

some ships – especially *Sheffield* whose command team were lucky to escape a court martial due to their poor decisions prior to being attacked. Additionally, once other ships were damaged, degraded communications led to poor decision making – particularly in the case of *Ardent*, which might have been saved if the commanding officer had received sound advice (or sought out advice) regarding the ship's actual damage.

The fog of war and confusing higher-level orders placed other ships in difficult positions. Equally some ships were damaged but were still in an area where enemy attack was expected so were still trying to fight the ship while dealing with unexploded bombs on-board and many casualties. The Boards of Inquiry were conducted in quiet office spaces and well after the events. Many of the recommendations made regarding equipment and training were sound but they often failed to comprehend the time pressure that many command teams were under – where split second decisions made the difference between life and death or staying afloat or sinking. In other cases, such as the loss of *Atlantic Conveyor*, being in the wrong place at the wrong time and following orders played a major part in her loss.

Command and control at the staff level showed serious limitations due to the skill and stamina, or lack of it, amongst the various embarked headquarters staff. Poor decision making and lack of communication at the operational level had, in some cases, a disastrous flow on effect at the tactical level particularly at the landing of troops at Fitzroy from RFA *Sir Galahad*.

My only suggestion to improve this analysis would have been a little more on what kept other damaged ships afloat – what were the ship design and decision-making aspects that enabled their

survival vice that of their peers. It is easy to be critical, from our safe arm-chairs, of the failures of those in combat – but equally analysis of what went wrong, and why, should be investigated in order to try and prevent its repetition. Overall, an excellent book and one that should be read by all naval personnel, regardless of nationality or rank, as it provides well-described cases studies on modern war at sea.

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Barry Cahill. *Rebuilding Halifax. A History of the Halifax Relief Commission*. Halifax, NS: Formac Publishing, www.formac.ca, 2020. 224 pp., illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. CDN \$27.95, paper; ISBN: 978-1-45950-637-4. (E-book available.)

This study of disaster relief adds another book to the growing corpus of 1917 Halifax Explosion literature. Barry Cahill concentrates on the Halifax Relief Commission (HRC), a bureaucracy adopted to disburse the funds – some \$18 million from the federal government which amounted to two-thirds of the total donations available for the relief of the injured and dispossessed in Halifax-Dartmouth and the redevelopment of the “Devastated Area.” For the initial context, Cahill chooses the field of disaster studies. Then he moves on to envisage the long-lived HRC as both a forerunner and later an example of Canada's regulatory state.

The reader is left in no doubt about the objective of the analysis. It is not meant to explore the cause of the collision between the *Imo* and *Mont-Blanc*. That was beyond the purview of the HRC. It largely bypasses the initial rescue, relief, and restitution efforts of the volunteer-based Halifax Relief Com-

mittee. Although there is a chapter on Thomas Adams and city planning, the study does not aim to lionize Adams, the arrogant city planner in the employ of the federal government who designed a redevelopment scheme for Richmond, the pre-explosion name for Halifax's working-class north end above the Narrows. Instead, the focus is on the leadership of the Halifax Relief Commission, which was established under the War Measures Act of 1914. While preserving federal authority, that statutory underpinning was replaced near the end of the war by a Nova Scotian statute, the Halifax Relief Commission Incorporation Act (April 1918) which lasted until 1976 when the last survivor pensions, by then the one remaining responsibility of the HRC, were transferred for administration first to the Canadian Pension Commission and then, on its demise, to the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Besides funding the pensions, the other issues which focused the HRC's attention throughout its long history were the rental and maintenance of the housing for homeless survivors that it built in Richmond Heights, soon known as the Hydrostone, and the fraught relationship the commissioners maintained with Halifax City Council, especially with respect to the exemption of the HRC from taxes, a bone of contention beginning in 1926. After the Second World War, the HRC decided to sell its properties, a move that was completed in 1954 and gave the city some of the tax base it had lost. Dissatisfied, the city of Halifax tried to go after the HRC's assets, and a running battle ensued for the rest of the HRC's existence.

Cahill aims to rescue the HRC from obscurity, but he is interested only in the executive staff (for most of the time, three commissioners and the comptroller), not the employees. How much the

bosses were paid we are not told, but they certainly held down other jobs at the same time. Maybe the autocratic, paternalistic, secretive bureaucracy was what was needed in unique circumstances which the municipal government was deemed incapable of handling.

The HRC officials – the key bureaucrats – were naturally men and, with one initial exception, local men. Cahill has little to say about the committees or departments that reported to the commissioners, which must have included a sprinkling of women because of their prominence among social workers, as well as the volunteers the HRC replaced with paid staff. The former included Jane Wisdom, a highly effective administrator, the latter the indomitable Agnes Dennis who headed a pre-commission clothing committee. International interest among women is illustrated by the concern shown by Dame Nellie Melba who not only toured the "Devastated Area," but went on to sing in a fund-raising concert for the cause in Boston in 1919. Despite the impressive newspaper research by the author's research assistant, Cahill misidentifies the female journalist writing for the *Daily Echo* (90-91). She was Ella Maud Murray, an activist who had an intimate knowledge of the north end.

The unique nature of the HRC in Canadian bureaucratic history has Cahill looking for the motives that produced it. He identifies the principal consideration to be the need for "high public policy," not much comfort to survivors who would have preferred "to work out their own salvation" (59) or a city government undermined for generations by a commission over which it had no control. The public policy was so "high" that the Parliament of Canada ensured that the HRC's accounts were audited only by Auditor General of Canada. Another more unsavoury motive was pa-

trouge opportunity for Halifax's Members of Parliament.

Not surprisingly, then, Cahill gives top research priority to the high-level documentation pertaining to the policies adopted to pull Halifax back from the dangerous brink of disaster. As a result, his exploration of the long-term recovery overseen by the HRC is an interesting companion piece to David Sutherland's *"We Harbor No Evil Design": Rehabilitation Efforts after the Halifax Explosion of 1917* (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 2017), a lower-level examination of the interaction between HRC staff and a sampling of representative categories of rehabilitated and pensioned survivors.

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Richard Camp. *Three War Marine Hero: General Raymond G. Davis*. Oxford, UK: Casemate Publishers, www.casematepublishers.com, 2020. viii+231 pp., illustrations, bibliography, notes, index. UK £27.50, US \$34.95, cloth; ISBN-978-1-61200-939-1.

In *Three War Marine Hero*, Richard Camp examines the life and career of General Raymond G. Davis, with particular emphasis on the general's role in the Second World War, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War. Briefly mentioned are the family-related events that occurred between the wars.

Beginning with the Davis' enlistment in the United States Marine Corps, the author follows his career from Guadalcanal and the Pacific campaign, through Korea and Vietnam. While the broad nature of the work does not allow for a detailed exploration of every battle and fire-fight, by choosing specific events from all three wars, Camp gives the reader a glimpse into the unique chal-

lenges of each conflict and the changing roles of an officer as Davis advances in rank. Though useful, a knowledge of the conflicts and battles discussed is not essential to understanding or enjoying this particular book. Students of military history will find this book interesting because of the different perspective that it provides. Unlike personal memoirs by a soldier who is on the ground doing the shooting, but with little idea of the bigger picture, this book approaches the situations discussed from a different perspective. Being an officer, Davis is required to both execute the orders given to him, and make sure that those under him follow his orders. As a result, he has a better grasp of what is going on around him. Nevertheless, like the soldier on the line, he still has to deal with the fact that he does not know everything. Camp's examination of this issue allows the reader to reflect on how the lack of information affects those soldiers giving the orders, as well as those following them.

A recurring theme throughout the book is the fact that military commanders have little control over what's going on around them. Whether it involves mobilizing to go to war, or the fact that rations and bullets are in short supply, soldiers on the ground often have to approach the situation with what they have, rather than what they wish they had. This is particularly evident when discussing the chaos of mobilization. Military commanders can seldom pick when, or where they will go to war or into battle. By selecting specific battles from each war, Camp allows the reader to see the unique challenges of each conflict. His choice of specific engagements also allows the reader to experience events in greater detail than might otherwise be possible in a book covering three wars.

Well sourced, Camp's use of in-