian reliance on British arms and expertise for British officers held most of the key positions in the Canadian Corps, notably staff officers, thirty-one Britons to eighteen Canadians.<sup>26</sup> Seizing Vimy Ridge could not have been achieved without major British support. Major Alan Brooke, later Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS), was loaned to the Canadian Corps.<sup>27</sup> He planned and is credited for the famed creeping barrage for the attack on Vimy Ridge, with the bombardment being “very largely [his] show.”<sup>28</sup> Numerous British artillery batteries were attached to the Canadian Corps, while the 51st Highland Division advanced on the right flank of the Corps. Thus, Canada’s most famous victories was not possible without substantial British assistance.

Many Canadians advanced through the ranks of the Canadian Corps by 1917, bringing them into closer contact with British officers. McNaughton was appointed the Counter Battery Staff Officer of the Canadian Corps in January 1917.<sup>29</sup> The counter-battery office was often visited by future CIGSs, such as John Dill, General Staff Officer (GSO) 2nd Grade for the Canadian Corps from October 1916 to January 1917, and Edmund Ironside, GSO 1st Grade of the 4th Division from 1916 to 1918.<sup>30</sup> Bonds between Canadian and British leaders were formed in the crucible of war. After Vimy Ridge, Canadian Corps commander General Julian Byng was promoted, and Canadian-born and trained Currie succeeded Byng. Indeed, Haig named Currie

---

<sup>26</sup> Ian F.W. Beckett, “A Question of Command: GHQ and the Dominions, 1917,” in *Turning Point 1917: The British Empire at War*, eds. Douglas E. Delaney and Nikolas Gardner (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017), 90.

<sup>27</sup> John Swettenham, *McNaughton Volume 1 1887–1939*, (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1968), 85.

<sup>28</sup> Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King’s College, London, Alanbrooke 2/1/10, “Letter from Col Horton 5 May 1917.”

<sup>29</sup> John Nelson Rickard, *The Politics of Command: Lieutenant-General A.G.L. McNaughton and the Canadian Army, 1939–1943* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 17.

<sup>30</sup> Swettenham, *McNaughton*, 75.

commander without the Canadian government's prior knowledge or permission, again demonstrating the control Britain retained over Canadian forces.<sup>31</sup>

Although Currie strongly backed close imperial connections during the war, this did not stop him from asserting Canadian independence on the battlefield. Initially ordered to attack the town of Lens, Currie, countering that a direct assault would be disastrous if Canadian troops did not hold the surrounding heights, suggested instead an assault on nearby Hill 70 followed by an attack on Lens. General Henry Horne, Currie's commander as the head of the First Army of the BEF, supported these changes. Haig agreed and Currie's plan was carried out in August 1917. While the Canadians captured Hill 70, the Canadian Corps failed to take all of Lens.<sup>32</sup> Currie tried to assert control again for the Third Battle of Ypres in October 1917. Hesitant to join the attack in Flanders given the battlefield's impassable morass, Currie could not convince Haig to change plans. Thus, the Corps was ordered to take Passchendaele and the heights beyond, a difficult task accomplished in early November 1917 but with heavy losses.

By early 1918, as attrition had reduced the number of troops available to the British Empire, it was necessary to cut the numbers of battalions in an infantry division. Currie faced intense pressure from the War Office to follow suit, even being enticed with an offer to command a Canadian field army. But Currie objected as this plan would weaken the Corps' divisions by reducing frontline troops while also dispersing the hard-won knowledge of the officers and non-commissioned officers too thinly. Delaney has argued that Currie's primary reason for the rejection of a field army command was that such a formation would diminish the efficiency of the staff work as more officers—despite a shortage—would be needed.<sup>33</sup> Official

---

<sup>31</sup> Nicholson, *Official History of the Canadian Army in the First World War*, 283.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 285–297.

<sup>33</sup> Delaney, *Imperial Army Project*, 157.



Canadian military historian Stephen Harris has contended that “Currie was also convinced that painstaking preparation and careful, realistic planning was necessary to save lives, and he would allow no one to tamper with his command if there was any risk of weakening his staff or destroying the fighting ability of the Canadian Corps.”<sup>34</sup> As the CEF did not face the manpower crisis afflicting the British Army, Currie instead wished to break up the 5th Division to add 100 men to each battalion, a suggestion that Haig approved.<sup>35</sup>

The German spring offensives of 1918 raised questions about the ultimate control over the CEF. While the Canadian government wanted the Canadian Corps’ divisions to remain together as a cohesive whole, “the general principles governing the relations between the Canadian and British forces were not fully laid down until 1918 when the memorandum there cited was sent to the War Office pointing out inter alia that the G.O.C. of the Canadian Corps was entirely responsible for its personnel and policy.”<sup>36</sup> However, as Currie could not prevent the Corps’ breakup, Canadian divisions were placed in other BEF Corps. The Canadian divisions were placed in a reserve role and did not see any combat. Once the crisis passed, the divisions returned to Currie’s command.<sup>37</sup>

The push across the Canal du Nord to Cambrai was another example of the assertion of Canadian independence. Currie devised a plan for the Canadian divisions to advance on a very narrow front before fanning out once across the canal. While Horne tried to block this plan, a confident Currie persisted and even Haig failed to change Currie’s mind. Currie later revealed that Byng came to see him a few days before the attack to read over the plans. While Byng

---

<sup>34</sup> Stephen J. Harris, *Canadian Brass: The Making of a Professional Army 1860–1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 124.

<sup>35</sup> Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC), A.W. Currie fonds, MG 30 E 100, “Memoranda and Reports, 1914–1933” series, volume 36, file “File 166 Proposed Reorganization of Canadian Corps 1918”, page 2.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, memorandum “Organization of the Canadian Corps in the Field”, page 1.

<sup>37</sup> Nicholson, *Official History of the Canadian Army in the First World War*, 379–382.

considered the proposal to be possible under the best circumstances, he remarked to Currie, “Old man, do you think you can do it?” Currie insisted that the plan would work.<sup>38</sup> The Canal du Nord plan demonstrated the Corps’ increasing ability to undertake staff work, but the Corps were still reliant on British support in other areas. The Canadian Corps’ engineers were joined by the sappers and pioneers of the 11th British Division for the needed rapid construction of bridges over the canal. Currie’s plan worked as the 4th Division took Bourslon Wood, while the 1st Division cleared areas north of the town of Bourslon.<sup>39</sup> Crossing the Canal du Nord was one of the finest planned and executed offensives conducted by the Canadian Corps, but it would not have been possible without British help.

#### British-Canadian Relations in the Aftermath of the First World War

In the First World War’s immediate aftermath, a growing Canadian national identity did not translate into a desire within the Canadian Army to distance itself from Britain. Currie did not believe that one must be either Canadian or British for such identities could co-exist. Despite holding such an opinion, Currie tried to create a separate identity for the Canadian Corps after the war. In a 26 November 1918 letter to Prime Minister Robert Borden, Currie declared that “we are British, certainly, and proud to be called such, but a certain section of the English press are evidently determined on a policy to ignore the word ‘Canadian.’” Certain the Canadian Corps was not receiving the proper amount of acclaim for its role in the Hundred Days Offensive due to this misidentification, Currie emphasized that the Canadians were the core of the attack at Amiens. As for the Hindenburg Line, Currie, having the British 4th Division under his

---

<sup>38</sup> Tim Cook, *Shock Troops: Canadians Fighting the Great War 1917–1918 Volume Two* (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2008), 506–507.

<sup>39</sup> Nicholson, *Official History of the Canadian Army in the First World War*, 444–448.

command, stressed to Borden that the Canadians broke the line.<sup>40</sup> British historian Ian F.W. Beckett concluded that the limits of imperial authority over the dominions during the war only went so far.<sup>41</sup> Though Beckett's argument has validity, the Canadian Army did not try to change the basis of its relationship with its British counterpart. Despite the trials of war, the Canadian Army did not stray far from its British origins.

Currie was appointed Inspector General and Military Counsellor of the Canadian Army after the war.<sup>42</sup> Seeking to retain hard-won battlefield lessons, Currie argued in December 1918 that "there are many men here who have given ample evidence of possessing outstanding military qualifications, and if the services of these are to be preserved for the militia in the future, they ought to be retained now. . ."<sup>43</sup> To support this core leadership group, the report suggested that Canadian officers be exchanged with counterparts from other parts of the Empire.<sup>44</sup> The sharing of knowledge was an important focus for Currie, but this goal required retaining experienced officers.<sup>45</sup> As Currie explained in January 1920, "with MacBrien, I intend to have Andrew McNaughton, our last G.O.C., H.A. I am doing this because I consider McNaughton invaluable in the matter of reorganization." Crerar and Pope also joined the Canadian Army on a permanent basis. Despite his best efforts, Currie could not retain as many officers as he would have preferred.<sup>46</sup> Having grown tired of the politics of Ottawa, he resigned in 1920.

---

<sup>40</sup> LAC, Currie fonds, MG 30 E 100, "Correspondence, 1915–1933" series, volume 1, file "General Correspondence 1915–18 A-F 1", letter from A.W. Currie to R.L. Borden, 26 November 1918, page 1–3, 5.

<sup>41</sup> Beckett, "A Question of Command," 94.

<sup>42</sup> Continuing the trend of complicated title changes this position was the same as the prewar Chief of General Staff of the Canadian Militia. Currie was the only one to hold this title.

<sup>43</sup> LAC, Currie fonds, MG 30 E 100, "Correspondence, 1915–1933" series, volume 2, file "General Correspondence 1915–18 S-Z 4", letter from A.W. Currie to W. Ridgway Wilson, 10 December 1918, page 2.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, page 3.

<sup>45</sup> LAC, Currie fonds, MG 30 E 100, "Memoranda and Reports, 1914–1933" series, volume 38, file "Memoranda and Reports, January-July 1919", memorandum "Canada's Future Military Policy Part II", page 2, 3, 1.

<sup>46</sup> LAC, Currie fonds, MG 30 E 100, "Correspondence, 1915–1933" series, volume 4, file "Correspondence General E-G 11", letter from A.W. Currie to George Farmer, 15 January 1920, page 1–3.

But Currie maintained relationships with many British and Canadian officers, hoping to preserve strong imperial links. In a 27 April 1925 letter to Haig, Currie remarked, “It will serve to give emphasis to the fact that British soldiers, no matter what part of the Empire is their home, are one in their service and in their loyalty to the Empire.”<sup>47</sup> As he wrote to Ironside in 1930, “you may not agree with me, but I have a conviction that some day the dominating force in the British Empire is going to be Canada.”<sup>48</sup> But while working towards a larger role for Canada within the Empire, Currie felt in 1919 that “the attitude of certain sections of the British press in their recent references to Canadians has done a great deal to destroy any spirit of comradeship that might have been generated on the battle-fields.” Also, he complained “no one has been more persistent than myself in preaching a doctrine of Imperial Unity, but I confess that recently I have some doubts as to whether I have the right sow by the ear.”<sup>49</sup> But wartime issues also hindered Currie’s plans for imperial unity. Writing to Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King in 1928 about wartime military executions, Currie blamed British commanders for the Canadian deaths as they controlled disciplinary action in the CEF. By contrast, the Australians had retained control of their capital punishment system. Currie blamed the British for bringing up this matter and causing problems in the “Imperial friendship.”<sup>50</sup> In 1926, as Currie vented to Crerar: “Perhaps I am wrong, but I sometimes get the impression that there are a goodly number of people in the Old Country who are anxious to maintain the status which existed before the war; that is, they wish the Mother Country to be sitting at the top, and on the tier below the Dominions.” Clearly, Currie was frustrated by the situation while still preferring a strong

---

<sup>47</sup> LAC, Currie fonds, MG 30 E 100, “Correspondence, 1915–1933” series, volume 10, file “Correspondence General H 29”, letter from A.W. Currie to Douglas Haig, 27 April 1925, page 1.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., file “Correspondence General I-J 30”, Letter from A.W. Currie to Edmund Ironside, 4 May 1930, page 2.

<sup>49</sup> LAC, Currie fonds, MG 30 E 100, “Correspondence, 1915–1933” series, volume 3, file “1919 Correspondence General A-H 6”, letter from A.W. Currie to A. Page Grubb, 18 July 1919.

<sup>50</sup> LAC, Currie fonds, MG 30 E 100, “Correspondence, 1915–1933” series, volume 10, file “Correspondence General K 31”, letter from A.W. Currie to W.L.M. King, 1 April 1925, page 1–2.

connection between Canada and the Empire. While Currie died in 1933, his influence on the pro-British culture of the Canadian Army was undeniable.

### The Canadian Army in the 1920s and 1930s

Canadian historian C.P. Champion has asserted correctly that “much of the historiography has obscured the continuing Britishness of Canadians in the inter-war years by depicting the Great War as a uniquely nationalizing experience, a transition to Canadianism or “coming of age” from colony to “nation forged in fire.”<sup>51</sup> As budget cuts in the interwar period posed a threat to the Canadian military’s existence, this ongoing connection to Britain was a lifeline. Stephen Harris has detailed the problem that faced Canadian Army leaders:

[General James] MacBrien [CGS from 1920–1927] understood that no matter how much goodwill might exist between the militia minister and his generals, or how sympathetic the minister was to the army, the overall support the armed forces could count on from the government depended ultimately on cabinet’s interest in defence questions and its general attitude toward the military.<sup>52</sup>

A tighter connection would allow Canadians to use British resources that could not be found in Canada. Discussing the absence of formal Anglo-Canadian defence planning in the interwar years, historian Norman Hillmer has commented that “the military relationship between the two countries was intimate and of long standing.”<sup>53</sup> This connection overcame the many difficulties that threatened to end it.<sup>54</sup>

### Canadians in the British Military Education System

One important lifeline in maintaining the bond with Britain was Canada’s continued use of the British military education system. As Canada’s military provided education only to

---

<sup>51</sup> C.P. Champion, *The Strange Demise of British Canada: The Liberals and Canadian Nationalism, 1964–1968* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010), 110.

<sup>52</sup> Harris, *Canadian Brass*, 145.

<sup>53</sup> Norman Hillmer “Defence and Ideology: The Anglo-Canadian Military ‘Alliance’ in the 1930s,” *International Journal* 33, no.3 (1978): 596.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 204.

undergraduates at the Royal Military College (RMC), Canada's Army relied on the British military education system for advanced training of its high-level officers. Many Canadian officers attended the staff colleges at Camberley in the United Kingdom and at Quetta in British India to train for staff positions.<sup>55</sup> Teaching methods included lectures, syndicate tutorials, subject-specific conferences, and discussions.<sup>56</sup> Those who passed were qualified as *psc* (passed staff college). The staff colleges allowed the Empire's armies to be on the same page. As Delaney has noted, "the dividend, as Canadian general A.G.L. McNaughton stated, was that 'we have gained the priceless advantage of knowing each other so well, of organizing our forces in the same way, of writing our orders in identical manner.'<sup>57</sup>

Many Second World War Canadian Army leaders attended staff college in the interwar period. McNaughton was among the first to do so. After serving as the Director of Military Training at National Defence Headquarters in Ottawa, McNaughton was selected to attend Camberley in 1921.<sup>58</sup> John Swettenham, McNaughton's official biographer, has written that McNaughton's friendship with John Dill began at Camberley. According to McNaughton's assessment report, he was classified as fit for all types of staff positions.<sup>59</sup> Maurice Pope, who went to staff college in 1924, recalled that dominion officers, getting better reports at Camberley as they were less harshly judged than their British peers, had pleasant experiences.<sup>60</sup> Attending Camberley in 1923, Crerar created more personal ties with the Empire's military leaders. After

---

<sup>55</sup> Paul Dickson, *A Thoroughly Canadian General: A Biography of General H.D.G. Crerar* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 73.

<sup>56</sup> Mark Frost, "The British and Indian Army Staff Colleges in the Interwar Years," in *Military Education and the British Empire, 1815–1949*, eds. Douglas E. Delaney, Robert C. Engen, and Meghan Fitzpatrick (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2018), 157–158.

<sup>57</sup> Douglas E. Delaney, *Corps Commanders: Five British and Canadian Generals at War, 1939–45* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 3–4.

<sup>58</sup> LAC, A.G.L. McNaughton fonds, MG 30 E 133, "Canadian Army Overseas, 1921, 1939–1944" series, volume 222, file "PA 10–4", General McNaughton Biographies, page 6.

<sup>59</sup> Swettenham, *McNaughton*, 193.

<sup>60</sup> Pope, *Soldiers and Politicians*, 54. Granatstein, *The Generals*, 16.

he completed staff college, Crerar was transferred to the War Office as GSO 2nd Grade in the section for home defence, the first Canadian appointed to this position after completing staff college.<sup>61</sup> This time gave him valuable insight into the British imperial defence planning.<sup>62</sup> Seeing great value in staff college work, Currie encouraged Captain Guy Simonds to attend, which Simonds did in 1938.<sup>63</sup> Other Canadian officers who were important to “C” Force and the Canadian Army generally in the Second World War attended staff college and worked in the War Office. Future “C” Force commander J.K. Lawson was the first Canadian to attend staff college at Quetta in 1923.<sup>64</sup>

Maurice Pope praised staff college during the Second World War for “the fact that in pre-war days many of our army officers had attended the Staff College in Camberley, had done an interchange trick at the War Office, or had spent a year at the Imperial Defence College [IDC], or better still, had done all three.”<sup>65</sup> Historian Mark Frost has concluded that “the staff colleges broadened the outlook of officers beyond the narrow confines of the regiment and helped them to develop their abilities in critical analysis, writing, clarity of expression, and thought—all vital competencies of a good staff officer. Crucially, the staff colleges gave select officers of the British, Indian, and dominion armies a common language of staff and command methods.” Ten percent of the 446 Canadian Army officers in 1939 had qualified as *psc*.<sup>66</sup> Author David Fraser has concluded that “in a small, peacetime army the fact that a generation of selected officers had the suffix ‘psc’. . .knew each other, and had been through the same mill, had produced something

---

<sup>61</sup> Dickson, *A Thoroughly Canadian General*, 73, 76. Delaney, *The Imperial Army Project*, 196.

<sup>62</sup> Dickson, *A Thoroughly Canadian General*, 78.

<sup>63</sup> LAC, H.D.G. Crerar fonds, MG30 E157, “Personal Correspondence, 1914–1964” series, volume 18, file “Personal Correspondence 1931–32”, letter from H.D.G. Crerar to G.G. Simonds, 12 January 1932. Granatstein, *The Generals*, 16.

<sup>64</sup> Tyler Wentzell, “Brigadier J.K. Lawson and Command of “C” Force at Hong Kong,” *Canadian Military History* 20, no. 2 (2011): 20.

<sup>65</sup> Pope, *Soldiers and Politicians*, 153.

<sup>66</sup> Frost, *British and Indian Army Staff Colleges*, 169, 164. Granatstein, *The Generals*, 8.

of a General Staff Corps in fact if not in name.”<sup>67</sup> While Fraser was referring to the British Army, the same can be said about all armies within the British Empire.

The complex situations engendered by the Great War incited the creation of the IDC to address the need to study the strategic problems created by modern warfare. The IDC’s first class, beginning on 15 January 1927, drew students from across the Empire. Working in groups of six to nine, students created solutions to a progressive series of problems about hypothetical wars and principles of war, culminating in a final general exercise on imperial defence.

McNaughton, part of the IDC’s first class, worked with Lieutenant-Colonel Alan F. Brooke of the British Army, Captain Ralph Leatham of the Royal Navy, and Lieutenant-Colonel Claude Auchinleck of the Indian Army on strategic questions.<sup>68</sup> McNaughton’s remarks in this exercise demonstrated his nationalist opinions. He believed Canadian representatives may not be sent to a reformed Joint Planning Committee (JPC) until a course of action had been decided in Ottawa.<sup>69</sup>

In a paper entitled “The Principles of Imperial Defence,” McNaughton took exception with the use of “Imperial” as Canadians identified that term with Britain and its “Imperial interests.”

McNaughton was not against parts of the Empire, or the Commonwealth as he preferred to call it, working together. But he wanted dominion interests acknowledge.<sup>70</sup> Although McNaughton put Canadian issues first while at the IDC, he was willing to operate within a broad imperial framework.

---

<sup>67</sup> David Fraser, *And We Shall Shock: The British Army in the Second World War* (London: Cassell Military Paperbacks, 2002), 103.

<sup>68</sup> Andrew Stewart, “‘Necessarily of an Experimental Character’: The Interwar Period and the Imperial Defence College,” in *Military Education and the British Empire, 1815–1949*, eds. Douglas E. Delaney, Robert C. Engen, and Meghan Fitzpatrick (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2018), 196, 198.

<sup>69</sup> LAC, McNaughton fonds, MG 30 E 133, “Inter-War Years, 1919–1939” series, volume 106, file “Imperial Defence College 1927 Notes”, Imperial Defence College Exercise No.10 The Higher Direction of War Problem No. 1 Syndicate No.1, page 5.

<sup>70</sup> LAC, McNaughton fonds, MG 30 E 133, “Inter-War Years, 1919–1939” series, volume 105, file “Imperial Defence College 1927 Notes”, Notes of A Debate on ‘The Principles of Imperial Defence’ Wednesday 26 October 1927, page 1–2.



McNaughton kept in touch with Canadian CGS Major-General H.C. Thacker while at the IDC. Wanting to strengthen liaison with the British Army, McNaughton pushed for a full-time Canadian military representative in London who would sit on the Committee of Imperial Defence in order to learn about new developments in technology and organization.<sup>71</sup> McNaughton communicated his positive experiences at the IDC to Thacker, stating that “the College of Imperial Defence closed on December 9th, 1927 and I think we, one and all, agreed that it has been a most useful and valuable experience.”<sup>72</sup> McNaughton valued the connections he made at the IDC and the War Office. In a letter to Major-General H.H.S. Knox, the War Office’s Director of Military Training, McNaughton wrote “you can rest assured that I will take full advantage of your kind offer of help and I look forward to having a hand in developing an ever increasing measure of co-operation with yourself and other old friends at the War Office.”<sup>73</sup> To Captain G.C. Dickens of the Royal Navy in March 1929, McNaughton remarked that he planned to continue corresponding with his IDC classmates “as it has important bearing on our keeping various component forces of the Empire in co-ordination.”<sup>74</sup>

Long desirous of the chance to attend the IDC, Crerar, in a 1933 letter to Lieutenant-Colonel Arthur Edward Grasett, Crerar’s classmate at RMC, admitted “I had hoped, perhaps unjustifiably, to attend the I.D.C. this year. Whatever chances I might have had, however, were interfered with by prospects of the Geneva Conference again requiring my expert presence. I have reason to believe that my name will come up for consideration for the next course, but I

---

<sup>71</sup> LAC, McNaughton fonds, MG 30 E 133, “Inter-War Years, 1919–1939” series, volume 106, file “Imperial Defence College Communication with Canadian Defence Headquarter 1927–1928”, letter from A.G.L. McNaughton to H.C. Thacker, 16 September 1927, page 2–3.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 16 December 1927 Letter from A.G.L. McNaughton to H.C. Thacker.

<sup>73</sup> LAC, McNaughton fonds, MG 30 E 133, “Inter-War Years, 1919–1939” series, volume 107, file “McNaughton, Personal Change of Appointment Correspondence 1928–1929”, letter from A.G.L. McNaughton to H.H.S. Knox, 22 January 1929.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 15 March 1929 Letter from A.G.L. McNaughton to G.C. Dickens, 1.

refuse to count upon this happening until I am actually on my way.”<sup>75</sup> Crerar did not have long to wait for he was accepted to the IDC in 1934. While there, Crerar worked on Hong Kong’s defence problem, giving him intimate knowledge of the colony’s defence plans and challenges.<sup>76</sup> Crerar received a favourable report from Ironside who noted that Crerar was a good student of inter-imperial relations.<sup>77</sup> Delaney has highlighted the importance of these personal connections as Brooke was on the IDC’s staff during Crerar’s time there.<sup>78</sup>

### McNaughton and Crerar’s Views on Britain in the Interwar Period

The interwar careers of McNaughton and Crerar offer key insights into how Britain was viewed within the Canadian Army. McNaughton’s views on Canadian nationalism and the British Empire were complex for they made him vulnerable to accusations that he was anti-British.<sup>79</sup> As historian John Nelson Rickard has noted about McNaughton, he “grew up in the midst of this Canadian enchantment with the Empire and could scarcely have ignored the influence of its wide-ranging accomplishments.”<sup>80</sup> While Crerar was serving in the War Office, he and McNaughton kept in touch. McNaughton often asked Crerar to promote better Canadian-British cooperation, as “I think what we now want more than anything else is an expanse of interchange throughout the Empire, but in this of course we are limited by finances.”<sup>81</sup> McNaughton asked Crerar to inquire within the War Office about having British officers who

---

<sup>75</sup> LAC, Crerar fonds, MG30 E157, “Personal Correspondence, 1914–1964” series, volume 18, file “Personal Correspondence 1933”, letter from H.D.G. Crerar to A.E. Grasett, 11 January 1933.

<sup>76</sup> Dickson, *A Thoroughly Canadian General*, 164.

<sup>77</sup> LAC, Crerar fonds, MG30 E157, “Chief of General Staff Files” series, volume 1, file “958C.009 (D3) CGS file 1440–41 – Appointments, Transfers, Reports etc to October 1939. Personal Correspondence Pertaining to Appointments transfers, etc.”, Imperial Defence College Confidential Report on Lieut.Col. H.D.G. Crerar, 13 December 1934

<sup>78</sup> Delaney, *The Imperial Army Project*, 193–194.

<sup>79</sup> Perras and Kellner, “A Perfectly Logical and Sensible Thing,” 814.

<sup>80</sup> Rickard, *The Politics of Command*, 13.

<sup>81</sup> LAC, Crerar fonds, MG30 E157, “Personal Correspondence, 1914–1964” series, volume 22, file “958C.009 (D335) General Crerar’s Personal Papers – Appointments, Transfers, Reports. October 1939-March 1942”, letter from A.G.L. McNaughton to H.D.G Crerar, 5 August 1925, page 1.

were passing through Canada for postings elsewhere to visit Ottawa. McNaughton “only wish[ed] that more officers, either going out or returning would give us a chance to see them. . .It helps to maintain a good liaison and besides we obtain much information of value.”<sup>82</sup>

McNaughton understood that co-operation between the British and Canadian armies would be mutually beneficial if the lessons of the past were not to be forgotten. In a 13 November 1934 letter to A.F. Lascelles, Secretary to Governor-General Earl of Bessborough, McNaughton explained:

All my experience points to the necessity of informing the officers both of our own and of the British Service on the important principles which have governed our actions in defence in the past. I feel strongly that if we neglect these principles which have developed from historical experience we court disaster and I feel also that if they are observed there should be no especial difficulty in arranging co-operation in defence matters within the Commonwealth as may be required.<sup>83</sup>

McNaughton’s work to strengthen ties with Britain, which included providing benefits to Britain, demonstrated that he was not anti-British.

During the First World War, Crerar had sported an ambivalent attitude toward individual British soldiers but not the British Army in the abstract.<sup>84</sup> Crerar’s work in the War Office during the interwar years influenced his views on the British Army. Despite the growing connections Crerar made in Britain, he kept Canadian defence as his focus. Writing to Canada’s Minister of Defence about comments the British Secretary of State had made about imperial military organization, Crerar remarked “it is true that this secondary requirement [an expeditionary force] in a technical sense, entails a maximum similarity between the Canadian forces and other Empire forces, in matter of organization, training and equipment. But the degree of its attainment must

---

<sup>82</sup> LAC, Crerar fonds, MG30 E157, “Personal Correspondence, 1914–1964” series, volume 22, file “Semi-Official War Office”, letter from A.G.L. McNaughton to H.D.G. Crerar, 22 July 1926, page 1.

<sup>83</sup> LAC, McNaughton fonds, MG 30 E 133 II, “Inter-War Years, 1919–1939” series, volume 14, file “Earl of Bessborough 1931–”, letter from A.G.L. McNaughton to A.F. Lascelles, 13 November 1934.

<sup>84</sup> Dickson, *A Thoroughly Canadian General*, 36.

obviously be conditioned by the necessities of the primary responsibility of 'home defence.'"<sup>85</sup>

Crerar believed the War Office should prioritize dominion requests for interchange as the dominions possessed smaller permanent forces.<sup>86</sup> When Crerar favoured Britain, it stemmed from external factors, not because he held a Britain-first belief. Crerar told McNaughton in 1925 that when there was a conflict between his ad hoc role of Canadian military representative and a staffer at the War Office, he leaned to the latter for he was in Britain to occupy that position, not acting as a representative of Canada.<sup>87</sup>

In August 1926, Crerar gave a lecture to the Royal United Service Institution about making closer connections between the military forces of the British Empire. Focusing on the human aspect of imperial relations, he claimed that the human side had lost ground to material concerns after 1918, a problem in need of correction. Political considerations informed Crerar's opinions for imperial defence and politics could not be separated. While all imperial leaders supposedly supported Empire unity, they differed as to what it should look like. Crerar suggested that developing closer military ties would solve this problem for "it is not enough that the Imperial Forces should be allies. We must make them far more than that; they must be parts of one and the same imperial army." Further, "speaking as an officer of the 1st Canadian Division and later of the Canadian Corps Headquarters, I can say that we counted the British officers who served with us as part of our organization, and the Canadian formations as an integral part of the Imperial Forces as a whole, and this was quite as it should have been." The First World War's lessons would bolster the human element of better Empire cooperation. Regimental alliances

---

<sup>85</sup> LAC, Crerar fonds, MG30 E157, "Chief of General Staff Files" series, volume 11, file "Observations re S. of S. for War (UK) statement re future Organization British Army. (HDGC to Minister)", letter from H.D.G. Crerar to Defence Minister, 14 March 1938, page 3.

<sup>86</sup> LAC, Crerar fonds, MG30 E157, "Personal Correspondence, 1914-1964" series, volume 22, file "Personal Correspondence Semi-Official", letter from H.D.G. Crerar to T.V. Anderson, 5 February 1926, page 2.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, letter from H.D.G. Crerar to A.G.L. McNaughton, 23 May 1925.

could help solve the problem for officers could be exchanged or sent to train with their affiliated regiments in Canada or Britain. Crerar claimed that inter-regimental liaison was “an expression of Imperial esprit de corps which brushes aside the barriers of distance. It is a real basis for the development of a common spiritual link connecting the Imperial Forces as a whole.”<sup>88</sup>

Crerar did not foresee future conflict endangering imperial unity: “When war again threatens, however, I feel certain that Imperial politics, as in the past, will operate on one straight forward line: there will be no divergence.”<sup>89</sup> Even as the dominions acquired more autonomy within the Empire, Crerar lectured about the need for closer intra-imperial military relations just months before King was re-elected Prime Minister in September 1926. As Crerar’s position directly opposed King’s more suspicious view of imperial relations, Delaney recounted that “he was suitably upbraided for his public pronouncement, as pretty much any dominion soldier would have been for overstepping bounds and advocating what amounted to an ‘imperial’ policy for defence.”<sup>90</sup> In 1937, writing to Lieutenant-Colonel E.L.M. Burns about officers being forbidden to speak publicly about political or strategic issues, Crerar wanted that order lifted so officers could learn more about Canadian defence requirements.<sup>91</sup>

Crerar continued to offer his opinions on Canadian defence into the 1930s, including writing an article in 1938 under the pseudonym of “Canuck” for *Canadian Defence Quarterly*.<sup>92</sup> Crerar was aware of Canada’s dependence on British protection in the times of war and peace as

---

<sup>88</sup> H.D.G. Crerar, “The Development of Closer Relations between the Military Forces of the Empire,” *The Journal of the Royal United Service Institution* 71, no. 483 (1926): 446, 442, 445, 451.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 453.

<sup>90</sup> Delaney, *The Imperial Army Project*, 183.

<sup>91</sup> LAC, Crerar fonds, MG30 E157, “Personal Correspondence, 1914–1964” series, volume 18, file “958C.009 (D381) General Crerar’s Personal Correspondence 1935, 1936 and 1937”, letter from H.D.G. Crerar to E.L.M. Burns, 4 January 1937.

<sup>92</sup> Roger Sarty, “How C.P. Stacey Became the Army’s Official Historian: The Writing of *The Military Problems of Canada. 1937–1940*,” in *Canada and the Second World War: Essays in Honour of Terry Copp*, eds. Geoffrey Hayes, Mike Bechthold, and Matt Symes (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University, 2012), 146.

defence on Canada's east coast relied on the distance from Europe that Atlantic Ocean provided and the Royal Navy. His predictions for future conflict took positive sentiment toward the British Empire into account:

In the event of such a war the Canadian people would unquestionably demand that their vital interests be defended, hence the primary role of Canada's defence forces is the defence of such interests (direct defence). But, the Canadian people might demand intervention overseas as they did in 1899 and 1914. In present conditions it is impossible to say how the Canadian people may react to some future event. Any sane individual will and must recognize, however that a demand for intervention on the basis of sentiment, interest or principle, is a possibility of the future. If so, it would seem that some means to implement such a demand on the part of the public should be maintained.<sup>93</sup>

While its strong connections with Britain might draw Canada into a war, Crerar believed those connections also helped the Canadian Army financially given the lack of funding from the Canadian government. In a 24 June 1935 letter to British politician Malcolm MacDonald, Crerar averred that "one does not need to live within the Empire, however, to realize that in the strength and continuing growth of that curious organization lies the best hope of a peaceful solution to many of the world's difficulties."<sup>94</sup> Writing to Colonel H.G. Eady of the War Office, Crerar noted:

And while I do not for a moment anticipate that any Canadian Government of the day will commit itself to participation in overseas military operations before those operations are upon us, I do foresee a gradual understanding on the part of French Canadians, as well as the Anglo-Saxon variety, that the security of Canada is inseparably connected with the maintenance of the Empire in general, and Great Britain in particular, and that close liaison in questions of defence is an obvious necessity.<sup>95</sup>

---

<sup>93</sup> LAC, Crerar fonds, MG30 E157, "Royal Military College Files, 1914–1939" series, volume 11, file "The Problems of Canada Defence By 'Canuck'", pages 9, 14.

<sup>94</sup> LAC, Crerar fonds, MG30 E157, "Personal Correspondence, 1914–1964" series, volume 18, file "958C.009 (D381) General Crerar's Personal Correspondence 1935, 1936 and 1937", letter from H.D.G. Crerar to Malcolm MacDonald, 24 June 1935.

<sup>95</sup> LAC, Crerar fonds, MG30 E157, "Royal Military College Files, 1914–1939" series, volume 10, file "Liaison with Col. H.G. Eady, M.C., The War Office", letter from H.D.G. Crerar to H.G. Eady, 10 March 1938.

Crerar was aware that Canadian support for the Empire was reliant on several factors. In a letter to Major-General R.H. Haining of the IDC, Crerar opined that “the strength of the Empire is largely based on sentiment—sentiment does not operate in peace. It comes to full force in war, however. Therefore definition of a Canadian on Imperial questions of this vital nature should not be sought in advance of the crisis should Imperial unity at the commencement of that period be the aim.”<sup>96</sup> But Crerar knew that Canada’s Army required much more than sentiment to survive.

Crerar attempted to influence imperial relations by supporting the pro-Empire side of the intellectual debate in Canada in the 1930s. Crerar encouraged the future official Canadian Army historian C.P. Stacey to emphasize close relations with Britain, notably *The Military Problems of Canada*, which Stacey wrote from 1937 to 1940.<sup>97</sup> This was not the first work that Stacey had written about the Canadian-British relationship. In a 1930 article for the *Canadian Defence Quarterly*, Stacey had discussed the growing disconnect between Canadian political independence and dominion reliance on British military protection.<sup>98</sup> Also desiring a stronger rearmament program and maintaining close ties to Britain, Stacey led the Historical Section of the Canadian Army by 1940 in part due to his relationship with Crerar.<sup>99</sup> As historian Roger Sarty has argued, by writing *The Military Problems of Canada*, Stacey was “engaged in nothing less than a campaign to preserve Canada’s ties to Great Britain,” a view that aligned with Crerar’s objectives.<sup>100</sup> That relationship led official Canadian military historian Brereton Greenhous to charge that Crerar “had been a Crerar protégé since 1940, and he owed his appointment as official historian to Crerar, who was still alive at the time.” Greenhous blamed

---

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 22 June 1936 Letter from H.D.G. Crerar to R.H. Haining.

<sup>97</sup> Dickson, *A Thoroughly Canadian General*, 116.

<sup>98</sup> Sarty, “How C.P. Stacey Became the Army’s Official Historian,” 141.

<sup>99</sup> C.P. Stacey, *A Date with History: Memoirs of a Canadian Historian* (Ottawa: Deneau Publishers, 1983), 63.

<sup>100</sup> Sarty, “How C.P. Stacey Became the Army’s Official Historian,” 139.

Crerar for the decision to send the troops to Hong Kong and accused Stacey of being afraid to question Crerar.<sup>101</sup> Some of this criticism is warranted. But as will be explored later, since the decision did not solely rest with Crerar, nor should all the criticism fall upon him.

### Conclusion

Many who have written on Hong Kong believe that Canadian political and military leaders did not think much about the defence of the British Empire. But the process that led to the Canadian troops being sent to Hong Kong in 1941 shows this was not the case. In this chapter, I have demonstrated the strong connections between British and Canadian Army officers, something that few writers have noted in their accounts about the Battle for Hong Kong. But while Greenhous and Vincent have painted Crerar as a pro-British sycophant, he was far more. Rather, Crerar was much influenced by Canada's link to Britain, and this line of thinking had a direct effect on his decision to support Hong Kong's reinforcement. Crerar gave his recommendation after years of working in the British Army establishment, engaging in debate and discussion on imperial defence and working to further Canada's military link to the British Empire. Other important individuals such as Currie and McNaughton worked to strengthen Canada's ties to Britain after the Great War. Though their enthusiasm varied, one commonality was support for the Empire. Through their experiences in the First World War and their time at the staff colleges and the IDC, these Canadian officers favoured maintaining a strong relationship with Britain, something that often directly contradicted the wishes of Canadian politicians. The Canadian Army had gained some autonomy in the First World War. Said autonomy, however, did not mean that the Canadian Army was unwilling to fight for British imperial goals in another major war.

---

<sup>101</sup> Brereton Greenhous, *"C" Force to Hong Kong: A Canadian Catastrophe, 1941–1945* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1997), 19.



## CHAPTER 2

### TO BE HELD AS LONG AS POSSIBLE: DEFENCE PLANNING FOR HONG KONG 1841–1941

Hong Kong's defensibility in 1941 is one of the most misunderstood elements in the Canadian literature about the battle. Myth makes assumed that because Hong Kong was deemed indefensible before late 1941, "C" Force should never have been sent to that beleaguered colonial outpost. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill assessment, made in January 1941, is often used to make this case: "This is all wrong. If Japan goes to war with us there is not the slightest chance of holding Hong Kong or relieving it. It is most unwise to increase the loss we shall suffer there. Instead of increasing the garrison it ought to be reduced to a symbolic scale."<sup>1</sup> Indeed, as journalist Kevin Lui used Churchill's comments in 2017 to conclude that "over 2,000 people from Allied nations died trying to protect an outpost that, according to Winston Churchill in January that year, had 'not the slightest chance' of being retained if war with Japan broke out. Seen in this light, the Canadians, and other defenders, were doomed from the start and Churchill's motives have been scrutinized ever since."<sup>2</sup> But British perceptions of the defence of Hong Kong were far more fluid than is often presented, with opinions changing until September 1941. One of the more important myth makers, Carl Vincent, falsely claimed that "never mentioned was that at all times the British Chief of Staff had viewed Hong Kong incapable of a prolonged defence or of being relieved."<sup>3</sup> As I aver in this chapter, someone, whether in Hong Kong or in Britain, always wanted to defend the colony no matter the circumstances. The

---

<sup>1</sup> Winston Churchill, *The Second World War: The Grand Alliance* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1951), 177.

<sup>2</sup> Kevin Lui, "How Untrained Canadian Troops Fought and Died in the Defense of Hong Kong," *Time Magazine*, 17 January 2017, <https://time.com/4635638/battle-of-hong-kong-canada-winnipeg-grenadiers-royal-rifles/>.

<sup>3</sup> Legion Magazine Staff, "Face To Face: Should The Canadian Government Have Sent Troops To Hong Kong?" *Legion Magazine*, 1 January 2015, <https://legionmagazine.com/en/2015/01/face-to-face-should-the-canadian-government-have-sent-troops-to-hong-kong/>.

thoughts of those residing in the colony about Hong Kong's defence is little studied in previous works on the battle. The zombie myth about a lack of fluidity in the thinking of Hong Kong's defence until the 19 September 1941 request for Canadian troops cannot stand.

Hong Kong Historian Tony Banham has claimed that the Battle of Hong Kong is "a far longer and vastly more complex story than that bracketed by the years 1941–1945."<sup>4</sup> That insight helps to frame this chapter as two themes emerge when studying the long history of Hong Kong's defence. The first theme was the failure of policymakers to heed recommendations made by those in the colony. The second theme concerns the need to maintain British imperial prestige by possessing Hong Kong. The fear of lost prestige should Hong Kong fall often seemed stronger than the actual benefits to be derived from defending the colony. As such, many wanted to defend Hong Kong, for a variety of reasons, until the Japanese attack in December 1941. Also in this chapter, I will demonstrate that the connections between members of the British and Canadian armies discussed in Chapter 1 influenced defence planning for Hong Kong.

#### The Establishment of the British Colony at Hong Kong and Its Early Defence

Britain's colony at Hong Kong began thanks to the opium poppy. A growing demand for Chinese tea in Britain produced a silver deficit in favour of the Chinese who lacked interest in purchasing British goods. The drug's negative effects led to it being banned by the Qing government in the early nineteenth century. In 1839, when Chinese officials demanded that British merchants hand over their illegal opium stock, the British initiated the First Opium War which produced a decisive British victory and the Qing ceding control of Hong Kong Island in the 1842 Treaty of Nanjing, the first of the unequal treaties that began China's "century of

---

<sup>4</sup> Tony Banham, "A Historiography of C Force," *Canadian Military History* 24, no. 2 (2015): 254.

humiliation.”<sup>5</sup> Further disputes about opium’s legalization plus a British and French desire to renegotiate the initial treaties incited a second conflict. British forces occupied the Kowloon Peninsula in March 1860 in retaliation for the breakdown of treaty negotiations. After the Second Opium War ended, China transferred Kowloon Peninsula and Stonecutters Island to British control in January 1861.<sup>6</sup> By the 1870s, two committees were convened to study the colony’s defence. The Milne Committee of 1878 concluded that Britain would lose face in China and India if Hong Kong were lost. A year later, the Carnarvon Committee was commissioned to broadly examine imperial defence. Both the War Office and the Local Defence Committee wanted to install more coastal batteries to protect against naval attack and to build more infantry positions. These coastal guns worked as a deterrence against a major naval attack on the south side of the island until December 1941.<sup>7</sup> While Colonel William Crossman’s plan had similar provisions, he wished to protect the communication line between the two batteries on the mainland with artillery pieces. As Hong Kong historians Kwong Chi Man and Tsoi Yiu Lun have observed, this was arguably the first attempt to form a defensive position across Kowloon Peninsula to repel a landward attack. Many of the recommendations from either the Milne or Carnarvon Committees were not enacted given budgetary restrictions and the lack of a serious land threat to Hong Kong.<sup>8</sup>

The struggle to maintain the colony’s sea and land defences defined the efforts of the 1880s and 1890s. In a 25 November 1889 response to a report by the Local Hong Kong Committee, the Colonial Defence Committee contended that Hong Kong’s strategic importance

---

<sup>5</sup> Kwong Chi Man and Tsoi Yiu Lun, *Eastern Fortress: A Military History of Hong Kong, 1840–1970* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2015), 10. Rana Mitter, *Forgotten Ally: China’s World War II, 1937–1945* (Boston: Mariner Books, 2014), 29.

<sup>6</sup> Kwong and Tsoi, *Eastern Fortress*, 15.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 55, 223.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 27, 29, 31.

“arses from the fact that it is the only naval base from which British commerce and interests in the China Seas can be guarded, or from which hostile operations against Russia, France, China, and Japan can be carried on.”<sup>9</sup> Concerned by growing French and Russian fleets in the Far East, the Local Committee argued that defeating a naval attack on Hong Kong would be exceedingly difficult. The possibility that a force might land on Hong Kong Island was discounted for the Island was thought to be susceptible to attack only from the southern approach, not from the mainland.<sup>10</sup> Lack of concern about a land attack proved short-lived. On 28 August 1890, the Colonial Defence Committee raised concerns that there was no plan to defend against a land attack and the present garrison was weak.<sup>11</sup>

Japan’s victory in the First Sino-Japanese War in April 1895 forced the Colonial Defence Committee to note that July that “the Japanese Empire will now have to be included in the list of possible hostile Powers affecting the strategical conditions of Hong Kong.” Aware of the limitations of the land force, the Committee recommended that the garrison not oppose a landing on the Island. Instead, most troops should be concentrated on the high ground under the General Officer Commanding (GOC), with the gaps between hills to be protected by machine guns and artillery. Despite the lack of manpower, some officers argued that the colony would be better protected by controlling the land north of the Kowloon Peninsula.<sup>12</sup> Britain acquired the New Territories on the Chinese mainland in 1898 to better protect Hong Kong Island and its vital harbour. After France gained concessions in China in 1896 and 1898, the British government ordered Hong Kong officials to acquire Kowloon. As some parts of this territory overlooked the harbour, Britain needed control to secure Hong Kong Island’s defence. In June 1898, the British

---

<sup>9</sup> The National Archives (hereafter TNA), CAB 11/57, Report of Local Committee Hong Kong, November 1889, 1.

<sup>10</sup> TNA, CAB 11/57, Report of Local Committee, 1889, 2.

<sup>11</sup> TNA, CAB 11/57, Amended Scheme of Defence, 28 August 1890.

<sup>12</sup> TNA, CAB 11/57, Defence Scheme, 10 July 1895, 2–3.

gained a ninety–nine-year lease over the New Territories, with control formally transferred in April 1899.<sup>13</sup> The transfer was met with violence from the inhabitants of the newly-acquired area during the Six-Day War of 14–19 April 1899. As the date of the transfer approached, tensions grew between the British authorities and inhabitants who, fearing that their land rights would be set aside, opposed the handover. As the locals were no match for regular British soldiers, 500 villagers were killed; just two British soldiers were wounded.<sup>14</sup> The local population suffered due to imperial defence concerns, and unfortunately, this was not to be the last time.

### Hong Kong's Defence in the Early Twentieth Century

Entering the twentieth century, Hong Kong was one of the most important British naval bases in the Far East. This status, however, did not endure as alliances, wars, and internal political changes rendered Hong Kong to be just another imperial outpost. Britain signed a treaty of alliance with Japan in 1902, allowing the Royal Navy to concentrate on defending the North Sea against a growing German naval threat. With Japan's May 1905 destruction of the Russian fleet at Tsushima, Russia's threat to British possessions in the Far East was removed.<sup>15</sup> However, major concerns still revolved around the threat posed by the German and French navies.

A reliance on static, land-based artillery quickly became the main method to protect Hong Kong. The Admiralty and the War Office conducted several exercises to test the colony's defences. Reporting on the 1906 combined navy and army exercise, while Royal Navy Commodore H.P. Williams characterized the exercise as satisfactory, he also wrote that “the cohesion between the naval and military forces should be much closer, than at present, each

---

<sup>13</sup> Kwong and Tsoi, *Eastern Fortress*, 49–50.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>15</sup> Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC), Department of National Defence fonds, RG 24, volume 18571, file “951.003 (D6), The Singapore Base”, memorandum on the Singapore Base 1930, page 1.

department should know what the other is doing.”<sup>16</sup> In 1908, Vice Admiral Hedworth Lambton, Commander-in-Chief of the China Station, undertook a “disagreeable duty to prove that these Defences are entirely futile and insufficient, and that their conception shows a complete inappreciation of what modern war will really mean.” Concerned about an attack by modern “big-gun” battleships against his weak cruiser force and 9.2-inch shore-based guns, Lambton wanted to put more guns at each harbour entrance to keep these vessels at bay. As Lambton wrote, “what I have written cannot, I fear, be entirely pleasant to the Authorities responsible for the present defences, but the truth, however unpalatable, should always be welcome,” which was a sentiment that rang true many times afterwards.<sup>17</sup> Lambton’s costly ideas were not adopted.

### Hong Kong and the First World War

Hong Kong faced little threat from the Central Powers during the First World War. As Japan was an ally of Britain, there was no major threat to Hong Kong. Yet two events indirectly threatened Hong Kong once Japan sided with the Entente on 23 August 1914. First, Germany’s Tsingtao concession on China’s Shandong Peninsula fell to Japan in November 1914.<sup>18</sup> But while the terms of the German concession specified that the land would revert to China if German control was lost, Japan refused to adhere to these conditions. Japanese troops were eventually forced from the former German concession in 1922.<sup>19</sup> The second event was the Twenty-One Demands Japan sent to China on 8 January 1915. Historian H.P. Willmott has organized the demands into five main categories:

They [the Japanese] sought a Chinese acceptance of Japan’s conquests of German concessions in China; the granting of further concessions in Manchuria; a Chinese

---

<sup>16</sup> TNA, ADM 1/8890, Enclosure No. 3 to Letter from Commodore Hong Kong, 19 February 1906, 2.

<sup>17</sup> TNA, ADM 1/8890, Lambton Report, 25 November 1908, 1, 19, 20–21.

<sup>18</sup> David Stevenson, *1914–1918: The History of the First World War* (London: Penguin Books, 2012), 123.

<sup>19</sup> H.P. Willmott, *Empires in the Balance: Japanese and Allied Pacific Strategies to April 1942* (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 1982), 27; Jeremy A. Yellen, *The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere: When Total Empire Met Total War* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2019), 13.

guarantee that no other power would secure any territorial concession in China; the granting to Japan of special rights on certain mining and metallurgical works in the Yangtse valley; and far-reaching concessions in specific railway development programs coupled with Chinese employment of Japanese officials in key financial, military, and police posts.

However, China and Japan agreed upon a toned-down version of the Twenty–One Demands after the Allies applied pressure upon Japan, thus damaging relations between Japan and the Western powers.<sup>20</sup>

### Anglo-Japanese Relations in the 1920s

The breakup of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in 1921-1922 produced numerous reverberations for British imperial policy, notably the construction of the Singapore base whose existence relegated Hong Kong to secondary importance in the Far East. At the 1921 Imperial Conference, the dominions and Britain decided to end the alliance with Japan to demonstrate goodwill toward the United States. This decision was not unanimously made. New Zealand and Australia wanted to renew the alliance to limit Japanese aggression in the Pacific, while Canada wanted to terminate the pact to better its relationship with United States.<sup>21</sup> Ultimately, the attendees chose to seek an agreement with the United States and Japan. If this initiative failed, the Anglo-Japanese Alliance would be renewed.<sup>22</sup>

The agreements made at the 1921–1922 Washington Conference replaced the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. Those deals reduced the sizes of the British, American, and Japanese navies, while the British and American navies maintained a forty percent tonnage superiority over the Japanese navy.<sup>23</sup> The agreements also limited the building of new naval fortifications at existing

---

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 29–30.

<sup>21</sup> Michael G. Fry, *Illusions of Security: North Atlantic Diplomacy 1918–22* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), 34–35, 92–98.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 152.

<sup>23</sup> Ronald H. Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun: The American War with Japan* (New York: Vintage Books, 1985), 20.

facilities. As a result, no new defensive positions could be built at Hong Kong between 1922 and 1936, a restriction that did not apply to the new Singapore base.<sup>24</sup>

Hong Kong's position in Britain's defence strategy had drastically changed thanks to the Washington Conference. Hong Kong was no longer a suitable option for a large naval station in the interwar period, as harbour facilities were not deep enough to handle ships larger than destroyers. Also, there was no room to store the large oil reserves that modern ships needed to operate. As Royal Navy's capital ships remained its main offensive weapons, a new naval station was needed in the Far East. Singapore was chosen as the site. This change led British military planners to adopt what would become known as "The Singapore Strategy." This change partly determined Hong Kong's fate in 1941. However, Hong Kong's role in Britain's defence strategy was not completely diminished by the building of the Singapore base. As historian Christopher Bell has written:

The Admiralty intended the naval base being built at Singapore to provide essential docking and repair facilities for a British fleet operating in eastern waters. However, given its distance from Japan, Singapore was considered unsuitable as a base for offensive operations. For this purpose, the Admiralty initially hoped to use Hong Kong, and to seize other bases even closer to Japan.<sup>25</sup>

The British Cabinet approved the Singapore base in the Far East on 16 June 1921 because Singapore sat astride a vital link between the Indian and Pacific Oceans.<sup>26</sup> Dominion concerns over "The Singapore Strategy" were placated by wishful thinking and outright lies. Prior to the 1923 Imperial Conference, South Africa's Prime Minister Jan Smuts worried about how the strategy would be applied if Britain faced a war with Germany and Japan simultaneously. Leo

---

<sup>24</sup> Kwong and Tsoi, *Eastern Fortress*, 74.

<sup>25</sup> Christopher Bell, "The 'Singapore Strategy' and the Deterrence of Japan: Winston Churchill, the Admiralty and the Dispatch of Force Z," *The English Historical Review* 116, no. 467 (2001): 610.

<sup>26</sup> Malcolm H. Murfett et al., *Between Two Oceans: A Military History of Singapore from First Settlement to Final British Withdrawal* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish Academic, 2004), 186.



Amery, First Lord of the Admiralty, claimed, rather optimistically, that the Americans would back Britain in that case.<sup>27</sup> The volatile nature of British politics in the 1920s also greatly delayed the base's construction. When the Labour Party defeated the Conservatives in 1924, it scrapped major construction given fears of an arms race but permitted work that had already begun to continue.<sup>28</sup> Construction resumed when the Conservatives returned to power in late 1924 but on a much-scaled-down version, as Chancellor of the Exchequer Winston Churchill wished to save money. As Malcolm H. Murfett et al. have argued, "whatever economies Churchill may have insisted upon for the good of the nation's finances, one is tempted to say that from this point onward the 'Singapore Strategy' became even more impractical and its corollary, the naval base, an unsuspecting hostage to fortune." The Labour Party, back in power by spring 1929, used "a de-acceleration technique" to slow building activities for Britain had already spent too much money to make the project's cancellation an economical choice.<sup>29</sup> By the time the Japanese attacked Singapore in early 1942, the base was still incomplete.

Hong Kong's government gave £250,000 to the Singapore project, a source of pride for the colony. In a 1925 report, Vice Admiral Allan Frederic Everett, Commander in Chief of the China Station, criticized this decision. Everett claimed that these funds could have been better spent to prepare Hong Kong for war and reduce its financial burden for Britain. Decrying the actions of Hong Kong's government, Everett averred "that the Hong Kong Government have apparently no idea whatever as to the possible eventualities here in the next decade or probably sooner."<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 194–195.

<sup>28</sup> S. Woodburn Kirby, *The War Against Japan: The Loss of Singapore* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1957), 3, 6. Murfett et al., *Between Two Oceans*, 195.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 196, 199.

<sup>30</sup> TNA, ADM 1/8711/148, Question of removal of Naval and Military Premises in Hong Kong, 12 February 1925, 2.

Another naval limitation treaty was reached in 1930 after considerable wrangling between Britain and the United States. Historian B.J.C. McKercher wrote that “the rise of American navalism in the 1920s, and the British response to it, conditioned by domestic political considerations, that produced the fundamental change in British naval policy by the time of the London naval conference in 1930, formal naval parity with another power.”<sup>31</sup> In 1927, American President Calvin Coolidge called for a new naval conference to extend the Washington Treaty ratios to submarines, destroyers, cruisers, and auxiliary vessels. But Coolidge’s attempt failed for Britain and America could not agree about cruisers. The British insisted on seventy, the Americans contended that each navy needed just fifty cruisers, and neither side wanted to agree to a number that might advantage the other country.<sup>32</sup> By 1929, Anglo-American relations had warmed enough that the idea of another conference on naval limitations was possible, as McKercher has contended, due to political changes in Britain and the United States. The election of Ramsey MacDonald’s Labour Party in 1929 plus Herbert Hoover’s 1928 presidential win in the United States allowed naval limitation to be revisited.<sup>33</sup> The London Treaty restricted the number and types of cruisers, the ratio being 10:10:7 for Britain, the United States, and Japan respectively.<sup>34</sup> According to a Committee of Imperial Defence (CID) report, “Hong Kong was perforce included in the naval bases to remain in status quo: but the development of Singapore, which is outside the agreement has been rendered all the more necessary by the position at Hong Kong, as well as by the American attitude.”<sup>35</sup> Historian Kent Fedorowich has noted that this “did

---

<sup>31</sup> B.J.C. McKercher, “The Politics of Naval Arms Limitation in Britain in the 1920s,” in *The Washington Conference, 1921–22: Naval Rivalry, East Asian Stability and the Road to Pearl Harbor*, eds. Erik Goldstein and John Maurer (London: Routledge, 1994), 42.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 44–45.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 51–52.

<sup>34</sup> Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun*, 20.

<sup>35</sup> TNA, ADM 116/3/165, The Washington Conference and its Effect upon Empire Naval Policy and Co-Operation, 7 April 1922, 3.

not mean that Hong Kong's strategic importance then decreased. However, as late as 1938, the Admiralty recognized that Hong Kong still could perform an important function as a forward base for offensive and defensive operations against possible Japanese naval incursions southward."<sup>36</sup> Singapore's base had not completely removed Hong Kong's importance to the Royal Navy and Britain.

### Hong Kong's Defence in the 1930s

Hong Kong's defence generated much debate in British military circles, especially within the CID, in the 1930s. The CID's Joint Oversea and Home Defence sub-committee discussed Hong Kong's coastal and anti-aircraft defences in January 1936. As the Washington Treaty was reaching the end of its term, it was uncertain if the agreement would be renegotiated. Regardless of the outcome, "the scheme now submitted by the War Office has therefore been designed in such a way that no alteration in it will be necessary should the present restrictions at Hong Kong be removed."<sup>37</sup> The report highlighted that Hong Kong's small garrison caused problems:

The use of coast artillery for projection against enemy landings is a departure from the general principles of coast defence, since it is normally the duty of the infantry garrison to provide the necessary beach defences. The Committee, however, are satisfied that in this particular case the defences proposed provide an appropriate and economical form of protection in view of the long coast-line and the smallness of the infantry garrison available.<sup>38</sup>

While the Washington Treaty forbade new additions to the naval defences at Hong Kong, modernization of existing defences was permitted. Given the resulting weakness of Hong Kong's defence, the CID's Overseas Committee recommended that the Foreign Office explore the

---

<sup>36</sup> Kent Fedorowich, "'Cocked Hats and Swords and Small Little Garrisons': Britain, Canada and the Fall of Hong Kong, 1941," *Modern Asian Studies* 37, no. 1 (2003): 117.

<sup>37</sup> LAC, DND fonds, RG 24, volume 18571, file "951.003 (D22), "Hong Kong Coast Defences", Committee of Imperial Defence Hong Kong Coast Defences, memorandum by the Joint Oversea and Home Defence Sub-Committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence 14 January 1936, page 1.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, page 3.

possibility of obtaining Chinese assistance to defend the New Territories against Japanese invasion.<sup>39</sup> The focus on possible amphibious landings precluded discussion of an overland attack against the New Territories.

Hong Kong's GOC, Major-General Arthur Bartholomew, and his staff wrote the 1936 Hong Kong Scheme Defence. Focussed on naval defence, three key reasons justified this emphasis. The first was that Hong Kong was still needed as a naval base. Secondly, the colony could support operations into China or against Japan. Finally, Hong Kong was an important commercial port that must remain open. British imperial reputation was a critical factor for "the loss of Hong Kong would be not only a serious blow to our prestige, but to the potential of our Fleet in the China Sea."<sup>40</sup> The defence of the mainland received more attention during this time. If an attack began to overwhelm defenders on the mainland, "it is the Fortress Commander's intention to delay the enemy's advance from every direction and finally to fight the issue out to a finish in the 'Inner Line,' which is organized in considerable depth for that purpose."<sup>41</sup> This was a reference to the Gin Drinker's Line, which will be discussed below. The defence of the beaches was crucial according to the 1936 scheme for "in order to gain a footing in Hong Kong, a landing force would be obliged to seize a number of separate beaches, since there is no single beach which offers adequate forming up and deployment facilities."<sup>42</sup> As Japanese actions in 1941 demonstrated, however, this proved not to be the case. The near obsession with the defence of the beaches handcuffed defensive thinking about the colony once war began. In 1936, the main

---

<sup>39</sup> LAC, DND fonds, RG 24, volume 18571, file "951.003 (D22), "Hong Kong Coast Defences", note by the Secretary, 10 February 1936.

<sup>40</sup> TNA, CAB 11/196, Hong Kong Defence Scheme, 1936, Chapter 1, 11.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, Chapter 4, 58–59.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, Chapter 1, 8.

concern was amphibious landings—whether on the mainland or on the island—while the possibility of an attack originating from land was discounted.<sup>43</sup>

Officials re-examined the British position in the Far East in 1937. While some suggested a defensive military strategy in conjunction with economic sanctions against Japan, the possibility of evacuating Hong Kong was rejected for Britain feared a loss of prestige on the world stage.<sup>44</sup> Despite coming to this conclusion, no change to troop levels was made. And while the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937 encouraged hopes that Britain could cooperate with China, this support was deemed to be dependent upon Britain's ability to hold Hong Kong. A recommendation of a separate report on Hong Kong was given, resulting in the 1938 "Policy on the Defence of Hong Kong."<sup>45</sup> The Chiefs of Staff Sub-Committee offered three options for Hong Kong: demilitarize it in peacetime; evacuate it at war's outbreak; or defend it. Demilitarizing Hong Kong was rejected as short-sighted for Japan may not always be a potential enemy, while abandoning the colony during peacetime would greatly harm British prestige. If Japan attacked Hong Kong, that assault would draw Japanese troops away from an attack against Singapore or force a naval battle that would permit the Royal Navy to bring superior forces to bear. Abandoning the colony at war's outbreak was rejected for the same reasons. Defending Hong Kong, no matter the circumstances, was the only option.<sup>46</sup>

Three defensive schemes/standards were developed. Standard "A" involved protecting the harbour for use by the main fleet. Standard "B" would maintain the harbour for use by submarines and other small craft. Standard "C" would delay the enemy's use of the harbour by

---

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., Chapter 1, 15.

<sup>44</sup> LAC, DND fonds, RG 24, volume 18571, file "951.003 (D23), The Policy for the Defence of Hong Kong", The Policy for the Defence of Hong Kong, 15 July 1938, page 1.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., page 2.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., page 1–2.

defending Hong Kong Island. Before making its recommendation, the Sub-Committee examined the numerous factors relating to Hong Kong's defence. Defending the New Territories was a focus. While the Gin Drinker's Line constituted the only way to mount a successful defence, it would be extremely expensive. The harbour would still be threatened by artillery fire emanating from beyond the line, therefore limiting its ability to function as a naval base: "It is the absence of any defensive position in the leased territories on which, *with any reasonable garrison*, the enemy could be held up sufficiently far forward to keep the Kowloon area immune from land bombardment, that is the real difficulty in the defence of Hong Kong against land attack." Standards "A" and "B" were rejected given their high costs, making Standard "C" the only choice given the limits of men, money, and equipment.<sup>47</sup> No matter what course was selected, the Committee ruled that "It will be important that our real intentions in the defence plan for the Colony are kept as secret as possible."<sup>48</sup> Operational security by bluff was relied on to defend the colony. With war's approach in 1939, the shift from a naval defence approach to a land-based defence at Hong Kong was complete as most RN vessels stationed at Hong Kong were withdrawn.<sup>49</sup>

### The Gin's Drinker's Line

The Gin Drinker's Line, the garrison's main defensive position sited in the New Territories, occupied a key position in Hong Kong's defence planning. The various strategies developed in the interwar years often saw the line designated as the central pivot of the colony's defence. It was designed as a series of concrete bunkers, often disguised as homes and other buildings, loosely connected by reinforced concrete tunnels, trenches, and barbed wire. The line

---

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., page 3–6.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., page 8.

<sup>49</sup> TNA, ADM 116/4356, Telegram from C. in C. China to Admiralty, 18 July 1939.

took its name from the bay that anchored its western end. But while the line's construction began in earnest in the 1930s, it was never completed. The roots of the Gin Drinker's Line extended back into the nineteenth century when a plan to build redoubt towers was cancelled in 1894 due to technological issues and bad planning. That same year, a new plan proposed blockhouses that would be used as advanced posts in the case of attack and to form a second line as reinforcements were rushed to the area. Thirteen were planned, nine on Hong Kong Island and four on the Kowloon Peninsula, but they were never built. In 1897, the plan was revived for a short time, only to be cancelled in 1901 in favour of mobile artillery and infantry holding the gaps between the hills against overland attacks. By 1911, the plan for the blockhouses had returned, and they were to run along the Kowloon Ridge. The defences were dubbed the "Anderson Line" after Major-General Charles Anderson who had proposed the plan. Only thirty blockhouses were built.<sup>50</sup>

When Hong Kong Governor Reginald Stubbs suggested in 1925 that the Kowloon Peninsula and the New Territories be abandoned to an attack, the CID ordered the Joint Planning Committee (JPC) to study the colony's defence. Submitted in 1927, the report concluded that the Royal Navy would take forty-four days to relieve troops holding a line between Gin Drinker's Bay on the west coast and Tide Cove on the east, the narrowest point in the New Territories and thus the easiest to defend.<sup>51</sup> Nothing came of the 1927 report given indifference and budget constraints, but the groundwork for the Gin Drinker's Line had been laid. Another JPC report in 1930 used the lessons drawn from the First World War to recommend a manpower saving defence plan for the New Territories. An in-depth three-zone defence system designed to slow

---

<sup>50</sup> Rob Weir, "A Note on British Blockhouses in Hong Kong," *Surveying and Built Environment* 22, no. 1 (2012): 8–11.

<sup>51</sup> Chi Man Kwong, "Reconstructing the Early History of the Gin Drinker's Line from Archival Sources," *Surveying and Built Environment* 22, no. 1 (2012): 24.

down an attack from the north was recommended. This system comprised a thinly held frontline that would draw in the attackers into pre-positioned reinforcements whose counterattack would eliminate any salient driven into the defensive line. Two “delaying lines” would support concrete machine gun emplacements supported by barbed wire in the permanent Gin Drinker’s Line.<sup>52</sup> As this latest report was issued at the start of the Great Depression, financial concerns delayed the line’s construction. By 1934, the CID ordered the JPC to submit yet another report.<sup>53</sup> Work began on the building of the Gin Drinker’s Line soon after this report was submitted. One of the project’s attractions was that fortifications could replace manpower housed in expensive barracks, thus cutting an Indian Army battalion.<sup>54</sup>

As the line was constructed, air support became vital to protecting Hong Kong. The Royal Air Force (RAF) reported in 1935 that it could only send more planes to Hong Kong after 1938. As airfields could only be built north of the Gin Drinker’s Line, Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS) General Archibald Montgomery-Massingberd asked the Army to employ ten infantry battalions to protect the airfields.<sup>55</sup> Much like the other plans, this scheme was never carried out. The version of the Gin Drinker’s Line that was built was not a continuous line but four defended localities. Again, construction and the manning of the line was far from what was envisioned, and the process remained incomplete when war came in 1941. Further, the line’s planned use changed over time. Bartholomew saw the line as the final position of the mainland garrison. Each locality, using in-depth defence, would be manned by a battalion and supported by artillery. In February 1937, the position was officially divided into the “Outer Line” on the

---

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>53</sup> TNA, WO 106/111, Report on the Defences of Hong Kong, Part 1, 1934, 16. Kwong “Reconstructing the Early History of the Gin Drinker’s Line,” 25.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 26, 29.

<sup>55</sup> Kwong and Tsoi, *Eastern Fortress*, 92–93.



Hong Kong-mainland border and the “Inner Line”, which was the new designation of the Gin Drinker’s Line’s. Bartholomew envisioned that the Kowloon garrison would not be withdrawn to the island. Rather, “all available troops on the Mainland will dispute to the last man and the last round...”<sup>56</sup> Concerned by this plan, the JPC suggested that the line should only be employed in delaying an attack followed by a withdrawal to the island once any part of the line had been breached. But when Bartholomew “was replaced by Major General Arthur Grasett in 1938, he urged the War Office to deploy at least eight battalions in order to allow the garrison to fulfil its mission.”<sup>57</sup>

Early construction on the Gin Drinker’s Line proceeded slowly; just twenty pillboxes were complete by 1937. While the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War that same year accelerated the pace of building, the project was suspended by April 1938. Thirty-eight pillboxes were done, thirty-three were almost finished, and nineteen were half-finished. Any construction that had been started could be finished. As the original proposal for the line is missing, the total number of proposed pillboxes remains unknown. Construction on the line was suspended due to a rethinking of Hong Kong’s role in British strategy in Asia and the impossibility of sending more troops to Hong Kong given deteriorating circumstances in Europe.<sup>58</sup>

### The Sino-Japanese War’s Influence on Hong Kong’s Defence

The Marco Polo Bridge Incident in July 1937 brought Japan and China to war.<sup>59</sup> The outbreak of conflict incited many changes in Hong Kong’s defence planning, with Japan’s capture of Canton seen as the greatest challenge to the defence of Hong Kong. On 12 October 1938, Japanese troops landed at Bias Bay, northeast of Hong Kong. The attack was not directed

---

<sup>56</sup> TNA, CAB 11/196, Hong Kong Defence Scheme, 1936, Chapter 4, 59.

<sup>57</sup> Kwong, “Reconstructing the Early History of the Gin Drinker’s Line,” 32–33.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>59</sup> Mitter, *Forgotten Ally*, 80.

toward Hong Kong as many British planners had feared. Instead, Japanese forces moved along the Pearl River to Canton to cut off one of the remaining sea outlets for China's Nationalist government. When Canton fell on 22 October 1938, A.P. Blunt, Britain's Consul-General there wrote:

I do not know the position in other occupied territory but it seems certain that Japanese are now in effective control over Hongkong's hinterland 'for duration of the war'. The whole history of the colony shows that Hongkong must be on terms with de facto authorities at Canton, be they Sun Yat-sen, the South-West Political Council, the Chinese Central Government or now the Japanese. With all respect I doubt whether this is yet sufficiently realised in Hongkong but I have no doubt it is nevertheless true.<sup>60</sup>

Tensions increased as both the Japanese and British initially put troops on the border before pulling back.<sup>61</sup> The Canton-Hong Kong Railway ceased operations and British trade into China's hinterland fell when the Pearl River closed to traffic. But Geoffrey Northcote, Hong Kong's Governor from 1937 to late 1941, refused to support China in order to maintain relations with Japan and protect Britain's Far East possessions.<sup>62</sup> Writing about the Japanese takeover of Canton, Blunt said:

I replied that having regard to the interruption caused to the Colony's trade and food-supplies the invasion could not be regarded as otherwise than very inconvenient; its military objectives were, however, understood and it was hoped that everything that would mitigate or remove the consequent inconveniences would be done. I was not in a position to express any view upon the Japanese military operations, as such.<sup>63</sup>

There were discussions in late November 1938 between British and Japanese leaders about reopening the Pearl River to commercial shipping.<sup>64</sup> Canton's fall also influenced British

---

<sup>60</sup> TNA, CO 129/571/11, Telegram from A.P. Blunt to Governor Hong Kong, 16 December 1938, 1.

<sup>61</sup> TNA, CO 129/571/11, Telegram from G.O.C. Hong Kong to War Office, 1 December 1938.

<sup>62</sup> TNA, CO 129/571/11, Letter from G.A. Northcote to H.R. Cowell, 14 November 1938.

<sup>63</sup> TNA, CO 129/571/11, Memorandum of Interview, 27 October 1938, 1.

<sup>64</sup> TNA, CO 129/571/11, Visit of Major Matsitani, of the Japanese Army, to Hong Kong, 27 October 1938, 1. Ibid., Telegram from C. in C. China, 26 November 1938.

relations with China's Nationalist government. After Canton's loss, shipping arms and ammunition through Hong Kong to the Nationalist Chinese was banned for Whitehall wished to avoid Japanese complaints and a blockade of Hong Kong.<sup>65</sup> Railway building supplies and other materials were also banned for a short time to coincide with the closing of the Burma Road in July 1940. Once the Burma Road reopened in October 1940, the flow of non-war material from Hong Kong resumed.<sup>66</sup> While Britain hoped to avoid straining relations with Japan, it also did not want to abandon China.

War in China also allowed older and somewhat unconventional ideas about Hong Kong's security to be re-examined. Making the British hold on the New Territories permanent was one such consideration. Historian Franco David Macri, who focuses on the history of southern China in the Second World War, discussed Britain's possible purchase of the New Territories. While explaining how the Chinese initiated this notion in 1938, Macri has neglected previous discussions by British colonial leaders.<sup>67</sup> In 1933, Sir Henry Pollock, an unofficial member of the Legislative Council and a long-time Hong Kong resident, sent a memorandum about buying the New Territories to Governor Sir William Peel and Commodore Frank Elliott, the RN's commander at Hong Kong.<sup>68</sup> Elliott expressed interest, but Admiral Frederic Dreyer, Commander-in-Chief of the China Station, was not keen for "from a legal point of view the question of the rendition of the leased territory will not arise for 65 years. Since, however, Hong Kong Island and the small Kowloon Peninsula were ceded by the treaties of Nanking and Peking (1842 and 1860), the Chinese might raise a cry for their return if the agitation over the 'unequal

---

<sup>65</sup> TNA, CAB 96/1, War Cabinet Far East Committee, Restriction of Exports of War Materials to China from Hong Kong, 22 October 1940, 1.

<sup>66</sup> Mitter, *Forgotten Ally*, 222.

<sup>67</sup> Franco David Macri, "Abandoning the Outpost: Rejection of the Hong Kong Purchase Scheme of 1938-39," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Hong Kong Branch* 50, 304.

<sup>68</sup> TNA, ADM 1/9820, Letter from H.E. Pollock to Commodore F. Elliott, 13 November 1933.

treaties' should be revived."<sup>69</sup> No further action was taken toward the purchase of the New Territories at that time.

The idea lay dormant until 1938 when Chinese officials approached Northcote with a proposal to sell the New Territories.<sup>70</sup> Writing to Secretary of State of the Colonies Malcolm MacDonald, Northcote suggested paying £20,000,000 to China to stabilize its currency and support China in its war against Japan.<sup>71</sup> Northcote favoured this course of action as "the retention of most, if not all, of the leased lands is a condition of the survival of Hong Kong as a British Colony into the next century."<sup>72</sup> In early August 1938, Northcote wrote again to MacDonald given the risk of "missing our market" for, no matter who won the Sino-Japanese War, this opportunity would not present itself again. Northcote made plain that "sooner or later the question of purchase or lease-extension must arise, if British Hong Kong is to survive as a Colony: I hope that my despatch made that clear."<sup>73</sup> Northcote's recommendation instigated a meeting among all military branches as well as representatives from the Colonial Office, Treasury, and Foreign Office on 26 August 1938. How different British agencies viewed Hong Kong's defence were demonstrated at this meeting. Once H.R. Cowell of the Colonial Office noted that the New Territories were important defensively and commercially, the conversation focused about using delaying tactics to defend the New Territories.<sup>74</sup> While the Sino-Japanese War constituted an opportunity to permanently acquire the New Territories, the conflict's uncertain outcome and a desire to avoid claims of an illegitimate deal produced apprehension. J.F. Brenan of the Foreign Office, highlighting the fact that China had never broached an

---

<sup>69</sup> TNA, ADM 1/9820, Letter from Admiral Frederic Dreyer to Secretary of the Admiralty, 18 November 1933.

<sup>70</sup> Macri, "Abandoning the Outpost," 304.

<sup>71</sup> TNA, ADM 1/9820, Letter from G.A. Northcote to Malcolm MacDonald, 8 June 1938, 1.

<sup>72</sup> TNA, ADM 1/9820, Letter from G.A. Northcote to Malcolm MacDonald, 11 June 1938, 1.

<sup>73</sup> TNA, ADM 1/9820, Letter from G.A. Northcote to Malcolm MacDonald, 4 August 1938, 1.

<sup>74</sup> TNA, ADM 1/9820, Note of a Meeting held in the Colonial Office on the 26 August 1938, 2-3.

extension of the lease, recalled an earlier decision not to extend a loan to China for the same amount.<sup>75</sup> As the current lease was long enough for defence requirements, the attendees rejected Northcote's proposal.<sup>76</sup> Although Northcote raised the question of extending the lease in March 1939, the Foreign Office again rejected it.<sup>77</sup> This episode was another example of officials in Britain ignoring the advice of officials in Hong Kong. This course of action may have been best for British imperial defence policy, but did not buttress Hong Kong's defence.

### Early Years of the Second World War

The onset of war with Germany in 1939 changed defence planning for Hong Kong. Defence of the British Isles and imperial defence had dominated Britain's defence planning for the majority of the interwar years. Diplomatic solutions such as treaties had been relied on to keep the peace in Europe in the 1920s, although they began unraveling by the mid-1930s. Brian McKercher has argued that Neville Chamberlain, upon becoming British Prime Minister in May 1937, shifted the strategic focus of British foreign policy. Chamberlain's appeasement policy was influenced by his desire to avoid a European war. While Britain would increase the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force to protect the home islands, plans for a field force to go to Europe were scrapped in early 1938. But once appeasement clearly had failed by early 1939, the focus was shifted fully to rearmament.

While Britain's strategic focus shifted to continental Europe, including an increasing need to reposition resources, notably naval vessels,<sup>78</sup> as historian John Ferris has remarked, "Japan shaped British policy in Europe: thus, in 1937–39, the need to buy time for rearmament

---

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>77</sup> TNA, ADM 1/9820, Telegram from A. Clark Kerr to Foreign Office, 14 March 1939. TNA, ADM 1/9820, Telegram from Foreign Office to Colonial Office, 17 March 1939.

<sup>78</sup> B.J.C. McKercher, "National Security and Imperial Defence: British Grand Strategy and Appeasement, 1930–1939," *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 19, no. 3 (2008): 423, 413.

drove the Admiralty's support for appeasement."<sup>79</sup> Once war began in September 1939, Britain was forced to take assets from the Far East to support the war in Europe.<sup>80</sup> Canadian historian Norman Hillmer has argued that "The attitude of the dominions undoubtedly reinforced an already strong desire on Britain's part to remain aloof from continental commitments: the concept of 'limited liability' was in fact embraced by every leading British minister from the mid-1930s onwards and was not seriously challenged until 1939."<sup>81</sup>

While the signing of a German-Soviet non-aggression pact on 23 August 1939 all but guaranteed a war in Europe, it prompted outrage in Japan given its recent unsuccessful battles along the Manchurian border with the Soviet Union.<sup>82</sup> As Clark Kerr, the British Ambassador to China, reported from Shanghai on 28 August 1939, "I have been informed by the Japanese Consulate unofficially that in the event of war in Europe Japan will remain strictly neutral. The reason is the Russo-German non-aggression pact which has led to a complete reversal of Japanese foreign policy."<sup>83</sup> France's unexpected collapse in June 1940 altered British defence planning completely as the Royal Navy was needed to defend both the British Isles and the Mediterranean. The German bombing campaign against the United Kingdom in the summer and autumn of 1940 indirectly led to more American support for Britain, notably when the British and American governments negotiated the Destroyers for Bases deal in September 1940, giving the Royal Navy more ships to protect vital Atlantic convoys.<sup>84</sup> Growing American support through late 1940 into 1941 allowed the British position to strengthen by year's end. One of the

---

<sup>79</sup> John Ferris, "The Fulcrum of Power: Britain, Japan and the Asia-Pacific Region, 1880–1945," in *Maritime Strategy and National Security in Japan and Britain: From the First Alliance to Post-9/11*, ed. Alessio Patalano (Leiden, Netherlands: Global Oriental, 2012), 36.

<sup>80</sup> Fedorowich, "Cocked Hats and Swords and Small Little Garrisons," 125, 128.

<sup>81</sup> Norman Hillmer "Defence and Ideology: The Anglo-Canadian Military 'Alliance' in the 1930s," *International Journal* 33, no.3 (1978): 589

<sup>82</sup> TNA, WO 208/1459, Telegram from A. Clark Kerr to Governor Hong Kong, 28 August 1939.

<sup>83</sup> Willmott, *Empires in the Balance*, 55–56.

<sup>84</sup> Daniel Todman, *Britain's War: Into Battle, 1937–1941* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 460.

most important measures enacted by the American government was the Lend-Lease program which carried the British war effort through to the conflict's end in 1945.<sup>85</sup>

Developments in Europe left the defence of the Far East in an even more precarious position than envisioned in the interwar period. On 16 April 1941, the Soviet Union and Japan signed a neutrality pact, reducing the likelihood of war in Manchuria and possibly giving Japan a free hand to move south. But the war's most significant development was the German invasion of the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941. The largest land invasion in history not only terminated the ideologically strange German-Soviet alliance, it gave Britain its first non-Commonwealth ally in a year. German attacks initially pushed deep into Soviet territory, leading to Allied concerns that Japan would try to take advantage of the situation and advance into Siberia. By summer's end, while the Soviet position did not look strong, they continued to resist Germany's invasion. Although the titanic struggle on the Eastern Front lessened the invasion threat of a German invasion of the British Isles, Japan's threat to the Far East magnified.

#### The summer of 1941

The summer of 1941 was a turbulent time for British policy in the Far East as the need to support actions taken by the United States in the Pacific drove decision-making.<sup>86</sup> As Ferris has asserted:

German policy and Russian power, the threats to China and the fall of France, threw Japan at Britain's throat and the latter into the arms of the United States. Britain had to abandon control over its policy in the Asia-Pacific region to Washington. Again, fratricide drove the Anglo-American relationship. President Roosevelt could not form an open alliance with Britain against Japan, leading each side to manipulate the other. In order to show itself alliance worthy in the Pacific, Britain had to convince Washington that it was stronger there than was true, or it thought.<sup>87</sup>

---

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 547.

<sup>86</sup> Antony Best, *Britain, Japan and Pearl Harbor: Avoiding War in East Asia, 1936–1941* (London: Routledge, 1995), 159. Bell, "The 'Singapore Strategy'," 627.

<sup>87</sup> Ferris, "The Fulcrum of Power," 38.

In response to Japan's occupation of southern French Indochina in July 1941, the United States, Britain, the Netherlands, Canada, and other Commonwealth nations imposed sanctions on Japan. The use of economic sanctions against Japan resulted from the British desire to deter Japan without using military force. But as Ferris has noted, the sanctions led the "Japanese leaders [to] decide on war, to preempt a threat they had provoked."<sup>88</sup>

American fears of Japanese expansion were growing in July 1941. General Douglas MacArthur was recalled to service with the United States Army on the 26th after serving as the commander of the newly-formed Philippine Army for several years. Before MacArthur took command, there had been no real plans to reinforce the islands. Once the new command was established, reinforcements came, growing the Philippine Army to 120,000 troops. In the official history of the United States Army in the Philippines, historian Louis Morton stated that "The reinforcement of the Philippines now enjoyed the highest priority in the War Department." As an example of this new importance, while new B-17 bombers were moved to the Philippines, "more than half of the total of heavy bombers and one sixth of the fighters were already in the Philippines."<sup>89</sup> Starting in August 1941, British policy moved from non-military deterrence to a heavy increase of military reinforcements to match American actions.

Britain relied on its strongest military asset, the Royal Navy. As Bell has outlined:

On 28 August, Pound informed Churchill of the admiralty's plans to create a balanced Far Eastern fleet by March 1942. Between mid-September 1941 and early January 1942, four of the unmodernized 'R' class battleships would be sent to the Indian Ocean, where they would initially serve as troop convoy escorts; and between November 1941 and mid-January 1942, the battleships Nelson and Rodney and the battle-cruiser Renown would move to either Trincomalee or Singapore. With the addition of an aircraft carrier, cruisers and destroyers, these vessels would ultimately form a balanced fleet which could be stationed at

---

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>89</sup> Louis Morton, *The Fall of the Philippines* (Washington D.C.: Center of Military History United States Army 1993), 39.



Singapore. In the meantime, Pound hoped that the presence of heavy ships in the Indian Ocean would...deter Japan from sending battleships or large cruisers into the Indian Ocean in the event of war.<sup>90</sup>

But the reinforcement did not occur thanks to disagreements between Churchill and the leaders of the Royal Navy. However, HMS *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* were sent to Singapore as a last-minute deterrent in November 1941 after Churchill pressured the Royal Navy, but Japanese naval air power sank the ships shortly after their arrival at Singapore.<sup>91</sup> The pattern of “too little, too late” became prominent in late 1941. More army units had already been sent to Singapore, including elements of the 8th Australian Division in February 1941.<sup>92</sup> Bell summarized the deterrent used by Britain:

During the last months of peace in the Pacific, London also strengthened its defences in Malaya, tightened economic sanctions against Japan, and asked the Canadian government to reinforce the hopelessly exposed garrison at Hong Kong. This was all part of the attempt to create an impression of growing British strength and resolve in the Far East. But even this was not expected to deter war. Ultimately, it was the combined strength of Britain and the United States that was counted on to restrain Japan. British efforts to impress Tokyo were therefore also aimed at the United States.<sup>93</sup>

This was context in which Brigadier Arthur Edward Grasett made his plea for Canadians to reinforce Hong Kong to Canadian General Harry Crerar, when they met in summer 1941.

#### Brigadier Arthur Edward Grasett and the Defence of Hong Kong 1938–1941

Individual military leaders played a major role in the Canadian reinforcement of Hong Kong. As leaders at the very top level often possess little understanding of the events and developments below their command, subalterns can yield much more authority than their official position would allow. One such individual was Brigadier Grasett as his actions had major

---

<sup>90</sup> Bell, “The ‘Singapore Strategy,’” 621.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 631.

<sup>92</sup> Peter Thompson, *The Battle for Singapore: The True Story of the Greatest Catastrophe of World War II* (London: Piatkus, 2006): 64–65.

<sup>93</sup> Bell, “The ‘Singapore Strategy,’” 627.

implications for the defence of Hong Kong. On 4 November 1938, Grasett became GOC of the British troops in China, a post he held until 19 July 1941.<sup>94</sup> The Canadian-born Grasett, after attending the Royal Military College in Kingston, Ontario, entered the British Army as an engineer officer and stayed. After assuming command in Hong Kong, Grasett was given a set of notes to prepare him for his new position. One passage in the notes accurately summarized Hong Kong's dilemma at the time:

The defence policy for Hong Kong previous to 1921 was based on our friendly relations with Japan, and the armament was never intended to be able to deal with a major attack from that quarter. In spite of this, however, the well-established supremacy of coast defence guns over warships did in effect give the place a reasonable security in the days before air action had to be taken into account. Similarly, the inherent difficulties in the launching of an effective military attack from Japan against the beaches or land frontier of the Colony gave us a fair prospect of holding out with quite a small infantry garrison for the period of [40 was crossed out] 54 days before the arrival of the British fleet.<sup>95</sup>

The notes given to Grasett reiterated that Hong Kong was an outpost and therefore not essential to holding Singapore. Thanks to the construction of the Gin Drinker's Line, little attention was paid to the defences on the actual island itself. Updating island defences thus became Grasett's priority.<sup>96</sup> Grasett's main concern was the number of troops available to garrison the colony. In a 16 January 1940 letter to Major-General R.H. Dewing, Director of Military Operations at the War Office, Grasett noted that his May 1939 recommendation to expand the garrison remained unanswered.<sup>97</sup> Grasett wrote Dewing again on 5 April 1940 to say that another battalion would be needed if the colony were attacked as casualties would be considerable in a prolonged fight.<sup>98</sup> To cut potential European casualties, the decision to evacuate civilian white women and

---

<sup>94</sup> Imperial War Museum (thereafter IWM), Private Papers of Major General C.M. Maltby, Catalogue number 22835 Scrapbook, 20 July 1941.

<sup>95</sup> TNA, WO 106/2366, Notes for Brigadier Grasett, 1 July 1938, 1–2.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>97</sup> TNA, WO 106/2380, Letter from A.E. Grasett to R.H. Dewing, 16 January 1940, 2.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 5 April 1940, 2.

children from Hong Kong was made on 25 June 1940.<sup>99</sup> The Japanese threat seemed minimal. As Grasett stated on 23 June, just 3,000 Japanese troops were estimated to be based along Hong Kong's border by 2 July.<sup>100</sup> On 5 August 1940, Grasett requested two more battalions for the colony as the existing garrison was the "bare minimum required and two additional battalions would add greatly to strength of Hong Kong."<sup>101</sup> This request, like all others, was denied.

The autumn of 1940 was marked by a growing concern among Hong Kong's officials about the garrison's ability to resist an attack. Remarking that Hong Kong's fall was only a matter of time once war began and civilian casualties climbed, a frustrated Governor Northcote asked, "how long could His Majesty's Government permit this to continue in order to hold a fortress which without command of the sea has no military value?"<sup>102</sup> Pessimistic, too, about the garrison's condition, Grasett claimed that the new Indian battalions in the colony were less trained given the Indian Army's rapid expansion, while the European volunteer unit had been weakened by the wider war effort. Still, in October 1940, Grasett asked again for more reinforcements as he felt "compelled to represent for reasons stated that one additional Battn. is now required to provide reasonable security."<sup>103</sup> The Chiefs of Staff denied this request in November.<sup>104</sup> Grasett continued to seek reinforcements until relieved of his command in 1941.

#### Appointment of Air Chief Marshal Sir Henry Robert Moore Brooke-Popham

The appointment of Air Chief Marshal Sir Henry Robert Moore Brooke-Popham as commander of British forces in the Far East brought more attention to Hong Kong's defence. Before Brooke-Popham had assumed command in late 1940, he reported that while lunching

---

<sup>99</sup> TNA, CO 323/1787/64, Hong Kong Defence Policy, 1940, 3–4.

<sup>100</sup> TNA, CO 323/1787/64, Telegram from G.O.C. Hong Kong to War Office, 23 June 1940.

TNA, CO 323/1787/64, Telegram from G.O.C. Hong Kong to War Office, 2 July 1940.

<sup>101</sup> TNA, WO 106/2399, Telegram from G.O.C. Hong Kong to War Office, 5 August 1940.

<sup>102</sup> TNA, CO 323/1787/64, War Cabinet, Chiefs of Staff Committee, Defence of Hong Kong, 19 October 1940, 4, 6.

<sup>103</sup> TNA, CO 323/1787/64, Telegram from G.O.C. Hong Kong to War Office, 25 October 1940, 1–2.

<sup>104</sup> TNA, WO 106/2383, Telegram from War Office to G.O.C. Hong Kong, 3 November 1940.

with the Prime Minister, Churchill had remarked “that we should hold Singapore no matter what happened. He said I could rest assured that there would be a continuous and steady flow of men and munitions to the countries in my command and that he was sparing no effort to make Singapore and the other British countries in East Asia strong and well defended as possible.” Churchill claimed he “was devoting every minute he could spare to watching the Far East.”<sup>105</sup> Thus, Brooke-Popham believed that he would receive support, a view that was reflected in his actions upon assuming his new position.

### Racism and Hong Kong’s Defence

Visiting Hong Kong after assuming command in Singapore, Brooke-Popham’s views on Hong Kong’s defence revealed deeper issues within the colony. In a 6 January 1941 letter to CID Secretary Major-General H.L. Ismay, Brooke-Popham said “I had a good close up, across the barbed wire, of various sub-human specimens dressed in dirty grey uniform, which I was informed were Japanese soldiers. If these represent the average of the Japanese Army, the problems of their food and accommodation would be simple, but I cannot believe they would form an intelligent fighting force.”<sup>106</sup> While Brooke-Popham’s assessment of the Japanese Army was quite wrong, his bigoted opinion laid bare the racist assumptions and conclusions that negatively impacted the defence of British colonies in the Far East. Poor opinions of Japanese troops abounded among British commanders. Those with experience in commanding British troops stationed in China believed Japan was weak for it could not beat China, an inferior nation.<sup>107</sup> Ferris concluded “that between 1937—41 the old China hands viewed the I.J.A. as a third rate army, whose quality was so low that its operational characteristics were irrelevant—

---

<sup>105</sup> TNA, CO 323/1787/64, Telegram Singapore-Brooke Popham 2, 5 December 1940.

<sup>106</sup> Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King’s College, London (hereafter LHCMA), Brooke-Popham 6/2/4, “Letter to H.L Ismay 6 January 1941,” 4.

<sup>107</sup> Best, *Britain, Japan and Pearl Harbor*, 165.

they could never be applied against a western force.”<sup>108</sup> Ferris argued that Major-General C.M. Maltby’s use of the Gin Drinker’s Line stemmed from his view that the tactics used against less-organized enemies on India’s North-West Frontier would be successful against the Japanese who were clearly a third-rate enemy.<sup>109</sup> Unfortunately, for Hong Kong’s defenders, Maltby was wrong. But when the fighting began, American historian Gerald Horne concluded that the British views of their racial superiority were shattered for “the invasion invoked a massive emotional collapse—a collective nervous breakdown—not least among European men.”<sup>110</sup>

Racism was not limited to the British views on the Japanese. The Chinese population had increased in Hong Kong as refugees fled the Japanese. Historian Richard Aldrich noted that this transient population caused an internal security problem at Hong Kong.<sup>111</sup> The government viewed and treated the local Chinese as a problem and not an asset. While Hong Kong’s growing population provided an opportunity to better defend the colony, racism precluded this path from being taken. Horne has argued that there was a long-standing policy to keep arms out of the hands of Chinese individuals, adding “British racism served to make this surrender virtually inevitable.”<sup>112</sup> Certainly, while there was evidence that racist policies influenced defence planning for the colony -- the 1936 Hong Kong Scheme Defence noted that “the local Chinese can be taken as useless” -- there was more nuance than Horne presented.<sup>113</sup> Kwong and Tsoi argued that “contrary to the popular belief that the British were reluctant in recruiting the local Chinese for defence, the British began to recruit more Hong Kong Chinese for the defence of

---

<sup>108</sup> John Ferris, “‘Worthy of Some Better Enemy?’: The British Estimate of the Imperial Japanese Army, 1919–41, and the Fall of Singapore,” *Canadian Journal of History* 28 (1993):240.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 245–246.

<sup>110</sup> Gerald Horne, *Race War: White Supremacy and the Japanese Attack on the British Empire* (New York: New York University Press, 2004), 67.

<sup>111</sup> Richard J. Aldrich, *Intelligence and the War against Japan: Britain, America and the Politics of Secret Service* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 23.

<sup>112</sup> Horne, *Race War*, 63.

<sup>113</sup> TNA, CAB 11/196, Hong Kong Defence Scheme, 1936, Chapter 1, 3.

Hong Kong on a large scale as early as 1936.” The early recruitment was for non-combat roles.<sup>114</sup> The process to recruit local Chinese for an infantry regiment only started in the summer of 1941. On 23 June, the War Office asked Grasett if he was in favour of local Chinese being used for defence.<sup>115</sup> His successor, Maltby, approved the force’s creation of the force on 8 August as he concluded that “if successful will contribute towards solution to manpower problem here and provide nucleus for further expansion.”<sup>116</sup> On 25 August, the War Office granted permission to raise a local Chinese infantry battalion.<sup>117</sup> The first recruits of the Hong Kong Chinese Regiment were enlisted on 3 November. Enough men signed up to form a platoon sized unit that saw combat alongside Canadian troops on the island near Repulse Bay.<sup>118</sup>

#### Brooke-Popham Attempts to Reinforce Hong Kong, 1941

Brooke-Popham wished to reinforce Hong Kong with two battalions drawn from Malaya in January 1941, the request that prompted Churchill’s oft-used quote about denying reinforcements for Hong Kong.<sup>119</sup> Churchill clearly changed his mind later that year for he did not oppose the 15 September 1941 proposal to buttress Hong Kong.<sup>120</sup> However, after Hong Kong’s loss, Churchill attempted to distance himself from that decision to reinforce the colony, claiming “later on it will be seen that I allowed myself to be drawn from this position, and that two Canadian battalions were sent as reinforcements.”<sup>121</sup> In his 15 January 1941 letter to Arthur Street, the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Air, Brooke-Popham described the air defence situation at Hong Kong. Although he feared that a landing strip could not be built on

---

<sup>114</sup> Kwong and Tsoi, *Eastern Fortress*, 154.

<sup>115</sup> TNA, WO 106/2398, Telegram from War Office to C-in-C Far East, 23 June 1941.

<sup>116</sup> TNA, WO 106/2400, Telegram from GOC Hong Kong to War Office, 8 August 1941.

<sup>117</sup> TNA, WO 106/2398, Telegram from War Office to GOC Hong Kong, 25 August 1941.

<sup>118</sup> TNA, CAB 106/88, Report on Hong Kong Chinese Regiment 8th–25th December 1941, 4–5.

<sup>119</sup> TNA, CAB 121/718, Question, 10 June 1942, 88–89.

<sup>120</sup> TNA, CAB 121/718, Defence of Hong Kong History, 2.

<sup>121</sup> Churchill, *The Second World War: The Grand Alliance*, 177.

Hong Kong Island in less than a year, there was a suitable site for a flying boat base south of the island. These bases would be able to support floatplanes which could be used to engage Japanese bombers. But Brooke-Popham's racist views of the Japanese also affected his position on air defences. As Japanese bombers had never faced fighters before, Brooke-Popham explained that "this indicates the reason why I am so insistent on getting some fighters out here at the earliest possible moment and why I should so like to have something at Hong Kong that could be used as a fighter from the water."<sup>122</sup> On 21 February, Brooke-Popham wrote that Hong Kong needed two battalions, adding that he must send troops from Malaya to reinforce the colony.<sup>123</sup> In early March, Brooke-Popham, seeing Hong Kong as a potential base, akin to Malta in the Mediterranean, to safeguard shipping lanes in the South China Sea, wanted six squadrons stationed there. However, he knew the Army would not be keen to hold such airfields against enemy attack, which would require more troops.<sup>124</sup> Again, his calls went nowhere.

Brooke-Popham also made suggestions that relied on bluff to confuse the Japanese. While wanting an aerodrome built on the island plus a detachment of fighters. Brooke-Popham hoped that dummy fighters and dummy aircraft crates could be sent to Hong Kong to convince the Japanese that the colony was better defended. He also hoped that a Royal Navy visit would "influence morale of Japanese as well as of Hong Kong garrison and population."<sup>125</sup> Concerned that fifth columnists and infiltrators might be operating in Hong Kong with the help of the Japanese Consulate, Brooke-Popham recommended cutting Japanese consular staffs to reduce sabotage and intelligence-gathering capabilities.<sup>126</sup>

---

<sup>122</sup> LHCMA, Brooke-Popham 6/3/3, "Letter to Street, 15 January 1941," 4–5.

<sup>123</sup> LHCMA, Brooke-Popham 6/1/9, "Aide Memoire on Regular Troops Required in the Far East," 1–2.

<sup>124</sup> LHCMA, Brooke-Popham 6/1/12, "Letter March 1941," 1–2.

<sup>125</sup> LHCMA, Brooke-Popham 6/1/29, "Aggressive Action Against Japan 30 August 1941," 1, 2.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

Brooke-Popham's plan to reinforce Hong Kong met resistance from the RAF, the Royal Navy, and the Army. As an RAF report outlined on 8 August 1941, "the decision to risk war will be taken on Malaya and not Hong Kong. On strategic grounds, therefore, we should not weaken Malaya to strengthen Hong Kong."<sup>127</sup> While acknowledging that changes had occurred, RAF officers opined:

It is true that the situation in the Far East is less dark than it was 9 months ago, but nothing that has happened at present has really altered the strategical situation of Hong Kong itself. It is not a place that can be used offensively in the present situation and we should be better off out of it. There is no prima facie case therefore for increasing the defences of Hong Kong on strategic grounds.<sup>128</sup>

The summer of 1941 ended with no reinforcements being sent to Hong Kong.

Still, Brooke-Popham was encouraged to demand more resources from the RAF for the Far East. On 15 September 1941, Air Marshal J.T. Babington of RAF Headquarters Technical Training Command told Brooke-Popham that "coming back to the Far East, and if I may presume to advise you, I believe that in spite of the treatment of your previous efforts at upgrading, another shot at it might now be successful. At any rate, I have done everything I can to clear the ground and prepare the way for a more hospitable reception."<sup>129</sup> On 16 September, Brooke-Popham asked again for four flying boats at Hong Kong to help direct anti-aircraft fire and to maintain communications with China and the Philippines. According to Brooke-Popham, a flight of four fighters would aid in "deception indicating increased confidence by example of reinforcing so vulnerable an outpost."<sup>130</sup> But Brooke-Popham again was rebuffed. Encouraged by the Canadian reinforcement, on 24 November, Brooke-Popham wrote "I leave to you the

---

<sup>127</sup> TNA, AIR 23/1863, Hong Kong Report, 8 August 1941, 1–2.

<sup>128</sup> TNA, AIR 23/1863, Air Defence of Hong Kong, 18 August 1941, 1.

<sup>129</sup> LHCMA, Brooke-Popham 6/11/2, "Letter from J.T. Babington 15 September 1941," 2.

<sup>130</sup> LHCMA, Brooke-Popham, 6/1/16, "Cable to Chiefs of Staff 16 September 1941," 1, 4.



political aspect of having Dominion troops unsupported from the air.”<sup>131</sup> His new tactic of hoping that the Canadian presence would lead to more air reinforcements, like all the others, failed.

#### Grasett’s Role in Suggesting Canada Reinforce Hong Kong

A direct chain of events in summer 1941 led to Canadian troops being despatched to Hong Kong. That chain began on 19 July when Maltby replaced Grasett as GOC of British troops in Hong Kong. The timing of Grasett’s travels back to Britain are important for determining how Grasett’s meeting with Canadian Chief of the General Staff (CGS) Harry Crerar developed. Maltby stated that he met with Grasett on 20 July to discuss issues affecting Hong Kong.<sup>132</sup> Grasett returned to the United Kingdom via Canada in August. While in Canada, he visited with his Royal Military College classmate Crerar and met with Canada’s Minister of National Defence, J.L. Ralston. Details remain elusive as no documentation about the meetings—including their exact dates—are known to exist. The number of meetings is also unknown. During the 1942 Inquiry about “C” Force’s despatch to Hong Kong, Crerar denied that he and Grasett had discussed sending Canadian troops to Hong Kong, asserting only that they had discussed the colony’s reinforcement generally.<sup>133</sup> In a 1953 letter to official Army historian C.P. Stacey, Crerar briefly outlined the conversations:

Grasett, accompanied by me, also described the Hong Kong situation to the Minister, Colonel Ralston, during a fairly lengthy interview on one of the couple of days he was in Ottawa. It is possible that the Minister made some reference to this in any personal diary he might have kept. However, neither to myself alone, nor to the Minister and myself jointly, did Grasett then raise the question of obtaining these two additional battalions from Canada.<sup>134</sup>

---

<sup>131</sup> TNA, WO 106/2412, Telegram from GOC Far East to War Office, 24 November 1941.

<sup>132</sup> IWM, Maltby, Scrapbook, 20 July 1941.

<sup>133</sup> LAC, Royal Commission to Inquire into and Report upon the Organization, Authorization and Dispatch of the Canadian Expeditionary Force to the Crown Colony of Hong Kong fonds, RG 33/120, volume 3, file “Telegram from H.D.G. Crerar to W.K. Campbell,” 11–12.

<sup>134</sup> LAC, H.D.G. Crerar fonds, MG 30 E 157, volume 21, file “958C.009 (D329) Comments by Gen. Crerar on Official History of Cdn Army,” letter from H.D.G. Crerar to C.P. Stacey, 23 October 1953, page 1.

Many have overlooked Ralston's role in these meetings. Some do not mention him at all, others confirm his presence solely through the letter Crerar sent to Stacey in the 1950s. Vincent failed to cite Ralston at all, while historians Nathan Greenfield and Brereton Greenhous mentioned Ralston without naming him directly or exploring his role.<sup>135</sup> Kwong and Tsoi have contended that Grasett shared his idea of reinforcing Hong Kong with Crerar and Ralston.<sup>136</sup> As Crerar biographer Paul Dickson claimed that Ralston had a "cautious reaction" to the 19 September British request for troops despite meeting with Grasett, Ralston's willingness to discuss the use of Canadian troops weeks later was presented as proof that "it would be surprising, then, if the deployment of Canadian units in some theatre of war had not, at least, been mentioned" when Grasett was in Ottawa.<sup>137</sup>

Crerar's comment to Stacey about Ralston possibly having a diary was, in fact, correct. Ralston kept a date book for this period, but it has many gaps over the course of the summer of 1941. While a meeting between Grasett, Crerar, and Ralston could not be conducted until after 20 July, Ralston's diary is missing entries from 28–29 July, a Monday and Tuesday. There are no entries either for 3 and 9 August. But as both days were Sundays, a missing entry is not unusual. The most suspicious date without an entry is Monday, 4 August. As Grasett may have been in Ottawa on that day, a meeting may have taken place. As the other dates in August are recorded, either the meeting took place on the 4th or Ralston did not mention the meeting in the diary.<sup>138</sup> Hong Kong's fall and the poor treatment of the prisoners of war are possible explanations for

---

<sup>135</sup> Nathan M. Greenfield, *The Damned: The Canadians at the Battle of Hong Kong and the POW Experience, 1941–45* (Toronto: Harper Collins, 2010), 12. Brereton Greenhous, "*C*" *Force to Hong Kong: A Canadian Catastrophe, 1941–1945* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1997), 15.

<sup>136</sup> Kwong and Tsoi, *Eastern Fortress*, 136.

<sup>137</sup> Paul Dickson, *A Thoroughly Canadian General: A Biography of General H.D.G. Crerar* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 166–167.

<sup>138</sup> LAC, J.L. Ralston fonds, MG 27 III BII, volume 67, file "Ralston, J.L. Diary 1941–44 (Incomplete)."

why Ralston may have not wanted to retain a meeting record. Given the available evidence, it is likely Ralston also participated in these discussions and thus had a part to play in the British request for reinforcements. But Ralston's true role may never be fully known.

Considering the events that followed these meetings, it is highly unlikely that Grasett, Crerar, and Ralston only discussed reinforcing Hong Kong in a general way. Crerar's goals as CGS are one reason why this claim is suspect. Paul Dickson has argued that because Crerar wanted to expand the Canadian Army effort upon becoming CGS, his decision to support the despatch of Canadian troops to Hong Kong must be understood in this context. As Canadian ground troops had not yet to fight in the war, "the Canadian government and Crerar were seeking concrete action to help dispel the malaise settling over the Canadian war effort when the question of the position of Hong Kong was first broached." As Crerar was aware that English Canadians were growing unhappy about Canadian Army inaction, Grasett's visit gave Crerar an opportunity to get Canadian soldiers to do something other than training in Britain or at home.<sup>139</sup>

Upon his return to Britain, Grasett met with the Chiefs of Staff (COS) Committee on 3 September 1941. Describing defence preparations at Hong Kong, Grasett warned that the Japanese forces, having set up aerodromes near Hong Kong, could attack the colony "whenever they wished to do so." Still, volunteers were augmenting the garrison and most of the defences were in a good state. With an eye to international relations, Grasett noted that everything had been done to assure Chinese leader Chiang Kai Shek that Hong Kong would be defended "to the last man and the last round."<sup>140</sup> This comment stands in contrast to Grasett's claim in January 1940 that "most of us are a bit restless here and would like to be a bit nearer the centre of things.

---

<sup>139</sup> Dickson, *A Thoroughly Canadian General*, 140, 163.

<sup>140</sup> TNA, CAB 79/14/8, Chiefs of Staff Committee Meeting, 3 September 1941, 5, 6.

I must say I do not find the thought of spending the war in Hong Kong a very happy one!”<sup>141</sup> In perhaps the most controversial action of his career, Grasett suggested that a small reinforcement of Hong Kong’s garrison would improve troop morale and show China and Japan that Britain would defend Hong Kong. Further, “in view of their interest of the Pacific, the Canadian Government might be agreeable to send one or two battalions if the point were put to them.”<sup>142</sup>

The British COS changed their views of the defence of Hong Kong during the early years of the Second World War. Despite Japan’s occupation of Canton and the area surrounding Hong Kong, their view were in a state of flux and their concerns about prestige and the loss of Hong Kong had not disappeared. In October 1940, the COS discussed Hong Kong in detail as “the situation in the Far East has changed to the extent that the Japanese have signed a pact with the Axis powers and have established themselves in part of Indo-China. On the other hand, the likelihood of U.S.A. co-operation in a war with Japan has become greater and hence we have been able to adopt a firmer line in our policy vis-a-vis Japan.” The Chiefs thus believed the decision to demilitarize Hong Kong was “largely a political one.” The potential loss of prestige received much attention in this memorandum as “the possible loss of prestige due to the fall of Hong Kong war even with all its attendant horrors would have less serious results than the loss of prestige from its demilitarisation under present conditions.”<sup>143</sup> These statements demonstrate how the defence of Hong Kong was viewed in the early years of the Second World War. It also demonstrates that American actions and thoughts influenced British policy in the Far East and that British policy was never set in stone.

---

<sup>141</sup> TNA, WO 106/2380, Letter from A.E. Grasett to R.H. Dewing, 16 January 1940, 2.

<sup>142</sup> TNA, CAB 79/14/8, Chiefs of Staff Committee Meeting, 3 September 1941, 6.

<sup>143</sup> TNA, CAB 121/718, Chiefs of Staff Committee Defence of Hong Kong Report, 19 October 1940, 1, 2.

The COS continued to demonstrate the same thinking toward Hong Kong well into 1941. In January, Brooke-Popham requested more troops for Hong Kong. The Chiefs of Staff rejected this proposal, although “should present discussions in Washington or any major change in situation alter our estimate of the position we will reconsider.”<sup>144</sup> By September 1941, the COS had completely changed its outlook on Hong Kong. As noted by CIGS John Dill on 8 September “to have reinforced a year ago would have been to throw good money after bad. The situation is now so changed that in 4½ months relief might be possible and such a reinforcement might well prolong resistance for a further considerable period.” He reminded the COS that “You will remember this policy was last reviewed in January, 1941 when it was decided not to send any more reinforcements to Hong Kong. Since then, however, the position in the Far East has changed radically and Japan has shown a certain weakness latterly in her attitude towards Great Britain and the United States.”<sup>145</sup> Grasett had a direct impact on the COS changing their view about Hong Kong: “The Chiefs of Staff, as a result of a discussion with General Grasett, later General Officer Commanding, Hong Kong, submitted a minute to the Prime Minister. . . recommending that Canada should be asked to send one or two battalions to Hong Kong.”<sup>146</sup> Ultimately, Grasett and Brooke-Popham’s repeated badgering for more reinforcements for Hong Kong finally paid off.

### Conclusion

On 9 September 1941, Lieutenant-Colonel Barlow of the Colonial Office wrote:

I fancy this paper may provoke the wrath of the Prime Minister. Quite apart from the old decision that no further reinforcements were to be sent to Hong Kong, the Prime Minister may well ask why it is that Major-General Grasett has not said

---

<sup>144</sup> TNA, CAB 121/718, War Cabinet Chiefs of Staff Committee, 22 January 1941, Annex I.

<sup>145</sup> TNA, CAB 80/30/59, Hong Kong, Defence of Note by C.I.G.S. circulating draft note for submission to Prime Minister, 8 September 1941, 1, 2.

<sup>146</sup> TNA, CAB 121/718, Letter from Colonel L.C. Hollis to Sterndale Bennett, 4 October 1941, 1.

before that the troops under his command were inadequate for their limited task, which had always been the defence of Hong Kong for a given period of time.<sup>147</sup>

Of course, Grasett had asked for more reinforcements on multiple occasions, only to be rebuffed each time. He had been supported by Brooke-Popham who had also repeatedly asked for more troops. Barlow's statement encapsulates the issues surrounding the reinforcement of Hong Kong. The advice offered by political and military leaders in the colony was often ignored by their superiors in London. Barlow was also wrong about Churchill being angered by the request for Canadian reinforcements. The fluid nature of Hong Kong's defence is best personified by Churchill changing his opinions on the reinforcement of the colony. Barlow's comment also demonstrates that Churchill was unaware of Grasett's many requests and the true situation at Hong Kong. This chapter demonstrates that the long-term connections between the British and Canadian armies allowed the much-discussed reinforcement to take place. Such links are not discussed in other works on the Battle of Hong Kong making this a much needed new addition to the battle's historiography.

---

<sup>147</sup> TNA, CO 968/13/2, Note, 9 September 1941.

## CHAPTER 3

### DEMAND FOR SENSATIONAL ACTION: CANADA ACCEPTS THE HONG KONG REQUEST

The most pervasive and emotionally charged myths about the Battle of Hong Kong relate to why Canadian leaders accepted Britain's 1941 request to reinforce the colony. The various versions of this myth cover the spectrum from the reasonable to the fantastical as accusations of betrayal abound. The personal ambition of Canadian leaders define other versions which are based on pure speculation and conjecture. Carl Vincent's claim fits this mould, for he has asserted that "while it is remotely conceivable that a Canadian government under the Liberals and led by [Prime Minister William Lyon] Mackenzie King would be willing to cold-bloodedly immolate 2,000 Canadians on the altar of either Imperial solidarity or Far Eastern defence, it does severely strain one's concept of the possible."<sup>1</sup> Brereton Greenhous, believing that blame must be assigned for the decision to send Canadians to Hong Kong, has placed it solely on General Harry Crerar, "a ruthless and studiously ambitious sycophant." While Greenhous did not offer a definite reason Crerar's support for the reinforcement, he has posited that Crerar's "authoritarian submissive" personality had sought to please his British superiors: "If they wanted Canadians at Hong Kong, that was what he wanted, too."<sup>2</sup> Writing about *The Valour and the Horror* in 1992, Canadian journalist Tony Atherton claimed that "while Japanese atrocities (and the nation's stubborn refusal to acknowledge them) are pilloried in the first episode, so is Winston Churchill's decision to send untrained Canadian soldiers to the colony having already decided it was indefensible."<sup>3</sup> In 2015, Blair Crawford, reporting on writer Terry Meagher's

---

<sup>1</sup> Carl Vincent, *No Reason Why: The Canadian Hong Kong Tragedy, An Examination* (Stittsville, Ontario: Canada's Wings, 1981), 42–43.

<sup>2</sup> Brereton Greenhous, "C" *Force to Hong Kong: A Canadian Catastrophe, 1941–1945* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1997), 15, 20.

<sup>3</sup> Tony Atherton, "Channeling," *Ottawa Citizen*, 12 January 1992, 37.

book *Betrayal: Canadian Soldiers in Hong Kong, 1941* in the *Ottawa Citizen*, wrote that “the book examines how the Canadians were betrayed, first by the British and Canadian governments who sent them to defend an undefendable colony, then again by the British commander who after the war blamed the Canadian troops for the defeat.”<sup>4</sup>

I argue in this chapter that a number of reasons played a role in Canada’s choice to reinforce Hong Kong. Canadian foreign policy objectives—most notably, the bettering relations with the United States—were a driving factor behind “C” Force’s despatch to Hong Kong. The timing of decisions by other governments attempting to deter Japan also played a part in the decision as Canada desired to be in lock step with Britain and the United States. Individuals’ goals and opinions were also a crucial element. Chief of the General Staff (CGS) General Harry Crerar’s ambitious plans to expand the Canadian Army played a key role in his decision-making, as did his historical understanding of Hong Kong’s defences. Also, I have placed the meeting Crerar and Brigadier Arthur Edward Grasett in a new context, something no other work about Hong Kong had done. Ministers of Defence National J.L. Ralston and C.G. Power played an influential, but often overlooked, role in this process, also is a new addition to the historiography. King’s support for reinforcement came despite concerns that an expanded Canadian military presence might lead to the need for overseas conscription. Surprisingly, military intelligence did not play a vital role in the decision. Thus, historian J.L. Granatstein has argued “Canada needed its own intelligence apparatus, its own ability to determine if troops should be committed to operations. In effect, Canada needed to act like a nation, not a colony”.<sup>5</sup> This chapter will demonstrate that Granatstein’s assessment was correct.

---

<sup>4</sup> Blair Crawford, “Author defends honour of Canadian troops at the Battle of Hong Kong, 1941,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 10 November 2015.

<sup>5</sup> J.L. Granatstein, *Canada’s Army: Waging War and Keeping the Peace* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 201.



## How the Request Was Accepted

On 19 September 1941, a Dominion Office telegram asking for Canadian troops to be sent to Hong Kong arrived in Ottawa. The process of reviewing and accepting the request proceeded swiftly. When the Cabinet War Committee (CWC) met to consider the proposal on 23 September, King declined to reach a decision without consulting Ralston who was vacationing in California. A message was quickly despatched, carried in person by Major C.M. Drury, the Canadian Assistant Military Attaché in Washington. Drury informed the Minister that while the CWC was willing to accept the British proposal, Ralston need not rush his decision. But Ralston felt a quick response was required given the telegram's language, a common behaviour for Ralston.<sup>6</sup> Ralston gave his support on 24 September after speaking with Crerar who had recommended that the government accept the request.<sup>7</sup> On 27 September, Drury returned to Washington with a verbal confirmation that Ralston approved the request.<sup>8</sup> Approving the British request on 1 October, King wrote in his diary that "in agreeing to Canadians going to the Orient, I again stressed the importance of care being taken to see that our agreement in that particular did not later afford an argument for conscription."<sup>9</sup>

## The Request

As the Dominions Office telegram is crucial to comprehending Canada's choice, I quote it here in full:

---

<sup>6</sup> Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC), Royal Commission to Inquire into and Report upon the Organization, Authorization and Dispatch of the Canadian Expeditionary Force to the Crown Colony of Hong Kong fonds (hereafter Hong Kong Inquiry fonds), RG 33 120, volume 2, file "Exhibits 1-44", exhibit 3 Record of Conversations on Important Subjects. LAC, H.D.G. Crerar fonds, MG30 E157, volume 1, file "958C.009 (D4) CGS Files 1940-1942-Letters of Congratulation on Appointment as Chief General Staff. Crerar Papers - Period Jul 40 to Oct 40", letter from H.D.G. Crerar to Hume Wrong, 22 August 1940.

<sup>7</sup> LAC, J.L. Ralston fonds, MG 27 III BII, volume 70, file "Hong Kong Inquiry, Memorandum", 26 February 1942, 2.

<sup>8</sup> LAC, Hong Kong Inquiry fonds, RG 33 120, volume 2, file "Exhibits 1-44", exhibit 8 Note on telephone conversation with Brigadier Letson, 1100 hours, 27 Sep 41.

<sup>9</sup> LAC, William Lyon Mackenzie King fonds, MG26-J13, Diary (hereafter King Diary), 2 October 1941, pages 1-2.

No. 162. Most Secret. In consultation with late General Officer Commanding who has recently arrived in this country, we have been considering the defences of Hong Kong. Approved policy has been that Hong Kong should be regarded as an outpost and held as long as possible in the event of war in the Far East. Existing army garrison consists of four battalions of infantry, and although this force represents bare minimum required for depot assigned to it, we have thought hitherto that it would not ultimately serve any useful purpose to increase the garrison.

Position in the Far East has now, however, changed. Our defences in Malaya have been improved and there have been signs of a certain weakening in Japanese attitude towards us and the United States. In these circumstances it is thought that a small reinforcement of garrison at Hong Kong e.g. by one or more battalions, would be very fully justified. It would increase strength of garrison out of all proportion to actual numbers involved, and it would provide a strong stimulus to garrison and Colony; it would further have a very great moral effect in the whole of the Far East and would reassure Chiang Kai Shek as to the reality of our intention to hold the island.

His Majesty's Government in Canada will be well aware of difficulties we are at present experiencing in providing forces which situation in various parts of the world demands, despite very great assistance which is being furnished by Dominions. We should therefore be most grateful if the Canadian Government would consider whether one or two Canadian battalions could be provided from Canada for this purpose. It is thought that in view of their special position in the north Pacific, Canadian Government would in any case have wish to be informed of need as we see it for reinforcement of Hong Kong and special value of such measure, even though on a very limited scale at the present time. It may also be mentioned that the United States have recently despatched a small reinforcement to the Philippines. It would be of the greatest help if the Canadian Government could co-operate with us in the manner suggested, and we much hope that they will feel able to do so.

If the Canadian Government agree in principle to send one or two battalions, we should propose to communicate with you again as to the best time for their despatch, having regard to the general political situation in the Far East.<sup>10</sup>

Various considerations, both foreign and domestic, some of which were raised in the telegram led to the Canadian acceptance of the request.

---

<sup>10</sup> LAC, Hong Kong Inquiry fonds, RG 33 120, volume 2, file "Exhibits 1-44", exhibit 1 telegram from Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to Secretary of State for External Affairs, 19 September 1941, pages 1-2.

## Foreign Policy Factors

Britain's need for manpower by late 1941 was acute. Canada already had provided much assistance to Britain. This effort included the garrisoning of British colonies such as Newfoundland, Jamaica, Bermuda, and the Bahamas, Canadian troops had also garrisoned Iceland which had fallen under Allied occupation in May 1940. Many of these reinforcements were approved with little discussion, although Iceland was the exception. Vincent Massey, Canadian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, reported the British request for a Canadian brigade for occupation duties in Iceland on 19 May 1940.<sup>11</sup> When the CWC discussed the request for troops for Iceland on 22 May, it agreed "to provide and maintain an Infantry Brigade for garrison service in Iceland..."<sup>12</sup> But the CWC discussed or referenced Iceland in eleven different meetings between 19 May request to 15 July. In contrast, Hong Kong was only discussed three times in the CWC between 19 September and 27 October 1941 when "C" Force left Vancouver. On 14 June 1940, a British request to increase the number of personnel destined for Iceland was approved.<sup>13</sup> At the 9 July meeting, concerns arose that "from the point of view of danger, service in Iceland would possibly be more hazardous than service in the United Kingdom."<sup>14</sup> However, Canadian troops in Iceland saw no combat, and most were gone from the island within a few months.<sup>15</sup>

North Africa also received much attention from the CWC. Though pressured by Ralston, King was hesitant to send Canadians to the desert as the fighting there only served to protect the

---

<sup>11</sup> LAC, Privy Council Office fonds, RG 2 7C, volume 1, file "Documents of the Cabinet War Committee, Volume 1, 1939-1940", telegram from The High Commissioner For Canada in Great Britain to Secretary of State for External Affairs Canada, 19 May 1940, page 1, microfilm reel C-4653.

<sup>12</sup> LAC, Privy Council Office fonds, RG 2 7C, volume 1, file "Minutes of the Cabinet War Committee Volume 1 8 December 1939-15 July 1940", memorandum re Meeting of Cabinet War Committee, 22 May 1940, page 2, microfilm reel C-4653.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., Memorandum re Meeting of Cabinet War Committee 14 June 1940, page 6, microfilm reel C-4653.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., Memorandum re Meeting of Cabinet War Committee 9 July 1940, page 3, microfilm reel C-4653.

<sup>15</sup> C.P. Stacey, *Six Years of War: The Army in Canada, Britain and the Pacific* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1955), 85.

British Empire, a factor that would not play well in a more skeptical Québec.<sup>16</sup> In November 1940, when Ralston suggested that Canadians could serve in Egypt, the CWC rejected the plan for Canadian policy regarding North Africa remained undecided.<sup>17</sup> In January 1941, the idea of Canadians in North Africa was again raised and rejected as British Prime Minister Winston Churchill had not thought of using Canadian troops in North Africa.<sup>18</sup> In a later meeting with Churchill, King recalled that the British Prime Minister did not want Canadians serving in the Near East or the Middle East, so-called “hot parts.”<sup>19</sup> By May 1941, fearing the loss of morale among inactive Canadian soldiers, Ralston wanted to get Canadian troops into action as quickly possible in the Middle East or to participate in raids against France.<sup>20</sup> King told Ralston “that I would not countenance anything of the kind; that it might be my Scotch conscience, or it might be common sense, but I do not feel that any government has the right to take the lives of any men for spectacular purposes.”<sup>21</sup> Ralston stopped pushing for Canadians to go to North Africa.

Canadian-American relations played a role in the decision to accept the Hong Kong request as the two nations had been moving closer together militarily since the late 1930s. On 19–20 January 1938, there had been talks between Canadian and American officers in Washington. CGS General C.E. Ashton and Chief of the Naval Staff, Percy W. Nelles had met with General Malin Craig, the American Army Chief of Staff, and Admiral W.D. Leahy, the

---

<sup>16</sup> Tim Cook, *Warlords: Borden, Mackenzie King, and Canada's World Wars* (Toronto: Allen Lane, 2012), 250–251.

<sup>17</sup> LAC, Privy Council Office fonds, RG 2 7C, volume 2, file “Minutes of the Cabinet War Committee Volume 3 23 October 1940–26 December 1940”, minutes of War Committee of the Cabinet, 14 November 1940, page 7, microfilm reel C-4653.

<sup>18</sup> LAC, Privy Council Office fonds, RG 2 7C, volume 3, file “Minutes of the Cabinet War Committee Volume 4 2 January 1941–27 March 1941”, minutes of War Committee of the Cabinet, 24 January 1941, page 4, microfilm reel C-4653.

<sup>19</sup> LAC, King Diary, 23 August 1941, page 1.

<sup>20</sup> Iain E. Johnston-White, *The British Commonwealth and Victory in the Second World War* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017), 254.

<sup>21</sup> LAC, King Diary, 20 May 1941, page 2.

Chief of Naval Operations. Craig had offered to extend the American operational zone to cover British Columbia in the event of war. As historian Galen Roger Perras has concluded, “despite Craig’s offer to extend protection to BC, both he and Leahy, no doubt reflecting their nation’s own isolationist bent, pointedly commented that no formal commitments would be agreed to in the discussions, an opinion that Ashton and Nelles did not dispute.”<sup>22</sup> Perras has argued that “given [American President Franklin] Roosevelt’s expressed concerns about the province’s inadequate fortifications, the President must have ordered Craig to put forward the deal as it is unimaginable the American general would have done such a thing on his own.” This “offer” was made as the result of an earlier meeting in London on 13 January 1938 between Captain Royal Ingersoll of the United States Navy and Captain T.S.V. Phillips of the Royal Navy. On that day, the two officers had:

signed a “Record of Conversation.” If Britain and America established a distant blockade of Japan, the USN would “also assume the responsibility for the general Naval defence of the West Coast of Canada.” Perhaps in the wake of that agreement, Roosevelt had wished to test Canada’s willingness to accept American strategic direction. British officials in Washington were unsure. [British Ambassador to the United States Ronald] Lindsay thought the Legation talks indicated that the State Department “was making one more step towards cooperation with the British Empire.”<sup>23</sup>

Canada was not made aware of this agreement. When details of Ingersoll’s mission subsequently leaked to the isolationist Congress, Roosevelt backtracked from Ingersoll’s mission. Thus, Perras has posited that the meeting in Washington constituted an attempt by Roosevelt to convince King to do more for Canada’s Pacific defence.<sup>24</sup> With this

---

<sup>22</sup> Galen Perras, “Stepping Stones on a Road to Nowhere? The United States, Canada, and the Aleutian Island Campaign, 1942–1943” (PhD diss., University of Waterloo, 1995), 61.

<sup>23</sup> Galen Roger Perras, “‘Future Plays Will Depend On How The Next One Works’: Franklin Roosevelt and the Canadian Legation Discussions of January 1938,” *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 8, no. 4 (2006): 27–28.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

acceptance of the British request, King showed Roosevelt that Canada would fight against the Japanese in North America.

In August 1938, Roosevelt delivered a speech at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, announcing that "I give to you assurance that the people of the United States will not stand idly by if domination of Canadian soil is threatened by any other empire."<sup>25</sup> In November 1938, newly-appointed CGS Major-General T. V. Anderson visited Washington to meet with General Craig and other senior American officers. Political Scientist James Eayrs has claimed that "the object of the visit was not so much to take the earlier staff discussions any further as to bring the Canadian officer into contact with his United States counterparts."<sup>26</sup> Despite this objective, C.P. Stacey, the Canadian Army's official historian, has averred that "A useful exchange of views took place, and Anderson was impressed by the cooperative attitude of the War Department."<sup>27</sup> But once Canada declared war on Germany in September 1939, communications with the United States on defence issues virtually stopped. But the German invasion of Western Europe in spring 1940 made American officials more receptive to the notion of military talks with Canada. On 17 June 1940, the Canadian military staff in Washington had floated the idea of joint talks on the defence of North America, opening the door to informal, secret meetings which began on 11 July.<sup>28</sup> Canadian and American staff officers met in Washington to discuss several topics, including weapons shipments to Canada from American manufacturers and joint defence planning for the Atlantic coast. Little was accomplished in these talks, as the Americans did not want to sign any formal agreements given American isolationism

---

<sup>25</sup> C.P. Stacey, *Canada and the Age of Conflict Volume 2: 1921–1948 The Mackenzie King Era* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), 226.

<sup>26</sup> James Eayrs, *In Defence of Canada: Appeasement and Rearmament* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965), 183.

<sup>27</sup> C.P. Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments: The War Policies of Canada 1939–1945* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1970), 98.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 333.

and the fact that Canada was at war while the United States was not. The first binding agreement, however, followed soon afterward.

On 17 August 1940, Roosevelt invited King to a meeting in Ogdensburg, New York. King went without consulting his military or political advisors other than bringing a list of desired military equipment that Ralston had provided. King and Roosevelt discussed the creation of a joint binational civilian and military board that would formulate defence plans for the Northwestern Hemisphere. As a result, the Permanent Joint Board on Defence was created.<sup>29</sup> This agreement was reached without British involvement. Certain that King had overstepped his authority, on 22 August 1940, Churchill sent an angry telegram to King about the agreement:

It would be better to do without the destroyers sorely as we need them than to get drawn into a haggling match between the experts as to what we ought to give in return for munitions. Immediately people would say how much are they worth in money and is not advantage being taken of our being hardpressed. Any discussion of this kind would be injurious to the great movement of events. Each should give all he can without any invidious comparison. I am deeply interested in the arrangements you are making for Canada and America's mutual defence. Here again there may be two opinions on some of the points mentioned. Supposing Mr. Hitler cannot invade us and his Air Force begins to blench under the strain all these transactions will be judged in a mood different to that prevailing while the issue still hangs in the balance.<sup>30</sup>

Canadian historian Desmond Morton was partially right when he claimed “that Ogdensburg represented Canada's transfer from one empire to another.”<sup>31</sup> Canada and the United States had moved closer together—a relationship that influenced future Canadian decision-making in the Pacific.

Given this alliance context, by the summer of 1941, Canada wished to support American policies in the Pacific. In July, the Department of External Affairs cabled the Secretary of State

---

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 338–341.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 341.

<sup>31</sup> Desmond Morton, *A Short History of Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 2001), 234.

for Dominion Affairs about Japanese designs on French Indochina, stating that the “Canadian government concur in your conclusion that, in present situation, we should co-operate completely with the United States in the policy they appeared to be prepared to adopt in face of Japanese move on Indo-China.”<sup>32</sup> Canada was told on multiple occasions that Britain intended to follow America’s lead when it came to Japan. Indeed, while worried that Japan might attack Thailand, the Secretary of State Dominion Affairs would not act without first consulting with Washington.<sup>33</sup>

Not only was Canada united with Britain in supporting the United States, King also actively worked to bring the United States into the fight against Nazi Germany. Two of King’s speeches in 1941 represented such efforts. The first speech was delivered on 4 September before many dignitaries including Churchill, during King’s visit to London. King spoke about many elements of Canada’s war effort, including the fact that Canadian soldiers had not yet engaged in combat: “You all know how eager our Canadian soldiers are for action against the enemy. I cannot make too clear that the policy of the Canadian government is to have our troops serve in those theatres where viewing the war as a whole, it is believed their services will count most.”<sup>34</sup> The majority of the speech, though, discussed bringing the United States into closer defence relations with Britain. King spoke of a “northern bridge,” comprised of Newfoundland, Greenland, Iceland, and the British Isles, to be jointly defended by Canada and the United States. Also noting that the United States and Canada would defend each other should the need arise, King ended his speech by pleading that “it must now be wholly clear that if the new world order,

---

<sup>32</sup> LAC, Ralston fonds, MG 27 III BII, volume 49, file “Japan, Canadian Information & Policy General 1940–1942”, telegram from Secretary of State for External Affairs to Secretary of State Dominion Affairs, 23 July 1941, page 1.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., telegram From Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to Secretary of State for External Affairs, 2 August 1941, page 1.

<sup>34</sup> LAC, King fonds, MG26-J5, volume 93, file “Speeches outside Parliament” speech The Lord Mayor’s Luncheon in Honour of the Prime Minister of Canada, 4 September 1941, page 9, microfilm reel H-3064.



based upon freedom, is to assume definite shape, this can only be effected through the leadership of the British Commonwealth of Nations and the United States of America working in whole-hearted co-operation toward this great end.”<sup>35</sup> In his diary, King detailed that “we had a very exacting time in deciding on the wisest phraseology with respect to the reference to America declaring her intention to prevent Germany’s conquest of Britain. I think perhaps I have gone as far as it is wise for me to go. It is a great responsibility and I only regret that I feel so very tired and worn as not to be able to think clearly or to give to the work the spirit that it merits.”<sup>36</sup> On the day of the speech, King wrote “I begin to wonder how it appeal in Britain, the United States and Canada. I am not without belief that there is something of inspiration in it may be of some small help.”<sup>37</sup> King believed the speech to be “a real triumph.”<sup>38</sup> Recounting his meeting with Churchill after the speech, King said his goal involved “stirring the Americans” to action.<sup>39</sup>

Upon returning to Canada, King, upon listening to a radio speech by Roosevelt, had reason to believe that his plan was succeeding. As he recorded in his diary, “one feels that the President’s declaration [Roosevelt’s shoot on-sight policy for U-boats] marks a real place of new beginning in the world situation. America has moved up into the front line at least at sea.”<sup>40</sup> King had clearly supported the American escalation in the Atlantic. The second speech took place in Ottawa on 17 September, only two days before the arrival of the British request telegram. Discussing his recent visit to Britain, King said “I had several purposes in view. The first was the fulfillment of a natural desire to visit the United Kingdom at this time of war, and thus to

---

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., page 12.

<sup>36</sup> LAC, King Diary, 3 September 1941, pages 1–2.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 3 September, pages 1.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 4 September, pages 4.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 5 September, 4

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 12 September. Daniel Todman, *Britain’s War: Into Battle, 1937–1941* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 682. Winston Churchill, *The Second World War: The Grand Alliance* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1951), 516.

emphasize, in the minds of the people in the Old Land, and before the world, Canada's position at Britain's side." King wanted to show that Canada stood by Britain, and that it would do the same with the United States. King decried any nation that took a neutral stance in the war, a not so thinly veiled criticism of the United States. In a call for unity, King declared "the world's free forces must act increasingly as one, in every aspect of the common cause, if humanity is to be saved a prolonged and bitter agony. Nothing less than one vast brotherhood of freedom will suffice to-day to preserve the world's freedom." Employing American history to speak to Americans, King recalled Abraham Lincoln's rhetoric from the 1850s that the United States could not continue to exist as half-free, half-slave, a clear appeal to the Americans to do more in the fight against Nazi Germany. King concluded that "we in Canada can make no more effective appeal to free men throughout the world than the appeal of our own example, as a people still removed from the heart of the struggle, yet putting forth our utmost effort."<sup>41</sup> King clearly wished to influence the Americans only days before the arrival of the 19 September request for troops.

Following the speech, King recorded in his diary, "I am sure the speech will be greatly appreciated in Britain, and I think it will not be unwelcome certainly for the President and the administration, and to most others in the United States."<sup>42</sup> Whether or not the American leadership was listening to King is beside the point, for King's messages demonstrated that his actions were designed to influence America and to bring it into the war. The next day King despaired, "I really think the U.S. should come in before it is too late. Otherwise Britain may be

---

<sup>41</sup> LAC, King fonds, MG26-J5, volume 91, file "Speeches in Parliament" speech Canada and the War, 17 September 1941, pages 3, 8-12, microfilm reel H-3062Ibid., 12.

<sup>42</sup> LAC, King Diary, 17 September 1941, page 2.

crushed. Then there would be no saving of the peoples who are in a position to reconstruct the world. I am glad I have spoken out without fear.”<sup>43</sup>

King also detailed a conversation he had with American Minister to Canada, Jay Pierrepont Moffat, who was headed to Washington after the speech. King asked Moffat to tell Roosevelt that “Churchill and other Ministers quite convinced that Britain could not win the war unless the U.S. actively intervened.” King also wrote that “Moffat asked me just what I meant by speaking of the U.S. going into the war, whether I meant coming in, in all directions, at once or proceeding as the U.S. was now doing...I said I did not mean actual physical intervention, but rather something in the nature of a declaration on the President’s part, making clear that Germany could not win, and that the U.S. would see that they did not win.”<sup>44</sup> Clearly wanting the United States to better help the Allied war effort, King needed to show Roosevelt that the British Empire would support American objectives in the Pacific in order to buttress both British and Canadian interests. All these concerns culminated as both Britain and the United States the increased measures to deter Japan from war in the summer of 1941. As noted in Chapter 2, American fears of Japanese expansion were growing in July 1941. A new policy of deterrence was adopted, the Philippine Army was strengthened, and new B-17 bombers were transferred to the Philippines. Britain matched this policy of military deterrence by strengthening defences in Malaya were strengthened.<sup>45</sup> It was in this context that Grasett made his plea for Canadians to reinforce Hong Kong when he met Crerar in August 1941.

---

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 18 September 1941, page 1.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 18 September 1941, 2.

<sup>45</sup> Bell, “The ‘Singapore Strategy,’” 627

## Military Intelligence and the Request

Strangely, military intelligence and analysis had almost no role in the Canadian decision-making process about the Hong Kong reinforcement. Nor have many writers provided much attention to the intelligence gap. Despite claims by some historians and writers that Canada did not possess a proper military intelligence apparatus, one did function during the Second World War.<sup>46</sup> In addition to this small organization, the Canadian government and military received various forms of intelligence information from Britain. Stacey noted that that communications between Canadian and British military personnel also provided information. The Canadian Chief of the General Staff was responsible for maintaining correspondence with British military attachés as Canada had no attachés of its own. These connections provided the Canadian General Staff with copies of War Office and the Air Ministry reports.<sup>47</sup> King, in his dual role as External Affairs Minister, also received regular updates from Dominion Affairs on British policy in the Far East and intelligence gathered about the Japanese.

The Far Eastern Combined Bureau (FECB) supplied information and analysis about Japan's actions and intentions. As historian John Ferris has observed, Canada had access to most FECB documents, including weekly situation reports, assessments of various developments matters, counterintelligence circulars from the Far East Security Service, plus materials about wireless intelligence.<sup>48</sup> The FECB was not the only intelligence source provided by Britain, as official communications were an important source of intelligence for Canada. Stacey noted the importance of this link: "In the nature of things, Canada received far more information than she

---

<sup>46</sup> Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments*, 139.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>48</sup> John Ferris, "'Consistent with an Intention': The Far East Combined Bureau and the Outbreak of the Pacific War, 1940–41," *Intelligence and National Security* 27, no. 1 (2012): 7

was able to impart; and if her government was in general well informed about the situation in the world at large, it owed this in great part to its membership in the Commonwealth network.”<sup>49</sup>

Relatively well informed about conditions in the Pacific in 1941, Canada supported America and Britain when they froze Japanese assets in July, which was a shock for Japan’s Foreign Minister.<sup>50</sup> A telegram from 12 September from the office of the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs was typical of the information given to Canada. While Britain believed that Japan was moving away from the Axis, “this does not mean renunciation of Japanese ambitions.” The telegram concluded by saying that “it remains very unlikely that extremist elements could be restrained from exploiting any favourable opportunity for further expansion in the north or south.”<sup>51</sup> Canada was given much intelligence by September 1941 but failed to use it properly.

Canada had some intelligence analysis capabilities of its own. Historian Timothy Wilford has argued that the Canadian intelligence gathering apparatus, far more advanced than previously thought, was very much involved in the Allied intelligence community. Still, Wilford has noted that many improvements to intelligence gathering that would have provided better access to Japanese signals came too late.<sup>52</sup> Canada also employed a British intelligence officer with Far East experience in its Pacific Command headquarters located in British Columbia. Colonel B.R. Mullaly, Britain’s former military attaché in Tokyo, provided analysis on developments in Japan in September 1941. In his 15 September report, Mullaly remarked that the creation of a new Japanese defence headquarters was “a development of great significance” and an indication that the Emperor was assuming direct control over the Japanese military. As the government-

---

<sup>49</sup> Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments*, 155.

<sup>50</sup> LAC, Ralston fonds, MG 27 III BII, volume 49, file “Japan, Canadian Information & Policy General 1940–1942”, telegram From Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to Secretary of State External Affairs, 28 July 1941, page 1.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, telegram From Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to Secretary of State for External Affairs, 12 September 1941.

<sup>52</sup> Timothy Wilford, *Canada’s Road to the Pacific War: Intelligence, Strategy, and the Far East Crisis* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 51.

controlled Japanese press was softening toward Americans, this change could be viewed as a “climbing down” from Japan’s more contentious positions. On 27 September, Mullaly averred that as “the present appears to be a period of waiting...the situation is, therefore, one of extreme delicacy for it involves, for Japan, the all-important consideration of ‘face.’”<sup>53</sup> Mullaly claimed the intelligence reports indicated that Japan’s “southward advance has, for the time being at any rate, been halted.” And while Japanese troops were moving from central and south China to Manchuria, an attack upon the Soviet Union was unlikely given American and British support for the Soviets.<sup>54</sup>

Intelligence failures were the hallmark of Allied efforts in late 1941. By mid-November, British leaders, made aware that Japan would attack somewhere, strongly believed that the target was Thailand.<sup>55</sup> The office of the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs informed Canada of this development on 30 November as well as the breakdown in the American-Japanese discussions to avoid war, observed that “an aggressive move is expected by Japan within the next few days.”<sup>56</sup> As Ferris has highlighted, from 6-8 December, London and “the FECB expected the Japanese fleet in the Gulf of Siam to stop in an Indochinese port, or else to enable an assault on Bangkok, rather than to attack Malaya.” The FECB believed that Japan was preparing for an all-out war in April 1942.<sup>57</sup> Limited independent Canadian assessment about events in the Far East negatively affected Canada’s ability to make informed decisions about the use of Canadian troops.

---

<sup>53</sup> LAC, DND fonds, RG 24, volume 3913, file “N.S.5. 1037-5-3 volume 1”, Comments on Developments in the Far East, 15 September 1941, page 1.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 27 September 1941 Comments on Developments in the Far East, 2.

<sup>55</sup> Antony Best, *Britain, Japan and Pearl Harbor: Avoiding War in East Asia, 1936-1941* (London: Routledge, 1995), 192.

<sup>56</sup> LAC, DND fonds, RG 24, volume 3913, file “War Service – European War, 1939 Reports on Situation in the Far East” telegram from Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to Secretary of State for External Affairs, 30 November 1941, page 1.

<sup>57</sup> Ferris, “Consistent with an Intention,” 22-24.

## Crerar's Role in the Acceptance of the Request

Individual preconceptions and experiences heavily influenced the Canadian acceptance of Britain's reinforcement request. As Granatstein correctly has asserted that "Crerar was unquestionably the most important Canadian soldier of the war,"<sup>58</sup> it is vital to comprehend why Crerar acted as he did. Crerar's connection to the Hong Kong reinforcement certainly contributes to Granatstein's claim, as Crerar's biases and experiences affected his support for the reinforcement proposal. Highlighting various military and non-military factors for supporting the reinforcement, Crerar averred in his written testimony to the Hong Kong Inquiry in February 1942 that "the proposed action whatever the Military risks of the enterprise, needed to be examined from the broad view as to its contributory value to the eventual winning of the war. In war, high governmental policy must frequently override local military considerations." That Crerar was a politically conscious soldier is evident as he added that:

In the case of the despatch of Canadian troops to Hong Kong...political and moral principles were involved, rather than military ones, and on such a basis, the matter required to be considered and decided by the War Committee of the Cabinet. In my opinion, the resulting decision was the proper one in the circumstances, and I so remarked at that time, both to the Minister and Associate Minister of National Defence.<sup>59</sup>

His study of Hong Kong's security situation while at the Imperial Defence College (IDC) in 1934 provided Crerar with a better understanding of Hong Kong's defence problems than any other Canadian soldier. Crerar's IDC working group had concluded that defending Hong Kong was dependent on the Royal Navy arriving, while acknowledging also that the colony required

---

<sup>58</sup> J.L. Granatstein, *The Generals: The Canadian Army's Senior Commanders in the Second World War* (Toronto: Stoddart Publishing, 1993), 83.

<sup>59</sup> LAC, Crerar fonds, MG30 E157, volume 1, file "'C' Force Canadian Army Feb 42-Jun 42 -- Hong Kong Enquiry. Papers and Questionnaires pertaining to Hong Kong Expedition, Questions Suggested by Mr. Drew K.C. and the Answers thereto by Lieutenant-General H.D.G. Crerar D.S.O.," Question 1.

defence by a land force to maintain British prestige in East Asia.<sup>60</sup> Despite what Crerar knew about the issues facing Hong Kong, he still supported the reinforcement for various political and strategic reasons. Paul Dickson, Crerar's biographer, has argued that Crerar's support for the Hong Kong reinforcement must be understood in the context of Crerar's desire to expand the Canadian Army. As "public confidence was important to army expansion for recruiting purposes, morale, and not least, political support,"<sup>61</sup> Hong Kong offered Crerar an opportunity to gain more backing from the Canadian people especially as a general malaise was affecting Canada's war effort.<sup>62</sup> As placing Canadian troops in a position to better buttress the Allied war effort would show value and gain Cabinet support for a larger Army, Crerar, very aware of public pressure to get more Canadian troops more involved in the war, took this into account when making his decision.<sup>63</sup>

Crerar's correspondence with General Andrew McNaughton in 1940 and 1941 provides valuable insight into Crerar's motivations. Shortly after taking over as CGS, Crerar told McNaughton in August 1940 that "I found, as I had expected, that the pressure of public opinion 'to get on with the war' had developed to such a height that there was a tendency on the part of the Government in general, and this Department in particular, to go in all directions at highest possible speed." Desiring a more coordinated Canadian war effort, Crerar also wondered "whether the next few months will not find you out of the U.K. and in some other area of operations where the Canadian Corps can better demonstrate its fighting power."<sup>64</sup> In a 19 May

---

<sup>60</sup> Paul Dickson, "Crerar and the Decision to Garrison Hong Kong," *Canadian Military History* 3, no.1 (1994): 98–99.

<sup>61</sup> Paul Dickson, *A Thoroughly Canadian General: A Biography of General H.D.G. Crerar* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 157.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 146, 163.

<sup>64</sup> LAC, Crerar fonds, MG30 E 157, volume 1, file "958C.009 (D12) CGS Files 1940–1941- Personal Correspondence Lt-Gen Crerar – Lt-Gen McNaughton. Period Aug 40 to Mar 41", letter from H.D.G Crerar to A.G.L. McNaughton, 8 August 1940, pages 1, 4.



1941 letter to McNaughton, Crerar admitted that “although the public here realize the vitally important role the Canadian Corps is playing in the United Kingdom, there is a not unnatural desire to see the Canadian in the headlines these days by some demonstration of their fighting abilities.”<sup>65</sup> By June 1941, Crerar, frustrated by political attacks, decried the “public impatience with the unspectacular, but most necessary, activities” of training. He requested that McNaughton give an “interview” to Canadian reporter Ross Monroe to highlight the important role of individual training to offset some of the concerns of those at home.<sup>66</sup> Crerar’s use of quotation marks demonstrated that he wanted McNaughton’s interview to be little more than propaganda piece designed to induce public obtain support for the individual training of soldiers. In summer 1941, Crerar had attempted to influence public opinion through a press campaign by cultivating press contacts to present the positives of the training activities.<sup>67</sup> On 11 August 1941, Crerar told McNaughton that he wanted to expand the Army in 1942. Displeased by a series of newspaper articles in *The Globe and Mail* that assailed the Army’s organization, Crerar believed that George Drew, a fiercely partisan Conservative Ontario Member of Provincial Parliament, was behind the articles. Crerar wrote “the Canadian Army is more vulnerable to political attack than the other two Services for the simple reason that owing to factors which none of us can control the Canadian Corps has been tied down to a passive defensive role in the United Kingdom and has thus been unable to satisfy the public in its demands for sensational action.”<sup>68</sup>

---

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 19 May 1941 Letter to A.G.L. McNaughton, 3.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 26 June 1941 Letter to A.G.L. McNaughton, 1–2.

<sup>67</sup> Dickson, *A Thoroughly Canadian General*, 162.

<sup>68</sup> LAC, Crerar fonds, MG30 E 157, volume 1 ,file “958C.009 (D12) CGS Files 1940–1941- Personal Correspondence Lt-Gen Crerar – Lt-Gen McNaughton. Period Aug 40 to Mar 41” letter from H.D.G. Crerar to A.G.L. McNaughton, 11 August 1941, page 3.

## Ralston's Role in the Acceptance of the Request

While Ralston's part in "C" Force's creation is often neglected in the writing about Hong Kong, a passage from King's diary from September 1941 provides an excellent insight into the defence minister's motivations. As King noted, "it seemed to me, however, on his own account that he [Ralston] even more than McNaughton is anxious to get our men into active service beyond the British Isles."<sup>69</sup> Ralston's desire to involve Canadian troops in combat was quite clear. Although King and the War Committee waited for Ralston's opinion about Britain's request, Associate Minister for National Defence for Air Charles Power claimed that Ralston was not solely responsible for making the decision.<sup>70</sup> King wanted to delay any decision, perhaps because, as Perras has noted, "King once told a British diplomat 'that his experience of political life had taught him that any success he attained had been due far more to avoiding action rather than taking action.'"<sup>71</sup> King's deflection did not work given Ralston's understanding of the war coupled with his character. Historian Daniel Byers has claimed that Ralston had a strong sense of duty, especially to those who served under him in the military and government.<sup>72</sup> In a 1945 letter to Crerar, Ralston made his views known: "You've had honours, lots of them, but the greatest happiness you will get, if I know anything about you, is the modest satisfaction in your own heart that you have done a good job."<sup>73</sup> Given his sense of duty, Ralston's support for the reinforcement was hardly surprising.

---

<sup>69</sup> LAC, King Diary, 10 September 1941, page 2.

<sup>70</sup> LAC, Hong Kong Inquiry fonds, RG 33 120, volume 1, file "Volumes 1-2-3-4-5 pps. 1 to 474 Monday, March 2 to Friday, March 6, 1942", page 272.

<sup>71</sup> Galen Roger Perras, *Franklin Roosevelt and the Origins of the Canadian-American Security Alliance, 1933-1945: Necessary, but Not Necessary Enough* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1998), 17.

<sup>72</sup> Daniel Byers, "J.L. Ralston and the First World War: The Origins of a Life of Service," *Canadian Military History* 22, no. 1 (2015): 3.

<sup>73</sup> LAC, Ralston fonds, MG 27 III BII, Volume 18, file "'C' Miscellaneous 1945-46", letter from J.L. Ralston to H.D.G. Crerar, 4 August 1945, page 2.

During the 1942 Hong Kong Inquiry, Ralston testified that his reasons for supporting the reinforcement derived from the original British telegram. For Ralston, the “biggest point to me was that it appeared evident that furnishing of this Force might prove [to be a] useful factor in causing Japan further to weaken her attitude toward U.S. and Britain.”<sup>74</sup> As for claims that the reinforcement would improve the morale of Hong Kong’s garrison, it “seemed to me to make, as my colleagues have said, a decision in the affirmative almost inevitable unless there was some overriding factor made that impossible or undesirable.”<sup>75</sup> Ralston was not the only Cabinet member to regard acceptance of the request as a near certainty. Power, acting Minister of Defence during Ralston’s absence, believed that acceptance was the only recourse. As a veteran of the First World War, Power admitted that “what did influence me to some extent was: Here were our partners in a great enterprise in the war, saying: ‘If you have any men to spare we would be glad to have them’; and in my opinion we had certain un-allotted battalions in Canada which could be spared, and I did not see any reason why they should not have them.”<sup>76</sup> Ralston believed that accepting the request was nearly inevitable, exposing the cultural, political, and strategic thinking that influenced his decision-making. Describing his support for Hong Kong’s reinforcement in a matter of fact way, Ralston stated that “it was not a matter which required, in my view, extensive investigation. The factors were plain. It was a job which Canada ought to take on.”<sup>77</sup>

---

<sup>74</sup> LAC, Ralston fonds, MG 27 III BII, Volume 70, file “Hong Kong Inquiry Mr. Ralston’s notes on Personal Preliminary Enquiry”, memorandum Re Hong Kong, 26 February 1942, page 1.

<sup>75</sup> LAC, Hong Kong Inquiry fonds, RG 33 120, volume 1, file “Volume 4 --- pp.297 to 398 Thursday March 9, 1942”, page 313.

<sup>76</sup> LAC, Hong Kong Inquiry fonds, RG 33 120, volume 1, file “Volumes 1–2–3–4–5 pps. 1 to 474 Monday, March 2 to Friday, March 6, 1942”, page 272.

<sup>77</sup> LAC, Ralston fonds, MG 27 III BII, Volume 70, file “Hong Kong Inquiry Mr. Ralston’s notes on personal preliminary Inquiry”, memorandum Re Hong Kong 26/2/1942, page 3.

## King's Role in the Acceptance of the Request

Once called “the world’s champion fence sitter,”<sup>78</sup> William Lyon Mackenzie King was a sensitive but ambitious man who formed few close relationships in his life, King held the office of Prime Minister for more than two decades. The arrival of the Dominions Office’s telegram’s placed King in a difficult position. If he did not support the reinforcement of Hong Kong and such opposition became public, likely more calls for conscription would ensue. Supporting the reinforcement was lower risk for him for a two battalion commitment was hardly a major matter capable of becoming a national issue. To comprehend King’s opinions about reinforcing Hong Kong, one must understand the First World War’s impact upon Canada. As historian Tim Cook has noted, “almost everything that King did as Canada’s war leader was measured against the possible effects of conscription—to prevent another national rupture.”<sup>79</sup> Conscription hung over his own head like the sword of Damocles, threatening to fall on him at any moment. King desperately desired to avoid replicating the heavy casualties suffered by the Canadian Corps in the Great War that had led to conscription for overseas service and had split his beloved Liberal Party before the 1917 election. Throughout the conscription crisis, King had remained loyal to the Liberal Party, a stance that cost him his bid to re-enter Parliament. But his loyalty had been rewarded when he became the leader of the Liberal Party in 1919.<sup>80</sup>

King’s conduct of Canadian foreign relations during the 1920s and 1930s was often seen as anti-imperial. He famously rejected a British call for Canadian military support in 1922 when Turkish forces threatened the British position at Chanak on the Dardanelles. At Imperial Conferences, trying to maintain Canadian independence, he had resisted any language in

---

<sup>78</sup> Cook, *Warlords*, 201.

<sup>79</sup> Tim Cook, *The Fight for History: 75 Years of Forgetting, Remembering, and Remaking Canada’s Second World War* (Toronto: Allen Lane, 2020), 220.

<sup>80</sup> Cook, *Warlords*, 105.

agreements that might limit Canada's ability to decide its own course. Aligning Canada more closely to British imperial needs was not King's objective. In his study on Canadian foreign policy, James Eayrs has discussed King's apprehension about working with Britain to build up a Canadian air force, with Eayrs concluding "he was not interested in defence but in deflection."<sup>81</sup> But once war came again in 1939, King could no longer simply deflect or avoid issues relating to Canada's foreign policy and the British Empire.

In the war's early days, King had not wanted any Canadian troops engaged in ground combat. Guided by the principle of limited liability, King wanted to support the United Kingdom through economic means such as arms and food production.<sup>82</sup> He also supported creating a program to train British Commonwealth pilots in Canada, the much lauded British Commonwealth Air Training Plan.<sup>83</sup> But King also had to balance support for the British Empire—demanded by large parts of English Canada—with following an independent foreign policy to maintain support in Québec. As Cook has pointedly remarked, "King's gaze was always directed firmly on domestic issues in Canada, and he continued to know little, and seemingly care less, about what was occurring to the Canadian forces overseas."<sup>84</sup> King feared that specific foreign policy decisions and their outcomes could threaten his position as Prime Minister, a key issue as King was certain he was the only one who could keep Canada united in wartime.<sup>85</sup> As King told Vincent Massey, "If I may say it myself, I think few will be found who

---

<sup>81</sup> James Eayrs, *In Defence of Canada: From the Great War to the Great Depression* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964), 218.

<sup>82</sup> Cook, *Warlords*, 219–220.

<sup>83</sup> Johnston-White, *The British Commonwealth and Victory in the Second World War*, 107.

<sup>84</sup> Cook, *Warlords*, 275.

<sup>85</sup> LAC, King Diary, 4 November 1941, page 1.

had as clear a vision of the whole probable trend of events than myself.”<sup>86</sup> As overseas conscription was the main risk to his position, King fought to block it at all costs.

But many Canadians, witnessing Canadian military inactivity, desired overseas conscription, a desire that both divided and bedevilled King, Ralston, and Crerar. King was especially motivated by the attacks of the pro-Conservative Party media. A major example of these attacks was a series of articles from Toronto’s *The Globe and Mail* in the summer of 1941. As historian Patrick Brennan has noted, “by the summer of 1941 the main Conservative newspapers were grumbling about a manpower crisis and the ‘failure’ of voluntary enlistment to raise the ‘necessary’ troops for overseas service.”<sup>87</sup> In June 1941, Churchill had asked King to come to Britain for a meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers. Reluctant to leave Canada, King told Churchill:

You will, I know agree that the Canadian unity is more essential to Canada’s war effort than all else. Already, my colleagues and I are beginning to be greatly embarrassed by efforts which are being made to undermine confidence in the present Administration and to compel, by organized effort the adoption of policies which it is well known the present Administration cannot and will not support. I cite conscription for overseas service as one example. We have, as you are aware, as respects Canada itself, compulsory military service. We believe we can raise through voluntary enlistment, the men required for overseas service. The conscription issue in 1917 raised heated passions of which the most unhappy memories still survive.<sup>88</sup>

King despised the *Globe and Mail* and its owner George McCullagh despite a good start to their relationship. Mark Bourrie, a Canadian journalist and author, has observed that McCullagh and many other journalists believed themselves to be ad hoc advisors to King in the

---

<sup>86</sup> LAC, King fonds, MG 26 J1, volume 312, file “Correspondence, 1941 (Massey to Mulock)”, letter from W.L.M. King to Vincent Massey, 27 September 1941, page 3, microfilm reel C-4866.

<sup>87</sup> Patrick Brennan, *Reporting the Nation’s Business: Press-Government Relations during the Liberal Years, 1935–1957* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 57.

<sup>88</sup> LAC, King fonds, MG 26 J1, volume 299, file “Correspondence 1941 (Abel to Avery)” telegram from Secretary of State for External Affairs Canada to The High Commissioner For Canada in Great Britain, 14 June 1941, page 1, microfilm reel C-4860.

1920s.<sup>89</sup> But an open break came between McCullagh and King after a strike hit the General Motors plant in Oshawa, Ontario, in 1937. McCullagh believed that communists were behind the strike, as unionism, in his mind, was always the work of foreign communist agitators. King refused to crush the strike, thus straining his relationship with McCullagh. According to J.W. Pickersgill, a Department of External Affairs staffer attached to the Prime Minister's Office, that troubled relationship was utterly ruined thanks to competing radio broadcasts at the war's start. King chose to make his first broadcast about the war on 25 October 1939 in order to pre-empt a similar broadcast by McCullagh.<sup>90</sup> This rivalry escalated as the war continued. In June 1940, King wrote that McCullagh "is part of the froth, if not of the scum of social life based on false standards of wealth".<sup>91</sup> Still, Pickersgill noted the following about King while on a trip to Toronto in October 1941:

[King] called on George McCullagh, the publisher of the *Globe and Mail* who was in the General Hospital. Although he did not admire McCullagh, Mackenzie King had a certain liking for him. When McCullagh referred to recent criticism of the Government in the *Globe and Mail*, he "told him I had not come in to discuss the matter at all but wished to see him and express my hope he might get better soon."<sup>92</sup>

The release of a series of articles in *The Globe and Mail* in the summer of 1941 only made their relationship more contentious.

Another figure connected to *The Globe and Mail* articles of the summer of 1941 was George Drew. King also despised Drew, and his diary is replete with unflattering references to Drew. Drew had long been critical of King. Drew had been a vocal critic of the government

---

<sup>89</sup> Mark Bourrie, *The Fog of War: Censorship of Canada's Media in World War Two* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 2011), 35.

<sup>90</sup> Brian J. Young, "C. George McCullagh and the Leadership League," *The Canadian Historical Review* 47, no.3 (1966): 207. J.W. Pickersgill, *The Mackenzie King Record: 1939-1944* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1960), 33.

<sup>91</sup> LAC, King Diary, 15 June 1940.

<sup>92</sup> Pickersgill, *The Mackenzie King Record*, 175.

during the Bren Gun Inquiry of 1938 that examined possible corruption related to weapons manufacturing contracts.<sup>93</sup> But Drew's ties to Ontario Premier Mitchell Hepburn, another man whom King despised, did not help. Hepburn and King had a falling out after the 1935 federal election and the animosity continued into the Second World War.<sup>94</sup> When Drew was appointed leader of the Ontario Conservative Party, King had hoped Drew could be "perhaps the best man to fight Hepburn and to expose his shortcomings. He is, however, a terrible jingo, very narrow and extreme."<sup>95</sup> Drew was also connected to McCullagh, at least in King's mind. As King recorded in his diary for January 17 1939:

I outlined to the Cabinet what I believe is the nature of the campaign being framed against us. There is going to be an effort to make up that we are censoring and silencing those who wish to deal with the country's defence and help in European situation. There will be an effort to stir up anti-Fascist feeling as there was anti-Communist feeling in the Ontario elections. The "Globe" will be the main conspirator. McCullagh doubtless playing in with Drew, Massey and others.<sup>96</sup>

Nor was King's focus on these two men a one-time occurrence as King noted in May 1939 "there is some relationship to seek to get Drew into power, on the part of the Globe, I have not the least doubt. Also McCullagh is lending himself to all the Tory blandishments possible."<sup>97</sup> Shortly after the declaration of war against Germany, King met Drew and Hepburn on 3 October 1939. When "Drew spoke particularly of not seeing that we were further ahead than in the previous war," King "pointed out that in the previous war, everything was focused on expeditionary force. Today we had the naval services and the air services in addition, and the Pacific Coast as well as the Atlantic to consider."<sup>98</sup> Far from finished with his criticism of King,

---

<sup>93</sup> A brief summary of this event is provided in Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments*, 101-102.

<sup>94</sup> Cook, *Warlords*, 226. LAC, King Diary, 18 January 1940, 2.

<sup>95</sup> LAC, King Diary, 9 December 1938.

<sup>96</sup> LAC, King Diary, 17 January 1939.

<sup>97</sup> LAC, King Diary, 22 May 1939.

<sup>98</sup> LAC, King Diary, 3 October 1939, 3.



Drew assailed King directly in several letters. King was impacted by such condemnation as he wrote in November 1939 “I had, oddly enough, too been thinking of the last letter from Drew, from Toronto, an insulting note in which he had used the expression—had I been in Canada during the last war—something evidently intended to hurt (but which failed of its mark).”<sup>99</sup> Despite King’s claims, clearly, Drew’s comments left their mark on the sensitive King.

Eighteen articles, entitled “War Problems Affecting Canada,” ran from 21 June to 16 August 1941 in *The Globe*. Although none of the pieces listed an author, the paper asserted that the articles were “prepared with and of consultations with recognized students of military science.”<sup>100</sup> While political and military leaders speculated about the pieces, Power claimed that George Drew was the author.<sup>101</sup> Crerar agreed, telling Power on 11 August that “The Globe and Mail claim that these articles were not written by Drew. On the other hand, there is ample evidence to indicate that Drew was sitting beside the man who was using the typewriter.”<sup>102</sup> In a memorandum sent to Ralston, Crerar asserted that “the pity of it is that for political purposes Drew is attempting to throw grit in the wheels of our military machine. We have quite enough of this grit furnished by enemies of Canada without Canadians themselves adding to the supply.”<sup>103</sup> Such claims have credence due to Drew’s military service in the First World War. In a 9 July 1941 letter to R.B. Hanson, leader of the federal Conservative Party, Drew said:

You may have seen the articles which have been appearing regularly in the *Globe & Mail* under the title: “War Problems Affecting Canada.” If you have read these you will perhaps have noticed that they contain some familiar suggestions. It must be admitted however that it is unbelievably difficult to get the general public to

---

<sup>99</sup> LAC, King Diary, 13 November 1939.

<sup>100</sup> “War Problems Affecting Canada,” *The Globe and Mail*, 21 June 1941, 6.

<sup>101</sup> R. Daniel Pellerin, “Sharpening the Sabre: Canadian Infantry Combat Training During the Second World War” (PhD diss., University of Ottawa, 2016), 133.

<sup>102</sup> LAC, Crerar fonds, MG30 E157, file “958.009 (D333) General Crerar’s Personal Papers- Personal Correspondence – Vol II July 1941-November”, letter from H.D.G. Crerar to C.G. Power, 11 August 1941.

<sup>103</sup> LAC, A.G.L. McNaughton fonds, MG 30 E II, volume 227, file “Personal Major-General H.D.G. Crerar Chief of the General Staff Canada CC7/Crerar/6”, letter from A.G.L. McNaughton to Minister of Defence, 27 June 1941, page 2.

recognize the seriousness of the present situation. Through the many military connections I have had and through the contacts I have been able to keep active I can assure you that it is the consensus of informed opinion that our military situation could hardly be worse. What I mean by that is this. If it were any worse it would be so apparent to even the most uninformed layman, that the training methods are all wrong, that there would be an outburst of indignation, and it is not at all certain however that he have just about reached that point.<sup>104</sup>

Drew's mention of "familiar suggestions" likely was a tongue-in-cheek reference that certainly hinted at his involvement. Another clue to Drew's participation comes in a 11 July 1942 letter that sent to King in the aftermath of the Hong Kong Inquiry. Employing a hockey analogy, Drew said "it would be just as reasonable to suggest that men could be called trained hockey players who had been shown a hockey stick, a puck and goal post and had their use explained to them, as it would be to say that men who had received lectures on weapons had actually been trained to use those weapons."<sup>105</sup> A similarly worded analogy had appeared in *The Globe* articles. While that does not definitively prove Drew's authorship, it strongly suggests that Drew helped to craft the articles.

The *Globe* claimed that its articles were "offered in a constructive spirit as a contribution to the very serious thinking we all must do about the problem of fitting the Canadian war effort into the highly revolutionary pattern of modern warfare."<sup>106</sup> But that claim rings hollow as the articles were designed to assail King and his government for their alleged misdirection of the war. The articles strongly implied that the Canadian Army's inactivity meant that Britain thought that Canada's Army was incapable of combat, or that King was avoiding combat, or both. The 26 June article directly blamed King for the use of obsolete training as "the only man who can deal

---

<sup>104</sup> LAC, George Drew fonds, MG 32 C3, "Provincial Political Career" series, volume 68, file "Number 614" letter from George Drew to R.B. Hanson, 9 July 1941, page 1–2, microfilm reel M-8987.

<sup>105</sup> LAC, Drew fonds, MG 32 C3, "Provincial Political Career" series, volume 427, file "Number 28" letter from George Drew to W.L.M. King, 11 July 1942, page 18, microfilm reel M-9045.

<sup>106</sup> "War Problems," *The Globe and Mail*, 21 June 1941, 6.

effectively with this situation is the Prime Minister of Canada. His is the primary responsibility, and his also is the ultimate responsibility. There is no other before him requiring such urgent and energetic action.” Further, [t]he cloistered atmosphere of a Government community is not the place to inspire our General Staff with a sense of vigor, of movement and of space.”<sup>107</sup>

But *The Globe* articles offered few practical solutions to the problems they had identified. While *The Globe* claimed that mobile divisions could be used to repel a German attack on Canada, this was a highly unlikely scenario given Germany’s massive invasion of the Soviet Union during the summer of 1941. Highlighting such an improbable occurrence was designed to boost public support for *The Globe*’s calls for more to be done for the war effort. Seeking to make complex issues more understandable, two *Globe* articles used hockey analogies. The first, possibly written by Drew, explained how highly trained troops will make better use of equipment than amateurs provided with the same material. The second observed that conscripts on home defence duty were not enthusiastic about enlisting in the active service. A lack of inspired leadership explained lack of enlistment for, much like a poorly performing hockey team, a leader/coach has to provide motivation.<sup>108</sup> The use of hockey imagery clearly demonstrates that the articles were aimed at accruing popular support for changes in government, and that they were not written to aid Canada’s war effort.

The articles explored various issues. The 2 July article claimed “there should be no controversy over the principle of conscription. Those who are demanding conscription, and the Government which is protesting that there shall be no conscription, are fanning the air. There has been conscription since June, 1940.”<sup>109</sup> This was a reference to the National Resource

---

<sup>107</sup> “War Problems,” *The Globe and Mail*, 26 June 1941, 6.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid. “War Problems,” *The Globe and Mail*, 18 July 1941, 6.

<sup>109</sup> “War Problems,” *The Globe and Mail*, 2 July 1941, 6.

Mobilization Act that emerged after France's collapse. Then there were enough volunteers for overseas service and no shortages were envisioned for the Canadian Army was not yet fighting.<sup>110</sup> The 30 June article demanded the formation of an independent munitions organization to be run an industrialist who "should head an organization completely divorced from the politics and from the red tape of Government procedure."<sup>111</sup> The 16 July article blamed equipment shortages on a "lack of official vision" at National Defence Headquarters by officers stuck in unthinking routines.<sup>112</sup> These disjointed articles were clearly designed to agitate King and boost the Conservative Party.

The articles had an impact on King. On 18 August, just before leaving for England, King wrote:

When I spoke with Cora [Lindsey, the wife of one of his cousins], she told me that she thought I was going overseas from what *The Globe* had in an editorial today, and mentioned that it was ill-natured, as most of *The Globe* editorials are. It made me, for the moment, sick at heart, in the light of all I have been striving to accomplish. However, *The Globe* represents the money interests, who wish to control. I will have my reply when war is over and my justification through the minds and hearts of the people, not for today only, but for a long time to come.<sup>113</sup>

After the British telegram requesting troops for Hong Kong arrived, King made another remark about *The Globe and Mail* in his diary, noting that the *Toronto Star* gave his new book, *Canada at Britain's Side*, which he had written as a response to press criticism, a good review, in contrast "to the belittling and detracting editorials of the *Globe and Mail*."<sup>114</sup> The "War Problems Affecting Canada" articles clearly influenced King, and the possibility they were penned by Drew only exacerbated that influence.

---

<sup>110</sup> Cook, *Warlords*, 249.

<sup>111</sup> "War Problems," *The Globe and Mail*, 30 June 1941, 6.

<sup>112</sup> "War Problems," *The Globe and Mail*, 8 July 1941, 6.

<sup>113</sup> LAC, King Diary, 18 August 1941, page 3.

<sup>114</sup> LAC, King Diary, 25 September 1941, pages 1–2.

Despite his earlier hesitation to visit Britain, King travelled there in August 1941. Stacey has argued that this reversal came because King resented being left out of the Atlantic Charter summit between Churchill and Roosevelt off Newfoundland in early August 1941: “It is evident that the realization that the two great powers were now leaving Canada and himself out of their councils had somewhat changed King’s attitude on Commonwealth questions.”<sup>115</sup> King could not be seen doing nothing as the *Globe* articles had alleged. Instead, he wrote about his desire to visit the United Kingdom to demonstrate Canada’s commitment to Britain.<sup>116</sup> But Canadian troops gave King a frosty reception in Britain, booing him as they had were bored and restless thanks to their garrison duties. The incident received attention in Canada. As reported in *The Hamilton Spectator*, “anxiety for activity on the part of the men was reflected in the enthusiastic reception given the Prime Minister when he shouted into the microphone: ‘I gather from the applause that many of you are impatient and would rather be engaged in more active operations than you are to-day.’” The article also noted that booing “was generally written off to-day as a soldierlike lark.”<sup>117</sup> King recorded in his diary that “I feel that, with the Army altogether, I have made a poorer impression than on other sides. First, because of bad weather on different occasions when I have spoken out of doors; and, secondly, the unpreparedness for the different occasions, and of great fatigue from so much physical exertion. However, I think I have shown a friendliness and a readiness to hear what was to be said, which in the long run will do good.”<sup>118</sup> The soldiers’ reaction exemplified the desire of Canadians to be fighting against Germany. Discontent at the lack of combat for Canada’s soldiers was not merely a talking point in the nation’s newspapers.

---

<sup>115</sup> Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments*, 150–151.

<sup>116</sup> LAC, King Diary, 3 August 1941, page 5.

<sup>117</sup> “King’s Reaction to Troops, Boos is a Broad Grin,” *The Hamilton Spectator*, 25 August 1941.

<sup>118</sup> LAC, King Diary, 5 September 1941, page 6.

Upon hearing about “C” Force’s arrival in Hong Kong, King noted in his diary that “for Canada to have troops in the Orient, fighting the battle of freedom, marks a new stage in our history.”<sup>119</sup> Despite such initial pride, King removed that diary entry, with historian John David Meehan speculating that “perhaps anticipating fallout from the decision, however, he later hid this entry for 15 November in a cupboard in the Laurier House library.”<sup>120</sup> King most certainly did not like to face issues directly, a time-honoured strategy that failed him in the case of the Hong Kong decision. In his somewhat unfair biography of King, Stacey has provided an excellent summation of the Prime Minister’s war leadership: “He kept his eyes fixed primarily upon the domestic scene, intent upon maintaining the country’s precarious unity and his own and his party’s power.”<sup>121</sup> Using his oft-employed tactic of delay in order to avoid problems, King had waited to consult with Ralston before accepting the Hong Kong request. A line from the poem ‘W.L.M.K.’ by F.R. Scott is a fitting epitaph for King’s propensity to delay and deflect: “Let us raise up a temple / To the cult of mediocrity / Do nothing by halves / Which can be done by quarters.”<sup>122</sup>

### Conclusion

Carl Vincent has claimed that “C” Force’s men were “the only Canadian soldiers and possibly the only Commonwealth soldiers of the Second World War who were deliberately sent into a position where there was absolutely no hope of victory, evacuation, or relief.”<sup>123</sup> Despite Vincent’s outlandish claim, there was no malicious intention behind accepting the request. Mistakes were made, and the final decision was based on poorly defined assumptions, but no

---

<sup>119</sup> LAC, King Diary, 15 November 1941, page 5.

<sup>120</sup> John David Meehan, *The Dominion and the Rising Sun: Canada Encounters Japan, 1929–41* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004), 192.

<sup>121</sup> C.P. Stacey, *A Very Double Life: The Private World of Mackenzie King* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1977), 28.

<sup>122</sup> F. R. Scott, *Selected Poems* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1966), 61.

<sup>123</sup> Vincent, *No Reason Why*, 35.

conspiracy existed. In this chapter, I have provided analysis on King's actions to bring the United States into the war and how this mindset influenced his support for the Hong Kong reinforcement. Such a connection has never been made before in any academic work looking at the Canadian reinforcement of Hong Kong. A discussion of the intelligence analysis failures of the Canadian military is also a new addition to the historiography. Individual understandings of the war and Canada's place within it were the reasons for the Canadian reinforcement of Hong Kong. The conversations between Grasset and Crerar are placed in a new context in this dissertation, as is the examination of the *Globe and Mail* articles and their influence upon King. Crerar and Ralston supported the request, but King displayed his usual reluctance to reach a decision in a timely manner. Years of experience and knowledge gained through war and politics led these men to reach the same conclusion. And when such concerns were combined with the political and institutional underpinnings of the Canadian war effort, there was no reason not to accept the 19 September request.

## CHAPTER 4

### READY FOR WAR? THE SELECTION AND TRAINING OF THE ROYAL RIFLES OF CANADA AND WINNIPEG GRENADIERS

The selection of “C” Force’s units and the training their personnel had is subject to numerous myths tainted by predetermined assertions that have little basis in fact. Many popular and academic historians and writers have presented “C” Force soldiers collectively as having little or no training. Author Carl Vincent has alleged that “to say that these units were even close to being ready for action is arrant nonsense...,” adding “were these battalions adequately trained *by the standards of the time?* They were not...”<sup>1</sup> The producers of *The Valour and the Horror*, taking cues from Vincent, claimed “The [Winnipeg] Grenadiers had a lot of time to polish their baseball game, but few of them had ever thrown a grenade. Some had never even fired a rifle.”<sup>2</sup> Their presentation of the Royal Rifles of Canada was no different. The creators of the series needed the units of “C” Force to be viewed as a poorly trained to buttress their allegations of betrayal and government cruelty. Many writers and historians have claimed that “C” Force’s units were so poorly trained that their selection bordered on the criminal. Seeking to present the Canadians as the reason for the fall of Hong Kong, author Tim Carew described the Grenadiers’ garrison duties in Jamaica as trivial for “in the West Indies, the gravest military crisis likely to be encountered was a defective refrigerator or a mild hurricane; many of them had less than six months’ service.”<sup>3</sup> In 2017, journalist Kevin Lui claimed that “trying to fend off the invaders were two battalions from Canada, the Winnipeg Grenadiers and the Royal Rifles of Canada,

---

<sup>1</sup> Carl Vincent, *No Reason Why: The Canadian Hong Kong Tragedy, An Examination* (Stittsville, Ontario: Canada’s Wings, 1981), 92.

<sup>2</sup> *The Valour and the Horror*, episode 6, “Savage Christmas,” directed by Brian McKenna, written by Terence McKenna and Brian McKenna, aired 12 January 1992, on CBC, [https://www.nfb.ca/film/savage\\_christmas\\_hong\\_kong\\_1941/](https://www.nfb.ca/film/savage_christmas_hong_kong_1941/).

<sup>3</sup> Tim Carew, *The Fall of Hong Kong* (London: Pan Books, 1963), 22–23.



totaling 1,975 men. Many of them were, at that time, deemed unfit for combat because of their lack of training.”<sup>4</sup> All these statements are false.

As the training level of these two battalions was an important factor in their selection, it must be fully examined.<sup>5</sup> Most studies of the Battle of Hong Kong do not examine the training of these units at length; even those studies that focus on specific units neglect this subject. This chapter will provide an in-depth examination of the training of the Royal Rifles, the Grenadiers, and the additional troops, whose training has been examined the least in the literature. I will argue that while these units were certainly not fully trained for the conditions they encountered at Hong Kong, no other units in Canada were so prepared. This chapter will demonstrate that the troops of “C” Force, far from being untrained, in fact, had received instruction that helped some of them to fight effectively at Hong Kong.

### The Selection Process

Terrance and Brian McKennas, as producers of *The Valour and the Horror*, have propagated the myth that “because of their lack of training, they [the Royal Rifles and Grenadiers] were officially classified by the Canadian Defense Department as unfit for combat.”<sup>6</sup> This statement is factually incorrect. The Royal Rifles and Grenadiers were not classified as unfit for combat because they lacked training; rather, their recent overseas garrison duties compelled that classification. The standard procedure was that all units returning from garrison duties must undergo refresher training. Unfortunately, the “C” Force units did not get such training prior to leaving for Hong Kong. The purposes of highlighting these distinctions is not to engage in mere

---

<sup>4</sup> Kevin Lui, “How Untrained Canadian Troops Fought and Died in the Defense of Hong Kong,” *Time Magazine*, 17 January 2017, <https://time.com/4635638/battle-of-hong-kong-canada-winnipeg-grenadiers-royal-rifles/>.

<sup>5</sup> Terry Copp, “The Decision to Reinforce Hong Kong September 1941,” *Canadian Military History* 20, no. 2 (2011): 8.

<sup>6</sup> *The Valour and the Horror*, episode 6, “Savage Christmas.”

nitpicking. Instead, it is an important correction that disputes the basis of the zombie myths surrounding the Battle of Hong Kong.

Many have erroneously claimed that Brigadier J.K. Lawson, before becoming “C” Force’s commander, had created his own unit list. Canadian Army official historian C.P. Stacey made this claim in *Six Years of War*, as did Grant Garneau in his own study about the Royal Rifles.<sup>7</sup> Using documents from the Hong Kong Inquiry, Carl Vincent argued that Lawson assembled the list after Colonel W.H.S. Macklin asked him to do so.<sup>8</sup> Author Nathan Greenfield has cited Vincent’s work to present the same information.<sup>9</sup> However, historian Tyler Wentzell wrote that:

H.A. Sparling, a staff officer in the directorate, had the task of finding two battalions suitable for garrison duty in a tropical climate and Sparling created the infamous list. Lawson passed the list to the Chief of the General Staff (CGS), Major-General H.D.G. Crerar, who selected the Winnipeg Grenadiers and the Royal Rifles of Canada for “C” Force. Both units were drawn from the “not suitable” category.<sup>10</sup>

Such incorrect claims require correction.

The process to select the units for Hong Kong began while the British request for troops to garrison Hong Kong was still under consideration. Two lists, putting active service battalions in Canada into categories based upon their fitness to serve overseas, were created. The first list was assembled by Lieutenant-Colonel H.A. Sparling, a staff officer in the Directorate of Military Training.<sup>11</sup> During the Hong Kong Inquiry, Sparling claimed that he had worked with Lawson to

---

<sup>7</sup> C.P. Stacey, *Six Years of War: The Army in Canada, Britain and the Pacific* (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 1955), 442. Grant S. Garneau, *The Royal Rifles of Canada in Hong Kong, 1941–1945* (Carp, Ontario: Baird O’Keefe Publishing Inc., 2001), 12, n18.

<sup>8</sup> Vincent, *No Reason Why*, 44.

<sup>9</sup> Nathan M. Greenfield, *The Damned: The Canadians at the Battle of Hong Kong and the POW Experience, 1941–45* (Toronto: Harper Collins, 2010), 13, n421.

<sup>10</sup> Tyler Wentzell, “Brigadier J.K. Lawson and Command of “C” Force at Hong Kong,” *Canadian Military History* 20, no. 2 (2011): 23.

<sup>11</sup> Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC), Royal Commission to Inquire into and Report upon the Organization, Authorization and Dispatch of the Canadian Expeditionary Force to the Crown Colony of Hong Kong

create the list based on the training reports of all the battalions still in Canada. Such units were placed into three classes, “A,” “B,” and “Not Recommended,” based on the progress of their training and service as of August 1941. Both the Grenadiers and Royal Rifles were placed on the “Not Recommended” list that was then sent to the Directorate of Staff Duties for further consideration. During the Inquiry, when pressed about the “C” Force battalions’ level of training, Sparling asserted that the units were better trained than 2nd Division’s battalions were when these units arrived in England in summer 1940. As for individual and collective training, Sparling contended that the Royal Rifles and Grenadiers were equal to any unit in Canada.<sup>12</sup> Sparling testified that he had no concerns with either unit, including issues of discipline, after viewing their training reports. When asked, “so if these two battalions did not get training, they were at no disadvantage as against other battalions in Canada?,” Sparling replied “hey were in exactly the same position.” As to why the Royal Rifles and Grenadiers were on the “Not Recommended” list, Sparling stated they would have been put on the “A” list had they undergone standard refresher training. As it was standard procedure to put all units through refresher training after coastal defence or garrison duty, not being on the “A” list did not necessarily indicate any training issue. Once the Grenadiers and Royal Rifles were chosen for “C” Force, Sparling claimed that he and Lawson saw no need to report any concerns about the battalions.<sup>13</sup> As Lawson died at Hong Kong, there is no way to verify Sparling’s claims.

The creation of the second list began on 23 September 1941 after the Cabinet War Committee approved the British request. Crerar ordered the Director of Military Operations and

---

fonds (hereafter Hong Kong Inquiry Fonds), RG 33 120, volume 1, file “Volume 9 --- pp.741 to 862 Thursday March 12, 1942”, page 793.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., pages 855-856, 813-814, 842, 848.

<sup>13</sup> LAC, Hong Kong Inquiry fonds, RG 33 120, volume 1, file “Volume 10 --- pp.863 to 968 Friday, March 13, 1942”, page 863, 925, 859, 857, 864.

Intelligence, Colonel R.B. Gibson, to determine how two battalions based in Canada could be chosen to reinforce Hong Kong.<sup>14</sup> Gibson in turn asked Colonel Macklin, Director of Staff Duties, “to give consideration” to the matter. Macklin conferred with Lieutenant-Colonel L.M. Chesley of the War Organization Section.<sup>15</sup> In a 26 September memorandum, Macklin outlined the many criteria used to choose the two battalions. The first criterion had many parts. First, Macklin recommended that the units of “W” and “Y” Forces in Newfoundland and Jamaica respectively not be selected. Second, troops furthest along in their training should be given priority for selection. Finally, selecting units from different parts of the country should be considered. The second criterion divided the remaining battalions into three classes based on their progress in training. Class “A” units were sufficiently trained to continue their preparation independently overseas. Class “B” units, “not so far advanced in training,” could go abroad if their training was supervised. Finally, Class “C” units required refresher training if they had been deployed elsewhere or lacked sufficient training. Battalions earmarked for the 4th Division, destined for Britain, were the furthest along in training. Macklin, not wishing to take battalions from the 4th Division, suggested that Class “B” units be selected. However, Macklin provided a word of caution regarding inspection reports for Class “A” and “B” battalions. As those documents were written by different inspectors, “it is practically impossible to secure a sound basis of comparison” between the reports.<sup>16</sup> Thus, Macklin suggested two alternatives for selecting the units: Alternative “A” was to select battalions from the 4th Division; Alternative “B” was to choose two battalions, one each from Atlantic and Pacific Commands.

---

<sup>14</sup> LAC, Hong Kong Inquiry fonds, RG 33 120, volume 2, file “Exhibits #180–240 #241–295”, exhibit 253 Despatch of Canadian Troops to Hong Kong Resume of General Staff Action, 14 February 1942, page 1.

<sup>15</sup> LAC, Hong Kong Inquiry fonds, RG 33 120, volume 1, file “Volume 4 --- pp.297 to 398 Thursday, March 5, 1942”, pages 349–350, 352.

<sup>16</sup> LAC, Hong Kong Inquiry fonds, RG 33 120, volume 2, file “Exhibit 1–44”, exhibit 6 memorandum from W.H.S. Macklin Colonel. D.S.D. to C.G.S. (through D.M.O. & I.), 26 September 1941, pages 1–2.

After a conversation with Crerar, Macklin drafted a memorandum recommending that the Royal Rifles and the Grenadiers be chosen for “C” Force. Unwilling to take battalions from the 4th Division which was slated to move overseas soon, Crerar wanted to ensure the chosen battalions came from different parts of the country. In his memorandum to Minister of National Defence J.L. Ralston, Macklin noted that the Royal Rifles and Grenadiers had done garrison duty akin to conditions at Hong Kong. Like Sparling, Macklin claimed that excepting the 4th Division’s battalions, there was little difference between the Royal Rifles, the Grenadiers, and other Canadian-based units for they all had similar duties.<sup>17</sup> The final memorandum that went to Ralston thus was partly Crerar’s work and partly Macklin’s. When pushed at the Inquiry about the battalions’ selection, Macklin supported Crerar’s decision.<sup>18</sup>

Once the units were set, “C” Force’s leaders was chosen. On 9 October 1941, the office of the Director of Military Operations and Intelligence hosted discussions about despatching troops to Hong Kong. The attendees opted first to call the expedition “C” Force and decided to send it as late as possible in the departure dates window provided by the War Office.<sup>19</sup> But that same day, the British government telegraphed to state “it would be most desirable if the two Canadian battalions could be despatched at a very early date and hope that His Majesty’s Government in Canada will be prepared to make arrangements accordingly.”<sup>20</sup> In a 11 October memorandum, General Kenneth Stuart, recently appointed as CGS, discussed appointing Lawson as commander of “C” Force. Colonel Patrick Hennessy, Director of Organization at National Defence Headquarters in Ottawa (NDHQ), would become “C” Force’s Officer in Charge of

---

<sup>17</sup> LAC, Hong Kong Inquiry fonds, RG 33 120, volume 1, file “Volume 4”, pages 353–355, 362.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 357, 364, 359.

<sup>19</sup> LAC, Hong Kong Inquiry fonds, RG 33 120, volume 2, file “Exhibit 1–44”, exhibit 20, minutes of a Meeting held in the Office of D.M.O. & I., 9 October 1941, page 3.

<sup>20</sup> LAC, Hong Kong Inquiry fonds, RG 33 120, volume 2, file “Exhibit 1–44”, exhibit 19 telegram from Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to Secretary of State for External Affairs, 9 October 1941.

Administration and second in command. Stuart discussed this recommendation with Ralston, and it was approved by acting Minister of Defence C.G. Power.<sup>21</sup> Lawson was informed of his appointment as “C” Force commander in a 20 October memorandum.<sup>22</sup> His various duties were outlined, the most prominent being to balance Canadian sovereignty of action despite being under British command. On 11 October, as per the request of Major-General C.M. Maltby, Hong Kong’s commander, the War Office asked Canada to provide a brigade headquarters plus various specialist units, including a signal section.<sup>23</sup>

### Lawson’s Part in the Process

To comprehend Lawson’s role in “C” Force’s formation, a re-assessment of his military career is needed. Born in Hull, United Kingdom, on 27 December 1886, Lawson moved to Canada just before the First World War and enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Force in September 1914. Promoted to Lieutenant in the Canadian Machine Gun Brigade in early 1917, he was later appointed to the Staff of the Canadian Corps in March 1918, giving Lawson valuable experience in the running of a large military organization. Lawson’s military competence was clear. He was twice mentioned in despatches and won the French Croix de Guerre. Despite Carew’s claims that Lawson was a schoolmaster and an executive at the Hudson’s Bay Company in the interwar period, Lawson was a regular soldier in the Canadian Permanent Force during this time.<sup>24</sup> Though demobilized in June 1919, Lawson, quickly rejoining the Canadian Army in November 1919, and became part of the Permanent Force in

---

<sup>21</sup> LAC, Hong Kong Inquiry fonds, RG 33 120, volume 2, file “Exhibit 1–44”, exhibit 28A, memorandum from Brigadier K. Stuart to Minister J.L. Ralston, 11 October 1941.

<sup>22</sup> LAC, Hong Kong Inquiry fonds, RG 33 120, volume 2, file “Exhibit #45–70; #71–84”, exhibit 50, memorandum from Brigadier K. Stuart to Minister J.L. Ralston, 20 October 1941.

<sup>23</sup> Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 443.

<sup>24</sup> Carew, *The Fall of Hong Kong*, 138.

April 1920.<sup>25</sup> As the first Canadian to study at the Staff College in Quetta, British India, in the 1920s, Lawson occupied a unique position in the Canadian Army:

Additionally, as one of 14 Canadian graduates of Quetta. . . Lawson was among an even smaller group that was exposed to the British Indian Army. At Quetta, Lawson observed Indian Army exercises which were larger and more complex than anything occurring in Canada. He visited training establishments and he got to know Indian Army officers, including Major-General Charles Maltby, his future commander in Hong Kong who was his classmate at Quetta.

Yet Wentzell has rightly argued that Lawson's "military education and experience was not by any means perfect—he never commanded a company, for example—but it was as good as a Canadian PF [Permanent Force] officer could get."<sup>26</sup>

Being too ill to travel with the 1st Division to the United Kingdom in 1939, Lawson was appointed Director of Military Training and Staff Duties at NDHQ in May 1940. He was charged with creating the training plan for the first round of conscripts drafted under the National Resources Mobilization Act (NRMA). Despite a reliance on older military training methods such as hygiene, physical training, and drill, Lawson had a keen interest in combined arms warfare.<sup>27</sup> Having inspected many units in Canada and Britain, Lawson was in a unique position to judge which units should go to Hong Kong. As historian Yves Tremblay has noted about Lawson's work, "Toute la causerie de cet officier à l'esprit ouvert vaut la peine d'être lue. D'ailleurs, une suggestion est faite officiellement en septembre 1941 de relire cette causerie devant toutes les troupes. Mais la guerre est cruelle et Lawson ne verra pas les mesures de redressement qu'il avançait porter fruits."<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> LAC, Ministry of the Overseas Military Forces of Canada fonds, RG 150, Accession 1992–93/166, Box 5471–20, Item 521673, J.K. Lawson First World War Service Record.

<sup>26</sup> Wentzell, "Brigadier J.K. Lawson and Command of "C" Force at Hong Kong," 20–21.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 22–23.

<sup>28</sup> Yves Tremblay, *Instruire Une Armée: Les officiers Canadiens et la guerre modern* (Outrement, Québec: Athéna, 2007), 135.

### Ralston's Role in the Selection Process

Ralston had a small role in "C" Force's composition. As previously noted, Ralston had asked that the battalions be selected from units in Canada, not from those stationed in Britain. Testifying at the Hong Kong Inquiry, Ralston said the "memorandum [recommendations from Crerar for the battalions to "C" Force] is the only written document which I saw or of which I had any knowledge whatsoever with regard to the selection of the battalions. I had either one or two conversations with General Crerar about it." When Ralston queried whether it might constitute "discrimination" not to choose the Royal Rifles and Grenadiers, Crerar responded "that these units, having done duty abroad and having served well, were entitled to have this assignment; and that it would make for the morale of the army that it be given to them rather than that other units be selected, and these two units reassigned to coast defence duty in Canada." Ralston testified that the discussion with Crerar was short although the subject was raised a few times after the fact. Having "every confidence" in Crerar, Ralston accepted Crerar's recommendations.<sup>29</sup>

### Power's Role in the Selection Process

Associate Defence Minister Power played a key in the selection of the Royal Rifles for duty in Hong Kong, although some authors make that claim without offering much evidence for their assertion. For example, Vincent has claimed:

It seems likely that soon after Power's reply to Price the Royal Rifles of Canada were earmarked for Hong Kong. In that event it would have been awkward to send a battalion from the 4th Division as the other half of the force. The Winnipeg Grenadiers, with similar experience in a garrison role, would most nearly match the Royal Rifles in its standard of training, and so was the battalion selected.<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup> LAC, Hong Kong Inquiry fonds, RG 33 120, volume 1, file "volume 4", pages 319–320.

<sup>30</sup> Vincent, *No Reason Why*, 47.



Vincent only cited the existence of letters between Power and John H. Price, the second in command of the Royal Rifles, and one diary entry from Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King, as proof for his accusation. Power's strong connection to the regiment is underexplored for he had considerable influence upon this process.

When asked at the Inquiry, "So that we can say, then, quite definitely, can we, Mr. Power, that after the decision was made to send this expedition to Hong Kong, and the subsequent approval of Colonel Ralston and of the General Staff had been obtained, that other than such casual discussions as might take place that you had in no direct control over this expedition?" Power answered that "I did not direct the organization of the expedition."<sup>31</sup> But Power did influence the selection of the Royal Rifles. His place among the Anglophone elite of Québec City helped him to form many connections with the regiment. Some Royal Rifles soldiers believed that the presence of so many wealthy men in battalion led to the Hong Kong assignment. Many years after the war, Private Arnold Graves of the Royal Rifles recalled: "I feel we were sent to Hong Kong because it was considered a safe place. Ours was a 'million dollar' regiment. There were a lot of very prominent people in the Royal Rifles," which included Power's son, Lieutenant Francis Power.<sup>32</sup> Power had other connections with the Royal Rifles. On 25 September 1940, Lieutenant L.G. Levie of the Royal Rifles had asked Power's secretary, James Sharpe, about using the battalion to protect the ammunition factory at St. Malo, Québec.<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup> LAC, Hong Kong Inquiry fonds, RG 33 120, volume 1, file "Volume 3 --- pp.100 to 296 Tuesday, March 3, 1942", pages 288–289, 291.

<sup>32</sup> Daniel G. Dancocks, *In Enemy Hands, Canadian Prisoners of War 1939–45* (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1983), 221. Tim Cook, *The Necessary War: Canadians Fighting the Second World War 1939–1943* (Toronto: Penguin, 2014), 70. Power's son is strangely absent from his memoir, perhaps as a result of his guilt at sending him into battle and several years of brutal Japanese captivity. Charles Power, *A Party Politician*, ed. Norman Ward (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1966).

<sup>33</sup> Letter from Lieutenant L.G. Levie to James Sharpe, 1940 September 25, Circulars from the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs series, Charles Gavan Power fonds, Locator 2150-74-D2069, Queen's University Archives (hereafter QUA).

While nothing came of this letter, it was not the last time that a Royal Rifles member sought a better assignment for the battalion.

Aside from his son, Power had close relationships with others in the battalion, notably John H. Price. Power and Price's fathers were both political rivals and friends in Québec City.<sup>34</sup> Price and his brother Arthur took control of the Price Brothers company, one of the world's largest manufacturers of newsprint upon their father's death in 1924. But when the Great Depression's advent nearly induced bankruptcy, the Prices lost control of the company.<sup>35</sup> Despite this setback, Price still moved in influential Anglo-elite circles in Québec. Power and Price were responsible for the mobilization of a Royal Rifles active service battalion and the inclusion of the 7/11th Hussars, another local militia regiment, in the unit.<sup>36</sup> Upon mobilization, Price, a First World War veteran, became second in command of the Royal Rifles. On 13 September 1941, Price sought Power's help to get the unit a better assignment. As the officers and men of the battalion were "first class soldiers" and "above the average," Price believed they were being wasted with garrison duties. Concerns over the other ranks' morale plus the difficulty in explaining why the battalion was passed over for assignments demonstrate some of Price's motivations. In his final recommendation memorandum to Ralston, Crerar emulated the language that Price had used in his correspondence with Power when discussing the morale of the other ranks. Certain that politics was playing a role in keeping the Royal Rifles from Britain, Price wrote to Power that "I hope that, with the interest you have in our welfare, you will be able & willing to convince the military authorities that it is bad policy to keep a unit like ours just killing

---

<sup>34</sup> Charles Power, *A Party Politician*, 9.

<sup>35</sup> Jean Benoit, "Price, Sir William," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 15, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed 24 November 2019. [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/price\\_william\\_15E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/price_william_15E.html)

<sup>36</sup> Garneau, *The Royal Rifles*, 4.

time for the officers & men have joined from serious motives & if this type of policy is to continue we had better know it now so that we may govern ourselves accordingly.”<sup>37</sup>

In mid-September, Power received several letters in support of the Royal Rifles obtaining an overseas assignment. On the 15th, Lieutenant-Colonel G.F. Berteau, temporary Commander of Military District No. 5 based in Québec City, wrote that the Royal Rifles were “one of the most efficient ever mobilized in this District, with a splendid type of men, excellent N.C.O.’s [Non-Commissioned Officers] and well trained and most efficient officers.”<sup>38</sup> The same day, Major J. Gignac, Deputy Assistant Adjutant-General of District No. 5, told Sharpe that “Nothing in the letter is over-emphasized. Not because they come from the old home town, but they are really outstanding in efficiency and organization. They easily stole the show in yesterday’s Garrison Parade.”<sup>39</sup>

Power’s correspondence with Price continued after the 19 September request arrived in Canada. Power received the original British request telegram on 22 September.<sup>40</sup> Writing to Price that day, Power stated:

In answer to your letter of September 13th, the whole question of your regiment has been giving me a great deal of concern, and I have repeatedly made enquiry as to what it is proposed to do about it. I know very well that by far the greater number of Officers, if not all of them, will be thoroughly disgusted if there seems to be no prospect of going overseas in the near future.

Promising that he had “made certain representations and will continue to do so,” Power claimed “I have some hope that events overseas may soon develop to the point where it will be possible

---

<sup>37</sup> LAC, Defence of National Defence fonds, RG24-G-3-1-a, R112, volume 37272, file “111.1009 (D2) Copies of Papers Re ‘C’ Force, Hong Kong rec’d by D Hist from Hon CG Power in 1953”, letter from John H. Price to C.G. Power, 13 September 1941, pages 1–2.

<sup>38</sup> Letter from Lieutenant-Colonel G.F. Berteau to Secretary of Minister of National Defence, 1941 September 15, Circulars from the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs series, Charles Gavan Power fonds, Locator 2150-73-D2065, QUA.

<sup>39</sup> Letter from Major J. Gignac to James A. Sharpe, 1941 September 15, Circulars from the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs series, Charles Gavan Power fonds, Locator 2150-73-D2065, QUA.

<sup>40</sup> LAC, Hong Kong Inquiry fonds, RG 33 120, volume 1, file “Volume 3”, page 269.

for your lot to have the opportunity which it deserves.”<sup>41</sup> Thanking Power on 10 October, Price was sure “good results will come of it. I quite realize that, owing to the lack of battlefields at the moment, there is not much chance of proceeding overseas and our men all appreciate that.”<sup>42</sup>

By the time of Price’s second letter to Power, Crerar had recommended that the Royal Rifles and the Grenadiers for Hong Kong. Crerar and Power discussed the Hong Kong proposal several times between 19 and 30 September. Asked at the Hong Kong Inquiry if he had had “occasion to discuss the matter with General Crerar,” Power answered:

As soon as I received the cable, I telephoned to General Crerar and discussed the matter with him in a broad and general way; I do not think I could give any details of the conversation. Then I am not quite clear, but I am under the impression that the next morning, that is the morning of the 23rd, I went to the Woods Building, the National Defence Building, and had further conversations with General Crerar there; but I would not be definite on that point. I do know I was there on the morning of the 24th and discussed matters with him with respect to Hong Kong again.<sup>43</sup>

There had been ample opportunity for Power and Crerar to discuss selecting the Royal Rifles to go to Hong Kong. Power’s letters with Price plus his meetings with Crerar undoubtedly played a key role in ensuring the Royal Rifles were sent to Hong Kong.

#### Crerar’s Role in the Selection Process

Crerar’s decision to send to the Royal Rifles and Grenadiers to Hong Kong made him one of the most controversial figures of Canada’s Second World War. Despite the work Sparling and Macklin had put into the lists, Crerar rejected their recommendations. As he explained to Ralston on 30 September, Crerar believed that representation from western and eastern Canada was

---

<sup>41</sup> LAC, Defence of National Defence fonds, RG24-G-3-1-a, R112, volume 37272, file “111.1009 (D2) Copies of Papers Re ‘C’ Force, Hong Kong rec’d by D Hist from Hon CG Power in 1953”, letter from C.G. Power to John H. Price, 22 September 1941.

<sup>42</sup> LAC, Defence of National Defence fonds, RG24-G-3-1-a, R112, volume 37272, file “111.1009 (D2) Copies of Papers Re ‘C’ Force, Hong Kong rec’d by D Hist from Hon CG Power in 1953”, letter from John Price to C.G. Power, 1 October 1941.

<sup>43</sup> LAC, Hong Kong Inquiry fonds, RG 33 120, volume 1, file “Volume 3”, pages 269–270.

important.<sup>44</sup> Crerar noted that their time spent as garrison troops in Newfoundland and Jamaica, respectively meant that “the duties which they there carried out were not in many respects unlike the task which awaits the units to be sent to Hong Kong. The experience they have had will therefore be of no small value to them in their new role. Both are units of proven efficiency.” While giving the battalions another stint of domestic garrison duty would damage morale, Crerar also cited the Royal Rifles’ connection to French Canada as another reason to choose the battalion.<sup>45</sup>

Many of Crerar’s thoughts and reflections about the selection process were recorded due to the Hong Kong Inquiry. Crerar, however, did not attend the Inquiry in person. As he was in Britain commanding the 2nd Division, he answered counsels’ questions with written responses. As the training issue was a key focus of the Inquiry, many of the questions directed at Crerar revolved around this topic. When asked if he thought the units sent to Hong Kong could not have been fully trained given equipment shortages, Crerar responded:

Training is an unceasing process. There were, however, in Canada at the time in question a number of battalions (amongst which were the Royal Rifles and the Winnipeg Grenadiers) which although somewhat handicapped by the lack of supplies of certain platoon weapons (mortars and anti-tank rifles), in my opinion were generally adequately trained to undertake defensive responsibilities such as those in prospect at Hong Kong.<sup>46</sup>

Crerar’s personal observations about the two battalions was also of interest to the Inquiry’s counsels. Crerar had visited the Royal Rifles during their time in New Brunswick in autumn 1940 and then again at St. John’s, Newfoundland, in summer 1941. As for the Grenadiers, Crerar

---

<sup>44</sup> LAC, Hong Kong Inquiry fonds, RG 33 120, volume 2, file “Exhibit 1–44”, exhibit 13 memorandum from CGS Major-General H.D.G. Crerar to Minister J.L. Ralston, 30 September 1941, page 1.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., page 2.

<sup>46</sup> LAC, H.D.G. Crerar fonds, MG30 E157, volume 1, file “‘C’ Force Canadian Army Feb 42-Jun 42 -- Hong Kong Inquiry. Papers and Questionnaires pertaining to Hong Kong Expedition, Questions Suggested by Mr. Kellock K.C. and the Answers thereto by Lieutenant-General H.D.G. Crerar D.S.O.”, Answer to Question 1.

had met with Lieutenant-Colonel Kay when he was transferred to Ottawa to become Deputy Adjutant-General at NDHQ. Crerar testified that Kay informed him that the Grenadiers, anxious for “more active service,” hoped not to be brought back to Canada.<sup>47</sup> Kay did not mention this conversation in his testimony, nor was he asked if he a role in “C” Force’s organization. Like Sparling, Crerar said the Royal Rifles and the Grenadiers had been placed in Class “C” given their need for refresher training. In light of the terrible events at Hong Kong, asked if he still supported his decision, Crerar said “yes, and in the light of the situation in the Far East obtaining at that time, I selected those particular battalions for the reasons given in my Memorandum dated 30th September...In the known circumstances at that time, I continue to regard this recommendation to have been soundly conceived.”<sup>48</sup>

Several historians have agreed with Crerar. Stacey has concluded “there were in 1941 no troops in the Commonwealth properly trained as training was understood at a later period of the war.”<sup>49</sup> Canadian historian Terry Copp has argued that context was also important for “neither the Royals nor the Grenadiers could remotely be considered ‘an efficient and well trained battalion’ except by the standards prevailing in Canada in 1941.” The context of the time when the units were selected is the important factor to consider when evaluating their selection, not the horrific events that followed the battle.

### The Royal Rifles’ Training and Service Prior to Hong Kong

The Royal Rifles of Canada, designated Canadian Active Service Force (CASF) and ordered to mobilize for war on 28 June 1940, was an amalgamation of troops from the Non-

---

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., Answer to Question 3.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., Answer to Question 5, page 3.

<sup>49</sup> Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 447.

Permanent Active Militia units of the Royal Rifles, the 7/11th Hussars, plus other volunteers.<sup>50</sup> Major W. J. Home commanded at the unit's headquarters sat at Québec City in the drill hall overlooking the Plains of Abraham. Their training began on 23 July 1940. The men were in high spirits, the war diary's author asserting that this condition derived from the recruits being asked at their enlistment about their readiness to serve overseas for extended periods of time. The Royal Rifles' time in Québec City was short as the unit moved to the famed First World War camp at Valcartier at July's end. The early focus was on physical training to improve the individual soldier's conditioning and self-esteem.<sup>51</sup> Training started at the squad level but moved on to company instruction on 26 August 1940.<sup>52</sup> Bayonet practice formed a large part of early training to acquire practical skills and boost morale. By September 1940, bayonet training had been placed at morning's end so that its positive effects were maintained throughout the day's training.<sup>53</sup> With a little hyperbole, the war diarist explained that "in this training their hearts are overwhelmingly in their work and their imaginations can run rampant. We keep bayonet training as the last period of the day, and the men return to their hut in the best possible mood—a little tired may be, but happy."<sup>54</sup>

The Royal Rifles moved to Sussex, New Brunswick, on 22 September 1940. The unit's disappointment in their new surroundings was made clear as the war diary asserted that "the camp itself seems to be a wretched exchange for Valcartier."<sup>55</sup> At its arrival, the battalion had

---

<sup>50</sup> LAC, DND fonds, RG 24, volume 15229, file "Volume 1 War Diary of Royal Rifles of Canada (C.A.S.F.) 28 June to 31 July 1940", memorandum For Purposes in Connection with History of the R.R.C. and for War Diary.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., volume 1, 23, 30 July 1940.

<sup>52</sup> LAC, DND fonds, RG 24, volume 15229, file "Volume 2 War Diary of Royal Rifles of Canada (C.A.S.F.) 1 August to 31 August 1940", 26 August 1940.

<sup>53</sup> LAC, DND fonds, RG 24, volume 15229, file "Volume 3 War Diary of Royal Rifles of Canada (C.A.S.F.) 2 September to 30 September 1940", 5 September 1940.

<sup>54</sup> LAC, DND fonds, RG 24, volume 15229, file "Volume 4 War Diary of Royal Rifles of Canada (C.A.S.F.) 1 October to 31 October 1940", 25 October 1940.

<sup>55</sup> LAC, Royal Rifles War Diary, volume 3, 23 September 1940.

completed elementary training, but some training in drill remained undone. Many route marches were conducted during the battalion's time in New Brunswick. Firing on rifle ranges and Bren gun training started on 28 September.<sup>56</sup> As the war diary had recorded:

Our men think that nothing better than the Bren Gun was ever invented. They are always practising loading, unloading, naming the parts, etc. in the break-off periods, and have a good time seeing how long it takes them to do a certain part of the drill. They use stop-watches on themselves, and every platoon is setting up its champion for each particular drill sequences.<sup>57</sup>

Given a shortage of Bren guns, troops had to take a Lewis gun course as “the idea seems to have been to teach the men to handle the Lewis, and to convince them it is not an inferior weapon so that when they may be forced to use it on active service they will not feel that they are at a disadvantage. This two-fold aim has been accomplished.”<sup>58</sup> Despite the war diary's optimistic representation of the training in New Brunswick, Garneau called any training done in New Brunswick beyond elementary tasks plus basic platoon and company tactics “a farce.”<sup>59</sup>

The Royal Rifles were sent to Newfoundland to perform garrison duty in late 1940. Some of the troops were posted to the town of Botwood. As with Sussex, the men disliked their posting, with the war diary noting that Botwood was “the most dismal apology for a town any of us had ever seen.” A duty rotation system where companies alternated weekly was set in Botwood; one company trained while the other did guard and fatigue work.<sup>60</sup> The rest of the troops went to the Gander airport, with the companies being rotated between the two postings. The two companies posted at the airport rotated between administrative work, training, and

---

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 24, 28 September 1940.

<sup>57</sup> LAC, Royal Rifles War Diary, volume 4, 4 October 1940.

<sup>58</sup> LAC, DND fonds, RG 24, volume 15229, file “Volume 5 War Diary of Royal Rifles of Canada (C.A.S.F.) 1 November to 30 November 1940”, 15 November 1940.

<sup>59</sup> Garneau, *The Royal Rifles*, 7.

<sup>60</sup> LAC, Royal Rifles War Diary, volume 5, 25 and 26 November 1940.



guard duty.<sup>61</sup> Such responsibilities limited how much battalion-level training could be done as “it is difficult to get sufficient time away from fatigues for a whole company to be together to train, but fatigue company can normally have two platoons on training, while the outpost company can expect to train each of its platoons every day for two hours.”<sup>62</sup> The considerable time spent on guard duty helped somewhat with training for there was some value in learning how to take cover, take orders, and practice observation skills. Further Lewis gun training was undertaken at Botwood in December 1940 through January 1941.<sup>63</sup> Bren gun training was done at Gander as this light machine gun was used in an anti-aircraft role, allowing for more practice time.<sup>64</sup>

There was little opportunity for advanced training once winter arrived. The Royal Rifles’ time during this season was marked by many lectures about weapons, tactics, and military procedures. There were fewer route marches as deep snow made marching problematic, while field craft exercises, too, had been difficult given the conditions.<sup>65</sup> Some of the training, notably ski training undertaken at Botwood in March 1941, did little to help at Hong Kong.<sup>66</sup> The problems imposed by winter were recorded in the war diary. “Regimental training took second place during the winter of 1940–41. As 24 hour guard duty at Gander strained the resources of the force to the limit, a series of lectures for officers and men plus a few NCO courses was all the training accomplished over a six month period.”<sup>67</sup> Spring’s advent did little to help the battalion’s situation. Most of the war diary entries for May 1941 were marked by the words

---

<sup>61</sup> LAC, DND fonds, RG 24, volume 15229, file “Volume 6 War Diary of Royal Rifles of Canada (C.A.S.F.) 1 December to 31 December 1940”, 6, 11 and 13 December 1940.

<sup>62</sup> LAC, DND fonds, RG 24, volume 15229, file “Volume 10 War Diary of Royal Rifles of Canada (C.A.S.F.) 1 April to 30 April 1941”, 14 April 1941.

<sup>63</sup> LAC, Royal Rifles War Diary, volume 6, 3 and 10 December 1940.

<sup>64</sup> LAC, DND fonds, RG 24, volume 15229, file “Volume 8 War Diary of Royal Rifles of Canada (C.A.S.F.) 1 February to 28 February 1941”, 3 February 1941

<sup>65</sup> LAC, Royal Rifles War Diary, volume 6, 13 December 1940.

<sup>66</sup> LAC, DND fonds, RG 24, volume 15229, file “Volume 9 War Diary of Royal Rifles of Canada (C.A.S.F.) 1 March to 31 March 1941”, 20 March 1941.

<sup>67</sup> Garneau, *The Royal Rifles*, 8.

“today it rained.”<sup>68</sup> Thanks to the wet weather, many lectures and handling of weapons training had been conducted, but little firing took place. Few sports activities or route marches had occurred during this time. Only on four occasions when practice alarms were raised was any collective action taken that could be loosely considered as training.<sup>69</sup>

June 1941 saw an uptick in training despite the continuation of poor weather. During this month, the Royal Rifles practiced responding to enemy landings, called “stand-to” duty, by taking actions to repel them at the various coves and bays near St. John’s. Operational orders had been issued detailing the best methods for defending different locations. The troops were despatched in trucks to the practice locations, a method of transportation largely absent during the Battle of Hong Kong.<sup>70</sup> The companies rotated “stand-to” Duty. “D” and “C” Company conducted a practice “stand-to” was conducted on 14 June by at Broad Cove.<sup>71</sup> On 16 June, the battalion conducted a practice Battalion ‘stand-to’; “Of late there has been many Stand-Tos called so that we may get to know our jobs if called upon to defend this Island of Newfoundland at any of the numerous bays around St. John’s. We are getting good training in coastal defence work. Back in Canada we would only have been able to get the theory of that kind of work but here we get both theory and practical experience.”<sup>72</sup> “A” Company had practiced their own stand-to at Logy Bay on the 16th.<sup>73</sup> Once the troops arrived at the various locations, defensive positions were established, with weapon pits dug depending on the terrain. Patrols had been conducted between the defended localities, while additional ‘stand-tos’ had been conducted on

---

<sup>68</sup> LAC, DND fonds, RG 24, volume 15229, file “Volume 11 War Diary of Royal Rifles of Canada (C.A.S.F.) 1 May to 31 May 1941.”

<sup>69</sup> LAC, Hong Kong Inquiry fonds, RG 33 120, volume 2, file “Exhibits #101–125 #125–179”, exhibit 120, memorandum from Brigadier E.G. Weeks to A.C.C.S, 16 February 1942.

<sup>70</sup> LAC, DND fonds, RG 24, volume 15229, file “Volume 12 War Diary of Royal Rifles of Canada (C.A.S.F.) 1 June to 30 June 1941”, 2 June.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 14 June.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 16 June.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 16 June.

the 23rd, 24th, and 25th.<sup>74</sup> After the exercise on the 23rd was completed, the war diarist recorded, “On their return all ranks were tired but they said that the Stand To was a lot of fun and good training. They claimed that they must have changed their positions out there about fifty times. There is to be a Stand To every day this week. This will certainly keep the Stand To companies hopping.”<sup>75</sup> The benefits of these exercises were discussed the next day: “Again the chaps were full of their experiences. This work is different to them and for the time being at least all ranks will be willing to learn all about coastal defense work.”<sup>76</sup> While these exercises were far from true tests of combat, they gave troops an opportunity to work together and establish defensive positions. Officers and NCOs obtained chances to lead men in situations they would encounter in battle. By the beginning of August, the battalion had moved frequently, starting with Valcartier, then back to St. John, New Brunswick, then back to Québec City for the transfer to Hong Kong.<sup>77</sup>

While the Royal Rifles’ training left much to be desired, many positives came out of this period as “night exercises, field exercises, training in field-craft and section leading, stand-to alarms, and long route marches brought the unit up to a satisfactory standard of individual training and a high level of physical fitness.”<sup>78</sup> The Royal Rifles’ stay in the Maritimes incited some bold statements in their war diary. Some men were described in a December 1940 diary entry: “Still another can neither read nor write, but give him a job to do and he does it thoroughly, using his own initiative and making decisions that call for the wisdom of Solomon.”<sup>79</sup> The diary made clear the desire to get into combat: “All in all, the actual theatre of

---

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 23 June, 24 June, 25 June.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 23 June.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 24 June.

<sup>77</sup> Garneau, *The Royal Rifles*, 10.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> LAC, Royal Rifles War Diary, volume 6, 3 December 1940.

war is about the only place we would be unanimously glad to move to, and the sentiment at present is that we'll see our share of fighting long before the war is over.”<sup>80</sup> As late as June 1941, the diary bragged that “a few recruits have proven after only a week’s training that they are good enough to take their place along side the rest of us in the regiment. Of course a few of the chaps who have come in the latest drafts have had previous military training. This is a great relief to our hard working instructors.”<sup>81</sup>

Not all views about the unit’s training were positive. Some Royal Rifles officers believed that the battalion’s training was not where it should have been by that point in the war. Writing to Power, Price believed that coastal defence duties made it impossible to do battalion-level training. Seeking to improve the battalion’s situation, Price wrote “all I ask is serious consideration of our problem & the placing of the unit in an area where continuous advanced collective training may be carried out to the end that the regt. [regiment] may be brought to the ultimate in fighting efficiency which, after all, is all that we are interested in to completely ready for the ultimate test of battle which must inevitably come.” Price “was rather apprehensive when we were sent to Newfoundland for I had seen the decay of units kept too long on coastal defense but on the whole the experience did us good & the men have come back well seasoned & with a lot of experience.”<sup>82</sup> While Price’s pleas may have been a tactic to obtain a better assignment, concerns about the battalion’s level of training were legitimate. Unfortunately, there would be little opportunity to undertake more training in Hong Kong.

---

<sup>80</sup> LAC, Royal Rifles War Diary, volume 10, 19 April 1941.

<sup>81</sup> LAC, DND fonds, RG 24, volume 15229, file “Volume 12 War Diary of Royal Rifles of Canada (C.A.S.F.) 1 June to 30 June 1941”, 21 June 1941.

<sup>82</sup> LAC, DND fonds, RG 24-G-3-1-a, R112, volume 37272, file “111.1009” letter John H. Price to C.G. Power, 13 September 1941, pages 1–2.

## The Winnipeg Grenadiers' Training and Service Prior to Hong Kong

The Grenadiers, activated for war service on 1 September 1939, were initially designated as a machine gun battalion under Lieutenant-Colonel O.M.M. Kay. Upon activation, over fifty percent of the militia regiment enlisted for active service.<sup>83</sup> The recruitment campaign began immediately with advertisements in the local newspaper, but forty percent of potential recruits were rejected for poor health and physique. In the early days, while the men were foot sore and cold, their physical conditioning improved as sports were employed to increase fitness levels.<sup>84</sup> In spring 1940, the Grenadiers were ordered to garrison two British colonies in the Caribbean to free British troops for service elsewhere. Before the battalion moved to the Caribbean, it converted to a rifle battalion, cutting its establishment from 770 to 660.<sup>85</sup> On the way to Jamaica, "A" Company disembarked at Bermuda at May's end and spent almost three months there. As recorded in the war diary, the company was "assigned Garrison duties. No men available for military training."<sup>86</sup> The remaining Grenadiers continued on to Jamaica.

The Grenadiers had spent time in three different camps while in Jamaica. Two camps were pre-established training centres, the Grenadiers set up the third themselves. Up Park Camp, near Kingston, was the unit's main base. Garrison responsibilities for Up Park Camp required that most of the troops were occupied with duties other than training. An internment camp set up in Jamaica for prisoners of war and enemy aliens required guards from the Grenadiers. Troops also had to check neutral ships entering Kingston harbour. There were defence responsibilities in case of enemy attack on the island plus aiding the civil power in case of unrest among the

---

<sup>83</sup> LAC, Hong Kong Inquiry fonds, RG 33 120, volume 1, file "Volume 9", pages 744, 762.

<sup>84</sup> LAC, DND fonds, RG 24, volume 15290, file "Volume 1 War Diary of The Winnipeg Grenadiers (M.G.) 1 September to 30 September 1939", 18 September 1939.

<sup>85</sup> LAC, Hong Kong Inquiry fonds, RG 33 120, volume 1, file "Volume 9", page 747.

<sup>86</sup> LAC, DND fonds, RG 24, volume 15290, file "Volume I War Diary "A" Detachment The Winnipeg Grenadiers (M.G.) 27 May 1940 to 30 June 1940" 29 May 1940.

Jamaican population. Individual training at Up Park consisted of bayonet fighting, the instruction and employment of Lewis and Bren guns, instruction on the Boys anti-tank rifle, stalking, use of cover, fighting patrols, and building roadblocks. But various equipment deficiencies limited the Grenadiers' chances to properly train. There were no active or dummy grenades and, as noted by Kay, no range firing occurred in Jamaica.<sup>87</sup>

Newcastle Camp, located in the Blue Mountains, was the other established training facility used by the Grenadiers. According to Kay, "possibly the best description I can give of Newcastle is to say that the only level piece of ground in the vicinity of the camp was a parade ground that had been built 30 yards wide by 100 yards long. The first hut was 780 feet lower than the last hut in the camp." As Newcastle duties required just sixteen men, the company stationed there spent most of its time conducting route marches, small platoon training, and company-level tactical schemes.<sup>88</sup> Acting Corporal Wilfrid John Middleton, who deserted from the Grenadiers thanks to his untreated medical issues, claimed there was little room at Newcastle for infantry tactics and only enough for route marching and dispersing on roads while practicing against air attacks. Middleton did not once recall training for mountain warfare, adding that, "as a battalion we never went out together at all, on any scheme."<sup>89</sup> Kay offered a different assessment: "The training had to be of an individual type or section or platoon training. The country was extremely mountainous, and if you did not utilize the small parade ground you had to spend your time in what might be called practising mountainous warfare; that is really what it amounted to." Kay asserted that the kind of training done at Newcastle was helpful for Hong

---

<sup>87</sup> LAC, Hong Kong Inquiry fonds, RG 33 120, volume 1, file "Volume 9", pages 749–755.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 749–750.

<sup>89</sup> LAC, Hong Kong Inquiry fonds, RG 33 120, volume 1, file "Volume 19 --- pp.1830 to 1951 Thursday, March 26, 1942", pages 1892, 1903.

Kong's conditions.<sup>90</sup> The Montpelier Camp was purposefully set up for the Royal Rifles as a short-term training camp. As Middleton asserted:

The first week was that of platoons doing infantry tactics under the platoon commanders, that is, the sergeants and junior N.C.O.'s. The last and second week the company went out together and would as a scheme or tactics together, but we had no blank ammunition or anything like that. We had one night scheme with the whole company, and that night we used firecrackers for ammunition, I believe.<sup>91</sup>

Kay noted that the time at Montpelier was spent on tactical training by section, platoon, and company in both attack and defence.<sup>92</sup>

Many questions directed at Middleton during the Inquiry revolved around weapons training. He claimed he did not once fire his rifle during the battalion's time in Jamaica. Instead, they got "sloping arms rifle drill given on the parade square; none other than that. Oh, yes, there was more, there was loading and unloading and sighting." Middleton noted three instances when rifles were fired while on duty. A sergeant was accidentally shot but was unharmed. "Another man shot the swastika down off the wall of a German hut; he took two rounds to do that, and I think he missed it. The other fellow shot a goal outside the fence." Lacking light machine guns, little training could be done with them. Middleton did not see a Bren gun until Jamaica. But he never fired it, never took it on any training exercises, nor did he use it to practice anti-aircraft fire. He handled a Lewis gun but did not fire it. Middleton saw a Thompson sub machine gun and a three-inch mortar in Jamaica but not the two-inch version. He claimed to never have seen a dummy grenade, nor did he practice with live ones.<sup>93</sup> Much like the Royal Rifles, the lack of weapons and ammunition made bayonet training a focus in Jamaica. There was no training with other branches such as the artillery or reconnaissance units. The lack of training, as Middleton

---

<sup>90</sup> LAC, Hong Kong Inquiry fonds, RG 33 120, volume 1, file "Volume 9", page 764.

<sup>91</sup> LAC, Hong Kong Inquiry fonds, RG 33 120, volume 1, file "Volume 19", pages 1891–1892.

<sup>92</sup> LAC, Hong Kong Inquiry fonds, RG 33 120, volume 1, file "Volume 9", pages 751.

<sup>93</sup> LAC, Hong Kong Inquiry fonds, RG 33 120, volume 1, file "Volume 19", pages 1891, 1894–1898.

noted, stemmed from the Grenadiers' time being occupied by guard duty at the internment camp, searching neutral ships, and various administrative duties. As Middleton deserted from the Grenadiers on the train trip to Vancouver, he was able to comment on the training after the unit's return from Jamaica. As Middleton recalled, "some of the men from the first draft that came back fired approximately thirty–five rounds with the rifle at the rifle range at Winnipeg." Some firing was also done on a miniature range.<sup>94</sup>

Brigadier Kay's testimony presented a more positive picture of the battalion's overall training. As the Grenadiers were originally a machine gun battalion, they had trained with the Vickers heavy machine gun. Only the anti-aircraft platoon had trained with the Lewis gun while in Canada. As the battalion's focus had been the machine gun, rifle training was neglected, and no actual firing had occurred in Canada. While the second flight was still in Winnipeg, they had fired rifles at the 350 and 375 yard ranges.<sup>95</sup> As the training at Newcastle and Montpelier counted as field training, Kay did not believe the gaps in training rendered the battalion inefficient. Despite Kay's departure from the battalion in mid-June 1941, when asked about the battalion's fitness to serve in Hong Kong, Kay responded, "I would have said it was good, my Lord, really good."<sup>96</sup>

Concerns existed in the battalion over the state of training after its return from Jamaica. As historian Cameron Pulsifer has noted, "the Grenadiers had received a large number of new recruits. [Company Sergeant Major John] Osborn considered these for the most part woefully undertrained...He told his boys that he knew he and his unit were headed for a highly dangerous spot and that, given the poor state of training, he had grave doubts about their fighting

---

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., pages 1892–1893, 1906, 1922.

<sup>95</sup> LAC, Hong Kong Inquiry fonds, RG 33 120, volume 1, file "Volume 9", pages 745–747, 753.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., pages 765, 792, 758.



capacity.”<sup>97</sup> Osborn had previous combat experience, having enlisted in March 1917. But he had been in the front lines with the 63rd Royal Naval Division for only a short time before being gassed on 15 March 1918. Sent back to England, he was demobilized in April 1919.<sup>98</sup> Still, his experiences on the Western Front had given him the ability to evaluate the condition of the men for combat. Though Osborn’s concerns were well founded, the battalion had a trained core of troops.

In a January 1942 report about the Grenadiers, Sparling noted that “training consisted, generally, of individual subjects so that personnel were versed in L.M.G. [light machine gun], A/tk. [anti-tank] Rifle, Thompson Sub Machine-gun, rifle and bayonet, signalling, map reading, fieldcraft, anti-gas, assault training, A.A. [anti-aircraft] drill...” Sparling had little to say about the Grenadiers’ collective training in Jamaica aside from the island reserve which “carried out its duties quite satisfactorily” when the alarm was raised.<sup>99</sup> Lieutenant-Colonel John Sutcliffe wrote a more complete report after taking command of the Grenadiers on 6 October 1941. Sutcliffe recorded that all elementary weapon training was completed with refreshers given to those who needed them. The rifle companies and anti-aircraft platoon had received elementary training on both the Lewis and Bren light machine guns. No grenade training had been conducted, a lack of experience that impaired both battalions’ battle performance at Hong Kong. Most of the personnel of the rifle companies had completed fieldcraft exercises, and all personnel, excepting the newest recruits, had finished their Tests of Elementary Training (TOET). The majority of the seventy-five new personnel who had arrived recently, although no actual date was supplied,

---

<sup>97</sup> Cameron Pulsifer, “John Robert Osborn: Canada’s Hong Kong VC,” *Canadian Military History* 6 no. 2 (1997): 82.

<sup>98</sup> The National Archives, ADM 339/1/28936, John Osborn Service Record.

<sup>99</sup> LAC, Hong Kong Inquiry fonds, RG 33 120, volume 2, file “Exhibits #101–125 #125–179”, exhibit 122 memorandum from Lieutenant-Colonel H.A. Sparling to D.S.D., 17 January 1942, pages 1–2.

were given a basic full training course and had six weeks of training upon leaving Jamaica. But Sutcliffe had noted, “in the matter of drill and general deportment their standard is high, and in spite of the many months (15½ in all) of monotonous duties, during which time they had no leave, the morale, discipline, and Esprit de Corps has been maintained at a very high level.”<sup>100</sup>

The Grenadiers, thanks to their time in Jamaica, had trained in the same warm conditions and hilly terrain that they faced in Hong Kong. No other unit in Canada had this type of experience when “C” Force was being created.<sup>101</sup> While the Grenadiers’ time in the Caribbean was not part of the reason they went to Hong Kong, they were certainly better prepared for its unique geographic and climatic conditions than the Royal Rifles.

#### Assorted Troops Attached to “C” Force

On 10 October, the War Office informed NDHQ that the two battalions should be classified as garrison battalions for medical category purposes. British troops in the Hong Kong garrison were classified as B7, equivalent to the Canadian category of C2.<sup>102</sup> The Canadian category C2 was defined as “able to see for ordinary purposes. Able to stand Home Service conditions of a sedentary nature.”<sup>103</sup> Troops designated C2 were fit only for service in Canada. Those overseas who were designated C2 were to remain on base duties. British category B had the overall criteria of “unfit for general service abroad but fit for base or garrison service at home and abroad...” The B7 designation, men already serving who were required to take their place on the lines of communications, meant they must be able to march at least two miles in fighting

---

<sup>100</sup> LAC, Hong Kong Inquiry fonds, RG 33 120, volume 2, file “Exhibits #85 to 100”, exhibit 100 The Winnipeg Grenadiers Brief Summary of the Training by the Regiment While in Jamaica B.W.I., 6 October 1941, pages 1–2.

<sup>101</sup> Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 181.

<sup>102</sup> LAC, Hong Kong Inquiry fonds, RG 33 120, volume 2, file “Exhibit 1–44”, exhibit 25, telegram from Canadian Military Headquarters, Great Britain to National Defence Headquarters, Ottawa, 10 October 1941.

<sup>103</sup> H.S.M. Carver, *Personnel Selection in the Canadian Army: A Descriptive Study* (Ottawa: Directorate of Personnel Selection National Defence Headquarters 1945), 99.

order.<sup>104</sup> Another request on 11 October from the War Office asked that the units sent to Hong Kong should include first reinforcements,<sup>105</sup> demonstrating that British planners did not believe that these troops were being sent to an area where combat operations might soon occur. Still, both battalions needed more troops to fulfill their roles.

Troops from other units had to be added to the Royal Rifles and Grenadiers as both battalions were below strength. Major-General B.W. Browne, the Adjutant-General at NDHQ, provided a memorandum to Ralston about the extra troops attached to both battalions. Written after Hong Kong's fall, Browne's memorandum was clearly an attempt to shift blame to others for the supposed poor quality of troops. As Browne wrote, "no general directive has been issued by me to the effect that reinforcements or personnel transferred from T.C's [Training Centres] to units destined for despatch overseas shall be fully trained."<sup>106</sup> As noted by Stacey, "the accepted policy governing reinforcements for the Corps in Britain was that men should not leave Canada without undergoing 'the full period of training laid down,' which was 16 weeks."<sup>107</sup> The policy was created by Lawson in August 1940.<sup>108</sup> According to Browne, the sixteen-week policy apparently did not apply to "C" Force. But shifting blame to "C" Force's commanders, Brown stated "should it have transpired that some men not fully trained were transferred to either of the units, it was without doubt with the knowledge and concurrence of the Officers Commanding.

---

<sup>104</sup> F.A.E. Crew, *The Army Medical Services: Administration Vol. 1* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office 1953), 343.

<sup>105</sup> LAC, Hong Kong Inquiry fonds, RG 33 120, volume 2, file "Exhibit 1-44", exhibit 25.

<sup>106</sup> LAC, Hong Kong Inquiry fonds, RG 33 120, volume 2, file "Exhibits #180-24- #241-295", exhibit 286 memorandum from Major-General B.W. Browne Adjutant-General to Minister J.L. Ralston, 2 January 1942, page 1.

<sup>107</sup> Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 445.

<sup>108</sup> LAC, Hong Kong Inquiry fonds, RG 33 120, volume 2, file "Exhibits #85 to 100", exhibit 94 Order Training-Reinforcement C.A.S.F., 18 August 1940.

No complaints in this regard were received prior to the unit's departure."<sup>109</sup> Browne's deflection of blame was an early example of a trend that scarred the battle's legacy.

The reinforcements sent to "C" Force came from various depots and units. The Royal Rifles were reinforced with 102 troops from two Advanced Training Centres at Camp Borden and fifty-two men from the Midland Regiment. The Grenadiers received 189 other ranks and twelve officers from the Advanced Training Centre at Winnipeg, forty from No. 10 District Depot, twenty-three from the Basic Training Centre at Portage la Prairie, and thirty from the Advanced Training Centre at Dundurn, Saskatchewan.<sup>110</sup> Commanders of the units who supplied the reinforcements provided statements to the Inquiry about the quality of the troops. Lieutenant-Colonel J.C. Gamey, commander of the Midland Regiment, addressed the concerns about the length of training of the reinforcements from his unit. As only two of these men had enlisted after 1940, both in March 1941, Gamey concluded that "all of the draft dispatched were considered as trained soldiers."<sup>111</sup> Captain W.T. Shrives of the A-10 Infantry (Advanced) Training Centre echoed Browne by averring that no information was provided about the required level of training that the reinforcing troops should have achieved.<sup>112</sup>

A significant number of former conscripts were included in the troops attached to "C" Force. Of the thirty troops from the training centre in Dundurn, four were former "R" recruits, conscripts drafted under the NRMA who had opted for active service and thus "were in a very high state of training before leaving."<sup>113</sup> Under the NRMA, men were first drafted for thirty days

---

<sup>109</sup> LAC, Hong Kong Inquiry fonds, RG 33 120, volume 2, file "Exhibits #180-24- #241-295", exhibit 286 memorandum from Major-General B.W. Browne to Minister J.L. Ralston, 20 January 1942, pages 12.

<sup>110</sup> Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 445.

<sup>111</sup> LAC, Hong Kong Inquiry fonds, RG 33 120, volume 2, file "Exhibit #45-70; #71-84", exhibit 84 memorandum from Lieutenant-Colonel J.C. Gamey to District Officer Commanding Military District No. 2, 28 January 1942.

<sup>112</sup> LAC, Hong Kong Inquiry fonds, RG 33 120, volume 2, file "Exhibits #101-124 #125-179", exhibit 113 memorandum from Captain W.T. Shrives to Camp Headquarters Camp Borden, 16 January 1942.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, exhibit 102 memorandum State of Training of Personnel Transferred From A-18 Adv (MG) T C MD 12 from Captain J.H. Reed to Military District No. 10 to Winnipeg Grenadiers, 27 January 1942, pages 1-2.

of training, then attached to a Reserve unit for the war's duration. By 1941, the system had been changed to keep drafted troops in training centres or to transfer them to active duty units within Canada. Enlistees and draftees began training together in 1941.<sup>114</sup> The change in training policy placed many forms of pressure on the "R" recruits to "go active." Historian Daniel Byers has detailed the positive and negative pressure employed by recruiters at the training centres. Speeches were given to appeal to a recruit's sense of duty or patriotism and public displays were made of their choice to "go active." Negative pressure included offering a week leave to those who enlisted or assigning men to unpleasant duties such as cleaning, kitchen fatigues, and sentry duty. Extreme measures were allegedly used, including publicly denying leave and the beating of one recruit.<sup>115</sup> William Allister and Georges Verreault, both of whom have written memoirs about their experiences at Hong Kong and in Japanese prisoner of war camps, were former conscripts who volunteered for active service. Other men had served four months before choosing to "go active."<sup>116</sup> Several of the men transferred to the Grenadiers from No. 10 District Depot were former conscripts, including Frederick Sadova and Frank Woytowich, who began their military service as thirty-day recruits.<sup>117</sup> The 100th Basic Training Centre also provided former conscripts for "C" Force.<sup>118</sup>

Some of the newly attached troops had previous experience in the Canadian militia or had other military service. George Harbour, who had served with the Grenadiers from March 1938 to

---

<sup>114</sup> Daniel Byers, *Zombie Army: The Canadian Army and Conscription in the Second World War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2016), 80–81.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 162–163, 166.

<sup>116</sup> LAC, Hong Kong Inquiry fonds, RG 33 120, volume 2, file "Exhibits #85 to 100", exhibit 91 report 'C' Force Personnel who Enlisted Subsequent 1 June 1941, 12 February 1942, page 3.

<sup>117</sup> LAC, Hong Kong Inquiry fonds, RG 33 120, volume 2, file "Exhibits #101–124 #125–179", exhibit 103 report Transferred from #10 District Depot to the Winnipeg Grenadiers, page 7.

<sup>118</sup> LAC, Hong Kong Inquiry fonds, RG 33 120, volume 2, file "Exhibits #101–124 #125–179", exhibit 104 report Transferred to Winnipeg Grenadiers from 100th C.A.(B)T.C., page 1.

August 1939, achieved twenty weeks of training after enlisting in April 1941.<sup>119</sup> While the interwar Canadian militia had not provided much advanced training, soldiers were taught military procedures. Several other ranks had experience from the First World War. William Boulette had been in the Pay Corps, while Andrew Nairn had served with the 4th Battalion King's Own Scottish Borders in the British Army from 1915 to 1919.<sup>120</sup> As Stacey asserted, while there had been an absence of tactical battalion level exercises in Newfoundland and Jamaica, "to say baldly that troops were 'untrained' is to give a quite wrong impression." Stacey argued that the context of the troop training was key. As the soldiers went to Hong Kong for garrison duty, NDHQ anticipated there would be plenty of time to correct any training deficiencies.<sup>121</sup>

Asked at the Inquiry about the 109 men who had only sixteen weeks training, as those troops would have been the first reinforcements, Sparling was "quite sure that the comparatively small number of men who had not had the benefit of the full course would not have a material effect on the sub-units to which they were posted."<sup>122</sup> Agreeing, Crerar stated that "this addition of a proportion of partially trained personnel would not be a handicap if the personnel were well selected, i.e. keen, intelligent volunteers."<sup>123</sup> The number of weeks of training was not a large concern of those who selected the troops of "C" Force for the focus was on the quality of the individual.

---

<sup>119</sup> LAC, Hong Kong Inquiry fonds, RG 33 120, volume 2, file "Exhibits #101-124 #125-179", exhibit 103, page 6.

<sup>120</sup> LAC, Hong Kong Inquiry fonds, RG 33 120, volume 2, file "Exhibits #101-124 #125-179", exhibit 104, pages 2, 4.

<sup>121</sup> Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 447.

<sup>122</sup> LAC, Hong Kong Inquiry fonds, RG 33 120, volume 1, file "Volume 9", page 851.

<sup>123</sup> LAC, Crerar fonds, MG30 E157, volume 1, file "'C' Force Canadian Army Feb 42-Jun 42 -- Hong Kong Inquiry. Papers and Questionnaires pertaining to Hong Kong Expedition, Questions Suggested by Mr. Kellock K.C. and the Answers thereto by Lieutenant-General H.D.G. Crerar D.S.O.", Answer to Question 9.

## Training on Route to Hong Kong and in the Colony

Not all authors believed that the troops of “C” Force would have had much time to train once at Hong Kong. Vincent wrote, “The original belief that plenty of time would be available for refresher training should have been dispelled by 27 October, yet still the troops were despatched. After 22 days in the colony, the first part of which was spent finding their way about, the Canadians were face to face with the battle-seasoned troops of Imperial Japanese army...”<sup>124</sup> Vincent was referring to a telegram sent by Britain that supposedly claimed war with Japan was imminent. The existence of this telegram, which made no such claim, became controversial in the post-battle period, something that will receive more attention in the coming chapters.

Some training was conducted on route to Hong Kong. Remarking that Lawson paid “the greatest attention to training,” Kay was not concerned about the quality of training conducted aboard the ships.<sup>125</sup> Sparling, in touch with Lawson until the latter left Ottawa to take command of “C” Force, claimed that Lawson had said that he was going to Hong Kong with assurance that the deficiencies in weapons training would be made right while on route.<sup>126</sup> Due to limitations in space, time, and equipment, only so much could be done. Training did not get underway until three days into the voyage given administrative issues and the need to integrate the new men. Lawson filed a report about “C” Force just before its arrival in Hong Kong. Some of his observations were not entirely accurate, notably his claim that “both units contain excellent material and a number of good instructors. Having been employed most of their time since

---

<sup>124</sup> Vincent, *No Reason Why*, 125.

<sup>125</sup> LAC, Hong Kong Inquiry fonds, RG 33 120, volume 1, file “Volume 9”, page 782.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 852, 854.

mobilization on coast defence duties, neither has done much field training, even of sub-units.”<sup>127</sup> While both the Royal Rifles and the Grenadiers had conducted field training, Lawson incorrectly noted that “neither had completed its T.O.E.T.s for infantry weapons since many of these have not previously been available for them.”<sup>128</sup>

Lawson emphasized physical exercise and weapons training onboard. Lectures were given to officers and NCOs about conditions in the Far East, racial issues, religion, military geography, health in the tropics, the Japanese Army, and characteristics of Indian Army troops.<sup>129</sup> Lawson kept a diary during the journey and his time in Hong Kong. “C” Force departed Vancouver on 27 October. By the 29th some training had begun, but by the 31<sup>st</sup> while training of the Grenadiers was going well, that was not the case for the Royal Rifles whose training was described by Lawson as “still sticky.” Drill was practiced as was physical training for all, including older officers and Lawson, while weapons firing occurred on the morning of 8 November. Lawson also vented some frustration about the political situation, writing that “Winston C says UK will declare war if Japs do so against US. Wish he would let us get to Hong Kong first.”<sup>130</sup>

Shortly after “C” Force’s arrival in Hong Kong, Lawson noted that officers from China Command met with their Canadian counterparts. On 3 December, Lawson had undertaken a “Tour of frontier with GOC [Maltby]” and he recorded he had “see[n] Japs.”<sup>131</sup> Stacey commented that the period between “C” Force’s arrival and the outbreak of war was marked by drill, administrative arrangements, and weapons training. Reconnaissance was conducted by all

---

<sup>127</sup> LAC, Hong Kong Inquiry fonds, RG 33 120, volume 2, file “Exhibit #45–70; #71–84”, exhibit 51, report from Commander, Force “C” to Chief of General Staff N.D.H.Q. – Ottawa, 15 November 1941, page 3.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>130</sup> LAC, John Kelburne Lawson fonds, MG 30 E 64, Lawson Diary, pages 1–2.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., pages 3–4.



officers and NCOs over the terrain which they were required them to defend. Exercises in occupying their action stations were conducted. Stacey noted that “Brigadier Lawson’s report for the week ending 29 November ran in part, ‘Battalions have carried out two 48-hour manning exercises each for approximately 50% of strength.’”<sup>132</sup> While the planners who had sent “C” Force to Hong Kong expected that there would be more time for training, the two battalions did have an experienced core that had to be relied upon in the coming battle.

### Conclusion

The various claims made about the selection process for “C” Force and the units’ training do not hold up to scrutiny. The reasons why the Royal Rifles and the Grenadiers were placed in the “Not Recommended” category had to do with standard administrative procedures, not because the battalions were poorly trained. Rather, the units were as well trained as could be expected in Canada during the early years of the Second World War. Many authors have promulgated this misunderstanding, thus fuelling the myths about the supposedly flawed selection of “C” Force. Personal relationships were a major influence in the selection process. The communications between Power and Price undoubtedly affected the selection of the Royal Rifles. The timing and Power’s ability to influence Crerar make the unit’s selection more than just a mere coincidence. For the Grenadiers, the conversations between Kay and Crerar, plus its similar training and experiences as the Royal Rifles, led to its selection. I have rectified the problems associated with these myths and made a significant contribution to the battle’s historiography. The insights provide into the training of the units of “C” Force are also a much-needed addition to the historiography. I have examined the training of the units deeper than other works have done before and as a result demonstrated that their training was not as poor as

---

<sup>132</sup> Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 460.

previously argued. I While the troops of “C” Force were not highly trained in comparison to units later in the war, they were far from the untrained rabble that so many authors claim.

## CHAPTER 5

### UNTO THE BREACH: THE BATTLE OF HONG KONG

The most enduring zombie myths about the Battle for Hong Kong involve the performance of the Canadian troops. The myths are divided into two opposing viewpoints. The first viewpoint—often held by British officers, historians, and authors—alleges that the Canadians performed so poorly that they produced the colony’s fall. Numerous examples can be found of this mindset. The 5/7 Rajputs War Diary recorded that “unfortunately they [the Canadians] were Garrison BNs who, though they may have had the right spirit, had had no tactical training whatsoever and in consequence pulled little or no weight in the Battle.”<sup>1</sup> Major-General C.M. Maltby, the British commander at Hong Kong, wrote the first widely disseminated source that blamed the Canadians for Hong Kong’s loss. In the 1948 version of his Despatch, Maltby wrote:

[the Canadians] proved to be inadequately trained for modern war under the conditions existing in Hong Kong. They had very recently arrived in Hong Kong after a long sea voyage, and such time as was available had been devoted to the completion of the south shore defences and making themselves au fait with and practising the problems of countering a south shore landing. In this role they were never employed and, instead, they found themselves counter-attacking on steep hill sides covered with scrub, over strange country, and as a result they rapidly became exhausted.<sup>2</sup>

Originally, this passage had been preceded by the following sentence: “Though possessing first class material, this lack of training rendered them incapable of fire and movement and consequently when launched in many local counterattacks (and it was on these counter-attacks that the defence of the island depended) they suffered heavily and accomplished little.” In

---

<sup>1</sup> The National Archives (hereafter TNA), WO 172/1692, 5/7 Rajputs (Hong Kong) War Diary 8th–25th December 1941, 3

<sup>2</sup> C.M. Maltby, “Operations in Hong Kong from 8th to 25th December, 1941,” *Supplement to The London Gazette*, 27 January 1948, 701.

another statement removed from his first version, Maltby directly questioned Canadian leadership.<sup>3</sup> Also cut from the Despatch was the following line: “The two Canadian battalions arrived in a state of training quite unfit for open warfare and had barely familiarised themselves with their static role of island defence.”<sup>4</sup> But while Maltby’s account of the battle remains one of the most influential sources about the Battle for Hong Kong, it suffers from a great many problems as this chapter will demonstrate.

Such caustic assessments of “C” Force’s performance incited a counter-reaction in which the Canadian troops were presented as the best fighters in the garrison, an opinion held mostly by Canadian writers and historians. Carl Vincent, a fervent supporter of this myth, has written that “It is a fact, moreover, that wherever the Japanese ran into problems it was usually the Canadians who were responsible.” In addition, Vincent claimed that Canadians inflicted at least half of the Japanese casualties.<sup>5</sup>

Neither of these contrasting myths accurately represent the reality of the situation. The Canadian troops sent to Hong Kong, put in a situation that they were not fully prepared for, did their best given the circumstances. While Canadian Army official historian C.P. Stacey wrote that “C” Force’s training was lacking compared to the official Canadian Army standards later in the war, “surviving officers of the Canadian units are generally of the opinion that those units’ battleworthiness was not inferior to that of the others of the garrison.”<sup>6</sup> But this measured conclusion was obscured by both nationalist boasting and finger pointing after the battle. And

---

<sup>3</sup> Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC), Department of National Defence fonds, RG24, volume 12752, file “The Hong Kong Operation”, *Supplement to The London Gazette Operations in Hong Kong, 8th to 25th December 1941* by Major-General C.M. Maltby 24 July 1946, page 3.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, page 5.

<sup>5</sup> Carl Vincent, *No Reason Why: The Canadian Hong Kong Tragedy, An Examination* (Stittsville, Ontario: Canada’s Wings, 1981), 203–204.

<sup>6</sup> C.P. Stacey, *Six Years of War: The Army in Canada, Britain and the Pacific* (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 1955), 447, 457.

while Stacey provided a foundation for further study of the battle, he also boasted about “C” Force:

Their casualty lists show that their contribution to the defence was a large one, and the Japanese accounts which have been quoted attest the battalions’ solid fighting qualities. It is satisfactory to read in those accounts that it was in areas where these battalions were the major units engaged that the enemy encountered his greatest difficulties and suffered his heaviest losses.<sup>7</sup>

This chapter employs sources that Stacey could not access or did not use. Further, the unedited version of Maltby’s Despatch will be utilized as it provides insights into some disputed events of the battle. The different viewpoints have led to the creation of numerous zombie myths. Elizabeth Greenhalgh has summarized why employing varying perspectives is of great importance: “Without such perspective nationalistic mythologies have a nasty habit of obscuring accurate interpretations of the past.”<sup>8</sup> This chapter, which explores the Battle of Hong Kong and Canadian performances during the fighting, does not claim to be an exhaustive narrative of the battle. Instead, individual episodes will be studied to demonstrate that “C” Force’s soldiers did not perform any worse or any better than other troops in Hong Kong’s garrison. Understanding how the Canadian forces fought at Hong Kong is essential to determining the battle’s legacy in Canada.

#### “C” Force’s Arrival in Hong Kong and Garrison Duties

“C” Force’s arrival in Hong Kong on 16 November 1941 aboard the *Awatea* caused a stir in the colony. The *China Mail*, in an extra edition that day, calling the Canadian troops a “Substantial Reinforcement of Garrison,” said their “thrilled the Colony upon which the tremendous significance of the substantial reinforcement was not lost.”<sup>9</sup> Civilians lined the

---

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 490.

<sup>8</sup> Elizabeth Greenhalgh, “Australians Broke the Hindenburg Line,” in *Zombie Myths of Australian Military History*, ed. Craig Stockings (Sydney, Australia: University of New South Wales, 2010), 91

<sup>9</sup> *China Mail*, 16 November 1941 Extra, 1.

streets as the Canadians marched to their barracks. In his memoir, Kenneth Cambon of the Royal Rifles, summarizing the attitude of the troops and civilians alike, averred “our two battalions marched down Nathan road steel-helmeted and obviously invincible. The main street of Kowloon was lined by cheering crowds waving small Union Jacks.”<sup>10</sup> The *China Mail* noted that while none of the soldiers had fought in the current war, many were First World War veterans.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, many of “C” Force’s ranking members were veterans of the Great War, including its commander Lawson, Senior Administrative Officer Colonel Patrick Hennessy, commander of the Royal Rifles Lieutenant-Colonel William Home, and Lieutenant-Colonel John Sutcliffe, commander of the Grenadiers. Many company commanders and some of the other ranks were veterans too. In addition to the aforementioned Company Sergeant Major John Osborn of the Grenadiers who served with the 63rd Royal Naval Division during the previous war, rifleman Percy Wilmot of the Royal Rifles had fought in the 19th Battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force and the 49th Battery of the Canadian Field Artillery.<sup>12</sup> H.P. McNaughton, a poetic chronicler of the Grenadiers’ exploits, was also a First World War veteran.<sup>13</sup> Not everyone believed having First World War combat experience was necessarily a positive thing. According to Brereton Greenhous, “the influence of First World War veterans in their midst, while perhaps adding an element of psychological stability, may well have encouraged them to think in terms of unwieldy frontal assaults under cover of massive artillery barrages, with entrenched machine

---

<sup>10</sup> Kenneth Cambon, *Guest of Hirohito* (Vancouver: PW Press, 1990), 5.

<sup>11</sup> *China Mail*, 16 November, 1.

<sup>12</sup> TNA, ADM 339/1/28936, John Osborn Service Record. Wilmot was discharged in the Great War as medically unfit for service due to flat feet. LAC, Ministry of the Overseas Military Forces of Canada fonds, RG 150, Accession 1992–93/166, Box 10429–38, Item 316183, Percy Wilmot Service Record.

<sup>13</sup> H.P. McNaughton, *Shadow Lights of Sham Shui Po: A Rhyming Picture of the Yesteryears*, (Hong Kong: POW Camp Shamshuipo, 1944), 53.

guns and barbed wire the essence of defence.”<sup>14</sup> While Greenhous’ first claim likely was true, battle evidence contradicts his second assertion.

“C” Force’s arrival positively affected the garrison’s morale. Captain Harold Robert Newton of the Rajputs wrote to his parents to say “the Canadians arrived. They are a good looking lot of chaps, as far as I have seen them.”<sup>15</sup> Also impressed by the Canadians, Maltby asserted that “they are a nice tough looking crowd & although they had been at sea for 3 weeks they marched away from the docks very well.”<sup>16</sup> The Rajput war diary noted the fact that the two Canadian battalions had “the most up-to-date equipment in October, [which] had a profound effect on the situation. Numerically, they constituted a valuable increase in the strength of the Garrison,” an odd comment for an underequipped “C” Force sported many First World War-vintage weapons.<sup>17</sup> But brigade vehicles, sent separately aboard the slow freighter *Don Jose*, never arrived as the ship had to diverted to the Philippines as war loomed.<sup>18</sup> Lack of transportation was a major problem for the garrison as Maltby cabled the War Office to say that twenty-five two-ton trucks had been purchased, and “if situation eases vehicles still essential for station duties to replace expensive hirings.”<sup>19</sup>

“C” Force’s seemingly effortless garrison duties were short-lived. Cambon provided a description of the luxurious accommodations awaiting the Canadians:

We were astounded by the luxury of the camp after eighteen months of Canadian Army life. Even the lowly rifleman had a single bed with sheets and a mosquito net. East Indian orderlies came in each morning with a cup of tea and an offer to shave you in bed and shine your shoes...all for a pittance. It was a shock to be

---

<sup>14</sup> Brereton Greenhous, *“C” Force to Hong Kong: A Canadian Catastrophe, 1941–1945* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1997), 33.

<sup>15</sup> National Army Museum, 1999–07–92, The Letters from Harold Robert Newton (1917–1941) to his Parents, 69.

<sup>16</sup> Imperial War Museum (hereafter IWM), Private Papers of Major General C.M. Maltby, Catalogue number 22835, Scrapbook, 17 November 1941.

<sup>17</sup> TNA, WO 172/1692, Rajputs War Diary, 3.

<sup>18</sup> LAC, J.L. Ralston fonds, MG 27 III BII, volume 69, file “Hong Kong Enquiry – memoranda of 3 discussions in Minister’s Office, 1 January 1941”, page 17. Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 449.

<sup>19</sup> TNA, WO 106/2412, Telegram from G.O.C. Hong Kong to War Office, 3 December 1941.

addressed as Sahib, sir. Others were ready to press your uniform and even make the bed.

Cambon believed that this luxury might explain the poor British performance at the beginning of the war in the Far East.<sup>20</sup> Rifleman Andrew Flanagan of the Royal Rifles described working days that began at 0700 hours and ended at 1200 hours due to the intense heat.<sup>21</sup> According to Cambon, frequent brawls between Canadian and British troops broke out at bars and brothels over pay differences and prostitutes.<sup>22</sup> Signalman William Allister summed up his time on garrison duty as “three glorious weeks of wild luxury, shopping, dining, drinking, spending, buying embroidered kimonos, carved tusks, silk pajamas.”<sup>23</sup> For the week ending 29 November, Canadian troops carried out two forty–eight-hour manning exercises at fifty percent strength. Uninvolved troops continued their weapons training.<sup>24</sup>

The Canadian reinforcement allowed for an altered strategy to defend the colony. Maltby’s plan called for one infantry battalion on the mainland to provide cover for engineers to carry out demolitions of important roads and bridges. The Royal Scots would hold the left of the Gin Drinker’s Line, the Punjabs would secure the right, the Rajputs constituted the mainland brigade’s reserve. Hoping that the Gin Drinker’s Line would protect the harbour and the island’s northern portion from Japanese artillery fire, Maltby noted that “time was also of vital importance to complete demolitions of fuel stores, power houses, docks, wharves, etc., on the mainland; to clear certain food stocks and vital necessities from the mainland to the island; to

---

<sup>20</sup> Cambon, *Guest of Hirohito*, 5–6.

<sup>21</sup> Andy Flanagan, *The Endless Battle: The Fall of Hong Kong and Canadian POWs in Imperial Japan*, (Fredericton, New Brunswick: Goose Lane Editions, 2017), 45.

<sup>22</sup> Cambon, *Guest of Hirohito*, 6.

<sup>23</sup> William Allister, *Where Life and Death Hold Hands* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1989), 17.

<sup>24</sup> LAC, Royal Commission to Inquire into and Report upon the Organization, Authorization and Dispatch of the Canadian Expeditionary Force to the Crown Colony of Hong Kong fonds, RG 33 120, volume 2, file “Exhibit #45–70; #71–84”, exhibit 56 telegram from Canadian Forces, Hong Kong to NDHQ Ottawa, 30 November 1941.



sink shipping and lighters and to clear the harbour of thousands of junks and sampans.”<sup>25</sup> The island brigade comprised the Middlesex Regiment, manning the island’s pillboxes, the Grenadiers tasked with defending the south-west side of the island, and the Royal Rifles based in the southeast. Partial manning of the defences began on 1 December as one platoon from each company took up battle positions.<sup>26</sup>

#### Canadian Press Reaction to “C” Force’s Arrival in Hong Kong

How the Canadian press received the news of the Canadian reinforcement, like much throughout Canadian history, was divided on linguistic lines. French language newspapers were either indifference or negative, while the English press supported the reinforcement. *Le Droit* of the Ottawa area declared “La Situation S’Aggrave en Extrême-Orient” on its front page on 17 November but said little about the value of the Canadian reinforcement. The paper did run a Canadian Press story that declared “un coup de maitre en diplomatie militaire”, disait-on dans les quartiers populaires de Hong Kong aujourd'hui, lorsque sur le coup de midi, on vit les soldats canadiens à l'exercice dans les casernes qui ent été mises à leur disposition depuis leur arrive ici hier matin.”<sup>27</sup> *La Devoir*'s reporting was negative despite its use of more neutral language:

Il y a trente ans ces semoines-ci, M. Henri Bourassa, dans un discours en public, faisait entrevoir, parmi les développements de l'idée de participation du Canada aux guerres impériales, la certitude de voir un jour des contingents de jeunes Canadiens se battre aux bords de la mer de Chine ou du Japon, dans les pays asiatiques en tout cas. M. Bourassa n'avait pas si tort, quoique, à l'époque, on dit qu'il était halluciné. Il y a depuis quelques jours un important détachement de soldats canadiens, tant du Québec que du Manitoba, rendu à Hong-Kong, l'un des postes les plus importants de l'Empire britannique du côté de l'Asie. Ce petit corps expéditionnaire est vraisemblablement parti du Canada, par voie de Vancouver...<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> Maltby, “Operations in Hong Kong,” 699.

<sup>26</sup> Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 459–460.

<sup>27</sup> “La Situation S’Aggrave en Extrême-Orient,” *Le Droit*, 17 November 1941, 1.

<sup>28</sup> “DES CANADIENS A HONG KONG,” *La Devoir*, 17 November 1941, 1.

Unsurprisingly, *The Globe and Mail* supported the reinforcement, averring “the great majority of the Canadian people, we believe, will welcome the news that our fighting forces are going to lend an active hand in the effort now being made to preserve peace in the Pacific by impressing the Japanese government with the determination of the Anglo-Saxon democracies not to tolerate any further Japanese aggression...”<sup>29</sup> The *Calgary Herald* declared that the “announcement of the arrival of Canadian troops at Hong Kong will create a feeling of satisfaction throughout this country” for “there has been some feeling of regret among Canadians that the men of this Dominion have not been permitted by war conditions to share in more active service so far.”<sup>30</sup> The *Montreal Gazette* agreed, declaring that the “Announcement by Prime Minister King on Saturday night that Canadian troops had arrived safely at Hong Kong was thrilling news for citizens of the Dominion.”<sup>31</sup> Such positive feelings would quickly fade.

### Determining Combat Effectiveness

As the Canadian performance in the Battle of Hong Kong is central to so many myths, “C” Force’s combat effectiveness must be measured. This is an especially difficult task as troops of different nationalities and units became intermixed, thus making conclusions about one unit’s performance nigh impossible. Previously, no models have been applied to determine the Canadians’ combat effectiveness, a key element that this chapter will provide. Political scientist Kirstin J.H. Brathwaite has created a useful way to examine combat effectiveness at Hong Kong. In her article comparing British and Commonwealth units fighting in Singapore and Malaya during the Second World War, Brathwaite observed that the literature was too narrowly focused

---

<sup>29</sup> “Wartime Frontier Expands,” *The Globe and Mail*, 17 November 1941, 6.

<sup>30</sup> “Empire Stand Solid,” *The Calgary Herald*, 17 November 1941, 4.

<sup>31</sup> “Canadian Troops at Hong Kong,” *The Montreal Gazette*, November 17 1941, 8.

on either soldiers' skills or their willingness to fight. She has contended that both elements must be understood to determine effectiveness.<sup>32</sup>

The comprehension of both the skills of the soldiers and their will to fight make an excellent model to examine the combat effectiveness of the Canadians at Hong Kong. This model does not rely on statistical data, an important consideration for relevant data for the battle is scarce or hard to prove. Brathwaite provided definitions of both skill and will. Skill is defined as a soldier's ability to conduct basic tactics such as fire and movement and using their weapons. The quality of command leadership and one's ability to coordinate and communicate with other units can also determine skill. Will can be measured by examining soldiers' morale, discipline, and initiative. Soldiers with higher will desert less, better follow orders, and are more willing to fire their weapons. Soldiers with initiative seek out engagement with the enemy, are willing to try new tactics, and create opportunities in battle.<sup>33</sup> This holistic approach is the best available method for measuring "C" Force's combat effectiveness.

#### The Battle of Hong Kong: A Brief Outline

A brief outline of the battle is now necessary to provide clarity to make sense of the disorganized fighting. The Hong Kong garrison was made up of "C" Force, the 2nd Battalion the Royal Scots, the 2nd Battalion 14th Punjab Regiment, the 5th Battalion 7th Rajput Regiment, the 1st Battalion the Middlesex Regiment, the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps (HKVDC), various artillery batteries, and other support units.<sup>34</sup> As war neared, all troops took up battle positions on 7 December.<sup>35</sup> The Japanese attack began on 8 December with an air raid on Kai

---

<sup>32</sup> Kirstin J. H. Brathwaite, "Effective in Battle: Conceptualizing Soldiers' Combat Effectiveness," *Defence Studies* 18, no. 1 (2018): 2.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 3–4.

<sup>34</sup> Kwong Chi Man and Tsoi Yiu Lun, *Eastern Fortress: A Military History of Hong Kong, 1840–1970* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2015), 165–166.

<sup>35</sup> Directorate of History and Heritage (hereafter DHH), file 593 (D1), Hong Kong War Diary 16 Oct/25 Dec 41 as a Rept Force "C" HQ & Details by Capt HA Bush, S/Capt "C" Force 10 Oct 45 incl Org Est & Parade State, 6.

Tak Airfield at 0800 hours that destroyed the Royal Air Force's (RAF) five outdated aircraft.<sup>36</sup> Japanese planes also attacked Sham Shui Po barracks, wounding some Canadian soldiers.<sup>37</sup> Immediately, garrison forces destroyed bridges between the border with China and the Gin Drinker's Line. But the Shing Mun Redoubt, the central pivot of the Gin Drinker's Line, fell unexpectedly on 9 December. As this loss rendered the entire line untenable, the defenders had to abandon it.<sup>38</sup> Maltby ordered a general evacuation of the mainland on the 11th.

After the troops on the mainland retreated to the island in good order, the garrison was split into East and West Brigades. The East Brigade comprised of the Royal Rifles of Canada, the Rajputs, and troops of the HKVDC and the Middlesex Regiment, led by Brigadier Cedric Wallis of the Indian Army. The West Brigade, comprised of the Winnipeg Grenadiers, the Royal Scots, the Punjabs, and a company of the Middlesex Regiment, fell under Brigadier J.K. Lawson's command. A Japanese demand for the garrison's surrender was made on 13 December. Governor Mark Young swiftly rejected the demand plus another made on the 17th.<sup>39</sup> The Japanese began to cross Lye Mun Passage on the island's northeast corner late on 18 December. By the 19th, the Japanese had split the garrison in two.<sup>40</sup> Fighting continued until Maltby ordered the garrison's surrender on Christmas Day 1941.<sup>41</sup> 290 Canadians died fighting for Hong Kong. The Hong Kong garrison lost 955 killed, 659 were listed as missing. The Japanese lost 675 killed and 2,079 wounded.<sup>42</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> Tony Banham, *Not the Slightest Chance: The Defence of Hong Kong, 1941* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003), 29.

<sup>37</sup> Sergeant Ronald Routledge and Signalman John Fairley were wounded in the Jubilee Buildings. Banham, *Not the Slightest Chance*, 340.

<sup>38</sup> Banham, *Not the Slightest Chance*, 36.

<sup>39</sup> Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 467–469. Banham, *Not the Slightest Chance*, 91.

<sup>40</sup> Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 481.

<sup>41</sup> Banham, *Not the Slightest Chance*, 262.

<sup>42</sup> Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 488–489.

## The Battle Begins, 8–18 December 1941

After the Japanese attack began, the Canadian troops revealed feelings of overconfidence based upon crude racial stereotypes. Sergeant James MacMillan of “A” Company of the Royal Rifles described his thoughts at war’s outbreak: “News that Japan had early that morning declared war on Great Britain and the United States came to us from an artillery sergeant-major on his way to post. And he actually seemed delighted to be the bearer of such tidings gloating over the fact that now was our chance to show these yellow-livered trouble-makers just where they stood.” MacMillan thought that Canadian troops based in Britain would be jealous that “C” Force had fought first.<sup>43</sup> Signalman Georges Verreault, profaning “we’re at war with the yellow pigs,” expressed his “hope that before it [his death] happens, I can get my hands around a couple of Nip throats. The ‘Royal Scots’ are being massacred up there according to a report. Hell why don’t they send us to their help? The two Canadians regiments are stuck on the island and the guys are roaring with frustration at not being able to join the battle.”<sup>44</sup> Despite the Canadians’ overconfidence at the battle’s advent, such boasting demonstrated their will to fight.

“D” Company of the Grenadiers were the first Canadians to engage the Japanese. Sent to Kowloon as a rearguard to defend the harbor for evacuation, these soldiers exchanged some fire with Japanese troops and withdrew in good order with the rest of the mainland brigade.<sup>45</sup> Canadian signallers on the mainland provided communications links for the Royal Scots, Rajputs, and Punjabs. Their tasks included fixing telephone lines damaged in the fighting and operating the Wireless Set No. 11, one of which was given to all the battalions on the mainland.<sup>46</sup>

---

<sup>43</sup> Canadian War Museum (hereafter CWM), 20110043–001, James MacMillan, Diary, 40.

<sup>44</sup> Georges Verreault, *Diary of a Prisoner of War in Japan, 1941–1945* (Rimouski, Québec: Vero, 1996), 36.

<sup>45</sup> Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 467.

<sup>46</sup> D. Burke Penny, *Beyond the Call: Royal Canadian Corps of Signals Brigade Headquarters, “C” Force Hong Kong 1941–1945* (Nepean, Ontario: Hong Kong Veterans Commemorative Association, 2009), 68. DHH, file 593 (D26), Interview with Capt G.M. Billings, R.C. Sigs., 27 March 1946.

The signallers came under fire from Japanese artillery and machine guns numerous times, while snipers were a danger near the pillboxes on the Gin Drinker's Line.<sup>47</sup> Captain George Billings, commanding the Canadian Signallers, praised his men's efficiency and their high morale until the battle's end.<sup>48</sup>

The earliest sustained enemy action faced by the Canadian infantry was the Japanese shelling of Hong Kong Island which began on 10 December and grew in intensity by the day. By the 16th, enemy artillery was taking its toll, with "Men showing signs of strain very little rest or sleep for anyone."<sup>49</sup> Rifleman Raymond Elliott of the Royal Rifles recorded the episodes of heavy shelling in his diary on the 10, 13, 14, 15, and 17 of December. Heavy air raids were noted on the 17th.<sup>50</sup> Japanese air raids increased in intensity on the 18th to soften up garrison positions in anticipation of landings later that night. Opinions about enemy airplanes changed over the course of the battle. While Elliott initially described being thrilled by the aerial displays when Japanese planes attacked on 8 December, by 24 December he noted, "Enemy planes are bombing again very discouraging not to see one of our own planes."<sup>51</sup> MacMillan also described the Japanese air power: "looking up at these death-dealing monsters advancing directly over us, I can but recall what an empty feeling there was in my stomach as any moment I expected to see a 'stick of eggs' come plummeting down upon us. The Japanese apparently used a bit of psychology in their aerial attacks and most of these were made invariably at mealtimes to add to our discomfort." He also noted that the Japanese pilots had poor bombing skills.<sup>52</sup> Verreault also said that while he feared the bombs, the Japanese artillery caused more damage. He also insulted

---

<sup>47</sup> Penny, *Beyond the Call*, 72.

<sup>48</sup> DHH, file 593 (D26), Interview with Billings.

<sup>49</sup> DHH, file 593 (D3), War Diary of Royal Rifles of Cda December 1941, 21.

<sup>50</sup> CWM, 20080086-001, Raymond W. Elliott, Diary, entries 10, 13, 14, 15, 17 December.

<sup>51</sup> CWM, Elliot, Diary, 8 December.

<sup>52</sup> CWM, MacMillan, Diary, 41-42.

the fighting ability of the Japanese pilot for “our charming enemy refuses to bomb us if the sky is grey. The dear little one, they might catch cold.”<sup>53</sup>

#### The Japanese Landing on Hong Kong Island, 18 December

Once the Japanese landed on Hong Kong Island on 18 December, many garrison units were quickly overrun, including a Royal Rifle platoon lost at Lyemun Barracks near the northeast coast.<sup>54</sup> According to Cambon, “the Japanese later admitted that they lost 65% of their men in this exercise against “C” Company. So the assumption that the outcome could have been far different with more support available is not unreasonable.”<sup>55</sup> The Royal Rifles fought to retake the position against Japanese troops and fifth columnists but ultimately failed.<sup>56</sup>

According to Japanese accounts, the Canadians inflicted a high portion of their casualties. But such success came at a high cost as “‘C’ COY with attached personnel went into action at 2200 hours yesterday [18 December] with 172 OR [Other Ranks] and 5 officers, and at 1600 hours [on the] 19th, 54 men answered their names and 4 officers were present.”<sup>57</sup> The Canadian troops had willingly engaged the enemy, but they suffered heavily for doing so.

#### The Canadians at Wong Nei Chong Gap

The Wong Nei Chong Gap, in the central part of Hong Kong Island, saw some of the most intense fighting experienced by Canadian troops during the entire battle. As the site of the West Brigade Headquarters, the gap sat at the confluence of several roads that stretched across the island, making the area a key target for Japanese forces. Many displays of bravery took place here, as did the Canadian ability to offer sustained, disciplined resistance. But fighting at the

---

<sup>53</sup> Verreault, *Diary of a Prisoner*, 38–40.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>55</sup> Cambon, *Guest of Hirohito*, 16.

<sup>56</sup> This episode is further explored in Brad St. Croix, “The Omnipresent Threat: Fifth Columnists’ Impact on the Battle of Hong Kong, December 1941,” *Close Encounters in War 1* (2018): 12.

<sup>57</sup> DHH, file 593 (D3), Royal Rifles War Diary, 33.

Wong Nei Chong Gap killed Lawson, creating a hole in “C” Force’s leadership structure, affecting the battle’s course, and enhancing the fight over “C” Force’s legacy. On 19 December, Lawson told Maltby, that Japanese troops had surrounded his command post in the Wong Nei Chong Gap and that he was “going outside to fight it out.”<sup>58</sup> Lawson’s body was later found amongst the Canadian and Japanese dead surrounding the command post. According to Japanese historian Hisashi Takahashi, “the deep impression the Canadian contingent left on the Japanese in terms of valour, Colonel Shoji, Commander of the 230th Regiment, buried Lawson with full military honours and put up a monument in his memory.”<sup>59</sup> Lawson’s death left the Canadians without a leader who possessed intimate knowledge of the British Army and personally knew. Thus, the Canadian battalions fell under the command of unfamiliar British officers.

Another act of sacrifice injured leadership in the Canadian ranks. The only Victoria Cross awarded during the Battle of Hong Kong went to Company Sergeant Major John Osborn of the Grenadiers for his actions on Mount Butler on 19 December. After leading the attack up the hill, Osborn helped to set up defence positions. But when the Japanese counterattacked and forced the Grenadiers from their positions, Osborn single-handedly covered his company’s retreat and directed stragglers to the new defensive position. As Osborn and some Grenadiers took shelter in a building, Japanese soldiers started lobbing grenades into their position. While Osborn threw the grenades back, when one landed in a position that he could not reach, shouting a warning to his men, Osborn jumped on the grenade. Dying instantly, Osborne saved many lives.<sup>60</sup>

---

<sup>58</sup> Maltby, “Operations in Hong Kong,” 714.

<sup>59</sup> Hisashi Takahashi, “The Canadian Expeditionary Force and the Fall of Hong Kong,” in *Canada and Japan in the Twentieth Century*, eds. John Schultz and Kimitada Miwa, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1991), 109.

<sup>60</sup> *Supplement to The London Gazette*, 29 March 1946, 1617.



Lawson and Osborn were not the only leaders to be killed early in the fighting. Sergeant George Paterson of the “HQ” Company of the Grenadiers died on 19 December while attacking the police station at the Wong Nei Chong Gap. Captain Alan Bowman, commander of “D” Company of the Grenadiers, also perished that day.<sup>61</sup> On the 20th, brothers Lieutenants William and Eric Mitchell, both of the Grenadiers, died after Eric was first wounded and William stayed with him. It appears that they were killed after surrendering to the Japanese. Lieutenant Hugh Young, Company Sergeant Major Walter Fryatt, and Lance Sergeant Albert Woods, all of “B” Company of the Grenadiers, were killed at Black’s Link near Mount Cameron, fighting toward the Wong Nei Chong Gap on the 21st.<sup>62</sup> The loss of so many officers and NCOs early in the battle caused disciplinary issues for various “C” Force sub-units of “C” Force, and led to problems later when the Canadian battalion commanders clashed with their British commanders.

Canadian drunkenness during the battle partially resulted from the loss of key leaders early in the fighting. Some claims of drunkenness amongst Canadians were true, others were exaggerations or second-hand assertions designed to sully Canadian reputations. One of the comments removed from the unedited Maltby Despatch concerned Canadian drunkenness. Major C. Manners, a retired British artillery officer, claimed that Canadians had been out of control and drunk at the Repulse Bay Hotel. As recorded by Maltby, Manners claimed they were all over the place drinking, under little control and that no further military action was taking place or, apparently, even contemplated,” adding that “the Canadians were doing nothing, the defences appeared to be quite inadequate, and that the Officer Commanding Coy was the worse for drink.”<sup>63</sup> Though Greenhous rejected this claim, he noted that there was one drunken Canadian at

---

<sup>61</sup> Banham, *Not the Slightest Chance*, 147, 145.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 182, 197–198.

<sup>63</sup> TNA, CAB 106/30, Despatch on operations in Hong Kong 1941 Dec. 8–25; copy of original, by Major-General C. M. Maltby, General Officer Commanding British Troops in China, 45, 47.

Repulse Bay, Rifleman James Riley, who was passed out when the hotel was evacuated.

Discovered by civilians sheltering in the hotel and disguised, he was repatriated to Canada before the war's end and promptly discharged from the Canadian Army.<sup>64</sup>

Several other instances of Canadian drunkenness were alleged, but their validity is questionable. Author Tim Carew presented an anecdote about drunken Canadians, originally told by British soldier Corporal Pelham who supposedly encountered them on the night of the 18th:

Two obviously drunken voices were singing in a travesty of harmony of "Red River Valley," "Now come sit by my side if you love me-e-e-e!" carolled the voices with deadly penetration; "dew not hasten to bid me adieu-u-u-u!" Pelham walked forward a few painful paces and saw the two Canadians. They sat leaning against one another, and drinking from a bottle.

After inviting Pelham to have a drink, one Canadian supposedly said to him, "me an' my buddy here are sittin' this goddam war out." When Pelham asked about the truck they were sitting near, supposedly he was told, "'we ain't goin' no place, pal,' by the first Canadian who, with a resounding hiccup, added "like I said, we don't want any part of this war. You want the truck, you help yourself. And gimme that bottle back."<sup>65</sup>

According to Major J.H. Monro, Brigade Major of the Hong Kong Command Headquarters, a planned counterattack from the Repulse Bay Hotel toward the Wong Nei Chong Gap supposedly did not occur thanks to Canadian drunkenness. A two-pronged attack with another unit coming from Little Hong Kong also was never mounted. Monro claimed that "the first attack never started because the Canadians and their Commander were drunk. The General sent Temple out from Stanley to take charge of the situation. I think that because the Canadians did not attack the other was cancelled."<sup>66</sup> Monro was

---

<sup>64</sup> Greenhous, "*C*" *Force to Hong Kong*, 100, 102.

<sup>65</sup> Tim Carew, *The Fall of Hong Kong* (London: Pan Books, 1963), 131–132.

<sup>66</sup> IWM, Private Papers of Lieutenant-Colonel J.H. Monro, Catalogue Number 17941, *A Gunner's War in China*, 1, 11.

among those who criticized the Canadians' fighting abilities despite having spent little time with them. Having spent most of campaign in the Battle Box, a bunker located fifty feet beneath a barracks in Victoria in the island's northwest, Monro acknowledged that communication with the units was difficult. Still, he concluded "the Canadians, of whom we had hoped great things, proved to be worse than useless. They were quite untrained. They had no discipline and were most unsteady. In fact they were a hindrance rather than a help" Given his distance from the fighting, Monro's conclusions must be called into question,<sup>67</sup> as he and Carew are two examples of individuals who sought to present the Canadians as poor soldiers in order to buttress British reputations.

A Canadian commander's drunkenness, described by RAF Squadron Leader D.S. Hill, may have played a role in the fighting near Bennet's Hill on the island's west side. As all RAF planes had been destroyed on 8 December, RAF personnel operated anti-aircraft guns and fought as infantry, with Hill and other RAF personnel attached to the Grenadiers' "C" Company led by Major John Bailie.<sup>68</sup> Events came to a head in the early hours of the 24th. When forced to retreat from Bennet's Hill, noticing that some Grenadiers had not received the order, Hill took a few men to make contact. As Hill asserted:

The Canadians are badly rattled, even their officer seems to have lost control of his men. The Japs start shelling us and confusion sets in and the men start leaving their posts. A scene I never wish to see again. I am in an awkward position as I have no command over the Canadians. Just as they start moving back the road Major Bailie advances down the road waving a revolver and shouting to his men to get back to their posts. Some obey and some don't. The Major is highly excited and his voice rings out through the night calling his men all the names he can think of.<sup>69</sup>

---

<sup>67</sup> Banham, *Not the Slightest Chance*, 27. IWM, Monro, A Gunner's War in China, 11, 13.

<sup>68</sup> IWM, Private Papers of Squadron Leader D.S. Hill, Catalogue Number 13558, Diary, 2-3.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

As no Canadians moved, Hill dashed across the bridge under fire to bring a supposedly drunk Bailie back to his unit. While most of the Canadians fled, some set up a mortar position. But the first shell they fired hit a tree, wounding several men. The wounded were dragged to a pillbox, and an ambulance arrived along with Lieutenants Railton Campbell and John Park. Hill described a complete breakdown in the chain of command: “Thank God the ambulance arrives at last, also Lts Campbell and Park. Campbell threatens to put the Major [Bailie] under arrest and Bailie threatens to put every Canadian under arrest. Comes the dawn and most of the Canadians have disappeared.”<sup>70</sup>

But Hill’s account does not match up with a report prepared by Major George Trist, second in command of the Grenadiers, later in the war. According to Trist:

At about 2230 hrs a phone call was received from Aberdeen Reservoir stating that some action was taking place in the area of Bennets Hill and Major Bailie left immediately, arriving by road some 20 minutes later at his Coy Hq. On arrival he was informed by C.S.M. Logan that the Japanese had shelled and attacked Little Bennets Hill and had driven out Lieut Whites platoon which had returned to No 2 platoon area on the reservoir bridge. Major Bailie went forward to find out the reason for the retirement and was advised by Capt Bardal that Lieut Whites platoon had fallen back owing to a heavy attack by the enemy.<sup>71</sup>

While an ambulance was called, Trist’s account did not note its arrival. Trist did mention the arrival of Campbell and his patrol at the Aberdeen Headquarters where a conference was held at 0530 hours on the 24th about what positions to assume on the hill. There was no mention of the threats to arrest anyone nor any insubordination. An attack planned for first light on the 25th was cancelled due to the temporary truce that lasted until the garrison’s surrender.<sup>72</sup>

As Hill was present during this incident while Trist was not, one could challenge Trist’s account. Still, aware that he might be criticized, Trist made clear “the writer commences this

---

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> DHH, file 593 (D33), Winnipeg Grenadiers War Diary, 17.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

report knowing full well that any report containing criticisms or accusations is bound to be read with a certain amount of scepticism particularly if it is written in opposition to an official report submitted by a much higher authority.”<sup>73</sup> While Hill’s recollection of the event was not an official report, Trist was concerned the Canadians were being blamed for Hong Kong’s fall. However, some Canadians corroborated parts of Hill’s rendition. Private Bernard Jesse of the Grenadiers’ “D” Company claimed that by the morning of the 25th, “we had a hell of a lot less men. No doubt about it. Some were deserting, making tracks, but that was hopeless. They had nowhere to go. It was hopeless for all of us. I have often thought that, what the heck, if the Japs had wanted to, they could have simply starved us out on that island.”<sup>74</sup> Hill had little to gain by making such criticisms about the Canadians, while Trist had the reputation of an entire battalion to protect. It is very likely that Bailie was drunk at the bridge. Some of the stories of Canadian drunkenness, like Bailie’s, are credible. Other claims were offered with little to no evidence and were advanced to supporting a preconceived idea of the fighting.

#### “D” Company of the Winnipeg Grenadiers and Their Stand at the Wong Nei Chong Gap

The brunt of the Japanese attack at the Wong Nei Chong Gap fell on “D” Company of the Grenadiers on 19 December. While Platoons 17 and 18 were overrun when the attack began, fifty troops held on inside shelters, designed only to protect against weather, not from munitions, and inside a kitchen sited in a concrete building across the main road from the Brigade Headquarters.<sup>75</sup> Their leadership was quickly killed or wounded. Company Commander Captain Alan Bowman was killed after eliminating a sniper on “D” Company’s front in the morning.<sup>76</sup>

---

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>74</sup> Bernie Jesse and Norm Park, *Seared in My Memory: One Hong Kong POW Tells His Story* (Saskatchewan: n.p., 1996), 26.

<sup>75</sup> DHH, file 593 (D1), Hong Kong War Diary, 6. Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 481–482. DHH: 593 (D9), Report of Hon. Capt. U. Laite, 3.

<sup>76</sup> DHH, file 593 (D26), Winnipeg Grenadiers, Attack on “D” Coy., 19–22 December, 1.

After being wounded by a Japanese grenade shortly thereafter, second in command Captain R.W. Phillip was replaced by Lieutenant Thomas Blackwood.<sup>77</sup> Luckily, the position had many machine guns and plenty of ammunition, which the defenders used to take a heavy toll of the Japanese.<sup>78</sup> By the evening of the 20th, with ammunition running low, Captains Howard Bush and Billings departed to link up with any troops at the Wan Chai Gap or Hong Kong Command Headquarters. Uriah Laite, the Grenadiers' chaplain, although asked to accompany Bush and Billings, declined so that he could stay with the men.<sup>79</sup> As this position lacked a medical officer, Laite took care of the wounded, earning the Military Cross for his actions. Fatigue was taking its toll on the 21st as the men had not slept or eaten since the 19<sup>th</sup>, while water had run out in the kitchen building.<sup>80</sup> Blackwood was wounded but continued to fight.<sup>81</sup> On the morning of the 22th, the enemy blew in the doors of the shelter with a two-inch gun. By then, ammunition was completely exhausted and only twelve unwounded men remained. By the time "D" Company surrendered, at least thirty–seven wounded were in the kitchen.<sup>82</sup> While the walking wounded were taken prisoner, the Japanese reportedly murdered the other seriously wounded men.<sup>83</sup> For the troops to withstand such attacks took tremendous discipline and will.

#### Discipline Breakdown in the Royal Rifles' "C" Company

Not all of "C" Force's troops displayed good discipline before the enemy. Lieutenant Leonard Corrigan of "C" Company, Royal Rifles, recalled several breaks in discipline during the battle. While he restored discipline despite the garrison's growing desperation, the Canadians

---

<sup>77</sup> DHH, file 593 (D9), Report of Laite, 3.

<sup>78</sup> Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 482.

<sup>79</sup> DHH, file 593 (D9), Report of Laite, 3. Bush was the Staff Captain at the West Brigade Headquarters.

<sup>80</sup> Oliver Lindsay, *The Battle for Hong Kong 1941–1945: Hostage to Fortune* (Staplehurst, United Kingdom: Spellmount, 2005), 250. DHH, file 593 (D9), Report of Laite, 3.

<sup>81</sup> DHH, file 593 (D26), Winnipeg Grenadiers Attack on "D" Coy., 2.

<sup>82</sup> DHH, file 593 (D1) Hong Kong War Diary, 14.

<sup>83</sup> DHH, file 593 (D33) Report on the Part Played by Winnipeg Grenadiers in the Defence of Hong Kong, War Diary, 11.

were not impervious to the stress of battle. While holding Mount Cameron, Corrigan was ordered to patrol to his front to determine enemy strength. When a Japanese soldier attempted to slash him with a sword, Corrigan, grabbing the blade with his bare hand, killed the soldier with a pistol.<sup>84</sup> After returning to his original position, Corrigan found that his men, believing him to be dead, had pulled back. Finding his men near the Company Headquarters, Corrigan ordered them back to the frontline and noted that upon “returning to the position, I had no trouble getting every thing ship-shape as the men still felt somewhat sheepish over their earlier performance.” Shortly thereafter, the Japanese reinitiated their attack but were beaten back by Bren gun fire and grenades. After repelling a subsequent smaller counterattack, Corrigan left again to the headquarters to ask for resupply. Upon his return, he discovered the position was empty again as the men had retreated after a mortar shell had killed a Bren gunner. Corrigan and a handful of troops reoccupied the position and briefly duelled with Japanese machine gunners before retreating. Entering the headquarters later in the day, Corrigan, finding it empty, was ordered to retreat to Victoria Peak where the West Brigade was reassembling. To Corrigan’s shock, he saw a white flag flying on The Peak. All discipline and order broke down once the garrison’s surrender was announced: “Pent-up emotions were given further impetus by the looting of stores of liquor and cigarettes and the combination of circumstances seemed to crumble the thin veneer of civilization within which men’s animal nature seems to lurk.” As Corrigan reflected, “perhaps we all might have done better under different circumstances, but I feel that most of us did our best here, and particularly am I proud of the fact that the replacement officers were at all times in the thick of things as can be seen from the casualty list, nor did I hear of any instance of the new

---

<sup>84</sup> DHH, file 593 (D5) “C” Personal Experience – Lieut. L. Corrigan, Winnipeg Grenadiers Hong Kong, Dec. 1941, 2.

chaps ‘cracking.’”<sup>85</sup> Corrigan’s story shows the crucial role that leadership played in keeping Canadian discipline intact. Order could be regained, but it took strong leadership to do so.

#### Canadian Counterattack Toward the Wong Nei Chong Gap

One attempt to retake the Wong Nei Chong Gap demonstrated that the Canadians had the will to fight and the ability to adapt to changing circumstances, two key elements in Braithwaite’s model. “A” Company of the Royal Rifles was ordered to contact West Brigade in the gap on 20 December. Platoon 18, in the lead, running into a Japanese pack train moving artillery toward the gap, inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy.<sup>86</sup> According to Elliott, they “Met enemy bringing up big guns. Walked into an ambush. Exchanged fire for about an hour. Outnumbered 10 to 1.”<sup>87</sup> After a runner requested reinforcements, Platoon 17 was despatched to ambush the Japanese from a higher position. “A” Company was forced to retreat when Japanese reinforcements arrived. Unable to find West Brigade, Platoon 17 took advantage of contact with the enemy to inflict casualties. The Canadian also used tactical adjustments. Elliott described how on the 21st, when ordered to take Bridge Hill, he and his compatriots forced a Japanese retreat by setting the scrub on fire. “A” Company retook the hill, but as relief did not arrive, the tired men were ordered to withdraw.<sup>88</sup>

Despite the ability of some troops to improvise, a lack of training plagued the Canadians during the fighting. The Hong Kong Police war diary asserted that a Canadian officer told a policeman in Aberdeen on 20 December that neither he nor his men knew how to use Bren machine guns or grenades. A police sergeant gave them a quick instruction about both.<sup>89</sup>

---

<sup>85</sup> Leonard Corrigan, *Diary Winnipeg Grenadiers, C Force: Prisoner-of-War, 1941–1945* (self-pub., 2008), 9–11.

<sup>86</sup> DHH, file 593 (D3), Royal Rifles War Diary, 38.

<sup>87</sup> CWM, Elliott, Diary, 20 December.

<sup>88</sup> CWM, Elliott, Diary, 21 December.

<sup>89</sup> TNA, CO 129/592/4, Hong Kong Police War Diary, 57.



Sergeant Leo Paul Berard of the Grenadiers had to do the same thing: “At this point, I heard through the grapevine that some of our forces were throwing grenades without being detonated. From then on, in full view of the men, I would play with a grenade, taking the pin off, holding the lever in place to secure the striker from the striking the cap of the four-second fuse.”<sup>90</sup> But Canadians did not hesitate to use their weapons. Allister vividly described the first time he killed in combat: “A figure was dead center in my sights...silhouetted against the sky as I pulled the trigger. He dropped. The thought vaguely registered that I had just killed a man. And so *easily*. I only had to line up the sights on the center of the turtle, tighten my finger—*bra-a-am!* Down went another. A duck-shoot booth at a county fair.” While Allister felt like he was getting away with murder, he had demonstrated that the Canadians could use their weapons in combat if needed.<sup>91</sup> Some of the myths about poor Canadian performance derive from a lack of understanding of what soldiers are trained to do. In describing the rearguard action on Kowloon, the producers of *The Valour and the Horror* exclaimed “everyone was handed a rifle, even army telephone lineman, Walter Jenkins.”<sup>92</sup> This level of surprise reveals the filmmakers did not understand military training for all “C” Force’s troops were trained as soldiers first, no matter their primary role.

Counterattacks were an essential part of the defence of the island for holding the high ground allowed the defenders to control the surrounding area and beat back continuous Japanese assaults. Hong Kong Island’s small size made control of the high ground even more important.

---

<sup>90</sup> Leo Paul Berard, *17 Days Until Christmas* (Barrie, Ontario: Barrie Press, 1997), 80.

<sup>91</sup> Allister, *Where Life and Death Hold Hands*, 29.

<sup>92</sup> *The Valour and the Horror*, episode 6, “Savage Christmas,” directed by Brian McKenna, written by Terence McKenna and Brian McKenna, aired 12 January 1992, on CBC, [https://www.nfb.ca/film/savage\\_christmas\\_hong\\_kong\\_1941/](https://www.nfb.ca/film/savage_christmas_hong_kong_1941/).

The Canadians were involved in numerous counterattacks, but as the majority of these attacks failed, Carew blamed the Canadians for the failures:

These abortive counter-attacks were made without preliminary reconnaissance by troops already exhausted by ten days of hard fighting. The blame for this melancholy state of affairs cannot be placed at General Maltby's door, for he was shouldering a tactical burden which was rapidly becoming intolerable. Some objectives were won at fearful cost, but could not be held. Even if they were briefly held, they could not be consolidated.<sup>93</sup>

The hilly terrain was one of the defining elements of the battle on the island. Cambon described the hills "as actors in the play, not just the scenery."<sup>94</sup> Maltby infamously claimed that the Canadians became very tired due to the difficult conditions.<sup>95</sup> As Sergeant George MacDonell of the Royal Rifles recalled, "the physical effort to climb these tangled, scrub-covered slopes, loaded down with weapons, water, and ammunition, was a major effort in itself. To do it all day and almost every day in the face of a determined, well-led enemy, who had to be killed to be evicted led to mind-numbing exhaustion." The threats posed by enemy action from grenades, machine guns, and mortar fire made these conditions worse. Even when the Japanese were driven back, MacDonell noted, the Canadian troops lacked water and food and had little ammunition to repel inevitable Japanese counterattacks.<sup>96</sup> Corrigan recalled the weight added by their armaments: "The going was pretty heavy as each man carried 250 rounds plus Brens and Bren ammunition and had had little rest and no food since the previous evening."<sup>97</sup> Despite the burden of equipment and the difficult terrain, the Canadians fought to the point of exhaustion. By the 19th, the Royal Rifles "had been doing continuous manning for over a week with no chance

---

<sup>93</sup> Carew, *The Fall of Hong Kong*, 164.

<sup>94</sup> Cambon, *Guest of Hirohito*, 120.

<sup>95</sup> Maltby, "Operations in Hong Kong," 701.

<sup>96</sup> George S. MacDonell, *One Soldier's Story 1939–1945: From the Fall of Hong Kong to the Defeat of Japan*, (Toronto: Dundurn Group, 2002), 74–75.

<sup>97</sup> Corrigan, *Diary Winnipeg Grenadiers*, 3.

to sleep but in weapon pits. Some would fall down in the roadway and go to sleep and it took several shakings to get them going again.”<sup>98</sup> Signalman Ray Squires noted that “they were very hungry as they had had no food for four days, and little if any sleep. Flesh, nerves, and blood simply cannot stand explosives for any continuous length of time.”<sup>99</sup> MacMillan remarked on the difficulty in keeping troops alert: “Poor devils, these sentries, they couldn’t help it if they fell asleep: they hadn’t had any rest for the past five days now and not much food either, and in spite of their finest efforts to keep awake, their eyelids mechanically closed.”<sup>100</sup> When retreating back to Palm Villa after capturing and then abandoning Notting Hill on the 20th, Cambon was grumbling when another soldier told him to stop complaining. Cambon credits this soldier, Rifleman William Barclay, with getting him back on track for “I had by now abandoned all hope of us coming out the winners. I knew what had happened to some of those already captured, and now was determined to try my best to go out with a bang, not a whimper.”<sup>101</sup> Beset by tough physical conditions and relentless Japanese attacks, one can understand why Canadian troops were exhausted.

### The Controversy at Stanley

The Canadians faced some of their most difficult fighting on and near the Stanley Peninsula. It was also the site of the most intense disagreement between British and Canadian commanders. Establishing the course of events definitively is difficult for various accounts portray the events in vastly different ways. The intensity created a decades-long fight in the historiography about the clash between Brigadier Cedric Wallis, commander of the East Brigade,

---

<sup>98</sup> DHH, file 593 (D3), Royal Rifles War Diary, 32.

<sup>99</sup> CWM, 20050094–002, Arthur Ray Squires, Diary, 3.

<sup>100</sup> CWM, MacMillan, Diary, 56.

<sup>101</sup> Cambon, *Guest of Hirohito*, 23.

and Lieutenant-Colonel William Home, commander of the Royal Rifles and the highest ranking Canadian after the deaths of Lawson and Hennessy.

Shortly after the Japanese landed on Hong Kong Island, the East Brigade withdrew toward the Stanley Peninsula, a retreat that took a toll on the Royal Rifles.<sup>102</sup> By the 21st, the unit, in the line for several days, was exhausted. Wallis recounted that Home had requested to speak to Governor Mark Young, as Home feared that further resistance would only squander Canadian lives. Wallis attempted to stop Home from talking to Young before he spoke with Maltby. Home, unable to contact either official, was finally convinced by his subordinates to get some sleep.<sup>103</sup> But such rest did not change Home's view that further resistance was futile. Major Evan Stewart of the HKVDC, also cognizant of the garrison's worsening predicament, noted on the 22nd that "there was a growing feeling among the rank and file that further resistance merely postponed the inevitable and was not worth the waste of life, though among the higher ranks it was well understood that every day, every hour, was of vital importance to the Empire war effort, and that we should fight it out to the bitter end."<sup>104</sup> Home tried to convince Wallis on the 23rd that further resistance was pointless. But Wallis appealed to Home's sense of patriotism by remarking that Canadian Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King was encouraging the garrison to fight on, while adding that no other British unit commander sought surrender. Wallis' appeal failed to change Home's mind about the garrison's ability to resist the Japanese attack.<sup>105</sup> Still, the Royal Rifles remained on the front line.

---

<sup>102</sup> Evan Stewart, *Record of the Actions of the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps in the Battle for Hong Kong December, 1941* (Hong Kong: Ye Olde Printerie, 1956), 31.

<sup>103</sup> TNA, WO 172/1686, East Infantry Brigade Hong Kong War Diary December 1941, 76–77.

<sup>104</sup> Stewart, *Record of the Actions of the HKVDC*, 47.

<sup>105</sup> TNA, WO 172/1686, East Brigade War Diary, 90.

Matters came to a head on 24 December. C.P. Stacey described the events of that day in a quite understated manner:

During the morning there was a discussion, apparently rather acrimonious, at Brigade Headquarters, which was now in the officers' mess at Stanley Prison. "No R.R.C. personnel had had any rest night or day for a period of 5 consecutive days," and the unit diary records that "Lt.-Col. Home insisted that the Battalion should be relieved otherwise he would not be responsible for what would happen.' There was still telephone communication with Fortress Headquarters, and after a conversation between Home and General Maltby it was decided that the unit would be relieved that night and go back to Stanley Fort, farther down the peninsula, to rest."<sup>106</sup>

While visiting the Royal Rifles Headquarters, Wallis "found the C.O., 2nd in C[ommand] & several senior Canadian officers. The atmosphere was sullen & I was informed that it was the considered opinion of all officers & the Bn as a whole that useless casualties were being caused by continuing to fight."<sup>107</sup> Wallis considered removing Home from command but instead withdrew the Royal Rifles to Stanley Fort away from the fighting. However, "Wallis also said he considered arresting or shooting Holme & making MajPrice (2nd in C[ommand] R. Rifles) in command. He had however refrained from doing so as he had come to the conclusion many officers would have required shooting—that it was in fact almost a bloodless mutiny."<sup>108</sup> Writer Oliver Lindsay has questioned Wallis' mindset for "it seems apparent from his reference to shooting Canadian officers that he must have become seriously mentally unbalanced."<sup>109</sup> In reporting the situation of the 24th to Maltby, Wallis stated that "I said that except for the RRC all were good heart & he need have no fears we should ever give up."<sup>110</sup> Describing the fighting

---

<sup>106</sup> Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 479.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>108</sup> TNA, WO 172/1686, East Brigade War Diary, Summary of Recommendations for Awards.

<sup>109</sup> Lindsay, *Hostage to Fortune*, 138.

<sup>110</sup> TNA, WO 172/1686, East Brigade War Diary, 92.

toward the battle's end, Wallis wrote that "it became even more apparent that the RRC were of little value having lost all morale and being badly led."<sup>111</sup>

Wallis was extremely critical of the Royal Rifles, almost to a ludicrous degree. He asserted that the Canadians' heavy battle dress hindered their ability to fight on hilly terrain and move quickly. Yet there is ample evidence that the Canadians were outfitted in summer uniforms. First, the *China Mail* had recorded that the Canadian troops were all wearing tropical uniforms when they arrived in the colony. Second, multiple communications from the War Office to National Defence Headquarters in Ottawa discussed the fact that "C" Force would need summer battle dress in Hong Kong.<sup>112</sup> Also, as many of the Canadians claimed to be cold and wet at night, obviously their battle dress was insufficient to keep the soldiers warm. Although such criticism demonstrates Wallis' desperate desire to find fault with the Canadians wherever possible, Maltby allowed such ludicrous claims to influence his Despatch. Originally, he wrote that "the Royal Rifles of Canada's positions on Sugar Loaf and Stanley Mound were precarious, the men exhausted from the unaccustomed hill climbing and from the wearing of heavy and unsuitable battle dress."<sup>113</sup> Clearly believing Wallis' account, Maltby stated that "for the events on Stanley Peninsula it is necessary to read the War Narrative of Commander East Infantry Bde."<sup>114</sup> Ultimately these claims were removed from the Despatch without any objection from Maltby, demonstrating the questionable nature of such allegations.

---

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 116.

<sup>112</sup> TNA, WO 106/2412, Telegram from Defensor Ottawa to CanMilitary, 10 October 1941. TNA, WO 106/2412, Hong Kong – Establishment of Infantry Battalions, 8 October 1941.

<sup>113</sup> LAC, DND fonds, RG24, volume 12752, file "The Hong Kong Operation", *Supplement to The London Gazette* Operations in Hong Kong, 8th to 25th December 1941 by Major-General C.M. Maltby 24 July 1946", page 22.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., page 25.

Canadian recollections of the events at Stanley differ greatly from Wallis' rendition. In a letter to Lieutenant-Colonel G.W.L. Nicholson of the Historical Branch of the Canadian Army, John H. Price asserted:

In my opinion Brig. Wallis' report is not to be relied upon. He was then in such a state of great nervous excitement and I believe his mental state was such that he was incapable of collected judgement or of efficient leadership. The insinuation in his report is that Brig. Home suggested a complete and final withdrawal of the Canadian force from the fighting. This is untrue and I so told General Maltby.<sup>115</sup>

As Price and Maltby resided in the same prisoner of war camp for a short time, Maltby could have used Price's recollection of events at Stanley. But he did not. Instead, noting only Wallis' recollections of these events, Maltby wrote that on 24 December "Brigadier Wallis assured me that Stanley Force were in good heart and that he was confident that if the enemy attacked his three lines of defence they would suffer heavily. He confirmed that he had enough food, water and ammunition, and I ordered him to fight on and not to surrender as long as these conditions prevailed."<sup>116</sup> While Price contended that a general surrender was discussed, a separate Canadian capitulation was not mentioned, nor did he believe that Home had asked to see Governor Young as the unit was cut off. As the deaths of Lawson and Hennessy made Home the senior Canadian, Price emphatically addressed Home's situation: "As such he inherited responsibilities which he took very seriously and which caused him great anxiety." Further, Price recalled that only he and Home had attended this meeting, contradicting Wallis' claim that several other officers were present.<sup>117</sup> The 24 December entry in the Royal Rifles war diary does not align with Wallis' version of events either:

B Coy "1600 hrs. (?) Coy. Comd. called to a Coy Comds'" meeting at Bn. H.Q. by O.C. Bn. (Brig. Wallis, INDIAN ARMY, C.O. EAST BDE. Was at the

---

<sup>115</sup> G.W.L. Nicholson and John H. Price, "The Controversy over Maltby's Hong Kong Dispatch," *Canadian Military History* 2, no. 2 (1993): 115–116.

<sup>116</sup> Maltby, "Operations in Hong Kong," 721–722.

<sup>117</sup> Nicholson and Price, "The Controversy over Maltby's Hong Kong Dispatch," 116.

conference) Orders were issued for the Bn. to be relieved of their present positions by H.K.V.D.C. Tps. and other Imperial Tps. The R.R.C. Tps. in the STANLEY VILLAGE AREA to withdraw to STANLEY FORT to reorganize and obtain some rest (no R.R.C. personnel had had any rest night or day for a period of 5 consecutive days).<sup>118</sup>

Price noted that the Royal Rifles were brought into the line after only six hours of rest.<sup>119</sup>

Despite Wallis' opinions of Canadian troops, they fought to the best of their abilities and circumstances in the area around Stanley. Canadians forced the Japanese off Bridge Hill on 22 December, one of the many times that the Canadians compelled Japanese troops to retreat. But the Japanese eventually retook the hill given a lack of available reinforcements.<sup>120</sup> The Canadians did not lack the will to act but were not properly supported. The Middlesex war diary judged the Canadians very unfavourably on 22 December. While the Middlesex, a machine gun battalion, manned the pillboxes and worked closely with Canadians on numerous occasions, that relationship became strained in the fighting near Stanley. A Japanese attack was described in the Middlesex war diary:

M.Gs. opened rapid fire dispersing them and forcing their withdrawal. This action by these guns was of course a normal M.G. fire task but it was obvious the Canadian Infantry were unaccustomed to this type of operation for many came running back accusing all and sundry of having fired into them. It must be remembered that these Canadians were raw material and were unaccustomed to this kind of fire. Whatever the results were the two mortars which had been harassing our troops ceased firing.<sup>121</sup>

As Canadian troops reputedly had left their positions to look for food and did not return for several hours, the war diarist recorded on 23 December that "the Canadians had lost heart."<sup>122</sup> As will be demonstrated below, this was not the case for all Canadians in the fight at Hong Kong.

---

<sup>118</sup> DHH, file 593 (D3), Royal Rifles War Diary, 54–55.

<sup>119</sup> Nicholson and Price, "The Controversy over Maltby's Hong Kong Dispatch," 116.

<sup>120</sup> Flanagan, *The Endless Battle*, 56–57.

<sup>121</sup> TNA, WO 172/1689, 1st Bn Middlesex Regiment (Hong Kong) War Diary 8–25 December 1941 Appendix 2D D Company, 3.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*



## “D” Company of the Royal Rifles’ Assault on Stanley Village

On Christmas Day 1941, “D” Company of the Royal Rifles was ordered to push the Japanese out of Stanley Village in a daylight attack. The assault on the high ground sought to protect the fortress headquarters by pushing the Japanese out of the village and the surrounding area. As previously discussed, counterattacks were necessary to defend the garrison’s positions. But by the 25<sup>th</sup>, the tactical usefulness had been out stripped by the collapse of the strategic situation. Wallis displayed that he had lost touch with the overall situation when he ordered the assault. While the strategic decision was based upon sound principles, the tactical decision was unwise.

Wallis’ decision has been criticized since his order was given. Vincent described that the assault, “...for idiotic futility, ranks with the Charge of the Light Brigade.”<sup>123</sup> Stacey provided a short account of the attack:

During the morning the Brigadier, finding that the Japanese had gained ground in the Stanley Village area and south of it, ordered the Royal Rifles to counter-attack. “D” Company delivered the attack without artillery support; the hills in the peninsula prevented the coastal batteries at its south end from firing into the area of the isthmus. The attack failed, and "D" Company lost 26 men killed and 75 wounded.<sup>124</sup>

Chronicling the attack in his account of the Royal Rifles, historian Grant Garneau laid the blame of the attack on Wallis for “the Commanding Officer [Home] ‘*protested against such an attack in daylight as most likely being unproductive of any results but additional Canadian casualties.*’

Brigadier Wallis insisted and “D” Company was ordered forward on this suicidal mission.”<sup>125</sup>

MacDonell, who was tasked with leading his platoon’s attack after all the officers had been

---

<sup>123</sup> Vincent, *No Reason Why*, 1.

<sup>124</sup> Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 479.

<sup>125</sup> Grant S. Garneau, *The Royal Rifles of Canada in Hong Kong, 1941–1945* (Carp, Ontario: Baird O’Keefe Publishing Inc., 2001), 84

killed or wounded, recalled thinking that “The sheer stupidity of the order to send us without artillery, mortar, or machine gun support into a village full of Japanese, in broad daylight, was not lost on me.”<sup>126</sup> Maltby, unable to communicate with the East Brigade Headquarters, did not mention this attack in his Despatch.<sup>127</sup>

The Japanese heavily outnumbered “D” Company. After the war, Price estimated that at least a brigade’s worth of Japanese soldiers had been in the Stanley area.<sup>128</sup> Rifleman Philip Doddridge recalled being told that there were only fifteen Japanese soldiers in the bungalows on the high ground at the edge of the village.<sup>129</sup> Other estimates ranged from a few hundred to over a thousand Japanese soldiers being present. Elliot estimated that “D” Company had about 130 men, MacDonell estimated 120.<sup>130</sup> While artillery support had been promised, no fire support materialized, and heavy machine gun fire also was absent.<sup>131</sup> Platoon 16 advanced on the right side along the coast while Platoons 17 and 18 attacked on the left through the cemetery.<sup>132</sup> The attack began at about 1330 hours from the Stanley Prison. Attacking on the right flank along the coast, Elliott recorded that:

When we were advancing we met English and Indian troops retreating said it was hopeless to try and take back village. They said there were thousands of enemy in village, guess they were right. Started across slope above village enemy spotted us and started shelling and firing rifles and machine guns some of the boys wounded by shrapnel. We went down ridge along shore and charged into the village were passing by boxes of T.N.T. bombs landed about five feet from it as we moved a little faster. Fighting every where. Bullets coming like hail.<sup>133</sup>

---

<sup>126</sup> MacDonell, *One Soldier’s Story*, 82.

<sup>127</sup> Maltby, “Operations in Hong Kong,” 723.

<sup>128</sup> DHH, file 593 (D26), Interview with Price, 1.

<sup>129</sup> “Memories Uninvited - The Battle,” Hong Kong Veterans Commemorative Association, accessed 8 October 2020, <https://www.hkvca.ca/memoriesuninvited/Chapter%206.php>.

<sup>130</sup> CWM, Elliott, Diary, 25 December. MacDonell, *One Soldier’s Story*, 84.

<sup>131</sup> DHH, file 593 (D26), Interview with Price, 1. DHH, file 593 (D3), Royal Rifles War Diary, 57.

<sup>132</sup> See Appendix.

<sup>133</sup> CWM, Elliott, Diary, 25 December.

Elliott witnessed a gruesome wound suffered during the attack as “Sgt Major Ebdon shot in chin jaw broken spit the bullet out of his mouth close call.”<sup>134</sup> Ebdon’s wound left him with a fractured jaw and eight missing teeth. Citing numerous casualties from the advance into the village, Elliott recalled the order to retreat was given at 1530 hours.<sup>135</sup>

Attacking on the left flank, MacDonell’s platoon, which assembled in a ditch beside the road that connected the fort to the village, came under enemy fire almost immediately. By advancing in short rushes and utilizing existing cover, the troops made it to the outer perimeter of the village with no casualties. MacDonell ordered his troops into a skirmish line and to fix bayonets. They charged into the graveyard, taking the enemy by surprise, overrunning them as “a confused and bloody melee of hand-to-hand fighting with bayonets then took place.” MacDonell entered the village after clearing Japanese troops out of the first row of houses with grenades. The Canadians moved further into the village, pouring fire into the Japanese troops advancing toward the bungalows. As the Japanese began to reorganize, they started inflicting Canadian casualties. MacDonell ordered his platoon to occupy positions in and around the line of houses they had cleared. Lieutenant Francis Power, commander of Platoon 17, was wounded, forcing MacDonell to take command of Power’s platoon too. Sergeant Lance Ross from Platoon 17 joined MacDonell at his position, using light machine guns to strafe the Japanese. According to Ross, Rifleman Joseph “Ed” Bujold threw grenades through the windows of the bungalow while the Japanese flanked their position by moving into the graveyard.<sup>136</sup>

A lull ensued as the Japanese regrouped for a counterattack. The men of “D” Company were running out of ammunition and had suffered several casualties. Their supply of water was

---

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> “Individual Report: E29977 Frank Ebdon,” Hong Kong Veterans Commemorative Association, accessed 8 October 2020, <https://www.hkvca.ca/cforcedata/indivreport/indivdetailed.php?regtno=E29977>.

<sup>136</sup> MacDonell, *One Soldier’s Story*, 82–84. “Memories Uninvited - The Battle.”

exhausted, a considerable problem in the scorching heat of Hong Kong. The lull proved short-lived for the Japanese attacked again after twenty minutes, this time with artillery support. With the Japanese threatening to encircle the Canadian position, MacDonell received an order to pull back to Stanley Fort. The men of both platoons were sent back in small parties as Ross and MacDonell covered them, but non-mobile wounded had to be left behind. Ross and MacDonell, providing cover for each other, were the last to leave the village. Doddridge recalled that his commander Major Maurice Parker cried as he counted the soldiers returning from the attack for the company had lost twenty–six killed and seventy–five wounded.<sup>137</sup> The members of “D” Company displayed remarkable discipline to attack an enemy on the high ground without protection. But bravery was not enough to take and hold this position.

But worse was to come as Canadians held their positions in anticipation of a Japanese attack expected to come later that day. As Flanagan noted in his diary on the last day of the battle, “Brigade headquarters shelled all day, counted 1008 shells. [Rifleman Ronald] Kinnie was killed at 1700 hours. At 2000 hours we were told that the Governor of Hong Kong had surrendered the island.”<sup>138</sup> Elliott had his mixed emotions upon hearing the news: “Cease fire was given at 7:30. I don’t know if I was glad or sorry it will be no fun becoming a Prisoner of war. We are all thinking tonight of the turkies you are having for Xmas back home.”<sup>139</sup> Time for reflection came after the garrison’s surrender. Historian Franco David Macri has quoted George MacDonell view’s that “No one disobeyed orders and MacDonell stated that there was, ‘no

---

<sup>137</sup> “Memories Uninvited - The Battle.” DHH, file 593 (D3), Royal Rifles War Diary, 57.

<sup>138</sup> Flanagan, *Endless Battle*, 58.

<sup>139</sup> CWM, Elliot, Diary, 25 December.

whining'. The men were prepared for the worst, and there was no discussion of surrender. He added that he 'never heard of any AWOL; not a single case of discipline.'"<sup>140</sup>

### Conclusion

In a deleted passage from his original Despatch, Maltby averred that if the Canadians had been "ably led, well trained and with time available, a very different story might have been recorded. It was unfortunate that troops in this state of training were despatched to an area where a crisis might develop at any moment."<sup>141</sup> Though Maltby's statement has a kernel of truth, it was surrounded by misinformation and prejudices. Furthermore, the Wallis-Home exchange is evidence of how national identity has clouded recollections of the fighting at Hong Kong. These examples are indicative of much of the literature about the Canadian role in the Battle of Hong Kong. Using Brathwaite's model, I contend that the Canadian performance during the battle was decidedly mixed, a conclusion rarely offered in the historiography about the battle. Though there was a will to fight, the Canadians lacked many necessary skills. The stand of "D" Company of the Grenadiers at the Wong Nei Chong Gap and the attack of Stanley Village by "D" Company of the Royal Rifles were proof of the Canadian will to fight even against incredible odds. The discussion of the breakdown of the Canadian leadership during the battle is a new contribution to the historiography of the fighting at Hong Kong. While Japanese shelling and bombing negatively affected Canadian morale, as Corrigan had shown, strong leadership could improve morale. There were some breaks in Canadian discipline, including drunkenness and the abandoning of positions which was also the result of the leadership breakdown. Despite these flaws, the scrutiny of "C" Force's fighting performance has been largely unfair. The Canadians

---

<sup>140</sup> Franco David Macri, "Canadians under Fire: C Force and the Battle of Hong Kong, December 1941," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Hong Kong Branch* 51 (2011): 249.

<sup>141</sup> LAC, DND fonds, RG24, volume 12752, file "The Hong Kong Operation", *Supplement to The London Gazette Operations in Hong Kong, 8th to 25th December 1941* by Major-General C.M. Maltby 24 July 1946, page 22.

fighting at Hong Kong did the best they could under the circumstances. While not supermen, neither were they terrible troops who caused the downfall of the colony. As H.P. McNaughton of the Grenadiers poetically recorded, the men of “C” Force endured at Hong Kong, “Out here they went to battle/And many met their God / As others kept on fighting / Against tremendous odds.”<sup>142</sup>

---

<sup>142</sup> McNaughton, *Shadow Lights of Sham Shui Po*, 42.

## PART II: MYTHMAKING AND ENTRENCHMENT

“In the Garden of Memory We Meet Every Day”<sup>1</sup>

—Tombstone of Sergeant David William Lumb, Royal Canadian Army Pay Corps, died in Hong Kong, September 1942

Writing about Canadian memories of the Second World War, historian Jonathan F. Vance has concluded that “social memory is all about the creation of a usable past, but in the two decades after 1945, Canadians did not have much need for the past. The present seemed all too good, and the future too promising, for people to want to take refuge in the war that had just ended. Nor did they show any great need to make sense of it.”<sup>2</sup> Creating the concept of a “usable past,” Van Wyck Brooks called for the manufactured past that would bind of American culture together for “the past is an inexhaustible storehouse of apt attitudes and adaptable ideals; it opens of itself at the touch of desire; it yields up, now this treasure, now that, to anyone who comes to it armed with a capacity for personal choices. If, then, we cannot use the past our professors offer us, is there any reason why we should not create others of our own?”<sup>3</sup> As applied by Vance, Canadians had no need to make a usable past out of the Second World War. Still, many historians, writers, and others have applied Brooks’ definition of the phrase to the Battle of Hong Kong to mold and distort events to fit a preconceived narrative. A usable past has informed the creation of many of the myths surrounding the battle. As such the next three chapters will examine how the battle’s legacy was created.

---

<sup>1</sup> “Sergeant David William Lumb” Commonwealth War Graves Commission,

<https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty-details/2221259/DAVID%20WILLIAM%20LUMB/>

<sup>2</sup> Jonathan F. Vance, “An Open Door to a Better Future: The Memory of Canada’s Second World War,” in *Canada and the Second World War: Essays in Honour of Terry Copp*, eds. Geoffrey Hayes, Mike Bechthold, and Matt Symes (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University, 2012), 475.

<sup>3</sup> Van Wyck Brooks, “On Creating a Usable Past,” *The Dial*, 11 April 1918, 339.

## CHAPTER 6

### AN ACT OF POLITICAL THEATRE: THE 1942 HONG KONG INQUIRY

The Hong Kong Inquiry was one of the earliest attempts to shape the legacy of the Battle of Hong Kong on a large scale. As many of the myths about the battle began with the Inquiry, its role must be fully understood to properly discuss the battle's legacy in Canada. While held in camera, the Inquiry received national attention. The Inquiry came to life, as Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King hoped that it would dispel concerns about the despatch and loss of "C" Force. However, individuals seeking to further specific personal and political goals greatly influenced the Inquiry. Also, the Inquiry became an exercise in passing blame for the despatching of Canadian troops to Hong Kong when Lyman Duff, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and the Inquiry head, absolved King's government of substantial blame, a finding that incited accusations of a government cover-up. Contemporary Conservatives plus future historians and authors alike labelled the Inquiry as a whitewash.<sup>1</sup> Such claims possess merit for the Inquiry was designed to make the Hong Kong episode disappear. As Canadian historian Gregory A. Johnson has concluded about the Inquiry's immediate aftermath, "the general consensus was that Hong Kong was an unforeseeable tragedy that was perhaps best forgotten."<sup>2</sup> There was little consensus, as many, including bombastic Ontario politician George Drew, made sure the battle would be remembered negatively. Interest in the Inquiry's findings and the battle itself dwindled during and after the war, only resurfacing briefly when controversies arose or

---

<sup>1</sup> Galen Roger Perras, "Defeat Still Cries Aloud for Explanation: Explaining C Force's Dispatch to Hong Kong," *Canadian Military Journal* 11, no. 4 (2011): 37. Carl Vincent is one such author in his work *No Reason Why: The Canadian Hong Kong Tragedy, An Examination* (Ottawa: Canada's Wings, 1981), 223.

<sup>2</sup> Gregory A. Johnson, "The Canadian experience of the Pacific War: Betrayal and Forgotten Captivity," in *Forgotten Captives in Japanese-Occupied Asia*, eds. Karl Hack and Kevin Blackburn (London: Routledge, 2008), 125.



when new information emerged. In this chapter I argue that the Inquiry gave life to many zombie myths, leaving an indelible mark on the legacy of the Battle of Hong Kong

### J.L. Ralston's Investigation into the Transportation Issues of "C" Force

Minister of National Defence J.L. Ralston launched an investigation within the Department of National Defence (DND) only a few days after Hong Kong's fall. Meetings were held on 1, 2, and 4 January 1942 to establish why the motor transport assigned to "C" Force had not been put aboard the ship that had carried the troops to Hong Kong.<sup>3</sup> Chief of the General Staff (CGS) General Kenneth Stuart, Major-General E.J.C. Schmidlin Quartermaster-General, Victor Sifton Master-General of the Ordnance, Colonel W.H.S. Macklin Director of Staff Duties, Lieutenant-Colonel E.H. Spearing Assistant Quartermaster-General (AQM) Movement Control, Captain E.D. James Director of Mechanization Branch, Lieutenant-Colonel R.J. Henderson Inspector of Ordnance Branch, and T.C. Lockwood and D.C. Connor from the Controller of Transport office all attended these meetings.<sup>4</sup>

From the very start of the investigation, Ralston focused on the Quartermaster-General's Branch, as "it was part of Q.M.G's. responsibility. On a troopship we should load whatever could be loaded. I think what happened was when we found that Motor Transport was so large it couldn't possibly all be loaded we took it on ourselves to ask Navy and Transport Controller for another freight ship and then put out of our minds sending anything on the first ship."<sup>5</sup> But when

---

<sup>3</sup> Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC), Royal Commission to Inquire into and Report upon the Organization, Authorization and Dispatch of the Canadian Expeditionary Force to the Crown Colony of Hong Kong fonds (hereafter Hong Kong Inquiry fonds), RG 33 120, volume 1, file "Volume 4 --- pp.297 to 398 Thursday March 9, 1942", page 324.

<sup>4</sup> Confusion reigned as Ralston asked questions several times, but he received no clear conclusions. Discussions centred around who knew about the limited amount of cargo space of the *Awatea*, the ship that took most of "C" Force. The attempts to fill the remaining space in the cargo holds with motor transport were also reviewed. LAC, J.L. Ralston fonds, MG 27 III BII, volume 67, file "Ralston, J.L. Diary 1941-44 (Incomplete)", 1,2, and 4 January 1942.

<sup>5</sup> LAC, Ralston fonds, MG 27 III BII, volume 69, file "Hong Kong Enquiry - memoranda of 3 discussions in Minister's Office, 1 January 1941", page 17.

Ralston, blaming Spearing, asked him if he would take responsibility for the vehicles, Spearing deflected the question.<sup>6</sup> When Ralston asked repeatedly about how Brigadier J.K. Lawson and others had wanted the ship to be filled, Spearing, claiming he had not known the name of the ship, could not have scheduled the motor transport, a bizarre assertion for Spearing had attended a 14 October 1941 meeting where the *Awatea* was identified as the ship that was move “C” Force. Made aware of this fact, Spearing alleged that he, sitting too far away when the relevant telegram had been introduced, did not hear the ship’s name.<sup>7</sup> But some doubted that the missing vehicles would have made a difference in Hong Kong. While Schmidlin commented twice on 1 January that the focus on the extra space was overblown for “the 10,000 feet [the estimated space] was nominal. It wouldn’t have taken more than eight or ten vehicles,” Ralston interjected that “somebody will say these vehicles might have been useful.”<sup>8</sup> Shortly thereafter, Schmidlin and Spearing were forcibly retired.<sup>9</sup>

Ralston delivered information about the Battle of Hong Kong to the House of Commons in January 1942. Admitting that the vehicles carried by *Don Jose* did not reach the colony, Ralston also noted that while twenty vehicles were to be put on the *Awatea*, they did not arrive at Vancouver’s port in time to be loaded. Ralston provided Parliament with considerable information about Hong Kong. Unwilling to cover up the details, Ralston admitted that 138 of “C” Force’s soldiers had not met the established standard of training time for overseas service. While another ten men’s records had not been given to him. Ralston also announced that an investigation was being made into why these undertrained men were taken on strength.<sup>10</sup> R.B.

---

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., pages 21, 24–25.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., “4 January 1942”, page 40.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., page 8.

<sup>9</sup> C.P. Stacey, *Six Years of War: The Army in Canada, Britain and the Pacific* (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 1955), 449.

<sup>10</sup> Canada, Parliament, *House of Commons Debates*, 19th Parl, 2nd Sess, Vol 4, (21 January 1942), 4471–4472.

Hanson, Leader of the Conservative Opposition, offered “no criticism at all of the government for having sent these two battalions to Hong Kong. If we are to be in a total war, and to undertake a total war effort, aside altogether from questions of prospective manpower, and methods by which that may be attained, we must expect to share in common with the other gallant soldier of the British empire, and of our democratic allies, the fortunes of war.” Still, while Hanson raised conscription, “that of course raises another difficult question, namely the whole question of reserve manpower, one which I do not propose to discuss in the house to-day. But I would remind the minister and the government that it is a very live issue throughout the country, and an issue which sooner or later parliament, the government and the individual membership of the house must face.”<sup>11</sup> In *The Globe and Mail*, journalist William Marchington claimed that Ralston’s speech was clearly a response to George Drew’s claims that untrained men had been sent to Hong Kong.<sup>12</sup> Questions about Hong Kong continued over many months, including some about the Quartermaster-General’s Branch. On 27 July 1942, Ralston claimed that personnel changes at DND Headquarters had been made, not just because of the vehicle issue, but because “the net result was that it appeared to me that the quartermaster-general’s branch had not realized its responsibility, and I did not want an occurrence of that kind to be repeated.”<sup>13</sup> While there were legitimate problems with the way the Quartermaster-General’s Branch had handled the vehicle issue, Schmidlin and Spearing’s dismissal demonstrated that a quick and simple solution had been sought for the “problem” of “C” Force’s failure at Hong Kong. However, this action did little to solve the problems facing King’s government.

---

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 4473- 4474.

<sup>12</sup> William Marchington, “Hong Kong Men Lacked Training, Troops Never Got Needed Vehicles,” *The Globe and Mail*, 22 January 1942, 1.

<sup>13</sup> Canada, Parliament, *House of Commons Debates*, 19th Parl, 3rd Sess, Vol 5, (27 July 1942), 4826.

## Beginnings of the Hong Kong Inquiry

Criticism by the Conservative opposition in Parliament in early 1942 prompted an official investigation on the Hong Kong reinforcement. King initially was unsure whether the Inquiry should be a Parliamentary one—he feared Opposition challenges—or a judicial Inquiry.<sup>14</sup> In his diary, King recorded Hanson’s concern that if a Parliamentary committee created the report, the Liberal majority would pass it with conclusions favourable to the government regardless of the actual findings.<sup>15</sup> On 4 February 1942, Hanson agreed to a judicial Inquiry if Lyman Duff was appointed commissioner.<sup>16</sup> Reluctant to agree due to his health, Duff accepted after King pressured him to do so. While lawyer and historian David Ricardo Williams has claimed that King wanted Duff to take on this role as a quid pro quo for extending Duff’s term as Chief Justice, King presented Duff’s decision as one of a duty to be done to support the nation and not “a matter of his either seeking to oblige the government or myself.”<sup>17</sup> Before the Inquiry began, Duff wrote that he was “rather immersed in preparations for my enquiry which is, of course, a nuisance.”<sup>18</sup> Clearly, Duff was unhappy to be involved in the process.

As historian Edward F. Bush has argued, “King first considered that a Parliamentary Inquiry would serve to defend his government against Drew’s charges, reflecting as they did on the cabinet’s competence and collective responsibility, but then decided that nothing short of a full scale Royal Commission would suffice to clear his government and satisfy the nation.”<sup>19</sup> Williams argued that “King saw the inquiry, however constituted, as a weapon with which to

---

<sup>14</sup> LAC, William Lyon Mackenzie King fonds, MG26-J13, Diary (hereafter King Diary), 27 January 1942, page 1.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 29 January 1942, page 1.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 4 February 1942, page 3.

<sup>17</sup> David Ricardo Williams, *Duff: A Life in the Law* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1984), 224. LAC, King Diary, 6 February 1942, page 2.

<sup>18</sup> LAC, Sir Lyman P. Duff fonds, MG 30 E 141, “General Correspondence” series, volume 2, file “Dafoe-Dysart”, letter from Lyman Duff to H.H. Davis, 16 February 1942, page 1.

<sup>19</sup> Edward F. Bush, “Sir Lyman Duff and the Hong Kong Inquiry,” *Dalhousie Review* 5 no. 2 (1972): 203.

fight the Tories on the dangerous conscription issue.”<sup>20</sup> King had other motivations for launching the Inquiry, notably shifting blame to others and clearing himself of any wrongdoing.

### George Drew and the Hong Kong Inquiry

George Drew loomed large over the Inquiry given his appointment as the Inquiry’s Opposition counsel in February 1942. King was certain that either Drew, leader of the Conservative Opposition in Ontario, or Arthur Meighen, a former Conservative Prime Minister, had pushed for the Inquiry.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, Hanson told Drew that he had requested the Inquiry on Meighen’s orders.<sup>22</sup> As King confided to his diary:

really is a help to us as it will show where the onus really lies, how ready we were to meet a British request, and will put the blame where it ought to be on those responsible for taking some men overseas who should not have gone. Instead of helping the Tories in their determination to have conscription at all costs, it is going to react against them. The public will see that our whole war effort being what it is, that mistake is being made in pressing matters so far. I hope the Defence Department will see the same.<sup>23</sup>

As King and Drew loathed each other, the Battle of Hong Kong’s legacy became entangled in their feud. King’s disdain for Drew was evident from his diary entries, as was his desire to seek good omens in the details of everyday life: “I was interested in noting the straight lines of the hands regarding Hong Kong when I complete reading at 11.25. That matter, I believe, will come out all right despite Drew being retained as Counsel for Hanson.”<sup>24</sup> Other Liberal Party members also despised Drew. A note made during a meeting of Liberal Members of Parliament to respond to criticism from the Opposition read that “since Drew is a public man, the final judge of his

---

<sup>20</sup> Williams, *Duff*, 223.

<sup>21</sup> LAC, King Diary, 22 January 1942, page 3.

<sup>22</sup> LAC, George Drew fonds, MG 32 C3, “Provincial Political Career” series, volume 68, file “Number 615” 13 July 1942 Letter from R.B Hanson to George Drew, page 1, microfilm reel M-8987.

<sup>23</sup> LAC, King Diary, 22 January 1942, page 3.

<sup>24</sup> LAC, King Diary, 22 February 1942, page 2.

conduct must be public opinion. Drew is a 5th Columnist, pro-German, anti-Russian, with Italian family connections.”<sup>25</sup>

Drew used the Inquiry as an opportunity to attack King. His intentions, revealed during his correspondence with Hanson, were clear. In a 26 January 1942 letter to Hanson, Drew wrote that “the mere fact that Mr. King immediately conceded the necessity for a public inquiry did more than anything else to convince the general public that the Government recognizes the seriousness of the blunders which took place.”<sup>26</sup> In a 5 March letter to Hanson, Drew accused the government of holding the Inquiry “in camera for their own protection.”<sup>27</sup> While Drew clearly believed he had caught King in a vulnerable position, the course of events shows this was not the case.

After the Inquiry, Drew, a 1 June 1942 letter to Hanson, claimed that “I undertook this task as a public service and, in accordance with my discussion with you, I declined to accept any fees, disbursements or travelling expenses in connection with my attendance before the Inquiry.” Certain that he was helping the Canadian people, Drew proclaimed that “the Inquiry, therefore, can be of the utmost public service and it is my hope that in dealing with the facts disclosed, the Report will lay the foundation for constructive reforms in the administrative control of our armed forces.”<sup>28</sup> Despite his claims, Drew’s motivations for participation were personal, and he was not sincere in wanting to help Canada’s military. Drew was merely motivated by politics and hatred. His motives remained the same as when he helped to produce the series of articles in the summer of 1941 for *The Globe* that assailed King’s handling of the war effort. Drew’s objectives were

---

<sup>25</sup> LAC, Department of National Defence fonds, R112, volume 37293, file “111.13 (D66) Misc Memorandum of Mr Ralston and Gen Foulkes re Hong Kong Enquiry 1941/48”, Notes on meeting of soldier members.

<sup>26</sup> LAC, Drew fonds, MG 32 C3, Provincial Political Career” series, volume 68, file “Number 615”, letter George Drew to R.B. Hanson, 26 January 1942. microfilm reel M-8987.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., letter from George Drew to R.B. Hanson, 5 March 1942.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., letter from George Drew to R.B. Hanson, 1 June 1942.

also apparent to some outside the Canadian government. After Duff's Report had been released, British High Commissioner to Canada Alexander Clutterbuck told the Dominions Office that Drew's support for the "enquiry originated in desire of Opposition to use Hong Kong disaster as stick with which to beat Government over conscription issue."<sup>29</sup>

### The Inquiry

As Commissioner of the Inquiry, Duff had:

to enquire into and report upon the organization, authorization and dispatch of the Canadian Expeditionary Force and, without restricting the generality of the foregoing, the selection and composition of the Force and the training of the personnel thereof; the provision and maintenance of supplies, equipment and ammunition and of the transportation therefor; and as to whether there occurred any dereliction of duty or error in judgment on the part of any of the personnel of any of the departments of the Government whose duty it was to arrange for the authorization, organization and dispatch of the said Expeditionary Force resulting in detriment or injury to the expedition or to the troops comprising the Expeditionary Force and if so what such dereliction or error was and who was responsible therefor.<sup>30</sup>

Lawyers R. L. Kellock and R. M. Fowler were appointed to prepare and present all relevant evidence, W. Kenneth Campbell was made Secretary of the Commission. Several reporters were hired by the counsels and Duff to take notes and review the proceedings. George Campbell was appointed as counsel for the Commission, Drew represented the Opposition. Ultimately, the responsibility for the Inquiry rested with Duff. While numerous counsels aided him, "these gentlemen were present merely to assist me. Counsel for the Commission, therefore, felt it their duty, as it was their duty, to probe in every direction for the purpose of getting the facts; and in

---

<sup>29</sup> The National Archives, DO 35/1009/5, Telegram from High Commission in Canada to Dominion Office, 6 June 1942, 2.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

this process a mass of oral evidence and of documents was placed before me. This resulted in lengthy hearings, but it was unavoidable and indispensable to a thorough investigation.”<sup>31</sup>

The Inquiry started with the questioning of individuals on 2 March 1942, a process that lasted until the 31st. Many witnesses appeared, including Ralston; General Andrew McNaughton, commanding Canadian troops in Britain; former Acting Corporal Wilfrid Middleton, a deserter from the Winnipeg Grenadiers; and those responsible for loading the *Awatea*. Over 300 exhibits were filed, over “2,288 typewritten pages” ranging from correspondence, ship manifests, training reports, meeting minutes, and battlefield updates. For obvious reasons, there was no testimony or documentation from anyone who fought in the battle, a problem for Duff as he sought to determine how “C” Force had been trained.<sup>32</sup> Only statements from former commanding officers and soldiers were presented as evidence. Displeased that the Cabinet War Committee’s meeting minutes were excluded at the government’s request, Drew informed Hanson that “I do not believe it is possible for the Commissioner to make a finding in regard to the individual responsibility of members of the Government.”<sup>33</sup> Even with all of this evidence, Duff’s biases, which will be discussed below, influenced his decision.

### Duff’s Report

Duff delivered his report on 4 June 1942. It had two parts, the report itself, plus an appendix expanding upon the Commission’s findings. As to whether Canada should have accepted Britain’s September 1941 request for troops, Duff absolved the government of any wrongdoing: “It would perhaps be a possible view that the propriety of this decision by the

---

<sup>31</sup> Lyman P. Duff, *Report on the Canadian Expeditionary Force to the Crown Colony of Hong Kong* (Ottawa: King’s Printer, 1942), 11.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 12, 22.

<sup>33</sup> LAC, Drew fonds, MG 32 C3, “Provincial Political Career” series, volume 68, file “Number 615”, letter from George Drew to R.B. Hanson, 1 June 1942, page 1, microfilm reel M-8987.



Government is exclusively [a] matter for consideration and discussion by Parliament. Since, however, I am required to pass upon the question, it is my duty to say that I have no doubt the course taken by the Government was the only course open to them in the circumstances.”<sup>34</sup> As for General Harry Crerar’s part in the decision-making process, the matter was muddled by Crerar’s inability to attend the Inquiry in person. According to Crerar’s telegram, “I desire it to be understood that my personal desire is to appear before judicial enquiry as I have no wish to avoid any responsibilities in connection with Hong Kong contingent which are mine.”

Arrangements were being made to have Crerar come back to Canada on 14 February 1942, but the plan was cancelled.<sup>35</sup> Duff relied on Crerar’s written answers about the training of “C” Force units plus conversations Crerar had with others to make his pronouncement. As Crerar believed that he had made the right decision to recommend “C” Force’s despatch,<sup>36</sup> Duff concluded that “the evidence...satisfies me that General Crerar’s recommendation was made upon sound grounds and that he is not chargeable with any error in judgment, still less with any dereliction of duty in relation to it.”<sup>37</sup> Duff also exonerated Crerar for selecting the Royal Rifles of Canada and Winnipeg Grenadiers as “I can perceive no ground upon which the propriety of his decision to accept the advice of his professional adviser can be justly criticized.”<sup>38</sup>

As for the training levels of the extra men added to “C” Force’s units, the Chief Justice “found that the inclusion of this small percentage of men was not the result of any shortage of fully trained men in Canada. It arose from the necessity of obtaining the men with great speed

---

<sup>34</sup> Duff, *Report on Hong Kong*, 4.

<sup>35</sup> LAC, H.D.G. Crerar fonds, MG30 E157, volume 1, file “958C.009 (D55) GOC File 5–0–25 ‘C’ Force Canadian Army Feb 42-Jun 42 – Hong Kong Enquiry. Papers and Questionnaires Pertaining to Hong Kong Expedition”, telegram From H.D.G. Crerar to J.L. Ralston, 12 February 1942, page 1.

<sup>36</sup> LAC, Crerar fonds, MG30 E157, volume 1, file “‘C’ Force Canadian Army Feb 42-Jun 42 -- Hong Kong Inquiry. Papers and Questionnaires pertaining to Hong Kong Expedition, Questions Suggested by Mr. Kellock K.C. and the Answers thereto by Lieutenant-General H.D.G. Crerar D.S.O.”, Answer to Question 5, 3, 1.

<sup>37</sup> Duff, *Report on Hong Kong*, 5.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

and secrecy and the impracticability in the time available of selecting them from a larger number of training centres.”<sup>39</sup> Duff also concluded that it was not unfair that these extra men had been added to “C” Force.<sup>40</sup> Duff noted that if weapons shortages were reason enough for the Royal Rifles or Grenadiers to be excluded from going to Hong Kong, then no battalions in Canada could have been chosen.<sup>41</sup>

Duff only faulted the Quartermaster-General’s Branch for it could have done more to ensure that “C” Force’s transport had arrived at Vancouver in time to be loaded onto the *Awatea*. But while Duff criticized Spearing for lacking the energy required in wartime, he ruled that the troops had not suffered from a lack of transportation during the battle. To justify this claim, a large part of the appendix was devoted to examining the extra space on the *Awatea*. Duff concluded that while bureaucratic bungling was at fault, ultimately, the effect of the lack of motor transport on “C” Force could not be known, a contradictory conclusion that demonstrated the Inquiry’s true goal was to avoid blaming King’s government.<sup>42</sup> The conclusion that Canadian troops did not suffer from lack of transport deviated from the evidence presented at the Inquiry. For example, a telegram from Hong Kong sent to National Defence Headquarters (NDHQ) in Ottawa on 13 December 1941 stated that nearly all carriers and all armoured cars had been evacuated from the mainland to the island, demonstrating their importance to the garrison.<sup>43</sup> NDHQ was informed the following day that “Chinese labour situation grave and majority of mechanical transport drivers deserted.”<sup>44</sup> These desertions severely hampered the transportation

---

<sup>39</sup> Duff, *Report on Hong Kong*, 7.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 8, 4, 5.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 8, 58.

<sup>43</sup> LAC, Hong Kong Inquiry fonds, RG 33 120, volume 2, file “Exhibits #101–125 #125–179”, exhibit 132 telegram from Fervour to Defensor, 13 December 1941.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, exhibit 133 telegram from Fervour Hong Kong to National Defence Headquarters, Ottawa, 14 December 1941, page 2.

plans that relied on local Chinese labour, as there were not enough drivers from the garrison to assume such roles. A telegram from the 22nd read “water and transport situation critical.”<sup>45</sup> Another telegram from 24 December asserted “troops now very tired. Water and transport situation still very grave.”<sup>46</sup> Duff clearly had ignored this evidence when he concluded that the lack of transportation had not hurt the Canadian troops. Indeed, blaming the Quartermaster-General’s Branch was Duff’s easiest option as Ralston had made changes in the Branch in January 1942.

Duff also blamed Britain for the intelligence failure at Hong Kong because “the Canadian Government, having no sources of its own of military information in the Far East, naturally and necessarily relied upon the Government of the United Kingdom for advice as to the military and diplomatic situation there.”<sup>47</sup> As we have seen in Chapter 3, this was not the case. Historian Edward F. Bush has argued that “Duff’s Report contended that Canada had no contacts in the Orient, and so was utterly dependent on British intelligence, from which no forewarnings had come concerning the imminence of war in the Far East. This defence really amounted, in essence, to laying the blame at Britain’s door, on the premise that the colony was indefensible.”<sup>48</sup> While Duff helped to deflect blame for Hong Kong, he made important points about the decision to reinforce that stand the test of hindsight. The maintenance of peace, while it failed, was worth seeking:

But these events of December cannot, of course, invalidate the grounds of the decision of the Canadian Government in September to accept a share of the responsibility for strengthening the garrisons of the Pacific, as Australia had accepted a share in strengthening the forces at Singapore: that the despatch to Hong Kong of a reinforcement of one or two battalions would increase the

---

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., exhibit 129 telegram from Admiralty to N.D.H.Q., 22 December 1941, page 2.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., exhibit 140 telegram from Troopers, War Office, London England to National Defence Headquarters, Ottawa, 24 December 1941, page 2.

<sup>47</sup> Duff, *Report on Hong Kong*, 16.

<sup>48</sup> Bush, “Sir Lyman Duff and the Hong Kong Inquiry,” 204–205.

strength of the garrison out of all proportion to the numbers of the reinforcements; that it would have a powerful moral influence on the whole of the Far East and thereby might have a sensible effect in maintaining peace; would reassure the Chinese as to the British intention to hold Hong Kong; would give fresh evidence of the solidarity of the British Commonwealth; that to gain time was all important.

Duff offered a conclusion that still holds true today: “Statesmen and soldiers can properly be held accountable for a reasonably capable practical judgement as to such probabilities, but not on the assumption that they must have had anterior knowledge of subsequent events.”<sup>49</sup> Despite the many issues with Duff’s handling of the Inquiry, he offered prudent insights about the vital importance of context.

### Duff’s Legacy

Like much else surrounding the Battle of Hong Kong, Lyman Duff’s legacy was negatively influenced by his participation. However, unlike numerous other individuals, Duff’s tarnishing was well deserved for Duff’s findings were deliberately biased for he arrived at his conclusions due to his support for King and his dislike of Drew. Writing to Drew before the release of Duff’s Report, Hanson—displaying a naiveté about Duff and the government’s power over him—did “not believe the Chief Justice would be influenced by them but he may have been after an examination of some of the documents.”<sup>50</sup> Williams claimed that Duff’s political affiliation made him biased. Initially appointed to the Supreme Court by Liberal Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier in 1906, Duff was chosen to be Chief Justice of the Supreme Court by Conservative Prime Minister R.B. Bennett in early 1933.<sup>51</sup> For many years, Duff’s political affiliation was listed in *Who’s Who* as Liberal. Williams has argued that King chose Duff because of his support of the Liberal Party. Duff coordinated with both King and Ralston to

---

<sup>49</sup> Duff, *Report on Hong Kong*, 17,18.

<sup>50</sup> LAC, Drew fonds, MG 32 C3, “Provincial Political Career” series, volume 68, file “Number 615”, letter from R.B. Hanson to George, 7 March 1942, page 1, microfilm reel M-8987.

<sup>51</sup> Williams, *Duff*, 66, 160–161.

choose his counsel, a highly partisan action. As Williams has highlighted, “In a real sense, it was the government and the army that were on trial, and for a judge to consult one of the accused before appointing counsel for the prosecution is nothing short of extraordinary. King had not misplaced his confidence. The explanation, of course, was that Duff was not impartial, something that King realized full well.” Finally, Williams concluded that while Duff’s political views did not influence his Supreme Court decisions, they did so during the Hong Kong Inquiry.<sup>52</sup> Kenneth Campbell, Duff’s private secretary for several years, was “certain that the report, which completely exonerated the government from any blame in the unfortunate affair, represented Sir Lyman’s unbiased appreciation of all of the evidence presented to him.”<sup>53</sup> Of course, such a statement must be viewed critically given the close relationship between Campbell and Duff.

Duff’s dislike of Drew also played a role in his report. Drew and Duff had many sharp exchanges given Drew’s displeasure with Duff’s procedural choices. For example, when Drew asked General Kenneth Stuart about the cables that had been included as exhibits, Duff chastised Drew for wasting time with such a question. Rejoining that the process being followed was wasting time, Drew asked Stuart the same question. But after Stuart answered that there was no way for him to know that, Duff responded that that answer was to be expected.<sup>54</sup> On 12 June King recorded that Duff privately spoke ill of Drew’s behaviour during the Inquiry and revealed that he had shown great restraint by not having Drew removed from the courtroom.<sup>55</sup> On 8 April

---

<sup>52</sup> Williams, *Duff*, 225, 245.

<sup>53</sup> W. Kenneth Campbell, “The Right Honourable Sir Lyman Poore Duff, P.C., G.C.M.G.: The Man as I Knew Him,” *Osgoode Hall Law Journal* 12, no. 2 (1974): 255.

<sup>54</sup> LAC, Hong Kong Inquiry fonds, RG 33 120, volume 1, file “Proceedings of Royal Commission Appointed under Part I of the Inquiries Act, Chapter 99, of the Revised Statutes of Canada, 1927, to Inquire into and report upon the Organization, Authorization and Dispatch of the Canadian Expeditionary Force to the Crown Colony of Hong Kong”, pages 236–241.

<sup>55</sup> LAC, King Diary, 12 June 1942, page 8.

1942, King recorded that Duff had his mind made up about how to complete his Hong Kong report before the counsels made their oral arguments.<sup>56</sup> While Duff's supporters have praised his ability to remain impartial, the evidence does not support this conclusion. In fact, displaying disinterest in the Inquiry, Duff had wanted to finish the matter as soon as possible. As a result of his apathy, the legacy of the Battle of Hong Kong was negatively influenced for Duff's summary report left the government vulnerable to allegations of a cover-up.

As Bush has remarked, "never perhaps in our history have the findings of a Royal Commission come under such fire as have those of Sir Lyman Duff on the ill-fated Hong Kong expedition." Duff's legacy was damaged by the Inquiry. As Bush lamented, "it was undoubtedly a pity that the Chief Justice was fated to be enmeshed in this maelstrom of an issue so very near the end of his illustrious career. He complained to the Prime Minister that the Toronto *Globe & Mail* and C.B.C. Radio had cast reflections on his integrity, a radio commentator having observed that it looked as if Drew had been right after all."<sup>57</sup> As Bush concluded, "the tangled and contentious Hong Kong inquiry was the one blot on an otherwise brilliant career; nonetheless, government responsibility for the dispatch of half-trained troops, and evasiveness thereafter in its justification, merit as much criticism as the effort of the Chief Justice, if such it was, to defend its conduct."<sup>58</sup> But Williams, taking a middle course, wrote that Duff was personally affected by "Drew's charges and the persistent coverage they received made any reference to the Hong Kong affair painful to Duff for as long as he lived."<sup>59</sup> Williams contended that it is difficult to reach one conclusion about Duff: "To chronicle the contradictions is to

---

<sup>56</sup> LAC, King Diary, 8 April 1942, page 1. The final exchange of oral arguments was on 22 May. LAC, Drew fonds, MG 32 C3, "Provincial Political Career" series, volume 427, file "no. 28, Hong Kong Inquiry 1942", letter from George Drew to W.L.M. King, 11 July 1942, page 29, microfilm reel M-9045.

<sup>57</sup> Bush, "Sir Lyman Duff and the Hong Kong Inquiry," 208, 209.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 211.

<sup>59</sup> Williams, *Duff*, 239.

wonder whether in his the case the appearance was reality.” Williams found that Duff “professed to be impartial, but he could not always submerge his political loyalties.”<sup>60</sup> The Hong Kong Inquiry was one clear example of Duff’s inability to put aside his political views. Canadian legal historian Blake Brown has offered a stark conclusion about Duff’s legacy: “Critics have also pointed to Duff’s alcoholism, his alleged partiality in the Hong Kong inquiry, and the Supreme Court’s racist judgments regarding Canadians of Chinese and African descent during his tenure.”<sup>61</sup> While Duff is best known for gaining legal independence for Canada from Britain, his politically motivated conclusions about Hong Kong tainted his legacy.<sup>62</sup>

#### Charges against George Drew

As Clutterbuck told the Dominions Office, “in view of decisive terms of report I find it hard to think that Hong Kong disaster can yield much further political capital for Opposition.”<sup>63</sup> But some of the Opposition’s political capital was created when King’s government charged George Drew on 3 July 1942 for unlawfully making “a statement or reference with respect to the Report of the Crown Colony of Hong Kong likely to prejudice the recruiting of His Majesty’s Forces, contrary to the Defence of Canada Regulations...”<sup>64</sup> The charges stemmed from Drew’s public assertion on 5 June 1942 that Duff was ignoring evidence and reaching conclusions without evidence, and that the proceedings were held in camera to allow Duff to reach the conclusions desired by King’s government. Drew also wanted the various telegrams sent to Canada by Britain about the Hong Kong reinforcement to be released, a request that had been

---

<sup>60</sup> Williams, *Duff*, 278.

<sup>61</sup> R. Blake Brown, “The Supreme Court of Canada and Judicial Legitimacy: The Rise and Fall of Chief Justice Lyman Poore Duff” *McGill Law Journal* (2002): 591.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 274

<sup>63</sup> TNA, DO 35/1009/5, Telegram from High Commission in Canada to Dominion Office, 6 June 1942, 2.

<sup>64</sup> LAC, Drew fonds, MG 32 C3, “Provincial Political Career” series, volume 427, file “Number 26 Drew, G.A., Prosecution re Hong Kong 1942”, page 1–2, microfilm reel M-9045.

refused on the grounds that Britain would not grant permission.<sup>65</sup> On 2 July 1942, King confided in his diary that there were nefarious motivations behind the charges:

Also, question of considering whether it was wise to proceed with prosecution against Drew. A good many feel a mistake has been made. [Minister of Justice Louis] St. Laurent, however, seemed to take the suggestion much to heart. He felt that any action by the government would be, so far as he was concerned, a spanking in public. He pointed out that an effort was being made to link the Drew matter with that he had said in the H. of C. and to find a way to get him out of the government, as the same forces were always trying to do with me. It is clear that he preferred to have the prosecution proceed. I confess I was surprised how much he took the matter to heart, but it is clear the injustice of the criticism of the press has gotten a little under his skin.<sup>66</sup>

The charges were subsequently dropped on 10 July 1942 when Crown prosecutor D.L. McCarthy contended that the release of Duff's Report compromised the standard of law that required silence about ongoing cases.<sup>67</sup> Told by Louis St. Laurent that the charges were withdrawn, King was "greatly relieved that the Drew charge is being withdrawn, not because it is not thoroughly desirable but we would not get justice and the whole position would be reverted."<sup>68</sup> King's desire to see Drew charged and then his support for a quick reversal highlights that these charges were intended to scare Drew, a politically motivated misuse of the criminal justice system by King.

Responding to these charges, Drew wrote two letters to King, on 11 and 16 July 1942, expressing his disagreement with Duff's conclusions. King recorded his disgust with Drew's letters:

Then read a letter received during the day from Colonel Drew, of Toronto, regarding the Hong Kong enquiry, a perfectly appalling communication attacking the Chief Justice, insinuating he had used part of the evidence and concealed other parts in order to make a finding which was not in accordance with the facts. All kinds of extreme language charging St. Laurent with using mounted police in a

---

<sup>65</sup> LAC, William Lyon Mackenzie King fonds, MG 26 J4, "Memoranda and Notes, 1940-1950" series, volume 268, file "2684", page C184427, microfilm reel H-1490.

<sup>66</sup> LAC, King Diary, 2 July 1942, page 1.

<sup>67</sup> LAC, King fonds, MG 26 J4, "Memoranda and Notes, 1940-1950" series, volume 268, file "2684", page C184426-C184430, microfilm reel H-1490.

<sup>68</sup> LAC, King Diary, 10 July 1942, page 1.



manner which was prostituting the force, etc. I have never read a more extreme or dangerous type of letter.<sup>69</sup>

Although Drew released his long letter of the 11th to the press, censors blocked its publication.<sup>70</sup>

Explaining his motivations for taking part in the Inquiry to R.B. Hanson on 11 July, Drew alleged “I also believe that in view of the fact that this was a public Inquiry and that in effect I was counsel for the public, it is my duty to make the facts available to the other parties in the Opposition.” Drew rejected claims that his letters contained any information that might aid the enemy: “The truth is that any evidence that was really secret was kept from the Inquiry.”<sup>71</sup> But as Drew had made his leader’s political position difficult, Hanson gave Drew a dressing down for giving information to M.J. Coldwell, leader of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, and John Horne Blackmore, head of the Social Credit Party. As Hanson wrote, “you will allow me to say that you did not represent the public. You were appointed by the Chief Justice on my nomination and you represented me, as the one asking for the inquiry—not the public. Necessarily, you put forward the point of view of the public but that is quite another thing from saying that you represented the public.”<sup>72</sup> This exchange demonstrated that the Conservative Party, far from acting in good faith to better the Canadian Army, desired only to attack King.

Drew’s letters repeated many of the same arguments that he had made during the Inquiry. In his 11 July letter, Drew stated, “In the meantime Mr. St. Laurent started the proceedings against me which were withdrawn only yesterday. It is not the purpose of this letter to discuss his attempt to suppress the truth by imitating the methods of the Gestapo but the course he followed

---

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 13 July 1942, 1–2.

<sup>70</sup> J.L. Granatstein, *The Politics of Survival: The Conservative Party of Canada, 1939–1945* (Toronto: University of Press, 1970), 122.

<sup>71</sup> LAC, Drew fonds, MG 32 C3, “Provincial Political Career” series, volume 68, file “Number 615”, 11 July 1942 Letter from George Drew to R.B. Hanson, page 1, microfilm reel M-8987.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 13 July 1942 Letter from R.B. Hanson to George Drew, page 1.

in my own case throws new light on his earlier conduct which was one of the reasons why I though it was my duty to write to you.” Drew claimed that keeping this information secret would only help the enemy as the Canadian public must know about the state of their armed forces.<sup>73</sup> Drew claimed “it is the future, not the past, with which we must now be concerned. It should have been the object of the Commission to point the way to more effective direction of our military effort. That object has been disregarded.” Drew believed the report to be a fraud.<sup>74</sup>

Drew conceded that some did not desire more discussions on Hong Kong in order to reduce the soldier’s families’ suffering. But he did not believe “the families of the gallant men who went to Hong Kong would wish to have a single fact withheld which could be of use in correcting conditions which otherwise might cause unnecessary grief to the families of other young men....”<sup>75</sup> Spending much of the letter objecting to parts of Duff’s Report, Drew also discussed the intricacies of the various weapons used by “C” Force, the lack of vehicles, and the events that led to the Canadian despatch of troops to Hong Kong. Drew was particularly focused on a telegram from 24 October 1941 that supposedly “stated in explicit terms that the time had come to reckon with the possibility of an early attack” by Japan.<sup>76</sup> But the telegram in question did not provide the information that Drew claimed. Instead, it detailed a fall of the Japanese government and stated that “the Washington conversations and the conduct of affairs has been put into extremist hands.” There was concern of an attack on Thailand or the Soviet Union “in the fairly new future.” It was recommended that economic sanctions against Japan continue and that the United States be left to continue its talks with Japan in the hopes of avoiding war in the

---

<sup>73</sup> LAC, Drew fonds, MG 32 C3, “Provincial Political Career” series, volume 427, file “Number 28”, letter from George Drew to W.L.M. King, 11 July 1942, page 1, microfilm reel M-9045.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, page 4.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, pages 3–4.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, page 10.

Pacific.<sup>77</sup> However, official Canadian Army historian C.P. Stacey disagreed with Drew, for “the documents were far from creditable to British Intelligence, but they did nothing to support Mr. Drew’s overheated imaginings...”<sup>78</sup>

Drew castigated King for “C” Force’s October 1941 departure for “there should, therefore, be no delay in correcting the wholly unjust and utterly unwarranted impression conveyed by the Commissioner’s Report that the Canadian Government, having relied upon the Government of Great Britain, received no warning of the impending danger...”<sup>79</sup> Drew concluded his letter by asserting:

I wish to refer to the strange suggestion that there is something improper about criticism of this Report... This is the report of a Commissioner and his report is entitled to no special respect simply because the Commissioner on other occasions occupies a judicial position. But even if it were the finding of a judge sitting as a judge, I need hardly point out that British jurisprudence has never accepted the doctrine of judicial infallibility.

Despite the charges against him, Drew did not intend to stop his criticism or restrain his comments simply because Chief Justice Duff presided over the Inquiry.<sup>80</sup> Drew made clear that he would criticize the government moving forward, wielding Duff’s Report as a new weapon in his arsenal.

The issue of the 24 October telegram formed the basis of Drew’s 16 July letter to King. Drew believed that the change of Japan’s government on 16 October 1941 had constituted a “warning of war,” and “there could be nothing to excuse the government of Canada or the senior officers, if they took no steps to review the situation, in the light of that completely changed

---

<sup>77</sup> LAC, Department of External Affairs fonds, RG 25 volume 5769, file “Canadian Garrison Force-Hong Kong”, telegram from the Dominions Office to the Governments of Canada, The Commonwealth of Australia, New Zealand, and to the United Kingdom High Commissioner in the Union of South Africa, 24 October 1941 page 1–2.

<sup>78</sup> C.P. Stacey, *A Date with History: Memoirs of a Canadian Historian* (Ottawa: Deneau Publishers, 1983), 201.

<sup>79</sup> LAC, Drew fonds, MG 32 C3, “Provincial Political Career” series, volume 427, file “Number 28”, letter from George Drew to W.L.M. King, 11 July 1942, page 11, microfilm reel M-9045.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, page 31.

situation.”<sup>81</sup> Drew was convinced King had erred by ignoring the warning and that “It would offend every principle of decency, of justice, and of common sense, if the existence of a message which gave clear and explicit warning, were to be hidden under a veil of secrecy when its disclosure is absolutely necessary if there is to be any clear understanding of what took place.”<sup>82</sup> Calling the whole Inquiry into question given the early war warning message, Drew charged that “it is time to take off this veil and colour of words which make a show of being something, but which in fact are nothing.”<sup>83</sup> Duff had wanted to include a portion of the 19 September request but the British government denied permission.<sup>84</sup> However, Drew’s attempt to influence King failed. By the end of July 1942, King hoped that the Hong Kong Inquiry was complete and “from now on, emphasis should and will be placed on the heroism of our men.”<sup>85</sup> Drew may have sincerely desired to expose the truth about Hong Kong in order to help the Canadian war effort. But as a hypocritical man, Drew’s claims ring hollow for he used “C” Force’s fate to score political points.

### Press Reaction to the Inquiry

The Canadian press’s reaction to the Hong Kong Inquiry was mixed for attacks upon King and defences of Drew abounded. The press coverage of the Inquiry played a crucial early role in forming impressions of the Inquiry and therefore influencing the battle’s legacy. The charges against Drew resulted in the propagation of zombie myths about Hong Kong taking root in the Canadian collective memory of the battle. Initially, the press praised the Inquiry. King was applauded by an editorial in *The Globe and Mail* for his decision to make the Inquiry a judicial

---

<sup>81</sup> LAC, Drew fonds, MG 32 C3, “Provincial Political Career” series, volume 427, file “Number 28”, Letter from George Drew to W.L.M. King, page 2, 16 July 1942, microfilm reel M-9045.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., page 3.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., page 4.

<sup>84</sup> TNA, CAB 21 2686, Letter from Eric Machtig to Norman Brook, 7 February 1948, 4.

<sup>85</sup> LAC, King Diary, 29 July 1942, page 1.

and not a parliamentary process: “The proceedings of such a committee, in which there would have been a partisan majority, could scarcely have failed to produce a series of unpleasant wrangles and evolve an unsatisfactory report.” The decision to have both the government and the opposition represented by counsel was commended as it “...indicates creditable determination to court the fullest possible inquiry.” Moreover, “By arranging for a judicial inquiry Mr. King has chosen the best method of allaying this disquietude [from the Canadian public], and it is also the method fairest to the Ministers and military chiefs whose reputations are involved. His decision should have the approval of all parties and of the whole Canadian people.”<sup>86</sup> *The Manitoban*, the University of Manitoba newspaper, used the Inquiry to raise questions about Royal Commissions more generally and to back them for they were educational for students.<sup>87</sup>

Once Duff’s Report was issued and the charges against Drew filed, opinion turned against King and his government. A 22 July 1942 *Georgetown Herald* editorial directed at the government’s treatment of George Drew opined that “we are not well enough versed in the technicalities of politics to appreciate whether or not Colonel Drew was legally correct in wishing to reveal certain aspects of the Hong Kong investigation, but we do know that the way in which our government has handled the whole affair must be providing many a juicy morsel for digestion in the Nazi propaganda machine.” The editors questioned the decision to charge Drew as he had much sympathy in the court of public opinion. Thus, the quick dropping of charges without allowing Drew to speak to the accusations “most certainly carries with it the implication that the whole prosecution was a blunder. The face of our government must have been very red.”<sup>88</sup> But King also received sympathy for the Drew situation. *La Gazette du Nord* based in

---

<sup>86</sup> “A Wise Decision,” *The Globe and Mail*, 14 February 1942, 6.

<sup>87</sup> “Royal Commissions,” *The Manitoban*, 20 February 1942, 2.

<sup>88</sup> “A Matter of the Utmost Public Concern,” *The Georgetown Herald*, 22 July 1942, 2.

Amos, Québec, contended “il y aura sans doute un débat sur l’expédition de Hong-Kong, le rapport de l’enquête Duff, les vues du colonel Drew et le retrait de la poursuite prise contre ce dernier. Les journaux tories cherchent à faire une grosse affaire de ce qu’ils appellent la bévue capitale du gouvernement et en particulier du ministre de la Justice. Evidemment, la tâche de gouverner un pays comme le Canada n’est pas facile.”<sup>89</sup> *Le Devoir* critiqued King’s concession to the Conservatives about Drew’s appointment: “Chaque fois que M. King veut apaiser les impérialistes et les conscriptionnistes, en leur faisant des concessions, il se fait prendre au piège. Quand on traite avec certains adversaires, c’est folie que vouloir les apaiser.”<sup>90</sup>

The *Montreal Gazette* ran several editorials following the release of the Duff Report. The editors sang the praises of Drew on 6 June, calling him “a man outstanding in Canadian public life.”<sup>91</sup> Another *Gazette* article that day argued that “the responsibility of the Duff Commission was either to assign blame for the botch or to explain what circumstances created the misleading impression. Sir Lyman’s report does neither. It simply asserts—‘I am satisfied’ . . . that no fault was committed by anyone. Canadian confidence in the good judgement of our Chief Justice is or was, very high, but it was never as high as all that.”<sup>92</sup>

Offering harsh criticism toward King, Duff, and the report on 20 July 1942, *The Winnipeg Tribune* proclaimed that “the case of the suppressed DREW letter goes far beyond Col. George Drew and far even, beyond Hong Kong.” *The Tribune* called for the government to give the Canadian people assurance that the mistakes learned during the Inquiry would be applied for the betterment of the Canadian Army. As for releasing Drew’s letter publicly, the article opined “the fact is that there has been a series of on again, off again, somersaults by the government

---

<sup>89</sup> “Politique fédérale,” *La Gazette du Nord*, 17 July 1942, 1.

<sup>90</sup> “M. Hanson réagit,” *Le Devoir*, 10 June, 1942, 10

<sup>91</sup> “Col. George Drew is Aghast,” *The Montreal Gazette*, 6 June 1942, 8.

<sup>92</sup> “Hong Kong Affair Not Yet Closed,” *The Montreal Gazette*, 6 June 1942, 8.

which arouse grave misgivings.” The editorial closed with the following: “Indeed, public confidence had been thoroughly undermined by the government’s whole performance. That is why it is imperative that there should be an open inquiry into the Hong Kong expedition and into the whole situation relating to the training and equipment of our troops in Canada.”<sup>93</sup>

On 20 July, *The Tribune* also published pieces from other Canadian newspapers that had commented on the King-Drew affair. Despite *The Tribune*’s anti-King stance, it ran many pro-King editorials in this section. The *Lethbridge Herald*, for example, argued that “Col. Drew is haunting the headlines again, charging the Canadian government and military leaders with gross inefficiency in not a sending a properly trained and equipped force to help the British in Hong Kong. With hindsight to help him he is making out what appears to him to be a wonderful case against the Ottawa government.” The *Herald*, sarcastically citing Drew’s use of hindsight, asserted that “if Col. Drew knew he should have told the President of the United States. Then Pearl Harbor might never have happened. There might still be peace in the Pacific had Col. Drew’s foresight been as good as his hindsight.” The *Toronto Star* noted that “Colonel Drew’s letter, in the form in which it was written, was in our opinion extremely partisan in its point of view and unfair to the commissioner, who is chief justice of Canada and who, in imposing secrecy, was following powers granted him by order-in-council and, more important, was carrying out the conditions imposed by the British government.” *The Montreal Star* agreed for “the insistent demand, however, made by Col. Drew and those who support him that the government of Canada break with the government of Great Britain and make public secret documents is of course not to be thought of for a moment by anybody seized of what national honor means.”<sup>94</sup>

---

<sup>93</sup> “This Goes Beyond Hong Kong,” *The Winnipeg Tribune*, 20 July 1942, 6.

<sup>94</sup> “Canada-Wide Press Round-Up on Drew Letter,” *The Winnipeg Tribune*, 20 July 1942, 6.

Not all editorials praised King. As *The Globe and Mail* hyperbolically stated, “After the people rose in their wrath it was announced that the prosecution [of Drew] was withdrawn so that Parliament could debate Hong Kong.” The paper claimed that if King kept the facts of Hong Kong secret, “it is the final step in the death of freedom in Canada.” The *Montreal Gazette* argued that Hong Kong’s whole must be told to improve the Canadian war effort. The *Windsor Star* contended that the Drew letter must be made public for “the whole circumstances’ surrounding the strange procedure suggest a last-minute scurrying about on the part of Government for excuses to keep from the public eye information which the people should have.”<sup>95</sup>

A change of opinion by the editor of *Toronto Saturday Night* magazine was one of the more interesting turns in the Drew letter saga. On 18 July 1942, in support of King, its editors wrote:

We are not disposed to censure the Government for its attitude on the secrecy of the Hong Kong evidence. Opponents of the Government—and since it is a party Government it naturally has opponents—profess to believe that there cannot possibly have been anything in that evidence which it would do the enemy any good to know. This, as we have already noted, appears to us to be highly improbable, considering that the subject-matter of the inquiry must have ranged over the whole field of Canadian military preparation, transport facilities, training operating, equipment and so forth.

*Toronto Saturday Night* rejected Drew’s position, “which is in effect that the Commissioner must have been either senile or excessively partisan, and we doubt whether any large part of the electorate accepts it either.” Instead, contending that even if the Canadian troops had been better trained and equipped, Hong Kong still would have fallen, they castigated “the irresponsible sob-sisters of journalism who write as if somebody in Ottawa were responsible for the illnesses and

---

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.



deaths among the Canadian prisoners now in the hands of the Japanese are doing no good to Canadian morale or Canadian common sense.”<sup>96</sup>

But two days later *Toronto Saturday Night*, editor B.K. Sandwell, changed his mind about the Drew situation after reading a summary of Drew’s letter to King. An editorial appeared in *The Winnipeg Tribune* on 20 July as Sandwell wanted his change of heart published as soon as possible. Sandwell now believed “that the future liberty of the press in Canada will depend very largely upon the attitude taken by the proprietors and editors of the important daily newspapers in regard to the suppression by the censor of the abbreviated text of Colonel Drew’s letter to the Prime Minister on the Hong Kong Report, which is now in their hands.” As for the assertion that Drew’s letter could not be published lest it damage Canadian morale or provide information to the enemy, Sandwell did “not think that anybody who has seen the abbreviated text would hold that it ought to be suppressed for either of these reasons.” Revising his views about public opinion, Sandwell argued that “if the press of Canada ‘goes to the mat’ with the censorship on this matter, it will have the support of a very large and influential body of public opinion and will add materially to the respect and confidence in which it is held by the Canadian people.”<sup>97</sup>

In another *Toronto Saturday Night* editorial several days later, averring that his original position “was based entirely” on the fact that Drew’s letter might contain information that could help the enemy, after reading the summary, he no longer accepted that claim. Asserting that the British refusal to publish this information was “one of the commonest devices of governments seeking to evade responsibility at home,” Sandwell believed “we have not the slightest doubt that the Canadian government could secure the permission of the British government to reveal

---

<sup>96</sup> LAC, King fonds MG 26 J4, “Memoranda and Notes, 1940–1950” series, volume 395, file “49”, Hong Kong Secrecy, 18 July 1942, page C277959, microfilm reel H-1555.

<sup>97</sup> “Should Assert Freedom,” *The Winnipeg Tribune*, 20 July 1942, 6.

everything in Colonel's Drew letter in five minutes....," Sandwell was overconfident in British openness in relation to documentation surrounding Hong Kong. As will be noted in the next two chapters, Sandwell provided an early example for the belief that a conspiracy surrounded the Hong Kong episode when he mentioned that the censor had forbidden any details not found in the Duff Report from being published: "Nothing could be more exactly calculated to give the Canadian public the idea that there is much in the Hong Kong evidence that the government is desperately anxious to hide."<sup>98</sup> Sandwell's assertions had some validity for King was desperate to restrain all Hong Kong discussions, while British resistance played a major role in preventing the release of documents, a fight that lasted many more years.

### Conclusion

The Hong Kong Inquiry arose when several individuals used the Battle of Hong Kong to achieve their own ends. While it seemed initially that Ralston was genuinely motivated to improve the state of the Quartermaster-General's Branch, his investigation into the transport issues ended quickly and punished few officials. Duff's complete exoneration of the King government and his placing of the blame on the Quartermaster-General's Branch lends some credence to the claims that the Inquiry was a whitewash. Although Duff reached some proper conclusions in his report despite himself, he was wrong about the transportation issue and placing the blame for the intelligence failure on the British government. But Duff was right about training and weapons practice issues. The Inquiry came about because while King wanted the Hong Kong episode to disappear, he could not avoid it due to the pressure applied by the political opposition. In the aftermath of Duff's Report, Drew and King squared off for another round in their long-running feud. Drew's letters and actions and the King government's clumsy

---

<sup>98</sup> LAC, King fonds MG 26 J4, "Memoranda and Notes, 1940-1950" series, volume 395, file "49", More on the Drew Letter, 25 July 1942, page C277960, microfilm reel H-1555.

handling of the charges against him are evidence of this opportunism. While Drew's letter to Hanson demonstrates that Drew might have genuinely wanted to aid the war effort, Hanson's response shows that Drew's sincerity, if it existed, counted for little in any case. When other works discuss the Inquiry the focused is on individuals and the context of the battle, government policy, and the reasons for the reinforcement are often ignored. This dissertation's new approach to the Inquiry offers an original approach. The coverage of Canadian press reactions to the Inquiry is also new. King's desire to minimize attention paid to the Hong Kong episode by holding the Inquiry failed as the issues of government transparency and maintaining wartime secrecy dominated the discussion. British resistance to the release of documents ensured that political debates about the Battle of Hong Kong continued into the postwar period.

## CHAPTER 7

### FROM THIS DAY TO THE ENDING OF THE WORLD: THE LEGACY OF THE BATTLE OF HONG KONG FROM 1942 TO PRESENT

At the 2009 unveiling of the “C” Force Memorial Wall in Ottawa, Philip Doddridge, president of the Hong Kong Veterans’ Association (HKVA), remarked that “this ceremony today marks the fulfilment of a dream, a vision that started years ago when we began to realize that many of our comrades who have left this world, would not be recognized for their valiant efforts of so many years ago.”<sup>1</sup> Doddridge was right to be concerned about the lack of recognition of what “C” Force did in Hong Kong. In a 2016 article, journalist Craig S. Smith claimed “the debate over what went wrong raged in the aftermath of the war but has long since grown cold. These days, the sacrifice and courage of those who died are remembered more than the senselessness of their deaths. But historians have long acknowledged that it was a mistake to send untested Canadian boys to defend an indefensible island.”<sup>2</sup> Even those who express sympathy toward the Hong Kong veterans and their families present the battle in a negative manner. The Battle of Hong Kong’s legacy is constantly being reconsidered. I argue that many individuals, employing the battle for their own purposes, are responsible for Hong Kong’s negative legacy in Canada. Opportunism and the protection of reputations affected the early legacy building of the battle for George Drew plus British and Canadian commanders used the battle for their own ends. By contrast, the Canadian government simply wanted the Hong Kong episode to disappear from the collective Canadian consciousness. Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King’s government, plus its successors, tried to quietly dismiss any mention of the

---

<sup>1</sup> “Memorial Wall – Speeches at the Unveiling,” Hong Kong Veterans Commemorative Association (hereafter HKVCA), accessed 8 October 2019, <https://www.hkvca.ca/Memorial%20Wall/speeches.php>.

<sup>2</sup> Craig S. Smith, “A Doomed Battle for Hong Kong, With Only Medals Left 75 Years Later,” *The New York Times*, 23 December 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/23/world/canada/a-doomed-battle-for-hong-kong-with-only-medals-left-75-years-later.html>.

battle or the plight of its veterans. While they failed, their actions often brought more attention to the Battle of Hong Kong as evidenced by the release of the Major-General C.M. Maltby's Despatch in 1948 and the issue of Pacific campaign pay. The negative legacy of the battle gathered strength during the postwar years. The newspaper media played an important part in this, as it further spread the negativity associated with the battle. Yet the legacy can still be changed for the building of Hong Kong's legacy remains ongoing in the twenty-first century.

#### George Drew's Letter to King, Christmas 1941

In Canada, Hong Kong's legacy fight began even before the battle's end. On Christmas Day 1941, an open letter to King written by Ontario politician George Drew appeared in *The Globe and Mail*. Drew used the deaths of Canadians at Hong Kong to convince King to launch overseas conscription:

Please assure us that we will hear no more of the danger of disunity in Canada if our young men are called upon to do their duty. You cannot believe that the youth of Canada are unworthy of those young Canadians who are meeting their Gethsemane at Hong Kong at this very hour. Are the murderers of our own flesh and blood to go unpunished by other Canadians because some feeble voices proclaim that we should not send our men to fight beyond our own shores? God forbid that as a nation we should ever dishonour our glorious dead by repudiating the value of their sacrifice!<sup>3</sup>

As cited in Chapter 6, this letter marked the start of Drew's campaign to use "C" Force to attack King and his government. But it would not be the last time "C" Force sacrifices were used to further various political agendas.

#### Hong Kong's Impact on Canadian Policy during the Second World War

The fall of Hong Kong shaped how Canada deployed its military during the rest of the Second World War. After 1941, Canada was far more hesitant to accept British requests to deploy Canadian troops to the Empire's far reaches. In early 1942, Britain asked Canada for

---

<sup>3</sup> George Drew, "An Open Letter To Prime Minister King," *The Globe and Mail*, 25 December 1941, 1.

troops to garrison the Falkland Islands for fear Japan might take the islands to support further attacks in the Atlantic or to offer them to Argentina. The call for Canadian troops to be sent to this isolated outpost was rejected.<sup>4</sup> Canadian historian Galen Roger Perras has argued that the events at Hong Kong heavily affected this decision. Just as with “C” Force’s despatch, it was important to King that Canadians not be sent without obtaining President Franklin Roosevelt’s approval. Canadian Army leaders cited logistical difficulties in reaching the Falklands and the need to defend Canada from a growing Japanese threat as reasons for rejecting the request. General Kenneth Stuart recommended that the request be declined due to the Europe-first strategy adopted at the August 1941 Argentina conference.<sup>5</sup> As Perras has noted, Hong Kong loomed large as a key reason rejection the request:

However, [Under Secretary of State for External Affairs Norman] Robertson was not so certain that Canada should provide a Falklands garrison, and the reason behind this opinion was Hong Kong. Very much aware of growing demands for an official inquiry into the loss of almost 2000 Canadians at Hong Kong only weeks before, from the Under-Secretary’s point of view ‘it would be desirable to avoid, as far as possible, any risk of a similar case arising while the Hong Kong disaster was fresh in the public mind.’<sup>6</sup>

Commenting on the Falklands proposal, Canadian Army historian C.P. Stacey wrote:

So far as the written record goes, it would seem that throughout the discussion nobody in Ottawa ever mentioned Hong Kong. But Mr. [British Prime Minister Winston] Churchill’s request was made just three weeks after that colony, and the Canadians who formed part of its garrison, had surrendered to the Japanese. In January and February 1942, it is fair to say, very powerful arguments would have been required to prevail upon Mackenzie King’s government to accept another military commitment in a remote British possession.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Galen Roger Perras, “Anglo-Canadian Imperial Relations: The Case of the Garrisoning of the Falkland Islands in 1942,” *War & Society* 14, no. 1 (1996): 84, 92.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 73–74, 90.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>7</sup> C.P. Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments: The War Policies of Canada 1939–1945* (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 1970), 157.

Though Stacey erred by claiming Hong Kong was not mentioned, he was correct that the losses suffered just weeks before did impact governmental decision-making about sending troops to the Falklands.

British officials at the Dominions Office were puzzled by the Canadian refusal to send troops to the Falklands. After, DO officials monitoring the Hong Kong Inquiry had noted that Minister of National Defence for Naval Services Angus MacDonald had testified “I do not think anyone would contemplate in the circumstances a negative answer to the request. I do not think it was thinkable for this country to offer a negative answer to the request of the U.K.” This comment, a DO official asserted, was “interesting in the light of subsequent refusals by the Canadian Government to send forces to the Falkland Islands...”<sup>8</sup> While DO functionaries did not believe anything had changed, the Canadian government clearly thought otherwise. No doubt recalling Japan’s complete control of the skies over Hong Kong, Robertson claimed that without proper air defences “there would be little point in sending in an infantry force as lambs to the slaughter.”<sup>9</sup> The Battle of Hong Kong marked a clear change in Canadian policy toward Britain.

The Battle of Hong Kong also shaped Canada’s contribution to the Aleutians campaign in 1943. Japan occupied some islands in the Alaskan island chain as part of its massive Midway offensive in June 1942.<sup>10</sup> In 1943, Canadian troops were sent to fight under American command. By the time the Canadians landed at Kiska in August, the Japanese had evacuated the island. But Perras has noted misgivings within the Cabinet War Committee (CWC) about sending troops to the Aleutians. Minister C.G. Power was particularly concerned about the mission: “Always

---

<sup>8</sup> The National Archive (hereafter TNA), DO 35/1009/5, Defence of Hong Kong: Proceedings of Royal Commission on Hong Kong, 4.

<sup>9</sup> Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC), William Lyon Mackenzie King fonds, MG 26 J4, “Memoranda and Notes, 1940–1950” series, volume 371, file “3910”, Falkland Islands, 16 January 1942, page C257306, microfilm reel H-1541.

<sup>10</sup> C.P. Stacey, *Six Years of War: The Army in Canada, Britain and the Pacific* (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 1955), 493.

mindful of the fortunes of his beloved Liberal Party, Power thought that sending troops to Kiska would have valuable results and he would support it. However, he wanted nothing at all to do with the proposal to garrison Attu or Amchitka...Power feared that it would put the troops in a position similar to that of the two Canadian battalions lost at Hong Kong.” Perras has posited that the capture of Power’s son, Francis, must have weighed on him “as he had been one of the proponents of strengthening Hong Kong.”<sup>11</sup> Perras has contended that the King government feared another “political backlash and demonstrating a marked (and perhaps understandable) lack of confidence in its military advice after the disasters at Hong Kong and Dieppe, the government was intent on avoiding yet another catastrophe. The result was unparalleled civilian interference in such areas as the composition of the force, sailing orders, and operational planning.”<sup>12</sup> The rejection of the Falklands Island garrison request and the limited participation in the Aleutians firmly shifted the Canadian wartime focus to Europe. Thus, “C” Force’s defeat and the fate of its captured men took a backseat to the Canadians personnel who helped to win the war in Europe. This series of events ensured that the Battle of Hong Kong was remembered primarily for its failure, not for the stand that was taken against Japanese aggression.

As Canadians prepared for the June 1944 Normandy invasion while fighting in Italy continued, civilian and military leaders discussed who bore ultimate responsibility if disaster struck. As Stacey commented, “it was perhaps natural that civil servants in daily touch with Ministers should view the possibility of a military disaster mainly in terms of its effect upon the political fortunes of the government. The references to Hong Kong and the embarrassments it had brought to the King administration suggest how deep a mark that painful episode had left in

---

<sup>11</sup> Galen Perras, “Stepping Stones on a Road to Nowhere? The United States, Canada, and the Aleutian Island Campaign, 1942–1943,” (PhD diss., University of Waterloo, 1995), 264.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 276.



Ottawa.”<sup>13</sup> The Battle of Hong Kong thus had a strong impact on the King government during the war, while the disaster also influenced government actions into the postwar period.

### Legacy Building in the POW Camps

Some of the men who fought at Hong Kong took steps to shape how battle was remembered. While in prisoner of war (POW) camps, many troops wrote narratives designed to protect their reputations and those of their units. This early shaping of the battle’s legacy was largely motivated by the search for a scapegoat. As Canadian officers were placed in a separate camp from officers of the British and Indian battalions, there was little collaboration as various unit war diaries were rewritten. Brigadier Cedric Wallis’ account of the fighting on the Stanley Peninsula was a prime example. Major George Trist of the Winnipeg Grenadiers felt the need to record the Canadian side of the battle when he reconstructed the unit war diary in April 1942. Trist wrote that one of the reasons for recording the events was “...that we (the Canadian Forces) are being blamed by the Imperial troops for the early fall of Hong Kong. And while it is not definitely known that the Imperial staff are going to adopt this attitude in their official report every precaution must be taken to ensure that any attempt to make “C” Force...the scape goat is adequately challenged by a submission of facts while they are still fresh in the memory.”<sup>14</sup>

Major John Price of the Royal Rifles of Canada sought to influence the process of legacy building by persuading others in their writings. In the hospital when the colony fell, Price was accidentally sent to the British officers’ camp at Argyle Street upon his release. However, “Colonel Price feels that his stay there [Argyle Street] was a good thing as he found British feelings were strongly anti-Canadian at the time [November 1942]. He pointed out to Brig Wallis and General Maltby that if British reports condemned the action by the Canadians at Hong Kong,

---

<sup>13</sup> Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments*, 193.

<sup>14</sup> Directorate of History and Heritage (hereafter DHH), file 593 (D33), Winnipeg Grenadiers War Diary, 1.

Canadian reports might have some stones to throw.”<sup>15</sup> Despite Price’s warning, Maltby later cast many stones.

While in Japanese captivity, Maltby kept a scrapbook for his daughters that contained family history, poems, and stories written by Maltby and other officers in the POW camps. Price wrote a piece in the scrapbook entitled “Canada” that briefly described Canada’s Confederation but mostly detailed “C” Force’s role in Hong Kong. While opining that “Canadian history is full of romantic episodes, gallant deeds, & successful achievements, not only at home but in many lands in contributing to the extension & stability of the British Empire...,” describing “C” Force, Price wrote that “though unsuccessful & even disastrous in effect, this expedition is only another proof of Canada’s desire to contribute to the defense of the Empire, however & wherever needed.” Price remarked that friendships and contacts were formed in the POW camps, “which will go far towards a better understanding of mutual problems & greatly serve to strengthen intra-Empire ties so that this great Commonwealth of Nations may rise again on the ruins of the modern world, stronger & greater & able & willing to exert that moral influence for good that world is so greatly in need of.”<sup>16</sup> While Price’s goal to bolster Empire ties was evident in this passage, he failed as the postwar controversy surrounding Maltby’s Despatch made clear.

### The Maltby Despatch

Despite the warnings Price had offered during their captivity, Maltby threw the first stones in the postwar era with his Despatch. The original draft of the Despatch, which contained the disparaging comments about the Canadians detailed in Chapter 5, was sent to the Canadian Army Historical Section. Objecting to the Despatch for he believed Maltby had not accurately

---

<sup>15</sup> DHH, file 593 (D26), Interview with Lt-Col J.H. Price, 21C R.R.C., 22 March 1946, 1.

<sup>16</sup> Imperial War Museum, Private Papers of Major General C.M. Maltby, Catalogue number 22835, Commonplace Book, “Canada.”

portrayed Canada's contribution to Hong Kong's defence, Stacey wrote that "it was a bit embarrassing for a historian to be involved in what people might call tampering with the facts of the history, but my view was that general [Maltby], consciously or unconsciously, had tampered with them first."<sup>17</sup> Stacey, however, did not discuss Maltby's performance during the battle. Writing in 1951, Stacey argued that "while it is fairly clear that [Maltby] did not do a very competent job and did not command the confidence of his officers and troops, it is particularly desirable in this operation, I think, to avoid any remark which might bring on unpleasant discussions between this country and the United Kingdom, which have so far been avoided in this connection."<sup>18</sup> Stacey used personal accounts of the battle and archival sources to counter claims made in the Maltby Despatch.<sup>19</sup> Trying to adopt a neutral position, Stacey sought to tell the "essential truth" of the matter without ridiculing individuals lest he "re-open old wounds or give unnecessary offence." Stacey concluded, "with an eye to political, personal and regimental aspects, it seems out of the question to publish an absolutely frank discussion of what took place at Hong Kong. I have felt however that, having made a full examination of the records of the operations, I should set down on paper the main impressions left on my mind."<sup>20</sup> Stacey had to navigate a myriad of political and organizational roadblocks to produce the most accurate account that he could given the limitations imposed upon him. Legal historian David Ricardo Williams has called the editing of the Maltby Despatch the "Hong Kong Cover Up."<sup>21</sup> But this is simply untrue, while Williams presumed that Maltby, plus the other documents he cited, had accurate facts and assessments.

---

<sup>17</sup> C.P. Stacey, *A Date with History: Memoirs of a Canadian Historian* (Ottawa: Deneau Publishers, 1983), 240.

<sup>18</sup> LAC, Department of National Defence fonds, RG 24, volume 31917, file "1453-10 part 2 Historical Publications & Material- War 1939-1945- Hong Kong", letter from C.P. Stacey to CGS, 19 February 1951, page 1.

<sup>19</sup> Tim Cook, *Clio's Warriors: Canadian Historians and the Writing of the World Wars* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006), 156.

<sup>20</sup> LAC, DND fonds, letter from Stacey to CGS, page 1.

<sup>21</sup> David Ricardo Williams, *Duff: A Life in the Law* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1984), 258.

Maltby's Despatch was not the only difficulty Stacey met when writing about Hong Kong in the official history. As Stacey explained, "this has been a difficult chapter to write, partly because of the political controversy which followed the operation, but still more because of the nature of the operations themselves and the recriminations which followed between different parts of the defending force."<sup>22</sup> Stacey bemoaned the lack of primary sources by contrasting Hong Kong with Canada's other major wartime defeat for "Dieppe, I have made clear, was an extraordinarily well documented operation, not least on the German side. Hong Kong was not documented at all."<sup>23</sup> Discussing Stacey's dislike of writing on Hong Kong, historian Alexander Fitzgerald-Black has stated that as "human memory of specific events, especially in the trauma of battle, is so selective and malleable, Stacey generally did not rely on the recollections of individuals. The important exceptions were the disasters at Hong Kong (1941), Dieppe (1942), and Operation Spring where the chaotic circumstances prevented the keeping of written message logs and other dependable records."<sup>24</sup> As Stacey explained in his autobiography, "things were made worse at the time by the political sensitiveness of the business. Hong Kong had been made the matter of a continuing attack on the government; with George Drew it was a sort of King Charles's head, and anything we wrote was potentially explosive."<sup>25</sup> While Stacey did the best he could with his official history under the circumstances, the final product was incomplete when it came to descriptions of the battle and analysis of the fighting.

---

<sup>22</sup> LAC, DND fonds, letter from Stacey to CGS, page 1.

<sup>23</sup> Stacey, *A Date with History*, 238–239.

<sup>24</sup> Alexander Fitzgerald-Black (2015) "Investigating the Memory of Operation Spring The Inquiry into the Black Watch and the Battle of St. André-sur-Orne, 1944–46," *Canadian Military History* 21 no. 2, (2015): 23.

<sup>25</sup> Stacey, *A Date with History*, 240.

General Charles Foulkes, Chief of the General Staff from August 1945 to February 1951, played a key role in playing down the controversial elements of the Hong Kong story. Historian J.L. Granatstein has called Foulkes, a better politician than commander, “arguably Canada’s greatest military bureaucrat...”<sup>26</sup> Foulkes’ influence over the official history of the Battle of Hong Kong demonstrated his renowned abilities. More concerned about not making waves with the British Army than accurately portraying the battle’s course, Foulkes, in a October 1946 telegram, explained that while he did not oppose revisions to Maltby’s Despatch, he cautioned against seeking “the changes outlined on the grounds that we do not want to stir up any controversy regarding the action of the Canadians in the Hong Kong force as we feel the sooner Hong Kong is forgotten the better for the future of the Canadian Armed Forces.”<sup>27</sup> Faced with Stacey’s complaints, Maltby agreed to cut any passages that might cause embarrassment.<sup>28</sup> As noted by Ralph B. Pugh of the British Dominions Office, Maltby allowed such changes because the writing of the report had satisfied him. But the damage was already been done to the Canadians’ reputations. As Pugh wrote, “I had not previously heard of the stories of indiscipline, drunkenness and cowardice. In all the circumstances they are not altogether surprising and there is something to be said for not giving them publicity in this way at the present time.”<sup>29</sup> The offending passages were removed before the final draft was published.<sup>30</sup> In 1948, after the Maltby Despatch was released, Foulkes informed the Minister of National Defence that “you will recall that after discussing this whole question with Field Marshal Montgomery he agreed to

---

<sup>26</sup> J.L. Granatstein, *The Generals: The Canadian Army’s Senior Commanders in the Second World War* (Toronto: Stoddart Publishing 1993), 173–174, 179.

<sup>27</sup> LAC, Department of National Defence fonds, RG24, volume 12752, file “The Hong Kong Operation”, telegram Murchie from Foulkes, 021500R October 1946.

<sup>28</sup> TNA, DO 35/1768, Letter from C.W. Dixon to Undersecretary of State War Office, 22 March 1946.

<sup>29</sup> TNA, DO 35/1768, Note by Ralph B. Pugh, 18 March 1946.

<sup>30</sup> Stacey, *A Date with History*, 240. LAC, DND fonds, RG 24, volume 12752, file “The Hong Kong Operation”, letter from Lieutenant-General J.C. Murchie to Under Secretary of State, 4 October 1946.

have these offending paragraphs taken out of the Maltby Despatch. Therefore, unless this case is reopened these regrettable circumstances can remain in oblivion.”<sup>31</sup> Though Foulkes clearly wanted to keep discussion about Hong Kong to a minimum, the publication of the Maltby Despatch ensured that it would become a top political topic yet again.

### Maltby’s Report Impact on King’s Government

The release of Maltby’s Despatch on 29 January 1948 reignited the controversy surrounding the 1941 telegrams in Canada’s House of Commons. Seeking to bring new allies into his fight, George Drew cabled former British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden on 23 February 1948 to ask for help in securing the publication of the telegrams for “it would be preposterous at this time for United Kingdom to assert right to prevent Canadian government publishing anything it regarded as proper...Feel sure they have not done so and strongly urge question be asked Monday in London as to what nature of exchange of communications has been between Canada and United Kingdom on this subject.”<sup>32</sup> While passing the telegram to British Prime Minister Clement Attlee, Eden eventually informed Drew that his inquiries had made no headway.<sup>33</sup>

But Drew’s attacks did not abate, King wanted the Attlee government to explain that the telegrams sent in late 1941 to Canada had not mentioned the likelihood of an immediate threat from Japan.<sup>34</sup> Asked for his opinion, Eric Machtig of the Commonwealth Relations Office,

---

<sup>31</sup> LAC, DND fonds, RG24, volume 37293, file “111.13 (D66) Misc memorandum of Mr Ralston and Gen Foulkes re Hong Kong enquiry 1941/48”, Memorandum General Charles Foulkes to Brooke Claxton, 9 February 1948.

<sup>32</sup> The Conservative Party changed its name to the Progressive Conservative Party in December 1942. J.L. Granatstein, *The Politics of Survival: The Conservative Party of Canada, 1939–1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 149. TNA, PREM 8/941, Letter from F.E. Cumming-Bruce to J.L. Pumphrey, 23 February 1948. TNA, PREM 8/941, Telegram from George Drew to Anthony Eden, 21 February 1948.

<sup>33</sup> TNA, PREM 8/941, Telegram from Anthony Eden to George Drew, 24 February 1948.

<sup>34</sup> TNA, PREM 8/941, Telegram from Secretary of State for External Affairs to High Commissioner for Canada, 30 March 1948.

describing the matter as “... a perfect vendetta,”<sup>35</sup> produced a plan that the British government accepted. After King cabled Attlee to request the release of these messages. Attlee would respond that while the telegrams could not be published, he could “however, confirm that any such suggestion as has been mentioned is entirely contrary to the facts and that none of the telegrams contained any warning that action by Japan of the kind described was expected.”<sup>36</sup> After King read Attlee’s telegram in Parliament on 29 April, Drew cabled the British High Commissioner to Canada, Alexander Clutterbuck, to voice his displeasure:

I need not remind you of the unsatisfactory consequences of anything which might be interpreted as intervention in Canadian public issues by anyone from the United Kingdom it is only necessary to recall the unpleasant circumstances connected with a decision by Lord Byng to realize that when this occurs statements may be made which can only have a most unfortunate effect upon the good relations between Canada and the United Kingdom.<sup>37</sup>

Not mincing words in his updates to the Commonwealth Relations Office, Clutterbuck said, “generally, it would seem that there is little public interest and Drew’s outbursts against Dominion Government are now becoming so frequent that not much attention is paid to them. His attempts with support of Opposition in House of Commons to make party capital out of matter are certainly in poor taste, and intemperate way in which he has gone about it is not calculated to attract sympathy.”<sup>38</sup>

While the British declined to respond to Drew,<sup>39</sup> the King-Attlee act of political theatre did not placate Drew. Once Drew became head of the federal Progressive Conservative Party in the autumn of 1948, he used his new position to continue assailing the Liberal government. On

---

<sup>35</sup> TNA, PREM 8/941, Letter from Eric Machtig to L.N. Helsby, 1 April 1948.

<sup>36</sup> TNA, PREM 8/941, Telegram from Commonwealth Relations Office to Canadian Government, 19 April 1948.

<sup>37</sup> TNA, PREM 8/941, Telegram from U.K. High Commissioner in Canada to Commonwealth Relations Office, 30 April 1948.

<sup>38</sup> TNA, PREM 8/941 Telegram from U.K. High Commissioner in Canada to Commonwealth Relations Office, 1 May 1948.

<sup>39</sup> TNA, PREM 8/941 Telegram from J.L. Pumphrey to F.E. Cumming-Bruce, 7 May 1948.

28 February 1949, Drew and Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent verbally sparred in the House of Commons over both the letter and Drew's charges. Accusing St. Laurent of charging him in 1942 to silence his criticism of Duff's Report, Drew threatened to table his 1942 letters to King. But Drew's attempt did not proceed for Britain still would not release the controversial telegrams of autumn 1941, leading Drew to counter that he had given the letter to the press.<sup>40</sup> While the political fighting cast the battle in a negative light, "C" Force veterans gained some benefits.

#### Pacific Campaign Pay and the Pacific Star for "C" Force Veterans

For "C" Force veterans, their suffering at the hands of the Japanese is part of the battle's bitter legacy. Their second battle began once the garrison surrendered to the Japanese. The troops were placed in POW camps, either North Point Camp on the island, or Sham Shi Po in Kowloon, with the latter housing most of the Canadians. Conditions quickly deteriorated thanks to overpopulation plus Japanese negligence that produced many POW deaths from diphtheria, dysentery, typhoid fever, and malnutrition. The Japanese also murdered some Canadians, including the execution of four soldiers after a failed escape attempt in August 1942.<sup>41</sup> Starting in 1943, Canadians were sent in drafts to Japan to work as slave labourers in mines, factories, ports, and rail yards.<sup>42</sup> More lives were lost to dangerous work conditions and the brutality meted out by Japanese guards. The Canadians were delivered from captivity when the war in the Pacific ended with the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. But most POWs did not leave the camps until September 1945 due to Allied logistical problems.

---

<sup>40</sup> TNA, PREM 8/941, Draft Message from Mr. King to Mr. Attlee, 1–2.

<sup>41</sup> Sergeant John Payne, Corporal George Berzinski, Private J.H. Adam, and Private P.J. Ellis escaped from Sham Shi Po but were recaptured and executed; Jonathan Vance, *Objects of Concern: Canadian Prisoners of War through the Twentieth Century* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1994), 206.

<sup>42</sup> Charles G. Roland, *Long Night's Journey into Day: Prisoners of War in Hong Kong and Japan, 1941–1945* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2001), 322.



While Hong Kong veterans were not entitled to wear the Pacific Star, they were awarded the 1939–1945 Star and the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with Clasp.<sup>43</sup> When questioned in Parliament in September 1945 about why “C” Force had not been awarded the Pacific Star, Minister of National Defence Douglas Abbot claimed it was “unusual that our gallant lads who fought at Hong Kong should not be eligible for this particular star. On making inquiries I find that the regulations which govern the issue of this star...do not permit their being so included.” Noting this situation pertained for all Commonwealth nations, Abbot believed this matter would be corrected. Asked if the Hong Kong veterans would get the additional pay and allowances given to troops who volunteered to fight in the Pacific, Abbott, unable to offer an answer, would give one the next day. No answer, however, came.<sup>44</sup> Historian Kenneth Taylor has posited that there was a financial motive behind this lack of recognition for “the award of the Pacific Star, which incidentally would have involved the payment of large sums of supplementary pay to add to the arrears of pay already due the survivors, was denied.” The Hong Kong veterans were upset about the lack of recognition as well. Taylor recounted a story from Price: “The Minister of National Defense welcomed them home on the West Coast with words of pride on behalf of the Prime Minister. In the pregnant pause which followed, the perennial rear rank voice expressed the sentiments of all. ‘Bugger the Prime Minister, what about the Pacific Star?’”<sup>45</sup> Although Hong Kong veterans were awarded the Pacific Star at the end of October 1945, extending Pacific campaign pay was not given.<sup>46</sup>

---

<sup>43</sup> “Freed Prisoners To Wear Medals,” *The Globe and Mail*, 10 September 1945, 1.

<sup>44</sup> Canada, Parliament, *House of Commons Debates*, 20th Parl, 1st Sess, Vol 1, (11 September 1945), 72–73.

<sup>45</sup> Kenneth Taylor, “The Challenge of the Eighties: World War Two from a New Perspective, the Hong Kong Case,” in *Men at War: Politics, Technology and Innovation in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Timothy Travers and Christon I. Archer (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2011), 209.

<sup>46</sup> “Hong Kong Men Get a Pacific Star,” *The Globe and Mail*, 30 October 1945, 21.

The bitter verbal wrangling and political squabbles in the Canadian Parliament resulted in extra benefits for the Hong Kong veterans. When “C” Force personnel did not get the extra payments given to Canadian soldiers destined to fight in the invasion of Japan, the Opposition continually asked the King government about these payments after Japan’s surrender.<sup>47</sup> The payments were hardly large; for example, the pay scale for privates was just thirty cents daily.<sup>48</sup> Co-operation Commonwealth Federation Member of Parliament for Winnipeg North Centre Stanley Knowles, asking why the pay had not been given to “C” Force men, suggested that it be backdated to their departure from Canada in 1941.<sup>49</sup> This suggestion led nowhere. In 1947, the Canadian Corps Association wrote to the Department of National Defence (DND) to show their support for Pacific campaign pay being given to the Hong Kong veterans. The payment was rejected as “the Hong Kong survivors were in fact treated more generously in connection with leave and other entitlements than any other Canadian personnel who, unfortunately, fell into the hands of our enemies.”

Little headway was made regarding these payments until 1949. Thanks to the Maltby Despatch’s release, the Hong Kong issue re-entered the debates in the House of Commons. On 17 March 1949, when questioned about DND’s policy about such extra payments, Minister of National Defence Brooke Claxton explained that “the order did not cover Canadians who had fought in the Pacific, including the Hong Kong force, the Kiska force and members of the R.C.A.F. [Royal Canadian Air Force] and others who had taken part in the active operations in the Pacific.” As Claxton announced, “in principle the matter was decided by the government some time ago, and I am glad to be able to announce now that the terms of the original order will

---

<sup>47</sup> Canada, Parliament, *House of Commons Debates*, 20th Parl, 1st Sess, Vol 1, (10 September 1945), 42. *Ibid.*, (18 September) 260, 270.

<sup>48</sup> Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 516–517.

<sup>49</sup> Canada, Parliament, *House of Commons Debates*, 20th Parl, 1st Sess, Vol 2, (30 October 1945), 1661.

be extended so as to make members of the Hong Kong forces eligible for Pacific pay until two months after return of such members to Canada.” Gordon Graydon, a Progressive Conservative Member of Parliament, followed this statement by declaring “another victory for George Drew.”<sup>50</sup> When later questioned on the topic, the St. Laurent government announced that the Pacific campaign pay would finally be given, although the payments would not be awarded for service earlier than 1 June 1945, the date of the order in council. In addition, the veterans were given two months extra Pacific campaign pay after their return to Canada.<sup>51</sup> The additional compensation was given because “of the hardships suffered by the surviving members of “C” Force while prisoners in the hands of the Japanese, following the fall of Hong Kong, sympathetic consideration has been given to representations in favour of extending Pacific Campaign rates of pay to members of the Hong Kong Expedition...”<sup>52</sup> Despite the considerable damage the political fighting had done to the battle’s legacy, the Hong Kong veterans did obtain some benefits.

#### “C” Veterans Return Home

Once the Second World War finally ended, members of “C” Force faced more challenges back in Canada. As Hong Kong veteran Kenneth Cambon wrote, “it is difficult for me to write about my return home and the first few years in Canada. Strange that it should be that way, now that more than forty–four years have passed. In some ways they were harder on me than the years in prison camp. There the only goal was to survive.”<sup>53</sup> Many of the returning veterans subsequently suffered from alcoholism, psychological issues, and general poor health. Sixty–six Hong Kong veterans were rendered “economically blind.” In addition, many blind Hong Kong

---

<sup>50</sup> Canada, Parliament, *House of Commons Debates*, 20th Parl, 5th Sess, Vol 2, (17 March 1949), 1552.

<sup>51</sup> Canada, Parliament, *House of Commons Debates*, 20th Parl, 5th Sess, Vol 2, (18 March 1949), 1606.

<sup>52</sup> LAC, DND fonds, RG 24, volume 20348, file “951.056 (D3) Japanese Campaign Pay for Hong Kong Veterans”, Privy Council Meeting, 17 March 1949.

<sup>53</sup> Kenneth Cambon, *Guest of Hirohito* (Vancouver: PW Press, 1990), 101.

veterans also suffered from an impaired sense of touch thanks to a vitamin deficiency called avitaminosis, which made it difficult, if not impossible for some, to learn Braille or to type.<sup>54</sup> Many veterans had difficulty reintegrating back into civilian society. In his medical history of “C” Force, historian Charles Roland wrote, “often, they return home to dislocated families and have to struggle to cope with a world significantly changed from the one they knew before captivity.”<sup>55</sup> In a piece titled “Living with An ExPOW” written by Audrey Brady, the wife of a former American POW, she compassionately summarized the problems facing the men held by the Japanese:

Nearly all ExPOWs suffer pain—both mental and physical. They appear to be in good health, but are not. They do not like to think of themselves as mentally disturbed, but do not deny the physical pain. Very few doctors understand the relationship between having been a POW and the present physical condition of the patient. This has discouraged many from seeking help and so they continue to suffer in silence, some turning to the solace of alcohol and drugs.<sup>56</sup>

Many “C” Force vets employed alcohol as a coping mechanism after their return to civilian life. Using alcohol to sleep after returning from the POW camps, Andrew Flanagan said that beer helped him sleep and whisky made him “fightable.”<sup>57</sup> William Allister described the difficulty that he faced when trying to reintegrate with his family: “The more I strove to become part of this setting, the more it eluded me. Along with this awareness came an undefined anxiety that gnawed at me as though some furry tarantula had slipped into my brain and was creeping about with soft threatening steps. This was to be the hallmark of former POWs in the years ahead.”<sup>58</sup>

---

<sup>54</sup> Serge Durflinger, *Veterans with a Vision Canada's War Blinded in Peace and War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), 180, 196.

<sup>55</sup> Roland, *Long Night's Journey into Day*, xiii.

<sup>56</sup> CWM, 19790285-001, The Roll Call Vol: 2:4 Winter 1978 Hong Kong Veterans' Association of Canada British Columbia Branch Magazine, 3, 16.

<sup>57</sup> Andy Flanagan, *The Endless Battle: The Fall of Hong Kong and Canadian POWs in Imperial Japan*, (Fredericton, New Brunswick: Goose Lane Editions, 2017), 149, 161-162.

<sup>58</sup> William Allister, *Where Life and Death Hold Hands* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1989), 239.

Government aid to the Hong Kong veterans left much to be desired, although veterans' opinions were split. Astonished that the government would pay for his university schooling and give him a monthly stipend, Cambon believed the Canadian government did more for its veterans than any other belligerent country.<sup>59</sup> Allister's experience was more negative:

There was no counseling, no advice, no awareness that we might act or feel any differently. It was sink or swim, you're on your own, boys. Like good Canadians we expected nothing, got nothing. We were paid off in a lump sum — four years back pay shoved into the pocket of my battle dress. Then five days that landed me on the train home, stomach inflamed, fingers trembling, nerves shot.<sup>60</sup>

As Roland has noted, "By 1949 it had become apparent that rehabilitation of these former prisoners of the Japanese had not preceded as well as had been hoped or expected."<sup>61</sup> A study conducted in the 1960s revealed that Hong Kong veterans' opinions were split regarding their treatment by the Canadian government.<sup>62</sup> Some veterans accused the government of ignoring their plight in hopes that the issues would go away. In a 19 June 1970 editorial in the *Edmonton Journal*, Stanley Baty charged that "in prison camp our captors were patiently waiting for our demise. Here at home some 25 years later it would appear as though our own government is playing the same waiting game."<sup>63</sup> Subsequent government actions proved Baty's suspicions.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) was ill-prepared to help Hong Kong veterans once they returned to Canada. In his 19 April 1951 report to the DVA, Deputy Minister Major-General E.L.M. Burns, DVA Research Adviser E.J. Hider stated that "on the whole, the comparison shows that there is little difference in the results which have been achieved in

---

<sup>59</sup> Cambon, *Guest of Hirohito*, 109.

<sup>60</sup> Allister, *Where Life and Death Hold Hands*, 236.

<sup>61</sup> Roland, *Long Night's Journey into Day*, 324.

<sup>62</sup> LAC, Gustave Gingras fonds, MG31-J12, volume 13, file "Dr. H.J. Richardson 'Report of a Study of Disabilities and Problems of Hong Kong Veterans, 1964–1965' N.D., 1976", page 23.

<sup>63</sup> CWM, 19790285–001, Newsletter 1 July 1979, 2.

rehabilitation the Hong-Kong group compared with the overall group. The extent to which registrants have been rehabilitated is considered to show that the co-operation which has existed between the veterans and the Department has been very effective.”<sup>64</sup> Historians Mark Humphries and Lyndsay Rosenthal have disputed this assessment in their introduction to two DVA documents, including the one quoted above, that were reprinted in the *Canadian Military History* journal:

In a review of Department of Veterans Affairs pension files conducted in 1951, officials found that the rehabilitation rate of the Hong Kong veterans was 92.7%, similar to the ‘normal’ rates for all other veterans (93.3%). Rehabilitation was, though, narrowly defined by metrics which measured post-war versus prewar employment rates. The assumption was that if a veteran was employed and no longer in receipt of a pension, he had been successfully reintegrated into civilian society. The problem, of course, with these types of aggregate studies and economic measurements is that they ignore the complexities of reestablishment and re-adjustment. While the main benchmark for the DVA was steady employment, these figures ignore other important qualitative factors such as familial and personal problems which many veterans later reported.<sup>65</sup>

Furthermore, the issue of mental health was brushed aside to focus on physical ailments. In a 28 March 1951 letter to senior treatment medical officers of the DVA, Director of General Treatment Services W.P. Warner wrote:

While it is true and quite understandably true that beside the existence of the probably organic lesion of the central nervous system, there is an emotional factor present in many of these veterans, this should not be the focal point for investigation, counselling, and treatment . It should be understood that probably veterans who suffered for years from diets markedly deficient in vitamins have an organic lesion; it is felt that while the veteran is in hospital under investigation, that aspect of his investigation and treatment should be stressed rather than immediately putting him on the neuropsychiatric service.<sup>66</sup>

---

<sup>64</sup> Mark Humphries and Lyndsay Rosenthal, “Rehabilitation and Hong Kong Prisoners of War,” *Canadian Military History* 24, no. 2 (2015): 266.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 257–258.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 259–260.

The government's initial treatment of the Hong Kong veterans was far from adequate. The mental strains incited by a long and harsh imprisonment were rejected as reasons behind issues facing the veterans. Later medical studies demonstrated that mental health problems plagued "C" Force soldiers.

### Reasons Behind "C" Force Veterans' Treatment in the Postwar Period

Why did the government treat the Hong Kong veterans so poorly? According to Professor Stephen Winter, "the roots of state discrimination against the Hong Kong veterans lay in the official representation of them as a duplicitous and malingering threat to Anglo Saxon civilization. That misrecognition permitted arbitrary distinctions in the rule of law, exposing veterans to state discrimination."<sup>67</sup> But a concept developed by scholar Viet Thanh Nguyen in his work, *Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam and the Memory of War*, is more helpful to comprehend this situation. Nguyen argued that for war commemoration, the "other" are forgotten by the more powerful group.<sup>68</sup> In the case of the Battle of Hong Kong, the Canadian government labelled the veterans as the other, a relic of defeat and a group to be forgotten. Consequently, these troops fell outside the dominant Canadian narrative of victory. While the ultimately government failed to permanently place the veterans in this position, still, it set a negative tone for public perceptions of the battle.

International relations considerations also played a role in the poor treatment of the Hong Kong veterans. In 1951, the Allied powers and Japan signed a Treaty of Peace that officially ended the war in the Pacific. One provision provided Hong Kong POWs with a payment of \$1,995, or \$1.50 for every day of incarceration by Japan as compensation for their hardship.

---

<sup>67</sup> Stephen Winter, *Transitional Justice in Established Democracies: A Political Theory* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 131, 133.

<sup>68</sup> Viet Thanh Nguyen, *Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam and the Memory of War* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2016), 11.

Canada's official position was that this provision ended any issues of compensation that former POWs might assert. Winter has argued that this position stemmed from Canada's support for the rebuilding of Japan plus Japan's vital status as a Cold War ally.<sup>69</sup> An important distinction, particularly for former POWs, was that the payment did not come directly from Japan itself but from seized Japanese assets held in Canada.<sup>70</sup> As "C" Force vet Roger Cyr stated, "I feel that the day I was captured by the Japanese, that my personal rights were hacked to death. I became a non-person. I was treated worse than a dog. I further believe that when time came for the allied powers to settle with Japan and when they eventually did negotiate a Peace Treaty and when they did sign the Peace Protocol in 1952, my rights were totally ignored."<sup>71</sup> The lack of recognition of Japanese wrongdoing inspired the Hong Kong veterans to fight for many years.

#### Studies on "C" Force Veterans Health

Several studies sought to determine how veterans' incarceration had affected their mental and physical health. The investigations were carried out to determine what compensation the survivors were entitled to receive from the government. In December 1963, the House of Commons Committee on Veterans Affairs recommended undertaking a special study about the disabilities facing Hong Kong veterans.<sup>72</sup> Dr. H.J. Richardson examined the files of 100 ex-POWs. While five percent of Hong Kong veterans lacked any no disability due to their POW experience, the rest suffered in some way from their time as POWs. Notable was the high number of deaths attributed to atherosclerotic heart disease, while ninety-five surveyed veterans

---

<sup>69</sup> Winter, *Transitional Justice in Established Democracies: A Political Theory*, 133.

<sup>70</sup> Dave McIntosh, *Hell on Earth: Aging Faster Dying Sooner Canadian Prisoners of the Japanese During World War II*, Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1997), 258.

<sup>71</sup> Gregory A. Johnson, "The Canadian experience of the Pacific War: Betrayal and Forgotten Captivity," in *Forgotten Captives in Japanese-Occupied Asia*, eds. Karl Hack and Kevin Blackburn (London: Routledge, 2008), 137.

<sup>72</sup> LAC, Gingras fonds, MG31-J12, volume 13, file "Dr. H.J. Richardson Report of a Study of Disabilities and Problems of Hong Kong Veterans", page 3.



were receiving a pension for avitaminosis.<sup>73</sup> Richardson recommended that dental coverage be given to all Hong Kong veterans holding pensions for this condition, a recommendation that was implemented in May 1965. As Richardson argued:

the Commission consider giving effect to this evidence by conceding the possibility of a partial relationship between factors related to internment in the Far East as comprehended in entitlement for avitaminosis and the appearance of clinical A.S.H.D., such relationship to be assessed in terms consistent with the mortality experience of the group and with the evidence in the individual case, including the veteran's age and other features which in expert medical opinion are relevant to the assessment of relationship.

Richardson also suggested that the commission review old rulings that dismissed any link between death by heart disease and "C" Force service be reviewed as there was a likely connection between heart disease and the Hong Kong veterans' imprisonment.<sup>74</sup>

Beginning in 1985, the War Amputations of Canada and the HKVA undertook a general study of "C" Force veterans' health to support a claim before the United Nations (UN) to hold Japan monetarily responsible for its wartime actions. Dr. Gustave Gingras, who had served in the Canadian Army Medical Corps during the Second World War, was asked to review the files of 400 Hong Kong veterans to obtain compensation for them, or their widows, for their slave labour.<sup>75</sup> Gingras listed the numerous disorders suffered by veterans, including gastro-intestinal, foot, oral, ophthalmic, spinal, cardiovascular, respiratory, and urogenital issues. Avitaminosis, psychiatric issues, neurological impairment, and social problems were also noted. As Gingras concluded, "it is strongly believed that the surviving ex-POWs are 'fragile' persons and more

---

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., page 54, 57.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 69–70.

<sup>75</sup> McIntosh, *Hell on Earth*, 264. LAC, Gingras fonds, MG31-J12, volume 13, file "Cambon, Kenneth, Correspondence & Manuscript N.D., 1986–1987", letter from Gustave Gingras to Kenneth Cambon, 3 December 1986. Gingras fonds, MG31-J12, volume 12, file "G, Gingras and C. Chapman 'The Sequelae of Inhuman Conditions and Slave Labour Experienced by Members of Canadian Components of the Hong Kong Force, 1941–1945' Vol. 1 1987", page vii.

prone to suffer from a variety of physical, psychiatric and social disorders than the so-called normal members of the general population.”<sup>76</sup>

Conducting interviews with many veterans, Gingras asked numerous questions about their health, including, “is it your feeling that the incarceration in a Japanese prison camp has jeopardized your physical and mental health?” The physical effects were apparent to many of the veterans. Leon Cyr said that the four years of war and captivity took ten years off his life. Walter Grey retired from the postal office at age fifty-one due to poor health.<sup>77</sup> Many of the veterans felt there had been little to no change to their mental health. While the ongoing stigma surrounding mental health issues might explain such answers, the fact that some did not suffer from these issues cannot be discounted. However, other veterans were unsure about the effects of combat and imprisonment on their mental state. Frank Harding answered, “Physically, yes. Mentally—I would certainly say it has affected my relationship with my family. Maybe I am different...I don’t know.”<sup>78</sup> William Overton had to give up a supervisory position due to bad nerves.<sup>79</sup> John Simcoe answered, “Yes. I may appear calm, but I never am and I’ve been that way ever since. I have a great deal of apprehension and anxiety. If I am faced with stress I become very tense. I’m not what I should be.”<sup>80</sup> The veterans were also asked if they thought their fellow ex-POWs were aging faster than the average veteran. Eugene Matchett felt that his memory was affected for his older brother had a much better memory.<sup>81</sup> While Overton believed that some former POWs had died too soon due to their years in captivity, he believed that the death rates resembled those of

---

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., page 6.

<sup>77</sup> LAC, Gingras fonds, MG31-J12, volume 12, file “The Sequelae of Inhuman Conditions”, Appendix E, Cyr 7, Grey 9.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., Harding 8.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., Overton 9.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., Simcoe 8.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., Matchett 7.

other veterans past age sixty.<sup>82</sup> Joseph Gurski pointedly responded “Not only do they age fast—they are dying sooner.”<sup>83</sup>

The submission to the UN Human Rights Committee (UNHRC) was made in May 1987. As payments had been made as part the Treaty of Peace with Japan in 1952, both the Canadian and Japanese governments considered the matter closed. As such, the veterans received no support from Canada’s government. By 1991, the UNHRC found that the veterans had not exhausted the domestic options to pursue further compensation. Also, the UNHRC had no way to force the Japanese to pay.<sup>84</sup> Winter noted, “The veterans had lost. By then, three-quarters of the Hong Kong veterans were dead. The remaining veterans and widows had sought redress without success for nearly fifty years. Continued litigation would be risky, expensive, and difficult.”<sup>85</sup>

#### The Ongoing Search for Addition Japanese Payments

In 1993, Hong Kong veterans pushed the Canadian government to provide compensation if Japan would not. Five years later, the Canadian government compensated the surviving veterans and 400 widows with \$24,000 each. While “satisfied with the amount,” veterans were “upset that the money had to come from Canadian taxpayers instead of the Japanese government.”<sup>86</sup> Further, surviving “C” Force veterans were told in 2001 that they would receive 100 percent pension coverage, a decision that came far too late as many veterans were dead.<sup>87</sup> The pattern of “too little, too late” continued into the new millennium. Despite the common issues faced by the Hong Kong veterans, not all suffered equally. As Cambon noted, “I have

---

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., Overton 8.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., Gurski 7.

<sup>84</sup> McIntosh, *Hell on Earth*, 264, 266.

<sup>85</sup> Winter, *Transitional Justice in Established Democracies: A Political Theory*, 136.

<sup>86</sup> “‘Canadians captured in Hong Kong receive compensation,’ reported by Ron Charles, aired 11 December 1998,” Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, accessed 4 November 2020, <https://www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/canadians-captured-in-hong-kong-receive-compensation>.

<sup>87</sup> “Creation and Evolution of HKVCA,” HKVCA, accessed 8 October 2019, <https://www.hkvca.ca/aboutus/hkvcahist.php>.

been so lucky, but that is not the case with many of my comrades. The reasons for this are complex and not always entirely related to physical disabilities. Perhaps some never really escaped from those dreadful years. Freedom is more than a lack of a barbed wire fence. My heart goes out to them.”<sup>88</sup>

Japan finally issued an apology to the Hong Kong veterans on 8 December 2011. But the apology carried little weight for it was issued to HKVA President Philip Doddridge in a letter from Japan’s Ambassador to Canada, Kaoru Ishikawa. After stating that “the Japanese people should bear in mind that we must learn from the lesson of history, regard the facts of history as they are...” Ishikawa added, “I would like to state a heartfelt apology for our country having caused tremendous damage and pain to Canadian former POWs including you, who have undergone tragic experiences in the camps both in Japan and Hong Kong.” No monetary compensation came with this act of contrition.<sup>89</sup>

### The Hong Kong Veterans’ Association

The Hong Kong Veterans’ Association was born in 1965 as Hong Kong veterans felt the government was not helping them to cope with the special circumstances inflicted upon them by years spent in Japanese captivity. The HKVA, claiming that the disability pension formula did not support them, decried medical professionals for ignoring the unique illnesses veterans had developed due to avitaminosis and assorted other conditions. Most importantly, the veterans came together given the difficulties they faced as individuals in obtaining benefits from the government. Regional groups formed first, but eventually these groups combined to create a national organization. The HKVA constitution was ratified on 20 August 1965. The aims and

---

<sup>88</sup> Cambon, *Guest of Hirohito*, 117.

<sup>89</sup> “Japanese Apology Documents,” HKVCA, accessed 24 March 2020, <https://www.hkvca.ca/submissions/apology/Japanese%20apology%201.pdf>. “Creation and Evolution of HKVCA,” HKVCA, accessed 8 October 2019, <https://www.hkvca.ca/aboutus/hkvcahist.php>.

objectives of the association were “To assist all members in time of need, to maintain and improve social welfare and friendship among members and their dependants, to promote legislation for the physical well being of all members of all C Force or allied personnel who were imprisoned by Japan 1941–45.”<sup>90</sup>

HKVA branches created newsletters and magazines to keep members connected and informed. *The Roll Call*, the British Columbia branch’s newsletter, was edited and published quarterly by John Fonseca, a veteran of the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps. Several issues in the 1970s featured a section entitled “Well, Somebody’s Got to Say It...” that focused on issues surrounding pensions, veterans care, and the struggle to achieve monetary compensation from Japan. Much anger was directed at the Canadian government for its handling of these issues. But in the summer 1978 issue, the editors wrote, “we are extremely happy to announce that the long awaited for Bill for increased disability pensions to Hong Kong Veterans bringing them into line with certain categories of civil servants, will soon become effective. Maximum of \$310.76 increase on basic rate annually.”<sup>91</sup> One controversial element of *The Roll Call* was the comments made about the efforts of Japanese Canadians for redress from the Canadian government. As Fonseca opined in 1978:

\$75 millions for the cultural aspirations of national minorities (I wonder who they can be?). May I suggest to the Hon. Mister Minister that there are 190,000 veterans constituting a minority whose cultural aspirations are the maintenance of Canadian (and no way hyphenated either!) unity, honor and dignity from their representatives, apart from keeping body and soul together on a pittance.<sup>92</sup>

The mention of the hyphenated Canadians was a very thinly veiled attack on Japanese Canadians and their efforts for redress. By the late 1970s, Japanese Canadian groups were seeking an

---

<sup>90</sup> “Our Roots - Hong Kong Veterans' Association,” HKVCA, accessed 8 October 2019, <https://www.hkvca.ca/aboutus/hkvahist.php>.

<sup>91</sup> CWM, 19790285–001, *The Roll Call* Vol: 2:2 Summer 1978, 1.

<sup>92</sup> CWM, 19790285–001, *The Roll Call* Vol: 2:1 Spring 1978, 6.

official apology from Canada for their wartime removal from the Pacific coast and financial compensation for their seized property. By 1988, a redress agreement had been achieved. Each individual who was “subjected to internment, relocation, deportation, loss of property or otherwise deprived of the full enjoyment of fundamental rights...” was given \$21,000.<sup>93</sup> Hong Kong veterans were upset that no such compensation was given to them: “To most veterans the benefits gained is a right and not a reward—a right earned by blood, sweat and tears—and acknowledge this with appreciation, only as such.”<sup>94</sup> The HKVA carried out much good work for the Hong Kong veterans, but the organization was not without its controversy.

A new group soon took up the mantle of fighting for the Hong Kong veterans. The Hong Kong Veterans Commemorative Association (HKVCA) began at the 1993 national convention of the HKVA, when a new association, to be comprised of the children of the members of “C” Force, was proposed. The new organization stemmed from the concern that HKVA members were struggling to fulfill their mission given advancing age and health problems. The two organizations ran in parallel until 2001, when a semi-merger occurred at the national convention with the combining of the two groups’ administration and finances. The HKVCA defined its purpose as “to educate all Canadians on the role of Canada’s soldiers in the Battle of Hong Kong and on the effects of the internment of the battle’s survivors on both the soldiers and their families.” The goal to assist the Hong Kong veterans and their widows continued with the HKVCA.<sup>95</sup> The HKVA still participates in commemorative programs as veterans have an active role within the HKVCA to educate Canadian youth.<sup>96</sup>

---

<sup>93</sup> Roy Miki, *Redress: Inside the Japanese Canadian Call for Justice*, (Vancouver: Raincoast Books, 2004), 9.

<sup>94</sup> “1979 Vol 3:3 Roll Call,” Hong Kong Veterans Commemorative Association, accessed 24 February 2020, [https://www.hkvca.ca/newsltr/archives/Roll%20Call/RollCall3\\_3.pdf](https://www.hkvca.ca/newsltr/archives/Roll%20Call/RollCall3_3.pdf).

<sup>95</sup> “About Us,” HKVCA, accessed 8 October 2019, <https://www.hkvca.ca/aboutus/index.php>.

<sup>96</sup> “Creation and Evolution of HKVCA,” HKVCA, accessed 8 October 2019, <https://www.hkvca.ca/aboutus/hkvcahist.php>.

## Media Reactions to Hong Kong in the Postwar Era

While the Canadian media covered the various developments that had affected the Hong Kong veterans over the second half of the twentieth century, many of these works repeated the myths and misinformation that have plagued the Battle of Hong Kong's story since 1941. In a 1 July 1968 article in *Maclean's*, Ian Adams covered the Battle of Hong Kong and the veterans who fought in it. Adams' goal apparently was to anger his reading audience about the poor treatment meted out to Hong Kong veterans for he wrote that "here for the first time is a step-by-step documentation of the stupidity and folly that sent 2,000 untrained and ill-equipped men to defend an island on the other side of the world that everyone—except the heads of British army Intelligence—knew was indefensible."<sup>97</sup> This incorrect assertion is rather puzzling for Adams had quoted Stacey's official history which had laid out the process that had sent Canadian troops to Hong Kong. Employing hindsight liberally to critique the political and military leaders, Adams called the Japanese attack on Hong Kong "obviously inevitable" and repeated Drew's argument that a new and more militaristic regime in Japan installed in October 1941 had made war a certainty.<sup>98</sup> Adams quoted Captain Wilfred Queen-Hughes of the Grenadiers who said that "we got the odds and sods, 16-year-old boys, men who had been in uniform two weeks, criminals. Literally the sweepings of the depot. Men no other command wanted and had rejected. And we had to take them because they were forced on us at 24 hours' notice. My God! When they marched them in there was even a hunchback." But Adams rightly noted that "in the years since World War II the Canadian government has acted as if it wished the Hong Kong survivors would just go away."<sup>99</sup> A sharp anecdote concluded the article:

---

<sup>97</sup> Ian Adams, "For King and Canada," *Maclean's*, 1 July 1968, 31.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 42, 31, 43.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 43, 30.

When *Maclean's* began researching this article we started at the historical section of the Department of National Defense. There, in an interview with researcher Philip Forsyth-Smith, Colonel D.J. Goodspeed said that "If you get around to talking to surviving veterans of the Hong Kong battle, you must appreciate that all these men are a little balmy after their experience in the P.O.W. camps. Therefore, don't put too much stock in what they have to say."<sup>100</sup>

The above passage attempts to highlight a supposed cover up of Hong Kong and government callousness toward "C" Force's veterans. As Goodspeed was an official DND historian and a government official, his view on this subject should carry more weight than the opinion of others not involved with the government. Goodspeed was not the first member of the DND to view Hong Kong veterans with little sympathy for as W.H.S. Macklin, as Adjutant-General of the Canadian Army, called POWs "debris of past wars" and a waste of time for DND in 1950.<sup>101</sup> Macklin's part in the selecting of the units for "C" Force may explain why he wished this issue would die down. While governmental goals and actions were not as nefarious as presented in Adams' article, the poor treatment of the veterans was all too true.

In 1981, David Ricardo Williams wrote an article on the 1948 release of the Maltby Despatch. Citing the political battles in the House of Commons and the Hong Kong Inquiry, Williams noted that "what Mr. Drew said was unassailable: an uninformed Government and a careless Defence Department mounted an expedition of relatively untrained troops without vehicles to a potential theatre of war."<sup>102</sup> Williams claimed there was government negligence after Foulkes had supported Drew's position in 1948. When the debate reached the House of Commons, Claxton, responding to a question from Progressive Conservative Member of Parliament John Diefenbaker, stated there had been no consultations with the British. Days later,

---

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>101</sup> Vance, *Objects of Concern*, 237.

<sup>102</sup> David Ricardo Williams, "The Hong Kong Coverup of Bungling and Deceit," *The Globe and Mail*, 29 December 1981, 7.



King refused to table all correspondence about the Maltby Despatch and Drew's letter. Accusing King of taking part in a cover up, Williams outlined that while King had stated that there was no information to suggest war was coming in late November 1941, he seemed to have forgotten a speech he had given in October 1941, the same day that "C" Force had left Vancouver, in which he had said that war in the Pacific might start any day. Williams concluded his article by saying:

One can understand the Government in 1942 maintaining its innocence. It was wartime. But one can find no excuse for the shabby performance of Mr. King and Mr. Claxton in 1948. Their political partisanship was as great as that of Mr. Drew, but while in his desire to go for the Government's jugular he may have exaggerated the extent of mismanagement, he at least told the truth.<sup>103</sup>

While Williams was right to castigate government officials for the dodging of questions and outright lies in 1948, George Drew had not told the truth.

An 18 November 1991 *Maclean's* article by Rae Corelli offered an overview of the fighting in Hong Kong, POW time in Japanese captivity, and some veterans' experiences when they returned to Hong Kong. While Corelli called the reinforcement of Hong Kong "Ottawa's miscalculation," which it undoubtedly was, he did not mention the benefit of hindsight when making this statement. Corelli also wrote that "now, a half-century later, they [Hong Kong veterans] form the rapidly dwindling Hong Kong Veterans' Association of Canada. Denied compensation by the Japanese and largely ignored by military history, which prefers to dwell on tales of glory." Corelli also cited Hong Kong veterans such as Robert Manchester who asserted that "every time I walk through those hills'...I say to the people with me, 'God damn it, if we'd had an ounce of leadership and some equipment, we could have knocked the living socks right off those little bastards.'"<sup>104</sup> The focus on poor leadership and equipment was a continuing trend of discussion on the Battle of Hong Kong both before and after Corelli's article. Indeed, many of

---

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Rae Corelli "The 17 Day War," *Maclean's*, 18 November 1991, 46, 47.

Corelli's claims echo those found in *The Valour and the Horror* series which aired a few weeks after the article's publication.

### The "C" Force Memorial Wall

On 15 August 2009, when the "C" Force Memorial Wall was unveiled, Philip Doddridge remarked "and so, until this stone disintegrates and returns to dust, we will be remembered"<sup>105</sup> The wall lists all the members of "C" Force commemorating its participation in the Battle of Hong Kong. The HKVCA spearheaded the effort, launching a fundraising campaign in 2007 that sought donations to construct the memorial. Both members of the HKVCA and businesses were approached for donations.<sup>106</sup> While the National Capital Commission (NCC) offered land, it only allowed construction to begin after the original design was changed; the NCC had argued that the design "wasn't innovative enough and had to be improved." These changes doubled the cost of the project.<sup>107</sup> The fundraising brochure for the memorial noted that "when the Hong Kong Veterans Commemorative Association was formed, the veterans asked us to create a memorial so that the Canadians who fought in Hong Kong, and what they experienced, would not be forgotten. We can now fulfill our promise to the Hong Kong Veterans."<sup>108</sup>

While commemorative efforts for "C" Force were conducted in the early twenty-first century, the impetus came from private citizens, not Canada's government. This was another example of the othering of the Hong Kong veterans, or as Nguyen has said, "not satisfied with being disremembered, we who are others find that it is up to us to remember ourselves."<sup>109</sup> The

---

<sup>105</sup> "Memorial Wall – Speeches at the Unveiling."

<sup>106</sup> "Fundraising Brochure," HKVCA, accessed 8 October 2019, <https://www.hkvca.ca/Memorial%20Wall/archives/Brochure%20Memorial%20Wall%20phase2%20revised.pdf>.

<sup>107</sup> "Canadians in Hong Kong," Government of Canada, accessed 8 October 2019, [https://www.canadainternational.gc.ca/hong\\_kong/bilateral\\_relations\\_bilaterales/remembers-souvenirs.aspx?lang=eng](https://www.canadainternational.gc.ca/hong_kong/bilateral_relations_bilaterales/remembers-souvenirs.aspx?lang=eng). "Remembering 'the forgotten men,'" *Winnipeg Free Press*, 2 August 2009, A8.

<sup>108</sup> "Fundraising Brochure," HKVCA.

<sup>109</sup> Nguyen, *Nothing Ever Dies*, 63.

Hong Kong veterans took their commemoration into their own hands. There was little government help aside from the land donation. As Winter has argued:

Canada's failure to acknowledge its wrongdoing is underscored by its role in memorializing Hong Kong veterans. In the late 2000s, Canada provided land for a privately funded memorial in Ottawa. This was not an unqualified act of public munificence. Not only is the war memorial an unusually private initiative, permission for construction was withheld until the commemorative association agreed to fund a design that was twice its original budget. The monument briefly describes the battle and lists those involved. It does not discuss wrongdoing.<sup>110</sup>

While Winter's demand that the government admit guilt for sending "C" Force was misplaced, the lack of government assistance further demonstrated the government's ongoing insistence to downplay the Battle of Hong Kong.

### Conclusion

The deleterious legacy associated with the Battle of Hong Kong in Canada did not develop naturally, but it persisted because many individuals worked toward that goal. Some wanted to safeguard reputations, others sought political gain. Officers such as Maltby and Wallis shaped the legacy by blaming "C" Force for Hong Kong's loss in their reports and recollections. Under pressure from Canada's military leadership to downplay the Hong Kong story, C.P. Stacey was restrained in his writing about the battle while the fight over history spilled into the Canadian House of Commons. Despite government actions to limit the recognition and care of the "C" Force veterans, political pressure worked to the Hong Kong veterans' advantage, the awarding of the Pacific Star and the important Pacific campaign pay were prime examples. Upon returning to Canada, the veterans faced many difficulties, including physical and mental health problems. The reintegration into civilian life was not easy for all. To fight for better treatment from the government, the veterans formed the HKVA, but they still faced an uphill battle for

---

<sup>110</sup> Winter, *Transitional Justice in Established Democracies: A Political Theory*, 138–139.

recognition and proper government support. The overarching negativity surrounding the Battle of Hong Kong had real consequences as suffering was treated as the “debris of past wars.” It took many years to gain full pensions for all Hong Kong veterans, a largely empty gesture from the government as many veterans had died. It was not until the release of *The Valour and the Horror*, discussed below, that any changes toward the Hong Kong veterans by the government began. This chapter adds to the battle’s historiography by examining one of the most striking demonstrations of the battle’s negative legacy, how the HKVCA spearheaded the creation of the Hong Kong Memorial Wall. Clearly, the government, even in the twenty-first century, still did not want to provide full support for this commemoration and even hampered the HKVCA’s efforts. The Battle of Hong Kong’s negative legacy is still strong, even seven decades after the fighting had ended.

## CHAPTER 8

### THE STRUGGLE FOR HISTORY: THE BATTLE OF HONG KONG AND *THE VALOUR AND THE HORROR*

The legacy of the Battle of Hong Kong was scarred in the early 1990s by one of the most controversial historical works about the Canadian experience in the Second World War. *The Valour and the Horror* television documentary series placed the Hong Kong story in the public square in a dramatic way. Brian and Terence McKenna, the creators of the series, employed a usable past to fit their preconceived ideas about Canada's war, leading to a plethora of historic errors and incorrect assumptions. Through the Hong Kong episode, entitled "Savage Christmas," the McKennas spread the negative legacy of the Battle of Hong Kong to its largest audience in decades. As this episode was the first exposure to the battle for many Canadians, it left a lasting impression. The McKennas simply recycled old arguments made by Ontario politician George Drew in 1942 and presented them to the largest audience since the newspaper press coverage in the 1940s. As historian John Ferris has argued:

The claims of "Savage Christmas" about why 2000 Canadians were sent to Hong Kong are false. They are a Canadian version of the conspiracy theories that have surrounded American (and, to a lesser degree, British) decisions ever since 7 December 1941 – that [American President Franklin] Roosevelt or [British Prime Minister Winston] Churchill knew about the attack on Pearl Harbor and let it happen for their own fell purposes. The McKennas' view does not even have the charm of novelty. The Canadian politician George Drew formulated and publicized virtually identical views in the 1940s, views that received wide currency in the press.<sup>1</sup>

An immediate wave of protest followed the release of the series, notably from veterans who were "furious over the seemingly distorted portrayal of their actions during the war, which

---

<sup>1</sup> John Ferris, "Savage Christmas: The Canadians at Hong Kong," in *The Valour and The Horror Revisited*, eds. David J. Bercuson and S.F. Wise (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), 118.

in many cases were questioned against the moral relativism of the early 1990s.”<sup>2</sup> Though the McKennas had defenders, they faced criticism from journalists, academics, and the Canadian public alike. But as the series’ other two episodes incited much more criticism, many assumed the McKennas were right about Hong Kong. In this chapter I argue that “Savage Christmas” was just as error prone as the other more controversial episodes in the series. This issue, plus Brian McKenna’s strident reactions to criticism, requires a full examination of the episode. Some good did emerge from the storm of controversy created by *The Valour and the Horror*, notably a scholarly revisionist response that focused on the reasons for the “C” Force’s despatch. But few tried to correct the errors made in the episode about the battle itself, a task that will be performed in this chapter. More positively, *The Valour and the Horror* kept the Hong Kong veterans in the collective memory of Canadians.

#### Academic Historians’ Criticism of Historical Documentaries

Academic historians often have criticized historical documentaries. As Canadian historian Robert Vogel has argued, “the question of evidence is really not important, films and television do not have to provide footnotes, indeed under no circumstances must the evidence, if indeed it is looked for at all, be allowed to sway the opinions and prejudices of the script writers.”<sup>3</sup> Historian J.L. Granatstein has contended that “most of the media use history only to search for villainy, if they use it at all, or else they mangle it beyond recognition to prove a contemporary argument.”<sup>4</sup> Canadian historian Tim Cook too has critiqued the creators of *The Valour and the Horror*, stating that “documentarians are not required to present all sides equally

---

<sup>2</sup> Tim Cook, *Clio’s Warriors: Canadian Historians and the Writing of the World Wars* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006), 227.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Vogel, “Some Reflections on the Teaching of Military History in Canada,” *Canadian Military History* 1, no. 1 (1992), 103.

<sup>4</sup> J.L. Granatstein, *Who Killed Canadian History? Revised Edition* (Toronto: Harper Perennial, 2007), 3.

in a film, but it is poor history to pretend to do so. Historians must not try to hold the past accountable to the present: it must be understood in its own contextual system of values and historical events.”<sup>5</sup> Such critiques all apply to *The Valour and the Horror* for its producers seemed intent on manipulating established historical practices to create their series. Vogel also touched upon the moral indignation of the McKennas:

The outrageous nature of this series, in my opinion, did not lie in the interpretation of events offered by the script writers, although it was difficult at times to know how these interpretations were reached. What emerged was that the writers believed themselves to be the first people on earth to have observed that war killed people and was therefore a ‘bad’ thing.<sup>6</sup>

While Vogel was surprised that the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) would allow such a poorly researched program to appear on the network, his criticism was not directed at the network. Instead, it was “...levelled at the comparatively limited place that military history still has in our curricula and that as such each generation of graduates leaves our universities woefully ignorant of an important aspect of the past even when the individual student’s specialty in university was History.”<sup>7</sup> Granatstein also critiqued the lack of history education, declaring that “a CBC series such as *The Valour and the Horror*, which pretended to be a dramatized documentary about Canadian participation in the Second World War, created a furor, largely because it had no context. Only federal agencies fundamentally unaware of history could have funded such programming.”<sup>8</sup> While such criticisms are valid, they speak to a deeper issue for academic military historians: academics wield rather little influence on how Canadians view their history. More must be done to engage with the public to prevent further myth-making

---

<sup>5</sup> Cook, *Clio Warriors*, 229.

<sup>6</sup> Vogel, “Some Reflections on the Teaching of Military History in Canada,” 103.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

<sup>8</sup> Granatstein, *Who Killed Canadian History?*, 14–15.

works like *The Valour and the Horror* from dominating how Canadians' understand their history.

*The Valour and the Horror*

Australian historian Craig Wilcox has offered two insights about the Australian relationship with Britain in the post-colonial world that also apply to Canada. As Wilcox has claimed, "Australians were inclined to imagine themselves as having been victims of the Empire rather than privileged provincial members of it. A belated war of independence from Britain began, fought on the cultural front and against an unresisting, indeed moribund enemy. One of the war's key campaigns was a struggle for the collective memory of wars fought in khaki. It ended in resounding victory. Defeats such as Gallipoli and Singapore came to be interpreted in magazines, novels and films as the consequence of British bungling, British bastardry, even British betrayal."<sup>9</sup> A better description of *The Valour and the Horror* cannot be written.

*The Valour and the Horror*, the most controversial documentary series in Canadian military history, filmed three episodes about the Battle of Hong Kong, the Normandy campaign, and Bomber Command's aerial offensive against Germany. The series, co-produced by Galafilm and the National Film Board of Canada (NFB), received substantial funding from numerous sources. The CBC invested \$960,000, Radio Canada \$200,000, NFB \$400,000, Telefilm Canada \$900,000, the distributor Alliance International put in \$200,000, while Galafilm added \$180,000.<sup>10</sup> Both of the McKenna brothers had extensive journalistic experience. Brian McKenna was a founding producer of CBC's current affairs program, *The Fifth Estate*, Terence

---

<sup>9</sup> Craig Wilcox, "Breaker Morant: The Murderer as Martyr," in *Zombie Myths of Australian Military History*, ed. Craig Stockings (Sydney, Australia: University of New South Wales, 2010), 41.

<sup>10</sup> The Senate of Canada, *The Valour and the Horror: Report of the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology* (January 1993), 42.



was a correspondent on *The Journal*.<sup>11</sup> But such experience did little to buttress the validity of the series.

### “Savage Christmas”

When the Senate of Canada’s hearings over *The Valour and the Horror* paused for the summer of 1992, Brian McKenna called “the hearings blasphemy and said he’s been through ‘an ordeal by fire.’ Because people can’t find errors in his films, he said, they want to smear him, the independent producers, Galafilm of Montreal and the CBC.”<sup>12</sup> Brian McKenna left no room for debate about the series’ interpretations of historical events, nor did he display an openness to engage in the normal back and forth debate that often accompanies the release of historical works. Despite McKenna’s ridiculous claim that the hearings amounted to blasphemy, a critique of the Hong Kong episode is not only accepted but needed.

“Savage Christmas” aired on 12 January 1992. It blended footage of two Hong Kong veterans visiting Japan and Hong Kong with both archival film and footage of actors reading statements supposedly said by participants and witnesses to the battle in December 1941. The episode presented the Hong Kong reinforcement as a conspiracy between the British and Canadian governments to send Canadian troops into harm’s way. Noting British Prime Minister Winston Churchill’s January 1941 rejection of a call to reinforce Hong Kong and then his later shift to support reinforcement, the filmmakers claimed that Churchill, unwilling to risk British lives, tricked Canada into providing troops. The filmmakers also claimed that “the details of what happened to these soldiers were, for a long time, suppressed by the Canadian government”

---

<sup>11</sup> Mallory Schwartz, “War on the Air: CBC-TV and Canada’s Military, 1952–1992,” (PhD diss., University of Ottawa, 2014), 294.

<sup>12</sup> John Ward, “Veterans trade insults at Senate hearing on war documentary,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 27 June 1992, 3.

and “the terrible story is known to very few Canadians”<sup>13</sup> While the latter claim may be true, the claim of suppression is patently false as made evident by the Inquiry in 1942, the publication of the official summary in 1948, and the release of the official history on the battle in 1955, just ten years after the war’s end. This was hardly suppression. While the federal government oft tried to downplay the events surrounding the battle, its failures to do so each time it failed brought more attention to the story of Hong Kong. Nor were veterans prevented from telling their stories. By claiming that few Canadians knew about the Battle of Hong Kong, the McKennas endeavoured to establish themselves as the only legitimate authority about this sad chapter of Canadian history.

This episode was the least controversial of the series for the McKennas did not criticize “C” Force’s role in the fighting, and they presented the suffering endured by the troops in Japanese captivity sympathetically. Also, because the Hong Kong veterans were far less numerous than their Bomber Command and Normandy compatriots, they had less of a voice in the broader debate about the Second World War. According to a Hong Kong Veterans Commemorative Association teaching plan, “Savage Christmas” was “by comparison, largely ignored. The lack of response seemed to mirror the Canadian attitude to the entire Pacific situation.”<sup>14</sup> But this did not mean the episode lacked major faults. The claims made in the episode about “C” Force’s despatch have been debunked by many academics, efforts that will receive attention below. However, such literature often did not discuss the actual Battle for Hong Kong.

---

<sup>13</sup> *The Valour and the Horror*, episode 6, “Savage Christmas,” directed by Brian McKenna, written by Terence McKenna and Brian McKenna, aired 12 January 1992, on CBC, [https://www.nfb.ca/film/savage\\_christmas\\_hong\\_kong\\_1941/](https://www.nfb.ca/film/savage_christmas_hong_kong_1941/).

<sup>14</sup> “Lesson Three - The Valour and The Horror – ‘A Savage Christmas: The Fall of Hong Kong,’” Hong Kong Veterans Commemorative Association, accessed 21 October 2020, [https://www.hkvca.ca/teacherszone/en/lessons/TLE034%20LESSONS%20THREE\\_FOUR.pdf](https://www.hkvca.ca/teacherszone/en/lessons/TLE034%20LESSONS%20THREE_FOUR.pdf).

The coverage of the fighting in “Savage Christmas” included numerous historical errors and took creative liberties by using actor portrayals. The filmmakers claimed that the Royal Rifles were defending the beaches when the Japanese landed on Hong Kong Island on 18 December. This assertion was incorrect for the 5/7 Rajputs, a British Indian Army unit, engaged the Japanese landing while the Royal Rifles sat in a reserve position. Only one platoon of the Royal Rifles was sent forward to the coastline, something the filmmakers would have known if they had read official historian C.P. Stacey’s account of the battle.<sup>15</sup> The episode’s narrator claimed that Sergeant John Payne had telephoned headquarters to report the Japanese landings, only to be denied artillery support by an arrogant British officer who said the Japanese could not possibly be on the island. As the actor who portrayed Payne stated, “we’re commanded by these British imperial types. Some of them just don’t trust us colonials. He actually told me that I must be dreaming.”<sup>16</sup> While a version of these events did occur, Payne was nowhere near the initial Japanese landing. With this scene, the filmmakers demonstrated their anti-British views plus their willingness to manipulate historical events to fit their agenda.

The McKennas also present the Canadians as fighting in isolation for they rarely mention the British, Indian, or local troops battling in the colony. The filmmakers were not alone in this predilection for, as Tony Banham, a Hong Kong-based historian, has noted, this omission was a common occurrence in the Canadian literature on the battle.<sup>17</sup> The use of actor portrayals in the episode was also troubling and misleading. Payne, for example, having been executed after a failed escape attempt from a POW camp, could not have relayed the words used in the episode. The portrayal of Nursing Sister Kay Christie is another example of how events were created for

---

<sup>15</sup> Tony Banham, *Not the Slightest Chance: The Defence of Hong Kong, 1941* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003), 103.

<sup>16</sup> *The Valour and the Horror*, episode 1, “Savage Christmas.”

<sup>17</sup> Tony Banham, “A Historiography of C Force,” *Canadian Military History* 24 no. 2 (2015): 239.

television drama. Shown with tears welling in her eyes while stating that lectures given on route to Hong Kong instructed the men how to load a rifle, Christie reputedly stated “honestly, it’s just appalling.” as she looked away from the camera in disgust.<sup>18</sup> But the filmmakers failed to mention that Christie had told her interviewers that the troops were only going for garrison duty. This segment clearly was filmed to evoke audience emotions.

The Hong Kong episode is rife with simple errors that could have been avoided with proper research. A tracking shot of the hills north of Kowloon included a voiceover narration that wrongly explained that the Gin Drinker’s Line was a white ribbon of concrete. But the shot actually featured the MacLehose Walking Trail, not the Gin Drinker’s Line, which was covered in white dust and ran a similar course to the defensive line.<sup>19</sup> As previously mentioned, this defensive line was a loosely connected system of concrete machine gun bunkers, trenches, and other strong points. As Banham noted, the filmmakers did not even bother to visit Hong Kong in order to study the colony’s complex topography.<sup>20</sup> The narrator described the Gin Drinker’s Line as the British Army preparing for a First World War-style battle. But the Gin Drinker’s Line had never been intended to be a permanent and impregnable defensive line. Instead, its purpose was to slow any Japanese attack upon Hong Kong. As Canadian historian David Bercuson has argued, the fortifications in the New Territories did not mean the British commanders thought they were re-fighting the Great War. Fortifications simply were prepared positions to help resist an attack.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> *The Valour and the Horror*, episode 1, “Savage Christmas.”

<sup>19</sup> Banham, *Not the Slightest Chance*, 240–241.

<sup>20</sup> Banham, “A Historiography of C Force,” 241.

<sup>21</sup> David J. Bercuson, “The Valour and the Horror: A Historical Analysis,” in *The Valour and The Horror Revisited*, eds. David J. Bercuson and S.F. Wise (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1994), 37.

The episode's depiction of the fighting was where most of the misinterpretations and errors were made. The mainland's evacuation was wrongly presented in the episode as a hurried, unordered process.<sup>22</sup> Several errors were made in relation to Company Sergeant Major John Osborn's actions that earned him a Victoria Cross. The filmmakers claimed that he was defending the Wong Nei Chong Gap when Osborn, in fact, was on Mount Butler. They also claimed that Osborn died two days before Christmas when he was killed on the 19<sup>th</sup>, very odd mistakes considering the citation for Osborn's Victoria Cross contains the correct data. Furthermore, given the McKennas' focus on the bravery of individual Canadian soldiers during the battle, one would think such details would have been important to their research team. Finally, the narrator claimed that on Christmas Day, the Royal Rifles were "ordered by the British to make a suicide charge to retake the high ground around St. Stephen's. They were annihilated." While that attack did occur, the statement's tone and sentiment are misleading. Brigadier Cedric Wallis was British, and the filmmakers' statement provided no context about the attack, thus making it appear as if Canadians were purposefully sent to their deaths by callous imperial masters. The attack was not designed to be a suicide charge. Furthermore, Sergeant George MacDonell recounted that his unit initially pushed the Japanese back, only to be overwhelmed subsequently by superior Japanese numbers and firepower. Calling attention to these errors is not merely academic nit picking of popular history. While varied interpretations are inevitable in any historical debate, getting key details wrong—such as the position of an infantry battalion—demonstrates the lack of basic research that went into the episode and allows one to question the historical validity of the documentary series.

### The McKennas' Motivations for Making *The Valour and the Horror*

---

<sup>22</sup> *The Valour and the Horror*, episode 1, "Savage Christmas." C.P. Stacey, *Six Years of War: The Army in Canada, Britain and the Pacific* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1955), 468.

A family connection to the First World War inspired the McKennas to create *The Valour and the Horror*. When Brian McKenna and his daughter attended the 1987 Remembrance Day ceremony at the Westmount Cenotaph in Montréal, his daughter noticed the name of Adrian Harold McKenna, a soldier killed in Belgium in 1916. Adrian McKenna was Brian's paternal great uncle. His interest piqued, "McKenna went to Westmount Library, where he asked for a record of those named on the memorial. There was none. The research librarian suggested City Hall, but no records were found there either. 'They didn't know who the men were. Their stories were lost.'" The authors of the companion book, of the same name, to the series wrote "this was the voice from the past that made Brian McKenna determined to learn all he could about the Canadian experience of war."<sup>23</sup> He felt compelled to seek out stories about the common soldier.

But the inspiration behind Brian McKenna's choice of subject matter began well before his discovery of his family connection to the Great War. In a podcast around the 2016 release of *Newfoundland at Armageddon*, about the Newfoundland Regiment's attack at Beaumont-Hamel on the first day of the Somme Offensive, McKenna told the interviewer that he was bullied as a child. McKenna tell the interviewer "because I was pushed, I push back" The interviewer responded with "so we can blame the bullies, is that what you're saying" McKenna responded "yeah." It was not just his childhood that inspired his filmmaking. As a newspaper editor at Loyola College in the 1960s, McKenna, who protested the Vietnam War on the university campus, claimed the College tried to shut him down.<sup>24</sup> McKenna's experiences with the anti-war movement of the 1960s clearly influenced his journalism. After college, he was assigned to cover

---

<sup>23</sup> Merrily Weisbord and Marilyn Simonds Mohr, *The Valour and the Horror: The Untold Story of Canadians in the Second World War* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 1991), 1-3.

<sup>24</sup> "Brian McKenna on Armageddon, Newfoundland and the Battle of the Somme," Rabble, accessed 7 August 2021, <https://rabble.ca/podcasts/shows/face2face/2016/06/brian-mckenna-on-armageddon-newfoundland-and-battle-somme>. Weisbord and Simonds Mohr, *The Valour and the Horror*, 2

the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Battle of Normandy in 1969. In 1992, journalist Ted Shaw wrote that on this trip McKenna “frowned on the reminiscences of former generals and old war correspondents. The story he filed suggested it was better to forget about old wars.” But criticized for such claims and having a change of heart about how war should be discussed, McKenna returned to Normandy five years later to “make amends” for his previous remarks about the Second World War. This time, he told the stories of the enlisted men and women, not the generals and lawmakers, “the real story of war — an ugly, inglorious story.”<sup>25</sup> McKenna shifted for a general anti-war viewpoint to a focus on the common soldier. What continued was his anti-leadership viewpoint.

Brian’s first documentary about Canadian military history was released in the late 1980s. He convinced his brother Terence to jointly write *The Killing Ground*, a documentary about the First World War, which aired on the CBC in November 1988.<sup>26</sup> Displaying many of the same tropes, themes, and production elements found in *The Valour and the Horror*, the program employed actors in costume to read supposed historical accounts of veterans. The documentary had a clear anti-war, anti-leadership, and anti-British message.<sup>27</sup> In a 1992 article for *Maclean’s*, Brian McKenna explained that:

To bring the story to a new generation, we proposed to the CBC a production that came to be known as *The Killing Ground*, a two-hour film documenting the First World War. Despite its often controversial nature, it was acclaimed by veterans, critics and the military as a fair and moving assessment. After its broadcast near Remembrance Day, 1988, we investigated the possibility of doing similar films on the next war. . . . We made a deliberate decision to base the films on the accounts, not of generals or historians, but on the stories told by ordinary Canadian men and women who saw combat, and to cover the story as if it were happening now.<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> Ted Shaw, “Canada at war: repentant reporter seeks terrible truth,” *Vancouver Sun*, 10 January 1992, 36.

<sup>26</sup> Victor Dwyer, “The hell of battle: A series explores a war’s bleakest chapters,” *Maclean’s*, 13 January 1992, 48.

<sup>27</sup> Schwartz, “‘War on the Air’: CBC-TV and Canada’s Military, 1952–1992,” 296–298.

<sup>28</sup> Brian McKenna, “Why they made Valour; Journalist Brian McKenna wanted his children and others to know more than just the official history of World War II,” *Montreal Gazette*, 11 November 1992, B3.

In their response to the CBC Ombudsman Report on *The Valour and the Horror*, the McKennas explicitly linked the two series, asserting that “*The Killing Ground* employed exactly the same techniques of documentary and drama as *The Valour and the Horror*. This film on the First World War was the template for the three films on the Second World War.”<sup>29</sup>

Brian McKenna made numerous dubious claims when explaining the inspiration behind *The Valour and the Horror*. Some of his comments, bordering on paranoia, implied there was a conspiracy by historians and others to keep the war’s true nature hidden. In a January 1992 article published just before the release of *The Valour and the Horror*, Brian asserted that “historians don’t understand what we journalists understand fundamentally, that if you ask the toughest questions, everyone will be served and there will be liberation.” Further, “historians screwed up in telling us about the war. If you fail to tell the whole story, then you’re lying.”<sup>30</sup> In 1994, discussing the telling of stories about the war, McKenna alleged, “If we don’t do it, who else will?” He claimed “the field will be left to the propagandists. The stories of our war are too important to be left just to the military historians and the Legion.”<sup>31</sup> Brian “wanted to strip away the glory...and discover what really happened to the people who were there.”<sup>32</sup> McKenna postulated that some sort of conspiracy of silence existed around the war, a claim so outlandish that it must have been made to garner attention for the series.

---

<sup>29</sup> Brian and Terence McKenna, “Response to the CBC Ombudsman Report, November 10, 1992, Galafilm Inc.,” in *The Valour and The Horror Revisited*, eds. David J. Bercuson and S.F. Wise (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1994), 76.

<sup>30</sup> Shaw, “Canada at war,” 36.

<sup>31</sup> Tony Atherton, “Controversial film-maker to keep same format for new war docu-dramas; Brian McKenna has no apologies for *The Valour and the Horror*,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 24 November 1994, D2.

<sup>32</sup> Dwyer, “The hell of battle,” 48.



Many academic historians have offered their opinions on the McKennas' motivations to create the series. According to Jonathan F. Vance, the McKennas had not done anything especially novel:

When the McKenna brothers produced their now notorious documentary on Canada's war effort, they chose to focus on the disastrous defence of Hong Kong, the disastrous raid on Nuremberg, and the disastrous battles for Verrières Ridge. They were strongly criticized for their choices, but the McKennas were simply articulating Canada's social memory of the war, a memory characterized by a marked reluctance to celebrate success. Many Canadians know of the failed raid on Dieppe. How many know of the success of Canadian soldiers at Ortona or in Operation Wellhit?<sup>33</sup>

Having declined to help research the series, Canadian military historian Terry Copp declared that "it was clear from our previous conversations that he [Brian McKenna] had already decided what he wanted to say and the job of researcher was to provide material that could be used in developing his personal interpretation of the war."<sup>34</sup> Historians S.F. Wise and David J. Bercuson concluded that the series intended "to tell the true story of Canadian participation in the war for the first time, a story of idealistic young men betrayed by their commanders. The McKennas seemed to be trying to condemn the war, and to praise those who were not professional soldiers but had volunteered to fight out of the purest motives."<sup>35</sup> The McKennas were clearly influenced by author Carl Vincent's 1981 book as they thank Vincent in the credits for contributing to the episode.<sup>36</sup> As noted previously, Vincent's poorly researched and overly nationalistic book blamed numerous government and military officials for sending Canadian troops to Hong Kong. In their response to the Ombudsman Report, the McKennas called Vincent the leading scholar on

---

<sup>33</sup> Jonathan F. Vance, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997), 10–11.

<sup>34</sup> Terry Copp, "A Brief to the Veterans Affairs Committee of the Senate of Canada Concerning the CBC Series 'The Valour and the Horror' June 1992," 2.

<sup>35</sup> S.F. Wise and David J. Bercuson, "Introduction," in *The Valour and The Horror Revisited*, eds. David J. Bercuson and S.F. Wise (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), 4.

<sup>36</sup> *The Valour and the Horror*, episode 1, "Savage Christmas."

Hong Kong.<sup>37</sup> But Vincent's very thin bibliography only listed thirteen primary documents taken from British records, and Vincent did not accurately portray the strategic context surrounding "C" Force despatch to Hong Kong. Relying more on emotion than actual historical research, Vincent's book was firmly entrenched in the "poor bloody infantry" narrative. Vincent represented "C" Force's as a poorly led, untrained rabble, a theme that the McKennas emulated in their documentary. Not only did the filmmakers ignore much evidence, the source they relied on was poorly constructed.

### CBC Investigation into the Series

The controversy over *The Valour and the Horror* incited several investigations into the series. The Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission, receiving complaints about the series, launched an investigation that "concluded that the programs met fully the 'balance' and fairness provisions of federal broadcast regulations..."<sup>38</sup> The CBC conducted its own inquiry into *The Valour and the Horror*, appointing William Morgan, a long-time CBC producer, as ombudsman. Morgan, using commentaries from historians David Bercuson, Sydney Wise, and Denis Richards, also consulted two other figures suggested by the McKennas: Stephen Harris, a historian at the Department of National Defence, and Vincent. Making an important distinction, Morgan reiterated that Vincent was an archivist and an author, not a historian.<sup>39</sup> Morgan also claimed that while Vincent found the overall program to be accurate in theme and content, Vincent objected to the "knowingly" descriptor used for the government's actions of putting Canadians in harm's way.<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup> Brian and Terence McKenna, "Response to the CBC Ombudsman Report," 76.

<sup>38</sup> Graham Carr, "Rules of Engagement: Public History and the Drama of Legitimation," *The Canadian Historical Review* 86, no. 2 (2005): 320.

<sup>39</sup> William Morgan, "Report of the CBC Ombudsman," in *The Valour and The Horror Revisited*, eds. David J. Bercuson and S.F. Wise (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), 62–63.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

Detailing several CBC policies and standards that applied to the series, Morgan noted that anyone working on a program for the CBC must abide by its journalist policies—notably, notions of accuracy, integrity, and fairness. While accuracy was defined as information that “conforms with reality” and is not misleading or false, Morgan added that “accuracy, however, is such a requirement, and not always an easy one to fulfil. Accuracy is not achieved simply making sure that the facts chosen for presentation are right. To be accurate mean ensuring that all of the relevant facts are present.” Morgan, in other words, had highlighted the need to provide historical context. Integrity meant that information was truthful and not altered to justify a conclusion. Fairness was also defined as “the information reports or reflects equitably the relevant facts and significant points of view...”<sup>41</sup> Explaining the proper use of dramatized segments and actors, Morgan opined that “journalistic programs must not as a general principle mix actuality (visual and audio of actual events and of real people) with a dramatized portrayal of people or events.”<sup>42</sup>

For Morgan, “freedom of expression [was not] an issue in this review. The key creative people involved in the series are familiar with CBC journalism policies and aware that anyone producing a program for the Corporation, whether independently or as a member of staff, accepts the constraint of abiding by those policies.”<sup>43</sup> But while Morgan found “serious fault with the programs, I want to stress, as I tried to do earlier, that programming which raises legitimate questions about our history...is an important part of CBC’s mandate to inform.” Morgan also believed that the McKennas had not deliberately tried to distort facts or to mislead the audience.<sup>44</sup> Still, Morgan took issue with several aspects of the series, including the employment

---

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 64, 65.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 66–67.

of actors in “Savage Christmas.” When they invoked Roger Cyr’s ‘lambs to the slaughter’ assertion, the producers left out Cyr’s comment, made in a non-broadcasted interview, that the government despatched “C” Force based on the information of the day. The depiction of Kay Christie also omitted important context. Morgan observed that while Christie told the McKennas that she recalled hearing rifle instruction on route to Hong Kong, she also that the troops were sent to Hong Kong for garrison duty, not to fight.<sup>45</sup> Responding to the McKennas’ rebuttal about the Ombudsman Report, Morgan noted that the phrase “where to put the bullet in” was not found in the interview transcript.<sup>46</sup> As for the producers’ claim that Christie had ironically commented upon poor British and Canadian government planning, Morgan commented “there is no sense of irony in the printed transcript of the interview with Ms. Christie and the transcript indicates that, after rumours onboard ship from Vancouver, it was confirmed to Ms. Christie and others officially, while still docked in Honolulu, that their destination was the garrison in Hong Kong.”<sup>47</sup> As the CBC policy was to discourage the use of dramatic elements in journalistic programming, Morgan concluded:

Even if one takes the position that, because of a number of the people the producers considered it necessary for the audience to hear from are dead, the use of drama segments to present their words may be justified, one cannot avoid the fact that the use of drama in these programs had the effect of helping to create other serious problems and distortions...I believe it is clear why I find that the series as it stands is flawed and fails to measure up to CBC’s demanding policies and standards.<sup>48</sup>

The McKennas responded to the CBC Ombudsman Report, one of their numerous attempts to defend their work. Labelling Morgan’s process “a miscarriage of justice,” they

---

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>46</sup> William Morgan, “Comments on the November 10 Galafilm Report, 18 November 1992,” in *The Valour and The Horror Revisited*, eds. David J. Bercuson and S.F. Wise (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1994), 98.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 103–104.

<sup>48</sup> Morgan, “Report of the CBC Ombudsman,” 71, 72.

claimed that the historians selected by the ombudsman was “inappropriate and prejudicial towards the filmmakers” while none of the historians backing them—Brian Villa, Michael Bliss, or Graeme Decarie—were consulted by Morgan. They also claimed that Morgan declined to consult prominent American historian Carlo D’Este for the Normandy episode, or noted British writer Max Hastings about Bomber Command, or world-renowned British historian John Keegan. They also castigated David Bercuson as “a labour historian who has never written a book about the Second World War.”<sup>49</sup> In an editorial published several days after the initial response to Morgan, while Brian McKenna assailed the legitimacy of the reports presented to Morgan, “however, our principal difficulty with Mr. Wise, as the only Canadian military historian consulted by the ombudsman, still stands.”<sup>50</sup> Wanting the series to be judged by a panel of senior journalists, the McKennas were “confident that when fair minded observers review the Ombudsman’s report and our response, our programs will be vindicated.” The McKennas rejected Morgan’s Report, stating that “Mr. Morgan has been unable to find a single serious error in the entire six hours of television, and is bending over backwards to try and portray these minor nitpicking details as being of much greater significance than any reasonable observer would attach to them.”<sup>51</sup> More outlandish claims came later as Brian McKenna reportedly told a Senate hearing that “complaints about his television series *The Valour and the Horror* constituted ‘blasphemy.’”<sup>52</sup>

Shortly after Morgan’s findings were released, several newspaper articles featured Brian McKennas’ objections to the CBC investigation. William Walker quoted McKenna as saying that “it would have taken the courage of the early morning for the CBC to stand up for this series

---

<sup>49</sup> Brian and Terence McKenna, “Response to the CBC Ombudsman Report,” 74.

<sup>50</sup> Brian McKenna, “The Valour and the Horror,” *The Globe and Mail*, 18 November 1992, A21.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 88, 80.

<sup>52</sup> George Bain, “Blasphemy, or abused privilege?,” *Maclean's*, 20 July 1992, 9.

on the eve of Remembrance Day. That courage was not there...What does this tell investigative reporters to do in the future? They would have to be suicidal to look at the Second World War..."<sup>53</sup> John Ward of *The Vancouver Sun* quoted Brian McKenna as stating that "this film, despite the attempts to smear it today, remains as bullet-proof as it was the first day it was shown."<sup>54</sup> Whether McKenna's claims originated from delusional insights or outright hubris is difficult to determine, but even years later, Brian McKenna believed "the original series was journalistically unimpeachable."<sup>55</sup> In 2008, McKenna continued to defend *The Valour and the Horror* as being sound history: "I think those films stand up exceedingly well. It was a ferocious battle for history. One of the things we were accused of at the time *The Valour* was the crime of presentism: that we were judging the events of the 1940s by the standards of the 1980s. I think we rebutted that..."<sup>56</sup>

### The McKennas Have Defenders

The McKennas claimed that "for every historian attacking *The Valour and the Horror*, there is a serious historian supporting the series."<sup>57</sup> While this statement was simply untrue, the McKennas had defenders, including popular historian Pierre Berton who stated "they won't be able to repeat this program, as they should, or show it in schools, as it should be."<sup>58</sup> Canadian novelist Timothy Findley also averred that "if it were not controversial, it would be worthless; it would be mere propaganda. Propaganda, however, is what its opponents would have it be. Not to put too fine a point on it, they would prefer that it had lied. They object to its truths."<sup>59</sup> The McKennas also had some support within academia. In their 2012 work, *Warrior Nation:*

---

<sup>53</sup> William Walker, "CBC official condemns controversial war series," *Toronto Star*, 11 November 1992, A2.

<sup>54</sup> John Ward, "Panned war film called bullet-proof," *The Vancouver Sun*, 26 June 1992, A4.

<sup>55</sup> Atherton, "Controversial film-maker to keep same format for new war docu-dramas," D2.

<sup>56</sup> "Q&A with 2007 Pierre Berton Award winner Brian McKenna," *The Beaver*, April-May 2008, 59.

<sup>57</sup> Brian and Terence McKenna, "Response to the CBC Ombudsman Report," 73, 87.

<sup>58</sup> Walker, "CBC official condemns controversial war series," A2.

<sup>59</sup> Timothy Findley, "*The Valour and the Horror*," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 27, no. 4 (1992): 197-198.

*Rebranding Canada in an Age of Anxiety*, Ian McKay and Jamie Swift claimed that “what was revealing about the storm in Canada was the extent to which militarism had ruled out of question any critical evaluation of Canadian war-making.”<sup>60</sup> As will be explored below, the critiques of the series were not about the McKennas’ right to speak on such topics. Rather, the issue was their failure to present good history using proper methods. Despite the support, Brian McKenna did himself no favours. As archivist Ernest Dick noted, “unfortunately this tendency of Brian McKenna’s to jump to contentious conclusions, rather than weighing all the evidence, fuelled many of the protests against ‘The Valour and the Horror.’”<sup>61</sup>

#### Initial Academic Responses to *The Valour and the Horror*

Bercuson and Wise edited a book, *The Valour and the Horror: Revisited*, which included their reports and responses from other historians. Without hyperbole, Bercuson and Wise declared that “the public debate over *The Valour and the Horror* was without precedent, since the quarrel appeared [to] be over the interpretation of an aspect of Canada’s immediate past.” They also noted that while historians disputed the facts put forward by the series, no one was arguing that the McKennas’ lacked the right to say them. Bercuson and Wise focused on the supposed conspiracy that covered up the truth about the war, an occurrence that the McKennas claimed to have discovered first.<sup>62</sup> Discussing “Savage Christmas’s” claims of a conspiracy, Wise “was left with the impression, however, that the writers intended to plant the idea that there had been a conspiracy of silence about Hong Kong.”<sup>63</sup> Also rejecting any notion of a conspiracy,

---

<sup>60</sup> Ian McKay and Jamie Swift, *Warrior Nation: Rebranding Canada in an Age of Anxiety* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2012), 191–192.

<sup>61</sup> Ernest J. Dick, “‘The Valour and the Horror’ Continued: Do We Still Want Our History on Television?,” *Archivaria* 35 (1993): 264.

<sup>62</sup> Wise and Bercuson, “Introduction,” 3, 6, 9.

<sup>63</sup> S.F. Wise, “The Valour and the Horror: A Report for the CBC Ombudsman,” in *The Valour and The Horror Revisited*, eds. David J. Bercuson and S.F. Wise (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1994), 15.

Bercuson concluded that “Japan’s astute planners took advantage of the element of surprise to hit their enemy where he did not expect to be hit. That is war. It is not necessarily malfeasance and was certainly not in this case.”<sup>64</sup> While William Lyon Mackenzie King’s government tried to downplay Hong Kong’s catastrophe, there was never an official conspiracy to cover up the events. Moreover, as the 1942 Inquiry made very clear, attempts to sideline Hong Kong only brought more attention to the battle.

As Wise and Bercuson offered, “we have found it more than ironic, however, that in claiming to demythologize the history of Canada’s role in the Second World War, the McKennas came up with no better answer than to replace the myths they alleged to have existed by a new myth of their own—the myth of betrayal by commanders who were either incompetent or downright evil.”<sup>65</sup> Both historians, in their separate reports to the CBC ombudsman, labelled the series as poor history. As Wise concluded, “my comments in this report should make it clear that I do not regard this series as history, in any commonly accepted sense.” He allowed that the series might be a form of journalism and could be seen as a set of journalistic editorials if there had been any mention of this intention.<sup>66</sup> Doubting that the producers had used any part of the “mountain of evidence” that ran counter to their argument, Bercuson declared that “Savage Christmas” cannot be judged to be either ‘fair’ or ‘objective’ or a responsible piece of history even as a historical film documentary.”<sup>67</sup>

In his response to “Savage Christmas,” historian John Ferris contended that as the British believed that war with Japan was not imminent, the intent had been simply to supplement Hong Kong’s garrison. As the arguments dominating the Hong Kong episode “stem entirely from Carl

---

<sup>64</sup> Bercuson, “The Valour and the Horror: A Historical Analysis,” 37.

<sup>65</sup> Wise and Bercuson, “Introduction,” 9–10.

<sup>66</sup> Wise, “The Valour and the Horror: A Report for the CBC Ombudsman,” 29.

<sup>67</sup> Bercuson, “The Valour and the Horror: A Historical Analysis,” 38.



Vincent's book, *No Reason Why*," and asserting that "the McKennas use Vincent as an authority where he is not," Ferris stated that Vincent—hardly an expert on British-Japanese relations—had not consulted enough archival documents and the extensive secondary literature about British and American policy toward Japan. Ferris noted that even the Japanese did not know they would go to war until after Canadians had left for Hong Kong.<sup>68</sup> Laying out a well-reasoned argument about the deficiencies in the arguments presented by the McKennas, Ferris concluded:

If one must find villains behind the Hong Kong debacle, one need merely look in the mirror. The guilty men were a Canadian society and government that starved its military forces for years on end and then one day sent them off against well-equipped enemies, in pursuit not of national interests defined by external authorities. Hong Kong was not the first example of this phenomenon or the last. It happened in the First and Second World Wars, in the Korean War, and in the Gulf conflict. The risk was taken in NATO and everywhere Canadians have served as UN peacekeepers. It is the Canadian way of war.<sup>69</sup>

While the academic responses to *The Valour and the Horror* focused on righting the wrongs presented in the series, there was no attempt by historians to silence the McKennas. The same cannot be said for other responses to the series.

#### The Canadian Senate Investigation

The Veterans Affairs Sub-Committee of the Canadian Senate, motivated by the public outcry against the series, launched an investigation into *The Valour and the Horror*. The sub-committee received hundreds of documents submitted by veterans, veterans' organizations, historians, journalists, documentary producers, and citizens. Over eighty percent of the correspondence was critical of the series.<sup>70</sup> But the Senators well knew "the announcement in the Senate that the Sub-Committee intended to study and report on *The Valour and the Horror* at

---

<sup>68</sup> Ferris, "Savage Christmas: The Canadians at Hong Kong," 112–113.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>70</sup> Senate, *The Valour and the Horror Report*, 5.

once became almost as controversial as the film series itself.”<sup>71</sup> In her dissertation, historian Mallory Schwartz noted that the McKennas believed “the series would not receive a fair hearing because the subcommittee’s chair, Senator Jack Marshall, a veteran of the battle for Normandy, was ‘on the record both in the Senate and in a letter to us as expressing extreme antipathy toward these programs. He’s made up his mind.’ [CBC President Gérard] Veilleux also complained that supporters of the series were not allowed to testify.”<sup>72</sup>

The objectives of the investigation were:

to give veterans and veterans’ organizations a public forum in which to respond to what they consider to have been a public, unfair and malicious slander of their conduct, and the conduct of their leadership in the Second World War; to hear from a number of specialists in the history of Canadian participation in the Second World War and to learn their opinions about the historical methodology and merit of *The Valour and the Horror* series; to inquire into the roles played by two public bodies, the National Film Board and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, in the conception, production, financing and decision to air as a documentary, a highly interpretive film series on a historical subject; and to give the producers of the films the opportunity to respond to attacks on their work and to introduce to the Sub-Committee any qualified historians who assisted them in making the final ‘cut’ of the series or who were prepared to support its historical methodology and merit.<sup>73</sup>

The sub-committee recognized it had the power only to recommend and could not force either the CBC or NFB’s hand. The Senate Investigation was met with much protest. Many who protested the television series did not support the Senate’s actions. Professor of Communications David Taras noted that “perhaps the most obvious point is that none of the hundreds of films which showed the Allied war effort in a positive light had ever been the subject of an inquiry by the Canadian Senate.”<sup>74</sup> The sub-committee’s Liberal Senators refused to participate as they did

---

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., Senate, 3.

<sup>72</sup> Schwartz, “War on the Air: CBC-TV and Canada’s Military, 1952–1992,” 309.

<sup>73</sup> Senate, *The Valour and the Horror Report*, 3–4.

<sup>74</sup> David Taras, “The Struggle over ‘The Valour and the Horror’: Media Power and the Portrayal of War” *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 28, no. 4 (1995): 737.

not consider broadcast regulation to fall within the sub-committee's purview.<sup>75</sup> Moreover, the series, well received by entertainment reporters and newspaper columnists, won three Gemini awards, including best documentary series.<sup>76</sup> Additionally, some Hong Kong veterans liked "Savage Christmas."<sup>77</sup>

While the Senate report did not include a section on "Savage Christmas," a mistake that further damaged the battle's legacy by leaving the episodes' claims unchallenged in the public sphere, many sub-committee's recommendations and conclusions dealt with the episode's various problems. The Senators took issue with the use of actors for "dramatic sequences, even when accurately documented, are still open to considerable misinterpretation and bias through voice and demeanour. Sensationalism often prevails...When it is clear that the actors are not always uttering exact quotations extracted from the historical record, the dangers become even more pronounced."<sup>78</sup> The producers also:

omit and distort any evidence which might contradict their thesis that the Canadian army was poorly trained, poorly led and capable of war atrocities no different from those committed by the enemy. Through the use of hindsight, they pass judgement with the greatest of ease. They seek out villains ... In the filmmakers' haste to condemn war, they fail to understand its complexities. The result is production that aimed more to shock than to inform.

Thus, the sub-committee concluded that *The Valour and the Horror* could not justifiably be called a documentary.<sup>79</sup> If the CBC and the Senate investigations castigated the McKennas for not following journalistic principles, the academic community's responses to the series were of a much different character.

---

<sup>75</sup> Dick, "'The Valour and the Horror' Continued," 255.

<sup>76</sup> Taras, "The Struggle over 'The Valour and the Horror'," 732.

<sup>77</sup> Senate, *The Valour and the Horror Report*, 2.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 26–27.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 41, 57.

Providing a brief to the Senate, Professor Terry Copp insisted that while the series had been a key opportunity to create a informative piece of public history, instead, “Canadians were offered a sophomoric set of isn’t war horrible platitudes, mixed with anti-military, anti-British and anti-Canadian leanings. History, in ‘The Valour and the Horror,’ is a grim joke in which a member of the 60s generation imposes his own ‘feelings’ on the past.” While context is a crucial element in the making of sound history, the McKennas either distressingly had ignored context or did not comprehend its import. For Copp, “after having entirely ignored the context of the decision to reinforce Hong Kong, the script insists that ‘Canada answered England’s call accepting the mother country’s assurance that they would not be in harm’s way.’ This is simply and plainly untrue.”<sup>80</sup> The filmmakers claimed that Churchill, unwilling to risk British lives, had asked Canada provide the troops.<sup>81</sup> The McKennas also had ignored the complicated process involved in “C” Force’s despatch by failing even to mention Brigadier Arthur Edward’s Grasett’s meeting with General Harry Crerar. The documentary failed to discuss the numerous reasonable reasons for reinforcing Hong Kong, while also ignoring the geopolitical context of late 1941 and Canada’s place within it. As Copp concluded, while “some people may not like the fact that we were once a colony and then a Dominion, but a program about history ought to make viewers aware that Canada was a different country in 1941 than it is today.”<sup>82</sup> The decision to send Canadians to Hong Kong was neither immoral nor a dishonourable act. Instead, “the reinforcement of Hong Kong, Malaya and the Philippines by Canada, Britain and the United States was an attempt to deter the Japanese from attacking British or American territory. The

---

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 2-3, 5.

<sup>81</sup> *The Valour and the Horror*, episode 1, “Savage Christmas.”

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 5.

attempt failed but the motives of the men who made the decision were not dishonorable.”<sup>83</sup>

Copp’s stance on the series was clear:

I have no wish to censor the McKennas. Their biases and prejudices are their own problems. What I don’t understand is why the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation is willing to indulge the McKennas and their producers. Why does the C.B.C. and the Department of National Defence provide enormous sums of taxpayer’s money to an organization that doesn’t bother to check elementary factual information? Why did the C.B.C. decide to televise this mishmash? Does the C.B.C. attempt to assess the research in films it presents as documentaries?<sup>84</sup>

Historians had made an important critique regarding the series’ lack of context. The McKennas’ right to make history was not disputed: historians simply wanted proper historical research and principles.

The lack of proper historical research on the Battle of Hong Kong at the time of the series’ release was one reason for the lack of attention paid to the battle after the airing of the series. As Copp stated, “the Bomber Command segment of ‘The Valour and the Horror’ is such bad history that it makes the Hong Kong episode, despite its flaws, seem quite reasonable,” an argument that John Ferris also made.<sup>85</sup> Such assertions were made at a time when the level of research about the Battle of Hong Kong in the early 1990s had lagged badly behind that for Bomber Command and Normandy. Wise noted, “Nor have I seen it as part of my responsibility to check for accuracy every statement or presentation of an event occurring in the series.”<sup>86</sup> He was right to say so. In addition, Ferris provided an excellent background to the Hong Kong decision in *The Valour and the Horror Revisited* given his expertise in British intelligence and strategy. Ferris’ piece was not designed to primarily critique the whole of the episode but the sections dealing with sending Canadians to Hong Kong. But the paucity of research on the Battle

---

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>84</sup> Copp, “A Brief to the Veterans Affairs Committee,” 26.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 7; Ferris, “Savage Christmas,” 111.

<sup>86</sup> Wise, “The Valour and the Horror: A Report for the CBC Ombudsman,” 14.

of Hong Kong is no longer the case, in part due to the outcry against the series, a development that receives proper attention below.

### Brian McKenna's Continued Creation of Military History Documentaries

*The Killing Ground* and *The Valour and the Horror* set the pattern that Brian McKenna followed as he made more Canadian military history documentaries. His hallmarks, notably providing little context, leaving no room for debate, plus poor research, continued even as Brian McKenna was presented with the Pierre Berton Award, for his contributions to Canadian history in popular media, in 2007. Certain criteria must be met to receive this award: "Eligible nominees are individuals or organizations that have helped popularize Canadian history with the written word through such means as publications, film, radio, television, theatre, voluntarism or the web." One particular criterion is should be noted: "Nominees are considered on the basis of the quality of their research and their writing, and the overall contribution and impact of their work to fostering a better understanding of our past."<sup>87</sup> Brian McKenna's work, unfortunately, does not fit the criteria for the award.

McKenna's documentary work after *The Valour and the Horror* has received little attention from scholars. Despite the strong criticism directed toward the series, Brian McKenna continued to create other documentaries about Canada's involvement in the world wars, often with government funding and support. He directed and wrote one episode of the 1995 two-episode documentary series *War at Sea*. In 1995, the McKennas wrote and Brian directed *Glory: War at Sea* and *Glory: A Web of War*.<sup>88</sup> In 2007, Brian McKenna wrote and directed another

---

<sup>87</sup> "Popular Media Award," Canada's History, accessed 4 November 2020, <https://www.canadahistory.ca/awards/governor-general-s-history-awards/apply-for-popular-media-award>.

<sup>88</sup> "Glory (part 1): War at Sea," Galafilm, accessed 23 February 2020, <http://galafilm.com/en/pages/productions/1/3/32>. "Glory (part 2): A Web of War," Galafilm, accessed 23 February 2020, <http://galafilm.com/en/pages/productions/1/3/33>.

First World War documentary, *The Great War*, “a four-hour epic, using drama and re-enactments combined with documentary and living history”<sup>89</sup> Brian McKenna also co-wrote and directed the aforementioned *Newfoundland at Armageddon*, premiered on the CBC on the battle’s 100th anniversary, a program produced by Galafilm and supported by the Canadian government.<sup>90</sup> Brian McKenna has also worked on historical documentaries about the Battle of the Plains of Abraham, the Korean War, the War of 1812, the Irish famine, the life of Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau, and leaders of various First Nations.<sup>91</sup> Despite the criticism directed at the McKennas for creating historically inaccurate programs, the CBC continued to provide a platform for them. This fact speaks to a much deeper issue regarding how Canadians consume historical content. Documentary popular history continues to spread myths and misinformation. Canadians want to learn about their history and seek out content about it. Unfortunately, Canadian academic military historians are largely left out of the conversation. To combat this problem, changes need to occur among academic historians’ mindsets so that their work and views reach more people.

### Media Reaction to *The Valour and the Horror*

The media’s reaction to *The Valour and the Horror* offered important insights into how Canadians received the series. Newspaper articles, opinion pieces, and letters to the editor provide a window into individuals’ reactions to a historical product, a rare opportunity in the pre-internet era. Examining the media’s output is important for it disseminated many of the themes of *The Valour and the Horror*.

---

<sup>89</sup> “The Great War,” Galafilm, accessed 23 February 2020, <http://galafilm.com/en/pages/productions/1/3/23>.

<sup>90</sup> “Newfoundland at Armageddon,” CBC, accessed 8 February 2020, <http://newfoundlandatarmageddon.cbc.ca/team>.

<sup>91</sup> “Brian McKenna,” IMDb, accessed 4 November 2020, <https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0571338/>.

The media's reaction to the series was decidedly mixed. While Victor Dwyer generally praised the series, he also said:

one major weakness lies in the mostly stilted performances of several young actors describing the horrors of war in lengthy soliloquies. Brian McKenna said that he included those dramatizations to emphasize to younger viewers that it was people still in their youth who went through the ordeal. But beside the quietly compelling reminiscences of actual survivors, those segments appear overwrought. Indeed, the real strength of *The Valour and the Horror* lies in the voices of an often-forgotten generation of Canadians who learned firsthand that war can be hell.<sup>92</sup>

Journalist Marcel Adam, seeing the Senate Investigation as a matter of freedom of expression, averred “je crois qu’il aurait dû refuser de répondre à l’invitation et laisser au Sénat l’odieux de le forcer de comparaître devant lui pour justifier l’exercice de son droit d’opinion et d’expression dans un pays démocratique. Dans une démocratie il est déshonorant pour un Parlement d’attenter de la sorte à la liberté d’expression.”<sup>93</sup>

Remembrance Day in 1992 reignited debate about the series. An editorial in the 12 November edition of *The Globe and Mail* dramatically voiced their displeasure with the CBC and the ombudsman:

The CBC's journalistic reputation lies in pieces today, slit wide and deboned like a fresh-caught trout. It has been left in this condition not by the many criticisms, lately including those of the CBC's ombudsman, levelled at the controversial three-part documentary *The Valour and the Horror*, but by the craven efforts of the corporation's senior executives to appease the program's enemies in Parliament. This is the stuff of resignations.<sup>94</sup>

Accusing the Senate of using “the machinery of state against a free press, and its sole design is intimidation,” the editorial, calling Morgan's investigation a “kangaroo court,” claimed “the ombudsman report itself is hardly revelatory, and no more the last word on the subject for the

---

<sup>92</sup> Dwyer, “The hell of battle,” 48.

<sup>93</sup> Marcel Adam, “Quand la liberté d’expression met en émoi nos parlementaires,” *La Presse* 20 June 1992, B2.

<sup>94</sup> *The Valour and the Horror and the Shame*, *The Globe and Mail*, 12 November 1992, A30.



title its author wears.”<sup>95</sup> Not all of the media supported the McKennas. John Thompson of *The Globe and Mail*, decrying *The Valour and the Horror* as “cheap ‘pop’ journalism,” opposed using “it as a rallying point over freedom of speech and independent filmmaking is to cheapen those causes too.”<sup>96</sup>

The media outcry against the Senate and the CBC was criticized as well. According to Bercuson and Wise, “the media outcry shifted ground from the central questions of just how accurate the McKenna thesis really was to the murkier ground of whether veterans’ groups, the Senate, and others who became involved had any right to question how appropriate it had been for the CBC, a publicly funded network, to air the programs.” Indeed, according to Bercuson and Wise, “so thoroughly were the avenues of expression choked with the outpourings of journalistic indignation that contrary views were submerged.”<sup>97</sup> Accusations of suppression abounded in the debates over *The Valour and the Horror*, accusations that influenced the legacy of the Battle of Hong Kong by removing the discussion from questions of a historical nature and focusing on elements like freedom of expression.

#### Public Reaction to *The Valour and the Horror*

Canadians voiced their strong opinions about the series by writing letters to the editors of major Canadian newspapers. As Schwartz noted:

Significantly CBC Research also found that viewers passively accepted the conclusions of the film. For instance, 84 percent of those polled concluded that “the Canadian government was largely to blame for the massacre because it sent ill-equipped soldiers on a hopeless mission.” Not all viewers enjoyed the film, however. The CBC heard from several who objected to the use of offensive language, found factual errors, or thought there was too much “Brit-bashing.”<sup>98</sup>

---

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> John Thompson, “The Valour and the Horror,” *The Globe and Mail*, 18 November 1992, A21.

<sup>97</sup> Wise and Bercuson, “Introduction,” 5.

<sup>98</sup> Schwartz, “War on the Air: CBC-TV and Canada’s Military, 1952–1992,” 304–305.

A section of letters to the editor in the 25 November 1992 edition of *The Globe and Mail* displayed passionately public opinions. Supporters of the McKennas included Dan MacDonald. Identifying himself as President of the ACTRA Performers' Guild, MacDonald wrote that "it is ironic that those very freedoms for which Canadian fought and sacrificed in—and continue to do in the struggle for peace—should be abandoned by an organization we have cherished as a bastion of free speech and protector of artistic freedom."<sup>99</sup> Hans Modllch of Toronto noted:

The Wimpy way in which the CBC generals have pulled the rug from out under their troops in the trenches is despicable. More so, it is painfully typical! Does it not speak volumes on just how servile a top bureaucrat tends to become when facing his maker? Does it matter much, whether it is a government appointed CBC mandarin or top-echelon military man?<sup>100</sup>

Dan Riley of Brandon, Manitoba, however, could not be sure "what is more pathetic: CBC 'journalists' with biases even more remarkable than their egos, proposing to rewrite history according to their personal delusions or the doomsday hand wringing spewing forth out of all media land in response to the anemic knuckle-rapping of CBC ombudsman William Morgan? 'Three cheers accountability—as long as it doesn't rattle our ivory tower.'"<sup>101</sup> J.W. Strath of Nepean, Ontario, claiming to have fought in Bomber Command during the war, stated "your thesis that CBC producers, like Globe and Mail editors, must not be called to account before government tribunals is wrong. The implication is that CBC producers should be as free from political review as are editors of commercial publications."<sup>102</sup> A.P. Thornton of Toronto compared the McKennas' objectives to veteran viewpoints:

So let them stop claiming absence of malice, identity their fictions, and concede that in the real world from docudrama-land (good guys lit from above, bad guys from below), companies of brave men have been known to have true ends in view: in this case, the destruction of a tyranny. This costs a lot—whereas the only

---

<sup>99</sup> Dan MacDonald, "Letter to the Editor," *The Globe and Mail*, 25 November 1992, A27

<sup>100</sup> Hans Modllch, "Letter to the Editor," *The Globe and Mail*, 25 November 1992, A27.

<sup>101</sup> Dan Riley, "Letter to the Editor," *The Globe and Mail*, 25 November 1992, A27.

<sup>102</sup> J.W. Strath, "Letter to the Editor," *The Globe and Mail*, 25 November 1992, A27.

price paid the McKennas and the CBC has been some small discomfort. But they'll get over it on time for their next frank and fearless exposé.<sup>103</sup>

The series clearly had struck a chord with Canadians.

### Release of the Unedited Maltby Despatch 1993

The media coverage of *The Valour and the Horror* had a very curious outcome in late January 1993. As historian Galen Roger Perras has explained, "Britain's Cabinet, irked by Canadian accusations of British perfidiousness, and Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating's public denunciation in 1992 of Britain's failure to hold Singapore in 1942, a catastrophe that had enveloped 20,000 Australians, acted. It unlocked [C.M. Major-General] Maltby's unedited Despatch..."<sup>104</sup> John Crossland's 31 January 1993 article in *The Sunday Times* of London, detailing the contents of Maltby's Despatch, repeated stories of Canadian drunkenness and insubordination. No Canadian historians were quoted in the article. Indeed, the only cited academic was Peter Elphick, "a historian who has studied British policy in the Far East and criticized the Australian troops in Singapore," who argued that "in all wars, particularly when an army is retreating, there will be some troops who desert or get drunk."<sup>105</sup> He was correct, but in the context of reporting on the Maltby Despatch, Elphick enhanced negative views of the Canadians and gave legitimacy to Maltby's claims.

The Canadian press reacted strongly to the release of the unedited Despatch. A *Calgary Herald* editorial slammed Maltby, stating that "As a B movie, suitable for late-night television, British Maj.-Gen. Christopher Maltby's accusations of cowardice against Canadian troops under his command when the Japanese overran Hong Kong 52 years ago rates less than one star. It

---

<sup>103</sup> A.P. Thornton, "Letter to the Editor," *The Globe and Mail*, 25 November 1992, A27.

<sup>104</sup> Galen Roger Perras, "Defeat Still Cries Aloud for Explanation: Explaining C Force's Dispatch to Hong Kong," *Canadian Military Journal* 11, no. 4 (2011): 42.

<sup>105</sup> John Crossland, "Canadians branded cowards in Hong Kong battle," *The Sunday Times*, 31 January 1993, 5.

plays even worse in real life.” The *Herald*, claiming that Maltby tried to deflect responsibility for the fall of Hong Kong, charged that Maltby “allowed Canadian troops to be sent to their doom in Hong Kong.” Connecting the Canadian experience at Hong Kong to General Archibald Wavell’s critique of Australian forces at Singapore, the *Herald* asserted that “[Canadians and Australians] also are familiar with the workings of colonialism and will accordingly discount the biased and false reports of Maltby and Wavell.” The British press was accused of making “inaccurate accusations in a manner which lends them some credibility and thereby maligns the brave service of men who suffered untold hardship and death in defence of Britain’s Empire.”<sup>106</sup>

Michael Valpy, writing in *The Globe and Mail*, repeated many of the accusations presented in *The Valour and the Horror*, especially attacks upon Maltby and the British command. “It happened 52 years ago. But, by God, no British general is going to blacken the reputations of Canadian soldiers who were ordered in the name of stupidity, incompetence and vainglorious ox-headedness to do an impossible job for which they paid either with their lives or with years in bestial Japanese prison camps.” Repeating the “poor bloody infantry” trope, Valpy stated that “Canadian veterans of Hong Kong are outraged. So they should be. It is a toss-up who posed the greater hazard to them—the British and Canadian generals and politicians who sent them there, or the Japanese.” Valpy argued that “the Maltby report should not be taken seriously.”<sup>107</sup> While Valpy’s opinion of the Despatch was correct, he simply repeated tropes found in *The Valour and the Horror*, further damaging the battle’s legacy.

For Denny Boyd of *The Vancouver Sun*, “the ghost of Maj.-Gen. Christopher Maltby disinters the 50-year old siege of Hong Kong, he debases the memories of the young Canadians

---

<sup>106</sup> “Dead General Lied,” *Calgary Herald*, 2 February 1993, A4.

<sup>107</sup> Michael Valpy, “Why the Canadians were in Hong Kong in 1941,” *The Globe and Mail*, 3 February 1993, A2.

whose lives and health were mercilessly and vainly wasted in a battle that could not be won. . .”

Boyd called the defence of Hong Kong:

a military blunder, a suicide mission involving two battalions of untrained Canadian troops, including cooks and shoemakers, shipped there only 22 days before the onslaught. Yet in Maltby’s report on the action, written while he was in a Japanese prison camp and opened last week after being sealed since 1942, Maltby seems to blame the loss, not on his command, but on the cowardice and drunkenness of the Canadian soldiers and their officers. The implication seems to be that the outcome might have been different, had the Canadians met his standards.<sup>108</sup>

Media responses to the unedited Maltby Despatch rightly highlighted issues surrounding Hong Kong but did so with the kind of viewpoints espoused in “Savage Christmas.” The influence of *The Valour and the Horror* about our understanding of the Battle of Hong Kong is undeniable.

#### Canadian Hong Kong Revisionists

The controversy surrounding *The Valour and the Horror* led to a revisionist examination of the Canadian participation in the Battle of Hong Kong. Perras offered one of the earliest revisionist arguments about the context of Hong Kong’s reinforcement in 1995, asserting that his essay was a direct response to *The Valour and the Horror*.<sup>109</sup> Christopher Bell also called “Savage Christmas” an example of the conspiracy theories that surround the policy change of not reinforcing Hong Kong between 1938 and 1941.<sup>110</sup> This initial work was followed by more criticism of the series. In his 2003 article, historian Kent Fedorowich, labelling *The Valour and the Horror* a favourite of conspiracy theorists, contended that “although the least contentious of the three, it antagonized both historians and veterans who were disgusted by the overarching theme in all three episodes that Canadian forces ‘were unwitting, guileless dupes’ ruthlessly

---

<sup>108</sup> Denny Boyd, “Canadian troops were doomed as soon as they landed,” *The Vancouver Sun*, 5 February 1993, B1.

<sup>109</sup> Perras, “Defeat Still Cries Aloud for Explanation,” 43.

<sup>110</sup> Christopher Bell “Our Most Exposed Outpost: Hong Kong and British Far Eastern Strategy, 1921–1941,” *The Journal of Military History* 60, no. 1 (1996): 75–76.

manipulated by their political and military masters in unnecessary and ‘fruitless’ operations. In other words, their sacrifices had counted for nothing.”<sup>111</sup> The work of revisionists demonstrate that the Battle of Hong Kong needed a reassessment but also that a defeat can be examined without writing that manifests into overly nationalistic polemics. The revisionist literature does not celebrate the loss at Hong Kong but instead puts the battle in its proper context. By doing so, these historians contributed positively to the legacy of the battle as proper understanding of historical events is an end in and of itself. Works of this type about Hong Kong are all too rare.

### Conclusion

*The Valour and the Horror* has had an unmistakably malign influence on the legacy of the Battle of Hong Kong. This chapter makes several important additions to the historiography on *The Valour and the Horror* and the legacy of the Battle of Hong Kong by examining, for the first time, the various the problems and misinterpretations surrounding “Savage Christmas.” The examination of the revisionist literature that responded to the series is also an important addition to the historiography. These sections are important to understand to the battle’s legacy today. The controversy that the series generated incited several investigations that were just as controversial as the series itself. For all his faults, Brian McKenna’s actions did much to keep the Battle of Hong Kong present in the public consciousness. While “Savage Christmas” had as many historical errors and flawed conclusions as the other two episodes in the series, it received far less attention. Alongside the overall negative legacy of the battle, the general disinterest in the Pacific Theatre of the Second World War among Canadians explains why this lack of attention occurred. Furthermore, media attention spread many of the misconceptions presented in the series, an issue that plagues the battle’s legacy today. Some positives did come from its

---

<sup>111</sup> Kent Fedorowich, “‘Cocked Hats and Swords and Small Little Garrisons’: Britain, Canada and the Fall of Hong Kong, 1941,” *Modern Asian Studies* 37, no. 1 (2003): 116, 114.

airing, the British government's release of the unedited Maltby Despatch, the attention that the series brought to the Hong Kong veterans, and the subsequent academic revisionism on the context of the despatch of "C" Force. One of the most important takeaways from *The Valour and the Horror* saga was to expose the lack of influence that academic military historians have in how Canadians view their military past. While this situation has changed little since the release of the series, hope remains. Technology's advancement since the 1990s has allowed more historians to disseminate their work to an ever-growing audience. If one lesson can be learned from the problems and controversy of *The Valour and the Horror*, it is that academic historians are needed in the public history sphere—a challenge that more of them should opt to take on.

## CONCLUSION

The creation of the legacy of the Battle of Hong Kong had been a complicated and combative process. Politicians, authors, historians, journalists, and soldiers have all sought to use the battle to fit their needs. This included wanting to protect reputations, advance a preconceived narrative, or to win political battles. While many have presented the Canadian participation at Hong Kong negatively, that representation is not accurate. Undoubtedly, much about the Battle of Hong Kong is negative, and this study has no desire to hide those elements or to downplay their seriousness. The garrison was defeated by the Japanese, brutal conditions killed many Canadian POWs, and the Canadian government treated the Hong Kong veterans poorly in the postwar years. But some positive aspects exist. The Canadian government did contribute to the attempts to deter the Japanese in late 1941. While that effort failed, the choice to support Britain and the United States was the right decision even as the Canadian government's handling of the reinforcement itself, notably the absence of proper intelligence analysis, was poorly conducted.

"C" Force veterans remain another positive element often left underrepresented in literature and media. Many authors, historians, and journalists who have written about the battle have hurt those who fought at Hong Kong by continuing to emphasize the most negative elements of "C" Force's story rather than sensitively exploring actual reality. Instead, claims that Canadians were the best fighters at Hong Kong only created more resentment and confusion when it comes to understanding the battle, a situation that did little to help the veterans. The troops of "C" Force fought better than expected against a well-trained and battle-hardened enemy despite their various deficiencies, and their story deserves a proper telling. Despite lacking skills, the tough stand at the Wong Nei Chung Gap and the attack on Stanley Village revealed their ability to adapt to changing conditions and to push the Japanese back. Despite their



best efforts, Canadian troops were defeated by Japanese tenacity and strength of arms. They have nothing to be ashamed of from their service. After defeat, they survived hellish conditions for years. They deserve to be presented in a positive fashion for they were not passive victims at any point in this process. The veterans need to be elevated into discussions on the battle to counter the negative elements that have received so much attention.

The zombie myths that have plagued the Canadian collective understanding of the battle have fed upon the negativity that surrounds “C” Force. These myths do not just influence historiographical discussions between academics, they have real world consequences. Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King, seeking to limit the battle’s effect on politics, wanted the Inquiry to dismiss all doubts about government negligence and incompetence. But this effort failed, bringing more negative attention to the battle. Accordingly, George Drew attacked the King government for many years, further souring “C” Force in King’s eyes. In the postwar years, little changed as government and military officials still sought to sideline “C” Force’s experiences at Hong Kong and in POW camps. Some positives came out of these political battles, as the Hong Kong veterans were given more pay. However, this period cemented the battle as being a politically sensitive topic that many governments since King have sought to downplay.

Much like the fictional undead, these myths are difficult to destroy and dangerous to our collective historical memory. They leave a haze over our understanding, allowing those who wish to benefit in some way from misrepresentations of the battle to do so. Luckily, these myths are not invincible if properly engaged. The best way to do this, as this dissertation has done, is to examine the events surrounding the battle and analyze them with the best practices of history. Another way to combat these myths is to encourage more discussion about “C” Force’s positive

elements. The veterans themselves deserve better recognition for what they did all those years ago. Sadly, while only a handful of veterans are alive to benefit from this change, it must be done all the same; our proper understanding of the battle demands it.

As such myths tend to follow similar patterns, several important themes can be identified. Understanding this situation is helpful in defeating the zombie myths. The attempt to shift blame for all things related to “C” Force has been a constant trend since the fighting stopped. Major-General C.M. Maltby, Brigadier Cedric Wallis, and author Tim Carew blamed Canadians for the defeat. Brereton Greenhous, Carl Vincent, and the McKenna brothers, taking the opposite opinion, have castigated the British. Both sides, by placing blame on other nationalities, created resentment and confusion that further obscured our understanding of the Battle of Hong Kong’s meaning. Remarking upon the failed 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba, American President John F. Kennedy said that “victory had a hundred fathers. Defeat is an orphan.”<sup>1</sup> Such a phrase perfectly encapsulates the passing of blame about the events at Hong Kong in December 1941.

Perhaps the most pernicious false claim is the assertion that the Battle for Hong Kong remains poorly known because the Canadian government and military covered up “C” Force’s loss. While Hong Kong has not received the same attention as Normandy or Dieppe, it has neither been forgotten nor ignored in Canada. The Battle of Hong Kong has an enduring legacy in Canada, one that has undergone development and change, especially over past decade or two. Regardless of individuals’ intentions, the Battle of Hong Kong has a place in the collective Canadian memory.

When the 19 September 1941 telegram requesting Canadian troops to reinforce Hong Kong was sent to Ottawa, it arrived in a fertile environment for a long-standing and intimate

---

<sup>1</sup> John Connell, “Defeat is an Orphan,” *The Sphere*, 6 May 1961, 200.

cultural and military connection between Canada and Britain produced Canada's acceptance of Britain's request. This study has explored this connection by bringing a new approach into the Battle of Hong Kong's historiography. Several long-term reasons influenced Canada's acceptance of the British request for reinforcements, and the long-standing colonial connection between the two countries was one of them. In September 1941, numerous Canadians, many of them were serving in the highest ranks of the Army, believed that the British Empire's interests were also Canada's. Even Canadian nationalists such as General Andrew McNaughton still valued the Canadian connection to Britain. General Harry Crerar's frequently had expressed support for the British Empire over the interwar period, and his pro-imperial feelings had not subsided by 1941. The years of British influence on the Canadian Army and the relationships developed with British Army leaders undoubtedly played a role in Canada's choice to send troops to garrison Hong Kong.

The constantly-changing nature of Hong Kong's defence policy was another long-term reason behind the Canadians reinforcement of the colony in late 1941. Proper study of these developments has been neglected area in most Canadian works on the battle, a problem this study has corrected. From the earliest days of British occupation in 1841 until "C" Force's arrival, Hong Kong's defence situation was always fluid. Initially, British defence policy for Hong Kong focused on naval defence until the early twentieth century when land-based defences received more attention. While Singapore's development relegated Hong Kong to the status of a forward base in case of war with Japan, much debate about how to best defend Hong Kong occurred in the interwar period. Some military and political leaders favoured a strong defence; others wished to demilitarize the colony. These ongoing discussions about the defence of the colony produced a de facto compromise that saw insignificant resources devoted to protecting

Hong Kong. The Gin Drinker's Line was a symbol of this policy for it was inadequate to defend the New Territories. Another example of the fluidity of the situation was the discussions about permanently acquiring the New Territories on the Chinese mainland. My dissertation has expanded upon Franco David Macri's claims that the Sino-Japanese War offered Britain this opportunity by arguing that the prospect of this land acquisition had been discussed well before the outbreak of that conflict. Still, more work remains to be done to fully understand all the complexities during the decades of British control of Hong Kong.

Several individuals played an important role in the defence of Hong Kong during the Second World War, with Air Chief Marshal Robert Brooke-Popham and Brigadier Arthur Edward Grasett being paramount. Grasett was more successful than his superior Brooke-Popham as evidenced by Grasett's ability to influence the British Chiefs of Staff about Hong Kong in 1941, something that Brooke-Popham failed to do. But other factors affected the colony's defence during the war, including the little-studied role of racism in defence planning. Racist dismissals of both the Chinese and Japanese negatively affected the defence of the colony, but changes came too late to make a difference, just one more change in a long string of which the Canadian reinforcement was simply another.

Despite the claims of some authors, there were many legitimate reasons why Canada opted to reinforce Hong Kong. My exploration of the role that the United States played in the Canadian decision to accept the Hong Kong request is new. Further, Minister of National Defence J.L. Ralston's important role in accepting Britain's request, often overlooked elsewhere, is better explored herein. I have expanded upon Crerar's role as well. While there was no conspiracy to put Canadian troops in harm's way at Hong Kong, mistakes were made when Canada accepted the request. Officials in Ottawa, oddly, little discussed Hong Kong's

reinforcement in comparison to other garrison requests, notably Iceland. That miscalculation by the Canadian War Cabinet required additional explanation not seen in other works on the battle. While numerous personal, political, and cultural factors all played a part in the despatch of Canadians to the distant colony, malice and cupidity were not among them.

The process that selected the Royal Rifles of Canada and the Winnipeg Grenadiers for “C” Force has been much misrepresented by secondary sources about the battle. My correction of these errors is a sorely needed new addition to the battle’s historiography. Other works have claimed that the units were categorized as unfit for combat due to a lack of training. Much like other misunderstandings about “C” Force, this was not the truth. The units were categorized as not fit for overseas duty due to the policy that all units returning from garrison duty must undergo further training upon their return. But while the Royal Rifles and Grenadiers did not receive their required training, they were not untrained. Other additions to the historiography include the demonstration of C.G. Power’s role in selecting the Royal Rifles, a part that many authors have ignored or downplayed. The main controversy surrounding the Grenadiers and Royal Rifles’ selection revolves around the accusation that they were untrained for their task. But, as I have shown, this was not the case for both units had trained while on garrison duty. While such training was far from perfect, to present these units as untrained is to ignore their records prior to going to Hong Kong.

The battle itself is the most difficult aspect to cover given nationalist boasting and blame deflection. Using Kirstin J.H. Brathwaite’s model of measuring both the skill and the will of soldiers to determine their combat effectiveness, I asserts that “C” Force’s adequate performance was no better and no worse than the rest of the garrison. Not all Canadians fought well, and unfortunately there were examples of Canadian drunkenness and poor discipline. But there were

times when Canadians demonstrated incredible bravery and combat ability. Company Sergeant Major John Osborn's winning of the Victoria Cross exemplifies the courage that many Canadians displayed on the battlefield. Some of the Canadians lacked the skills to use all of their weapons well, while many Canadians did not hesitate to act when instructed. The stand by "D" Company of the Grenadiers at the Wong Nei Chong Gap plus the counterattack by "D" Company of the Royal Rifles on Stanley Village demonstrated that the Canadians could ably resist Japanese attacks.

The Hong Kong Inquiry was an important part of legacy formation for it introduced Canadians to many myths about the battle. The first instances of accusations of government incompetence, public knowledge of "C" Force's supposed poor training, British perfidy, and the media attention of the Battle of Hong Kong emerged during the Inquiry, as did the desire of King's government to make Hong Kong disappear. Ralston's inquiry in January 1942, which has not been discussed in-depth elsewhere, was one example of the government's attempt to pacify political opposition. The forced retirement of both Quartermaster-General Major-General E.J.C. Schmidlin and Lieutenant-Colonel E.H. Spearing, Assistant Quartermaster-General of Movement Control while little else was done gave the impression that Ralston's investigation was merely a scapegoating exercise and did nothing little to mollify the political opposition. George Drew and R.B. Hanson, using the battle for their own political goals, seemed to care rather little about truly improving the Canadian war effort. This dissertation provided the first comprehensive account of the Inquiry and its aftermath that did not centre on Lyman Duff's role. Duff's findings that the government had done no wrong and the fact that he reached the same conclusion as Ralston lends credence to the charges that the Inquiry was nothing more than a whitewash. The charges against Drew were further evidence that the government wanted to

silence discussion of Hong Kong. Indeed, the Canadian media assailed King after the charges were laid against Drew, bringing more attention to the battle. The government wanted to have the Inquiry to settle the Hong Kong issues; instead, it incited more debates about the battle and the government's missteps related to "C" Force's despatch.

The fighting at Hong Kong had not even properly ended before individuals tried to shape its legacy. George Drew's Christmas Day letter was the first attempt to shape "C" Force's legacy. British and Canadian officers recorded their version of the battle's events to protect reputations and enhance their own careers. A wartime legacy of the battle included a refusal to send Canadian troops to the Falkland Islands in early 1942 and decisions to limit Canadian military participation in the Pacific. The release of Major-General Maltby's Despatch in 1948 was a prime example of the attempts to protect reputations and shift blame. The Canadian Army, responding negatively to Maltby's initial draft, demanded that offending passages purported to be in variance to recorded facts be changed. C.P. Stacey played a vital role in having this document altered. Drew reappeared in the Hong Kong story as he continued to assail the King government after the Maltby Despatch's release. Britain refused to release documents relating to Hong Kong despite multiple requests by King. Various acts of political theatre did little to appease Drew. Political battles became tied to better treatment for the Hong Kong veterans. One example is how the Pacific Star and the Pacific campaign pay, little examined elsewhere, were given to the veterans only after persistent political pressure was brought to bear. The overall treatment of the Hong Kong veterans by the government was poor. A detailed examination of all the major studies conducted about the veterans' health, normally ignored by other authors, has demonstrated government neglect. As a result of their poor treatment, the veterans formed the Hong Kong Veterans' Association (HKVA) to seek better benefits from the government. Some

payments were given to the Hong Kong veterans, but many came far too late to do any good. The HKVA has evolved in its mission as it seeks to keep the memory of the Battle of Hong Kong alive in Canada, including spearheading the creation of the Hong Kong Memorial in Ottawa. The newspaper media had a tremendous influence on the spreading of myths and the legacy of the battle, while private groups and the veterans took up the role that the government had neglected. The national memorial in Ottawa was another element where the government avoided taking too much action. Most “C” Force veterans did not live to obtain the proper recognition they were due. This mistake needs to be recognized by the Canadian government.

*The Valour and the Horror* series remains one of the most controversial influences on the legacy of the battle. The Hong Kong episode is rife with errors that resulted from the McKenna brothers pushing a narrative that was anti-British. The core issue at the controversy surrounding *The Valour and the Horror* was a dispute about who controls how history is presented. An example of this conflict was the debate over the CBC Ombudsman’s Report, while the Senate investigation also caused much uproar. Many of the series’ critics did not wish to silence the McKennas; they simply criticized them for failing to follow established historical practices. Academic responses focused on the reasons behind the Canadian reinforcement and neglected to discuss the battle itself. My exploration of the errors relating to the battle made in “Savage Christmas” disputed the McKennas’ claims that have gone unchallenged in academic works. An academic revisionist response developed about the reinforcement of Hong Kong as a direct response to *The Valour and the Horror*. Without these important works, the reasons behind the Canadian reinforcement and the Battle of Hong Kong would not be understood in the proper context as historiography pieces about “C” Force, such as Tony Banham’s, often do not discuss



the revisionist response.<sup>2</sup> Still, the series produced one benefit by keeping Hong Kong veterans in the minds of Canadians.

One of the more surprising lessons to emerge from this study of the Battle of Hong Kong's legacy has been the numerous gaps that exist between popular and academic history, both in relation to attitudes and collaboration. This is especially prominent in Canadian military history. The literature on the battle has demonstrated what problems arise when popular history dominates the historical discourse on a topic. Responding to this state of affairs, many academic historians have condemned popular history instead of trying to fix the situation. The differences are not so great that the two approaches cannot be reconciled. Eric Arnesen has argued that "There are enough good trade books in history that do meet the standard to suggest that the demand is not an unreasonable one. Academic and popular historians have much to teach one another. If those in the academy hoping to reach beyond university walls can fruitfully learn about more graceful and literary writing, so too can popular historians better acknowledge the complexities of the past."<sup>3</sup> Both sides have much they could teach the other to the benefit of historical inquiry.

Academic military history is especially well placed to adapt to these suggestions as the discipline can embrace the trends of popular history while still producing sound academic work. Bringing historical practices to the popular history will make both sides better. This change would benefit academic history such as avoiding a future situation like the myths about Hong Kong. A shift in how history is written could prevent poorly crafted works of history from dominating the historiography of a topic. It is not enough for academic historians to simply

---

<sup>2</sup> Tony Banham, "A Historiography of C Force," *Canadian Military History* 24, no. 2 (2015).

<sup>3</sup> Eric Arnesen, "The Recent Historiography of British Abolitionism: Academic Scholarship, Popular History, and the Broader Reading Public," *Historically Speaking* 8, no.6 (2007): 24.

disparage popular history works. They must interact with them, challenge their conclusions, and make their own work more appealing to the general public.

A new addition recently has been made to the Battle of Hong Kong's legacy. Some in Canada have evoked "C" Force's reinforcement of Hong Kong in 1941 to call upon Canada plus other democracies to resist China's restriction of democracy and human rights in Hong Kong. Derek H. Burney, former Canadian ambassador to the United States, used this image to call on the Canadian government to do more: "If nothing else, the memory of the gallant effort by Canadian troops in 1941 should give credibility to a principled stand by Canada in support of the spirit of democracy and freedom being asserted in today's Hong Kong."<sup>4</sup> China's restriction of rights has once again brought Hong Kong into the world of Canadian parliamentary politics. Some Canadian Members of Parliament (MP) used the battle to convince the Canadian government to pressure China to better treat the people of Hong Kong. Conservative MP Kenny Chiu has linked Canada and Hong Kong given the many of Hong Kongers who live in Canada and because "Hong Kong is a part of Canadian history, said Chiu, noting Canada made attempts to liberate the city from Japanese invasion in the Second World War."<sup>5</sup> While the historical facts are incorrect, the sentiment exists. Connecting the 1941 battle to Hong Kong's current struggle has brought a positive element to the battle's legacy by evoking it as a stand against aggression. As journalist Steven Chase has noted, "the conflict between pro-democracy protesters and government in Hong Kong this past year has illuminated Canada's ties to the semi-autonomous

---

<sup>4</sup> Derek H. Burney, "Canadians defended Hong Kong in 1941. We must do it again," *National Post*, 11 December 2019, <https://nationalpost.com/opinion/derek-burney-canadians-defended-hong-kong-in-1941-we-must-do-it-again>.

<sup>5</sup> Graeme Wood, "'Hong Kong's future is unavoidably linked to Canada,' says MP as China encroaches," *Richmond News*, 22 May 2020, <https://www.richmond-news.com/hong-kong-s-future-is-unavoidably-linked-to-canada-says-mp-as-china-encroaches-1.24139729>.

former British colony, where 300,000 residents hold Canadian citizenship.”<sup>6</sup> The various ties between Hong Kong and Canada are growing in the twenty-first century, which bodes well for how the 1941 battle will be remembered in Canada moving into the future. The historiography on the Battle of Hong Kong’s legacy is far from complete.

The Second World War’s legacy in Canada remains understudied. While new studies are always emerging, more must be done so that Canadians can understand what that war means to Canada and Canadians. The Battle of Hong Kong occupies a unique place in this legacy as the first deployment of Canadian troops in the Asia-Pacific region since the despatch of troops to Siberia at end of the First World War. Also, the fighting at Hong Kong was the Canadian Army’s first test of combat in the Second World War, while Canadian POWs taken at Hong Kong spent some of the longest time in enemy captivity during the war. This study has offered new insights about the battle in that it explored how the legacy of the fighting at Hong Kong was formed and the role that myths have played in this development. The battle of Hong Kong shares many similarities with another major Canadian defeat of the war, the Raid on Dieppe. This format applied in this dissertation can be applied to that defeat as well.

The Battle of Hong Kong and the 1942 Dieppe raid constitute Canada’s twin disasters of the Second World War. As long as the Canadian experience of the war is discussed, they will forever be linked. Writing about this connection, Canadian historian Galen Roger Perras has concluded:

Canada’s army suffered two great defeats during the Second World War, at Hong Kong, and at Dieppe in August 1942, where the Second Division took 3400 casualties, including 907 dead...Perhaps Dieppe’s dreadful casualty list has been made more tolerable, as Allied leaders argued lessons learned there paved the way for D-Day in 1944, or perhaps the disparate fate of the two groups of Canadian

---

<sup>6</sup> Steven Chase, “‘I think we’re largely forgotten’: Nearly 80 years ago, Canadians fought the Battle of Hong Kong,” *The Globe and Mail*, 27 December 2019, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/politics/article-i-think-were-largely-forgotten-nearly-80-years-ago-canadians/>.

POWs matters. Seventy-two of the 1946 Canadians taken prisoner at Dieppe died in German camps, a death rate of four percent. However, 281 C Force members died in captivity, a 17 percent fatality rate.<sup>7</sup>

These two defeats accounted for a large portion of Canadians taken as POWs during the war. Canadian troops from both engagements were poorly treated once they were taken prisoner, creating another connection between these two events. Historian J.L. Granatstein, in his history of the Canadian Army, has noted that the Hong Kong veterans faced continuous, cruel Japanese treatment, while Dieppe POWs had their hands shackled for extended periods of time and endured poor conditions in trains on their journey to POW camps. Yet, as Granatstein has remarked, the Dieppe POWs had a far higher survival rate than those captured at Hong Kong.<sup>8</sup> This marked difference has influenced the legacy of each battle by giving more attention to the Hong Kong POWs. Historian Tim Cook, who has written on both defeats, has rightly stated that “the treatment of the Canadians in Japanese hands was far worse than it was for those soldiers, sailors, and airmen who fell into the clutches of the Nazis.”<sup>9</sup> Had the Canadian POWs been treated well by the Japanese, would there have been fewer angry responses or attempts to blame someone for “C” Force’s despatch? The answer to this question can never be known. But given that a good part of the negative legacy surrounding Hong Kong stemmed from the treatment of the POWs, one can venture that this scenario is distinctly possible. Moral indignation makes for good copy and hence the attention that is paid to the sufferings of “C” Force.

Aside from the large number of Canadian POWs that fell into enemy hands, many other links exist between these two engagements. Cook has remarked about the “jagged scar of Dieppe

---

<sup>7</sup> Galen Roger Perras, “Defeat Still Cries Aloud for Explanation: Explaining C Force’s Dispatch to Hong Kong,” *Canadian Military Journal* 11, no. 4 (2011): 44.

<sup>8</sup> J.L. Granatstein, *Canada’s Army: Waging War and Keeping the Peace* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 199.

<sup>9</sup> Tim Cook, *The Necessary War: Canadians Fighting the Second World War 1939–1943* (Toronto: Penguin, 2014), 91.

that runs through the Canadian psyche to this day.”<sup>10</sup> The same can be said about Hong Kong despite the fact that Dieppe has received most of the attention between the two actions. Despite this greater attention paid to Dieppe, a study of that battle using the methodologies of this dissertation would be useful in the Canadian historiography of the war. Dieppe is also subject to many myths and misunderstandings so examining where these originate can help to better understand that battle. The historiography would also benefit from studying the legacies of these two engagements together.

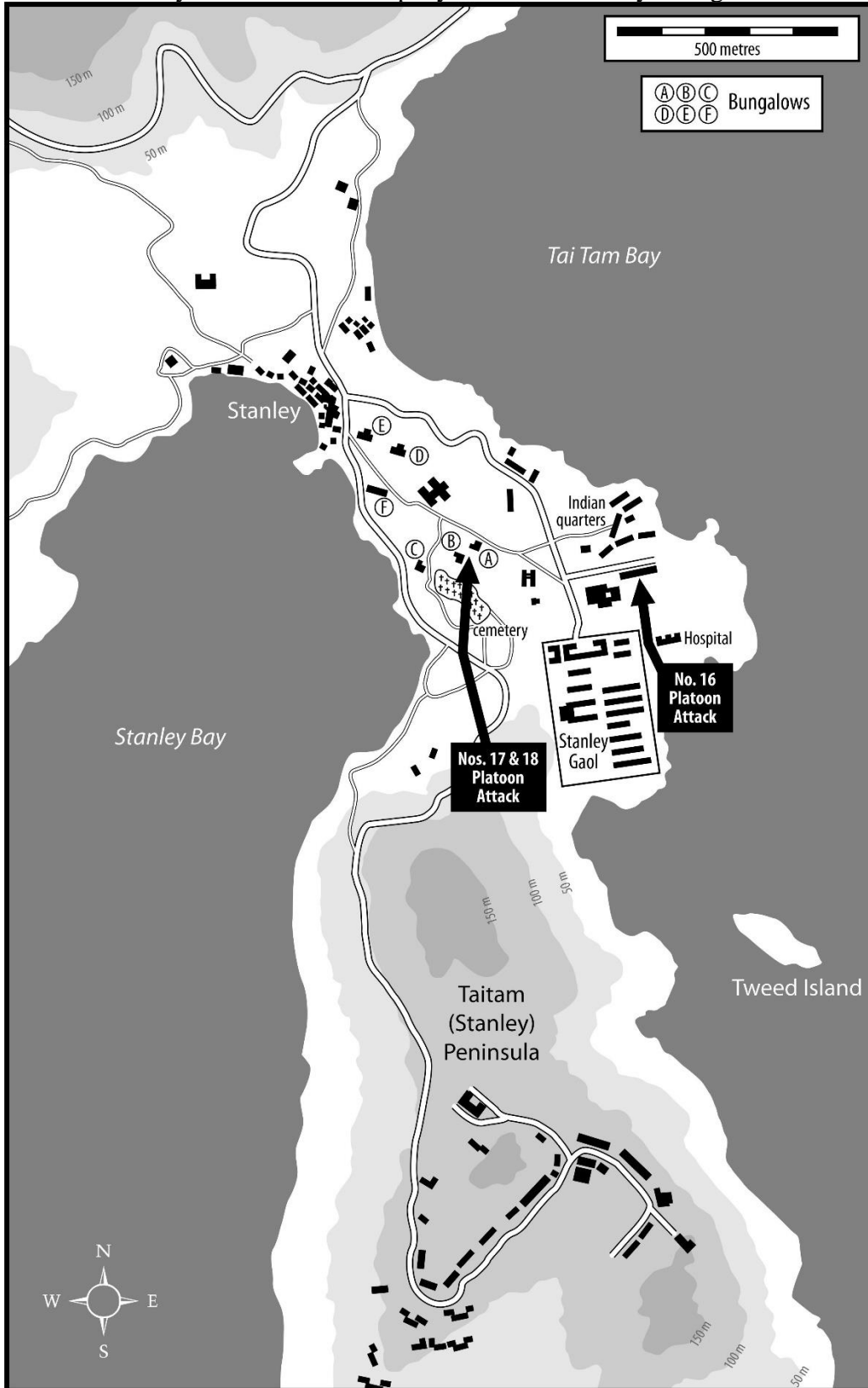
Craig Stockings has called the historical zombie myths “monsters of the mind.”<sup>11</sup> These rotting, unthinking myths have caused much damage to Canadians’ understanding of the Second World War. They have infected the Canadian collective memory. It is a possibility that this ailment will become a permanent affliction. With the passing of most Hong Kong veterans, the battle is quickly in danger of no longer being a living memory. As such, it may forever be remembered as a purely negative aspect of Canada’s Second World War. However, given recent developments in Hong Kong plus historical re-examinations of “C” Force’s despatch, perceptions about the battle have begun to change. What “C” Force did in Hong Kong has increasingly been presented in a more positive way. Hopefully, these changes are enough to crush the persistent, destructive zombie myths that surround the battle’s legacy. A focus on commemoration of those who died at Hong Kong and a memory free of politics and opportunism is possible. While this claim may be naïve, one can hope for a better understanding of “C” Force’s experiences. Hong Kong’s legacy continues to change, but the form it will take in the near future remains to be seen.

---

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 285.

<sup>11</sup> Craig Stockings, “Introduction: The Walking ‘Undead’ and Australian Military History,” in *Zombie Myths of Australian Military History*, ed. Craig Stockings (Sydney, Australia: University of New South Wales, 2010), 3.

**APPENDIX**  
Royal Rifles' "D" Company Attack on Stanley Village



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### 1) Primary Sources

#### 1.1 Archival Sources

##### Canadian War Museum

20080086–001, Raymond W. Elliott Collection

19790285–001, HKVCA Collection

20110043–001, James MacMillan Collection

20050094–002, Arthur Ray Squires Collection

##### Directorate of History and Heritage, Department of National Defence

File 593 (D1) C Force War Diary

File 593 (D3) C Coy RRC Diary

File 593 (D5) Personal Stories

File 593 (D9) Chaplains Reports

File 593 (D26) Interviews and Correspondence for Prelim Report on Hong Kong

File 593 (D33) War Diary Winnipeg Grenadiers

##### Imperial War Museum

Private Papers of Squadron Leader D.S. Hill

Private Papers of Major-General C.M. Maltby

Private Papers of Lieutenant-Colonel J.H. Monro

##### Library and Archives Canada

MG 26 J1 William Lyon Mackenzie King fonds

MG 26 J4 William Lyon Mackenzie King fonds

MG 26 J5 William Lyon Mackenzie King fonds

MG 26 J13 William Lyon Mackenzie King fonds

MG 27 III B11 James Layton Ralston fonds

MG 30 E 64 John Kelburne Lawson fonds

MG 30 E 100 Arthur William Currie fonds

MG 30 E 133 Andrew George Latta McNaughton fonds

MG 30 E 141 Sir Lyman P. Duff fonds

MG 30 E 157 Henry Duncan Graham Crerar fonds

MG 31 J12 Gustave Gingras fonds

MG 32 C3 George Drew fonds

RG 24 Department of National Defence fonds

RG 33 120 Royal Commission to Inquire into and Report upon the Organization, Authorization and Dispatch of the Canadian Expeditionary Force to the Crown Colony of Hong Kong fonds

RG 150 Ministry of the Overseas Military Forces of Canada fonds

##### Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College London

FM Alan Francis Brooke, 1st Viscount Alanbrooke of Brookeborough Papers

ACM Sir Henry Robert Moore Brooke-Popham Papers

The National Archives United Kingdom

Admiralty Papers: ADM 1, ADM 116, ADM 339  
Air Ministry Papers: AIR 2, AIR 23  
Cabinet Papers: CAB 11, CAB 79, CAB 96, CAB 121  
Colonial Office Papers: CO 129, CO 323, CO 968  
Dominions Office Papers: DO 35  
Prime Minister's Office Papers: PREM 8  
War Office Papers: WO 106, WO 172, WO 208

National Army Museum United Kingdom

The Letters from Harold Robert Newton, 1999–07–92

Queen's University Archives

Charles Gavan Power fonds

1.2 Period Publications

Published Reports and Articles

Crerar, H.D.G. "The Development of Closer Relations between the Military Forces of the Empire." *The Journal of the Royal United Service Institution* 71, no. 483 (1926): 441–455

Duff, Lyman P. *Report on the Canadian Expeditionary Force to the Crown Colony of Hong Kong*. Ottawa: King's Printer, 1942.

Maltby, C.M. Operations in Hong Kong from 8th to 25th December, 1941, *Supplement to The London Gazette*. London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1948.

Newspapers and Magazines

*Calgary Herald*

*China Mail* (Hong Kong)

*La Gazette du Nord* (Amos, Québec)

*La Presse* (Montréal, Québec)

*Le Devoir* (Montreal, Québec)

*Le Droit* (Ottawa, Ontario)

*Legion Magazine*

*Maclean's*

*Montreal Gazette*

*National Post* (Toronto, Ontario)

*Ottawa Citizen*

*Red Deer Express* (Red Deer, Alberta)

*Richmond News* (Richmond, British Columbia)

*The Beaver*

*The Georgetown Herald*

*The Globe and Mail* (Toronto, Ontario)

*The Hamilton Spectator*

*The Manitoban* (Winnipeg, Manitoba)

*The New York Times*

*The Sphere* (London, United Kingdom)



*The Sunday Times* (London, United Kingdom)  
*The Vancouver Sun*  
*The Winnipeg Tribune*  
*Time Magazine*  
*Toronto Star*  
*Winnipeg Free Press*

### 1.3 Government Documents

#### Canada

Canada, Parliament, *House of Commons Debates*, 19th Parl, 2nd Sess, Vol 4.  
Canada, Parliament, *House of Commons Debates*, 19th Parl, 3rd Sess, Vol 5.  
Canada, Parliament, *House of Commons Debates*, 20th Parl, 1st Sess, Vol 2.  
Canada, Parliament, *House of Commons Debates*, 20th Parl, 5th Sess, Vol 2.  
Canada, Parliament, *House of Commons Debates*, 20th Parl, 1st Sess, Vol 1.  
The Senate of Canada, *The Valour and the Horror: Report of the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology* (January 1993).

#### United Kingdom

*The London Gazette*, 15 November 1938.  
*The London Gazette*, 29 July 1941.  
*Supplement to The London Gazette*, 29 March 1946.

### **2) Secondary Sources**

Aldrich, Richard J. *Intelligence and the War against Japan: Britain, America and the Politics of Secret Service*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Allister, William. *Where Life and Death Hold Hands*. Toronto: Stoddart, 1989.

Alperovitz, Gar. *Atomic Diplomacy: Hiroshima and Potsdam The Use of the Atomic Bomb and the American Confrontation with Soviet Power*. New York: Vintage Books, 1965.

Arnesen, Eric. "The Recent Historiography of British Abolitionism: Academic Scholarship, Popular History, and the Broader Reading Public." *Historically Speaking* 8, no. 6 (2007): 22–24.

Banham, Tony. *Not the Slightest Chance: The Defence of Hong Kong, 1941*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003.

———. "A Historiography of C Force," *Canadian Military History* 24, no. 2 (2015): 235–254.

Beckett, Ian F.W. "A Question of Command: GHQ and the Dominions, 1917." In *Turning Point 1917: The British Empire at War*, edited by Douglas E. Delaney and Nikolas Gardner, 78–98. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017.

Bell, Christopher. "Our Most Exposed Outpost: Hong Kong and British Far Eastern Strategy, 1921–1941." *The Journal of Military History* 60 (1996): 61–88.

———. *The Royal Navy, Seapower and Strategy between the Wars*. New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2000.

———. "The 'Singapore Strategy' and the Deterrence of Japan: Winston Churchill, the Admiralty and the Dispatch of Force Z." *The English Historical Review* 116, no. 467 (2001): 604–634.

Benoit, Jean. "'Price, Sir William,' in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*. Vol. 15." Accessed 24 November 24, 2019. [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/price\\_william\\_15E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/price_william_15E.html).

- Berard, Leo Paul. *17 Days Until Christmas*. Barrie, Ontario: Barrie Press, 1997.
- Bercuson David J. "The Valour and the Horror: A Historical Analysis." In *The Valour and the Horror Revisited*, edited by David Bercuson and S.F. Wise, 31–58. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994.
- Berger, Carl. *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism 1867–1914*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970.
- Best, Antony. *Britain, Japan and Pearl Harbor: Avoiding War in East Asia, 1936–1941*. London: Routledge, 1995.
- Bourrie, Mark. *The Fog of War: Censorship of Canada's Media in World War Two*. Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 2011.
- Brathwaite, Kirstin J. H. "Effective in Battle: Conceptualizing Soldiers' Combat Effectiveness." *Defence Studies* 18, no. 1 (2018): 1–18.
- Brennan, Patrick. *Reporting the Nation's Business: Press-Government Relations during the Liberal Years, 1935–1957*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994.
- Brooks, Van Wyck. "On Creating a Usable Past." *The Dial*, 11 April 1918.
- Brown, R. Blake. "The Supreme Court of Canada and Judicial Legitimacy: The Rise and Fall of Chief Justice Lyman Poore Duff." *McGill Law Journal* 47 (2002): 559–591.
- Bush, Edward F. "Sir Lyman Duff and the Hong Kong Inquiry," *Dalhousie Review* 5, no. 2 (1972): 203–211.
- Byers, Daniel. "J.L. Ralston and the First World War The Origins of a Life of Service." *Canadian Military History* 22, no. 1 (2015): 3–16.
- . *Zombie Army: The Canadian Army and Conscription in the Second World War*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2016.
- Calvert, Jane E. "Myth-Making and Myth-Breaking in the Historiography on John Dickinson." *Journal of the Early Republic* 34, no. 3 (2014): 467–480.
- Cambon, Ken. *Guest of Hirohito*. Vancouver: PW Press, 1990.
- Campbell, W. Kenneth. "The Right Honourable Sir Lyman Poore Duff, P.C., G.C.M.G.: The Man as I Knew Him." *Osgoode Hall Law Journal* 12, no. 2 (1974): 243–260.
- Carew, Tim. *The Fall of Hong Kong*. London: Pan Books, 1963.
- Carr, Graham. "Rules of Engagement: Public History and the Drama of Legitimation." *The Canadian Historical Review* 86, no. 2 (2005): 317–354.
- Carver, H.S.M. *Personnel Selection in the Canadian Army: A Descriptive Study*. Ottawa: Directorate of Personnel Selection National Defence Headquarters, 1945.
- Chaisson, Eric. *Epic of Evolution: Seven Ages of the Cosmos*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005.
- Chipman, Donald E. and Robert S. Weddle. "How Historical Myths Are Born.....And Why They Seldom Die." *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 116, no. 3 (2013): 227–258.
- Churchill, Winston. *The Second World War: The Grand Alliance*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1951.
- Cook, Tim. *Clio's Warriors: Canadian Historians and the Writing of the World Wars*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006.
- . *The Fight for History: 75 Years of Forgetting, Remembering, and Remaking Canada's Second World War*. Toronto: Allen Lane, 2020.
- . *The Necessary War: Canadians Fighting the Second World War 1939–1943*. Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2014.
- . *Shock Troops: Canadians Fighting the Great War 1917–1918 Volume Two*. Toronto:

- Penguin Canada, 2008.
- . *Warlords: Borden, Mackenzie King, and Canada's World Wars*. Toronto: Allen Lane Canada, 2012.
- Copp, Terry. "A Brief to the Veterans Affairs Committee of the Senate of Canada Concerning the CBC Series 'The Valour and the Horror' June 1992."
- . "The Decision to Reinforce Hong Kong September 1941." *Canadian Military History* 20, no. 2 (2011): 3–13.
- . "The Defence of Hong Kong: December 1941." *Canadian Military History* 10, no. 4 (2001): 5–20.
- Copp, Terry, and Matt Symes. "Canada's D-Day: Politics, Media, and the Fluidity of Memory." In *D-Day in History and Memory: The Normandy Landings in International Remembrance and Commemoration*, edited by Michael Dolski, Sam Edwards, and John Buckley, 131–158. Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2014.
- Corrigan, Leonard. *Diary Winnipeg Grenadiers, C Force: Prisoner-of-War, 1941–1945*. Self-published, 2008.
- Crew, F.A.E. *The Army Medical Services: Administration. Vol. 1*. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1953.
- Delaney, Douglas E. *Corps Commanders: Five British and Canadian Generals at War, 1939–45*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011.
- . *The Imperial Army Project: Britain and the Land Forces of the Dominions and India, 1902–1945*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Dick, Ernest J. "'The Valour and the Horror' Continued: Do We still Want Our History on Television?" *Archivaria* 35 (1993): 253–269.
- Dickson, Paul D. *A Thoroughly Canadian General: A Biography of General H.D.G. Crerar*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007.
- . "Crerar and the Decision to Garrison Hong Kong." *Canadian Military History* 3, no. 1 (1994): 97–109.
- Douglas, W.A.B. and Breerton Greenhous. *Out of the Shadows: Canada in the Second World War*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.
- Durflinger, Serge. *Veterans with a Vision Canada's War Blinded in Peace and War*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010.
- Eayrs, James. *In Defence of Canada: From the Great War to the Great Depression Volume 1*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964.
- . *In Defence of Canada: Appeasement and Rearmament Volume 2*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965.
- Endacott, G.B. *Hong Kong Eclipse*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1978.
- Fedorowich, Kent. "'Cocked Hats and Swords and Small Little Garrisons': Britain, Canada and the Fall of Hong Kong, 1941." *Modern Asian Studies* 37, no. 1 (2003): 111–157.
- Ferguson, Ted. *Desperate Siege: The Battle for Hong Kong*. Toronto: Doubleday 1980.
- Ferris, John. "'Consistent with an Intention': The Far East Combined Bureau and the Outbreak of the Pacific War, 1940–41." *Intelligence and National Security* 27, no. 1 (2012): 5–26.
- . "Savage Christmas." In *The Valour and the Horror Revisited*, edited by David Bercuson and S.F. Wise, 109–127. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994.
- . "The Fulcrum of Power: Britain, Japan and the Asia-Pacific Region, 1880–1945." In

- Maritime Strategy and National Security in Japan and Britain: From the First Alliance to Post 9/11*, edited by Alessio Patalano, 17–39. Leiden, Netherlands: Global Oriental, 2012.
- . “Worthy of Some Better Enemy?": The British Estimate of the Imperial Japanese Army, 1919–41, and the Fall of Singapore.” *Canadian Journal of History* 28 (1993): 223–256.
- Findley, Timothy. “*The Valour and the Horror*,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 27, no. 4 (1992): 197–198.
- Flanagan, Andy. *The Endless Battle: The Fall of Hong Kong and Canadian POWs in Imperial Japan*. Fredericton, New Brunswick: Goose Lane Editions, 2017.
- Fraser, David. *And We Shall Shock: The British Army in the Second World War*. London: Cassell Military Paperbacks, 2002.
- Frost, Mark. “The British and Indian Army Staff Colleges in the Interwar Years.” In *Military Education and the British Empire, 1815–1949*, edited by Douglas E. Delaney, Robert C. Engen, and Meghan Fitzpatrick, 152–174. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2018.
- Fry, Michael G. *Illusions of Security: North Atlantic Diplomacy 1918–22*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972.
- Garneau, Grant S. *The Royal Rifles of Canada in Hong Kong, 1941–1945*. Carp, Ontario: Baird O’Keefe Publishing Inc., 2001.
- Granatstein, J.L. *Canada’s Army: Waging War and Keeping the Peace*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002.
- . *Conscription in the Second World War, 1939–1945: A Study in Political Management*. Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1969.
- . *The Generals: The Canadian Army’s Senior Commanders in the Second World War*. Toronto: Stoddart Publishing, 1993.
- . *The Politics of Survival: The Conservative Party of Canada, 1939–1945*. Toronto: University of Press, 1970.
- . *Who Killed Canadian History? Revised Edition*. Toronto: Harper Perennial, 2007.
- Grant, George. *Lament for a Nation: The Defeat of Canadian Nationalism*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1965.
- Greenberg, David. “That Barnes & Noble Dream.” *Slate*, 18 May 2005.  
[http://www.slate.com/articles/news\\_and\\_politics/history\\_book\\_blight/features/2005/that\\_barnes\\_noble\\_dream/are\\_popular\\_histories\\_vapid.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/history_book_blight/features/2005/that_barnes_noble_dream/are_popular_histories_vapid.html)
- Greenfield, Nathan M. *The Damned: The Canadians at the Battle of Hong Kong and the POW Experience, 1941–45*. Toronto: HarperCollins Publishers, 2010.
- Greenhalgh, Elizabeth. “Australians Broke the Hindenburg Line.” In *Zombie Myths of Australian Military History*, edited by Craig Stockings, 70–92. Sydney, Australia: University of New South Wales, 2010.
- Greenhous, Brereton. “C” *Force to Hong Kong: A Canadian Catastrophe*. Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1997.
- Harris, Stephen J. *Canadian Brass: The Making of a Professional Army, 1860–1939*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988.
- Hillmer, Norman. “Defence and Ideology: The Anglo-Canadian Military ‘Alliance’ in the 1930s.” *International Journal* 33, no. 3 (1978): 588–612.
- Horne, Gerald. *Race War: White Supremacy and the Japanese Attack on the British Empire*. New York: New York University Press, 2004.
- Humphries, Mark and Lyndsay Rosenthal. “Rehabilitation and Hong Kong Prisoners of War.”

- Canadian Military History* 24, no. 2 (2015): 255–266.
- Isenberg, Nancy and Andrew Burstein. “America’s Worst Historians.” *Salon*, 19 August 2012. [https://www.salon.com/2012/08/19/americas\\_worst\\_historians/](https://www.salon.com/2012/08/19/americas_worst_historians/).
- Jesse, Bernie, and Norm Park. *Seared in My Memory: One Hong Kong POW Tells His Story*. Saskatchewan: Self-published, 1996.
- Johnson, Gregory A. “The Canadian Experience of the Pacific War: Betrayal and Forgotten Captivity.” In *Forgotten Captives in Japanese-Occupied Asia*, edited by Karl Hack and Kevin Blackburn, 125–143. London: Routledge, 2008.
- Johnston-White, Iain E. *The British Commonwealth and Victory in the Second World War*. London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017.
- Jones, W.T. “On the Meaning of the Term ‘Influence’ in Historical Studies.” *Ethics* 53, no. 3 (1943): 192-201.
- Keegan, John. *The Second World War*. New York: Viking, 1989.
- Kesterton, Wilfred H. *A History of Journalism in Canada*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1967.
- Kirby, S. Woodburn. *The War Against Japan. Volume One: The Loss of Singapore*. London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1957.
- Klein, Maury. *A Call to Arms: Mobilizing America for World War II*. New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2013.
- Kwong, Chi Man. “Reconstructing the Early History of the Gin Drinker’s Line from Archival Sources.” *Surveying and Built Environment* 22, no. 1 (2012): 19–36.
- Kwong, Chi Man, and Tsoi Yiu Lun. *Eastern Fortress: A Military History of Hong Kong, 1840–1970*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2015.
- Lai, Wai-Chung Lawrence. “The Battle of Hong Kong: A Note on the Literature and the Effectiveness of the Defence.” *The Journal of the Hong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 39 (1999): 115–136.
- Lai, Wai-Chung Lawrence, Stephen N.G. Davies, Y.K. Tan, and P. Yung. “The Gin Drinker’s Line: Reconstruction of a British Colonial Defence Line in Hong Kong using Aerial Photo Information.” *Property Management* 27, no. 1 (2009): 16–41.
- Lenarcic, David A. “Bordering on War: A Comparison of Canadian and American Neutralist Sentiment During the 1930s.” *American Review of Canadian Studies* 24, no. 2 (1994): 217–228.
- Lindsay, Oliver. *The Battle for Hong Kong 1941–1945: Hostage to Fortune*. Staplehurst, United Kingdom: Spellmount, 2005.
- . *The Lasting Honour: The Fall of Hong Kong, 1941*. London: Sphere Books, 1980.
- MacDonell, George S. *One Soldier’s Story 1939–1945: From the Fall of Hong Kong to the Defeat of Japan*. Toronto: Dundurn Group, 2002.
- Mackie, Colin. *A Directory of British Diplomats Part 2*. London: Foreign & Commonwealth Office, 2014.
- Macri, Franco David. “Abandoning the Outpost: Rejection of the Hong Kong Purchase Scheme of 1938–39.” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Hong Kong Branch* 50 (2010): 303–316.
- . “Canadians under Fire: C Force and the Battle of Hong Kong, December 1941.” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Hong Kong Branch* 51 (2011): 237–256.
- McIntosh, Dave. *Hell on Earth: Aging Faster Dying Sooner Canadian Prisoners of the Japanese During World War II*. Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1997.
- McKay, Ian and Jamie Swift. *Warrior Nation: Rebranding Canada in an Age of Anxiety*.

- Toronto: Between the Lines, 2012.
- McKenna, Brian and Terence. "Response to the CBC Ombudsman Report, November 10, 1992, Galafilm Inc." In *The Valour and the Horror Revisited*, edited by David Bercuson and S.F. Wise, 73–88. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994.
- McKercher, B.J.C. "The Politics of Naval Arms Limitation in Britain in the 1920s." In *The Washington Conference, 1921–22: Naval Rivalry, East Asian Stability and the Road to Pearl Harbor*, edited by Erik Goldstein and John Maurer, 35–59. London: Routledge, 1994.
- McNaughton, H.P. *Shadow Lights of Sham Shui Po: A Rhyming Picture of the Yesteryears*. Hong Kong: POW Camp Shamshuipo, 1944
- Meagher, Terry. *Betrayal: Canadian Soldiers Hong Kong 1941*. Kemptville, Ontario: Veterans Publications, 2015.
- Meehan, John David. *The Dominion and the Rising Sun: Canada Encounters Japan, 1929–41*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004.
- Miki, Roy. *Redress: Inside the Japanese Canadian Call for Justice*. Vancouver: Raincoast Books, 2004.
- Mitter, Rana. *Forgotten Ally: China's World War II, 1937–1945*. Boston: Mariner Books, 2014.
- Morgan, William. "Report of the CBC Ombudsman." In *The Valour and the Horror Revisited*, edited by David Bercuson and S.F. Wise, 61–72. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994.
- . "Comments on the November 10 Galafilm Report, 18 November 1992." In *The Valour and the Horror Revisited*, edited by David Bercuson and S.F. Wise, 92–105. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994.
- Morison, Samuel Eliot. *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II. Volume Three: The Rising Sun in the Pacific, 1931-April 1942*. Edison, New Jersey: Castle Books, 2001.
- Morton, Desmond. *Ministers and Generals: Politics and the Canadian Militia, 1868–1904*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970.
- Morton, Louis. *The Fall of the Philippines*. Washington D.C.: Center of Military History United States Army, 1993.
- . "The Historian and the Study of War," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 49 (1962): 599–613.
- Murfett, Malcolm H., John N. Miksic, Brian P. Farrell, and Chiang Ming Shun. *Between Two Oceans: A Military History of Singapore from First Settlement to Final British Withdrawal*. Singapore: Marshall Cavendish Academic, 2004.
- Nguyen, Viet Thanh. *Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam and the Memory of War*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2016.
- Nicholson, G.W.L. *Official History of the Canadian Army in the First World War: Canadian Expeditionary Force 1914–1919*. Ottawa: Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationery, 1962.
- Nicholson, G.W.L. and John H. Price. "The Controversy over Maltby's Hong Kong Dispatch." *Canadian Military History* 2, no. 2 (1993): 111–116.
- Novick, Peter. *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1988.
- Pellerin, R. Daniel. "Sharpening the Sabre: Canadian Infantry Combat Training during the Second World War." PhD diss., University of Ottawa, 2016.

- Penny, D. Burke. *Beyond the Call: Royal Canadian Corps of Signals Brigade Headquarters, "C" Force Hong Kong 1941–1945*. Nepean, Ontario: Hong Kong Veterans Commemorative Association, 2009.
- Perras, Galen Roger. "Anglo-Canadian Imperial Relations: The Case of the Garrisoning of the Falkland Islands in 1942." *War & Society* 14, no. 1 (1996): 73–97.
- . "Defeat Still Cries Aloud for Explanation: Explaining C Force's Dispatch to Hong Kong." *Canadian Military Journal* 11, no. 4 (2011): 37–47.
- . *Franklin Roosevelt and the Origins of the Canadian-American Security Alliance, 1933–1945: Necessary, but Not Necessary Enough*. Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1998.
- . "'Future Plays Will Depend On How The Next One Works': Franklin Roosevelt and the Canadian Legation Discussions of January 1938." *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 8, no. 4 (2006): 1–31.
- . "Our Position in the Far East would be Stronger without this Unsatisfactory Commitment": Britain and the Reinforcement of Hong Kong, 1941." *Canadian Journal of History* 30 (1995): 231–259.
- . "Stepping Stones on a Road to Nowhere? The United States, Canada, and the Aleutian Island Campaign, 1942–1943." PhD diss., University of Waterloo, 1995.
- Perras, Galen Roger and Katrina E. Kellner. "'A Perfectly Logical and Sensible Thing': Billy Mitchell Advocates a Canadian-American Aerial Alliance against Japan." *The Journal of Military History* 72, no. 3 (2008): 785–823.
- Pickersgill, J.W. *The Mackenzie King Record: 1939–1944*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960.
- Pope, Maurice. *Soldiers and Politicians: The Memoirs of Lt.-Gen. Maurice A. Pope*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962.
- Preston, Richard A. *Canada and "Imperial Defense": A Study of the Origins of the British Commonwealth's Defense Organization, 1867–1919*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967.
- Prior, Robin. *When Britain Saved the West: The Story of 1940*. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2015.
- Pulsifer, Cameron. "John Robert Osborn: Canada's Hong Kong VC." *Canadian Military History* 6, no. 2 (1997): 79–89.
- Robinson, Michael. "Popular vs Academic History." *Time to Eat the Dogs* (blog). 4 May 2008. <https://timetoeatthedogs.com/2008/05/04/who-should-write-about-exploration/>.
- Rickard, John Nelson. *The Politics of Command: Lieutenant-General A.G.L. McNaughton and the Canadian Army, 1939–1943*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010.
- Roland, Charles G. *Long Night's Journey into Day: Prisoners of War in Hong Kong and Japan, 1941–1945*. Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2001.
- Sacco, Nick. "Can a Distinction Be Made Between 'Academic' and 'Popular' History?" *Exploring the Past* (blog). 16 October 2014. <https://pastexplore.wordpress.com/2014/10/16/can-a-distinction-be-made-between-academic-and-popular-history/>.
- Sarty, Roger. "How C.P. Stacey Became the Army's Official Historian: The Writing of *The Military Problems of Canada, 1937–1940*." In *Canada and the Second World War: Essays in Honour of Terry Copp*, edited by Geoffrey Hayes, Mike Bechthold, and Matt Symes, 139–157. Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University, 2012.
- Schwartz, Mallory. "War on the Air: CBC-TV and Canada's Military, 1952–1992." PhD diss.,

- University of Ottawa, 2014.
- Schwarzkopf, Matthew. "The Second Mission: Canadian Survival in Hong Kong Prisoner-of-War Camps, 1941–1945." MA Thesis, University of Ottawa, 2019.
- Scott, F. R. *Selected Poems*. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1966.
- Spector, Ronald H. *Eagle Against the Sun: The American War with Japan*. New York: Vintage Books, 1985.
- Stacey, C.P. *A Date with History: Memoirs of a Canadian Historian*. Ottawa: Deneau Publishers, 1983.
- . *Arms, Men and Governments: The War Policies of Canada, 1939–1945*. Ottawa: The Queen's Printer, 1970.
- . *A Very Double Life: The Private World of Mackenzie King*. Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1977.
- . *Canada and the Age of Conflict Volume 2: 1921–1948 The Mackenzie King Era*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981
- . *The Canadian Army 1939–1945: An Official Historical Summary*. Ottawa: The King's Printer, 1948.
- . *Six Years of War: The Army in Canada, Britain and the Pacific*. Ottawa: The Queen's Printer, 1955.
- . *The Victory Campaign: The Operations in North-West Europe 1944–1945*. Ottawa: The Queen's Printer, 1960.
- Stanley, Peter. "Dramatic Myth and Dull Truth: Invasion by Japan in 1942." In *Zombie Myths of Australian Military History*, edited by Craig Stockings, 140–160. Sydney, Australia: University of New South Wales, 2010.
- St. Croix, Brad. "The Omnipresent Threat: Fifth Columnists' Impact on the Battle of Hong Kong, December 1941." *Close Encounters in War 1* (2018): 4–21.
- Stevenson, David. *1914–1918: The History of the First World War*. London: Penguin Books, 2012.
- Stewart, Andrew. "'Necessarily of an Experimental Character': The Interwar Period and the Imperial Defence College." In *Military Education and the British Empire, 1815–1949*, edited by Douglas E. Delaney, Robert C. Engen, and Meghan Fitzpatrick, 192–211. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2018.
- Stewart, Evan. *Record of the Actions of the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps in the Battle for Hong Kong December, 1941*. Hong Kong: Ye Olde Printerie, 1956.
- Stockings, Craig. "Introduction: The Walking 'Undead' and Australian Military History." In *Zombie Myths of Australian Military History*, edited by Craig Stockings, 1–9. Sydney, Australia: University of New South Wales, 2010.
- Swettenham, John. *McNaughton Volume 1 1887–1939*. Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1968.
- Takahashi, Hisashi. "The Canadian Expeditionary Force and the Fall of Hong Kong." In *Canada and Japan in the Twentieth Century*, edited by John Schultz and Kimitada Miwa, 102–109. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- Taras, David. "The Struggle over 'The Valour and the Horror': Media Power and the Portrayal of War." *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 28, no. 4 (1995): 725–748.
- Taylor, Kenneth. "The Challenge of the Eighties: World War Two from a New Perspective, the Hong Kong Case." In *Men at War: Politics, Technology and Innovation in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Timothy Travers and Christon I. Archer, 197–212. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2011.



- Thompson, Peter. *The Battle for Singapore: The True Story of the Greatest Catastrophe of World War II*. London: Piatkus, 2006.
- Todman, Daniel. *Britain's War: Into Battle, 1937–1941*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.
- Tremblay, Yves. *Instruire Une Armée: Les officiers Canadiens et la guerre modern*. Outrement, Québec: Athéna, 2007.
- Vance, Jonathan. "An Open Door to a Better Future: The Memory of Canada's Second World War." In *Canada and the Second World War: Essays in Honour of Terry Copp*, edited by Geoffrey Hayes, Mike Bechthold, and Matt Symes. 461–477. Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University, 2012.
- . *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997.
- . *Objects of Concern: Canadian Prisoners of War Through the Twentieth Century*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1994.
- Verreault, Georges. *Diary of a Prisoner of War in Japan*. Québec: Vero, 1996.
- Vincent, Carl. *No Reason Why: The Canadian Hong Kong Tragedy, An Examination*. Stittsville, Ontario: Canada's Wings, 1981.
- Vogel, Robert. "Some Reflections on the Teaching of Military History in Canada." *Canadian Military History* 1, no. 1 (1992): 101–104.
- Weir, Rob. "A Note on British Blockhouses in Hong Kong." *Surveying and Built Environment* 22, no. 1 (2012): 8–18.
- Weisbord, Merrily and Marilyn Simonds Mohr. *The Valour and the Horror: The Untold Story of Canadians in the Second World War*. Toronto: HarperCollins, 1991.
- Wentzell, Tyler (2011) "Brigadier J.K. Lawson and Command of "C" Force at Hong Kong," *Canadian Military History* 20, no.2 (2011): 14–26.
- Wilcox, Craig. "Breaker Morant: The Murderer as Martyr." In *Zombie Myths of Australian Military History*, edited by Craig Stockings, 29–49. Sydney, Australia: University of New South Wales, 2010.
- Wilford, Timothy. *Canada's Road to the Pacific War: Intelligence, Strategy, and the Far East Crisis*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011.
- Willmott, H.P. *Empires in the Balance: Japanese and Allied Pacific Strategies to April 1942*. Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 1982.
- Williams, David Ricardo. *Duff: A Life in the Law*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1984.
- Winter, Stephen. *Transitional Justice in Established Democracies: A Political Theory*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.
- Wise, S.F. "The Valour and the Horror: A Report for the CBC Ombudsman." In *The Valour and the Horror Revisited*, edited by David Bercuson and S.F. Wise, 13–30. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994.
- Wise, S.F. and David J. Bercuson. "Introduction." In *The Valour and the Horror Revisited*, edited by David Bercuson and S.F. Wise, 3–11. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994.
- Wood, Gordon. "In Defense of Academic History Writing." *Perspectives on History*, 1 April 2020. <https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/april-2010/in-defense-of-academic-history-writing>.
- Yellen, Jeremy A. *The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere: When Total Empire Met Total War*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2019.
- Young, Brian J. "C. George McCullagh and the Leadership League" *The Canadian Historical*

Review 47, no. 3 (1966): 201–226.

### Visual Media

*The Valour and the Horror*, episode 6, “Savage Christmas.” Directed by Brian McKenna, written by Terence McKenna and Brian McKenna. Aired 12 January 1992, on CBC.

### Websites

Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. “Newfoundland at Armageddon.”

<http://www.newfoundlandatarmageddon.cbc.ca/team>. Accessed 8 February 2020.

———. “‘Canadians captured in Hong Kong receive compensation,’ reported by Ron Charles, aired 11 December 1998.” <https://www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/canadians-captured-in-hong-kong-receive-compensation>. Accessed 4 November 2020.

Canada’s History. “Popular Media Award.” <https://www.canadashistory.ca/awards/governor-general-s-history-awards/apply-for-popular-media-award>. Accessed 4 November 2020.

Commonwealth War Graves Commission. “Sergeant David William Lumb.”

<https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty-details/2221259/DAVID%20WILLIAM%20LUMB/>. Accessed 4 November 2020.

Galafilm. “Glory (Part 1): War at Sea.” <http://galafilm.com/en/pages/productions/1/3/32>. Accessed 23 February 2020.

———. “Glory (Part 2): A Web of War.” <http://galafilm.com/en/pages/productions/1/3/33>. Accessed 23 February 2020.

———. “The Great War.” <http://galafilm.com/en/pages/productions/1/3/23>. Accessed 23 February 2020.

Government of Canada. “Canadians in Hong Kong.”

[https://www.canadainternational.gc.ca/hong\\_kong/bilateral\\_relations\\_bilaterales/rememb-ers-souvenirs.aspx?lang=eng](https://www.canadainternational.gc.ca/hong_kong/bilateral_relations_bilaterales/rememb-ers-souvenirs.aspx?lang=eng). Accessed 4 November 2020.

Hong Kong Veterans Commemorative Association. “1979 Vol 3:3 Roll Call.”

[https://www.hkvca.ca/newsltr/archives/Roll%20Call/RollCall3\\_3.pdf](https://www.hkvca.ca/newsltr/archives/Roll%20Call/RollCall3_3.pdf). Accessed 24 February 2020

———. “About Us.” <https://www.hkvca.ca/aboutus/index.php>. Accessed 8 October 2019.

———. “Creation and Evolution of HKVCA.” <https://www.hkvca.ca/aboutus/hkvcahist.php>. Accessed 8 October 2019.

———. “Fundraising Brochure.”

<https://www.hkvca.ca/Memorial%20Wall/archives/Brochure%20Memorial%20Wall%20phase2%20revised.pdf>. Accessed 8 October 2019.

———. “Individual Report: E29977 Frank Ebdon.”

<https://www.hkvca.ca/cforcedata/indivreport/indivdetailed.php?regtno=E29977>. Accessed 8 October 2020.

———. “Japanese Apology Documents.”

<https://www.hkvca.ca/submissions/apology/Japanese%20apology%201.pdf>. Accessed 24 March 2020.

———. “Lesson Three - The Valour and The Horror-‘A Savage Christmas: The Fall of Hong Kong,’”

[https://www.hkvca.ca/teacherszone/en/lessons/TLE034%20LESSONS%20THREE\\_FOUR.pdf](https://www.hkvca.ca/teacherszone/en/lessons/TLE034%20LESSONS%20THREE_FOUR.pdf). Accessed 21 October 2020.

———. “Memories Uninvited - The Battle.”

- <https://www.hkvca.ca/memoriesuninvited/Chapter%206.php>. Accessed 8 October 2020.
- . “Memorial Wall – Speeches at the Unveiling.”  
<https://www.hkvca.ca/Memorial%20Wall/speeches.php>. Accessed 8 October 2019.
- . “Our Roots - Hong Kong Veterans’ Association.”  
<https://www.hkvca.ca/aboutus/hkvahist.php>. Accessed 8 October 2019.
- IMDb. “Brian McKenna.” <https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0571338/>. Accessed 4 November 2020.
- Rabble. “Brian McKenna on Armageddon, Newfoundland and the Battle of the Somme.”  
<https://rabble.ca/podcasts/shows/face2face/2016/06/brian-mckenna-on-armageddon-newfoundland-and-battle-somme>. Accessed 7 August 2021.