

Breaking the News by Following the Rules:

Canadian War Correspondents in World War Two Continued a Tradition of Bending to Authority

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Chapter One: A Canadian Tradition of Press Acquiescence

Since disgruntled Irish-American Civil war veterans massed across the Niagara River in 1866 preparatory to invading the soon-to-be Dominion of Canada, Canadian correspondents have tried to cover war news from the field. The Fenian raids gave us the first modern Canadian war correspondent (warco, in military parlance), made possible in part by the relative newness of the telegraph at his disposal (invented in 1843)¹ and the existence, by 1864, of 23 daily newspapers and a total of 298 periodicals in Canada.² In early war reportage, accuracy was often sacrificed in favour of drama. The battle of Ridgeway on June 3, 1866, for example, “is a classic case of getting a story half right and half very, very wrong³” says journalist and historian Mark Bourrie in his recent book *Fighting Words, Canada’s Best War Reporting*. Bourrie goes on to explain that reporters from *The Hamilton Spectator* and *The Globe* accurately described troop movements, up until the end of the battle, when the reporters depicted the Fenians fleeing in panic instead of calmly retreating. Accurate war reporting from the field was also a rare bird during the next significant Canadian engagement—the Northwest Resistance of 1885.

Embedding journalists with troops is nothing new, as Bourrie points out in this case. “Journalists and war artists accompanied the army, and some officers had made deals with newspapers back home to send dispatches.”⁴ In spite of this cozy arrangement, and the highly partisan nature of newspapers at the time, Bourrie argues that coverage was surprisingly even-handed.⁵ What the coverage of the Northwest Resistance did not include, however, was any formal censorship system, something that would change dramatically by the time reporters covered World War One a generation later. In the meantime, English-speaking war correspondents across the globe began to enjoy what journalist Phillip Knightley refers to as the

¹ Greg McLaughlin, *The War Correspondent*. (London: Pluto Press, 2002), 25.

² W.H. Kesterton, *A History of Journalism in Canada*. (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1967), 39.

³ Mark Bourrie, *Fighting Words: Canada’s Best War Reporting*. (Toronto: Dundurn, 2012), 112.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 124.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 124.

Golden Age for war correspondents—the period between the end of the American Civil War and the beginning of World War One.⁶

An explosion in literacy, population, urbanization and technological advancements resulted in more daily newspapers and higher circulations than ever before.⁷ Between 1901 and 1913, Canada experienced its highest population increase to date, spiking by almost 2 million to 7.2 million.⁸ Since the appearance of the first newspapers in the Western provinces in British Columbia in 1858, the numbers of newspapers had increased exponentially.⁹ Between 1857 and 1900, the total number of periodicals in British North America surged from 291 to 1,226. By 1900, there were 121 daily newspapers in Canada.¹⁰ Increasing use of the telegraph also contributed to the glut of journalists covering foreign countries, where there were plenty of wars from which to choose. Modern day war reporting with journalists in the field, which began with the Crimean war in the 1850s, was still in its infancy, and, Knightley argues, governments and militaries were slow to grasp the power of this new animal. As a result, censorship systems were not widely implemented, creating a journalistic free-for-all.¹¹ At the height of this yellow journalism period, reporters could even have been a causal factor in some wars. Knightley cites William Randolph Hearst's involvement in the Spanish American war as an example. In response to this un-enterprising reporter's telegraph: "Everything is quiet. There is no trouble here. There will be no war. I wish to return." Hearst responded with: "Please remain. You furnish Pictures. I will furnish war."¹² Knightley argues that is precisely what happened when the American battleship *Maine* blew up in Havana Harbour and Hearst's reporters intentionally skewed that

⁶ Phillip Knightley, *The First Casualty*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 42.

⁷ Kesterton, *A History of Journalism*, 65.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 65.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 39. (Kesterton derived his statistics from the *Directory of Canadian Newspapers*)

¹¹ Knightley, *The First Casualty*, 42.

¹² McLaughlin, *The War Correspondent*, 28.

accident into an act of war.¹³ The South African war took place at the pinnacle of this Golden Age. At the beginning of the Second Boer war, 1,019 Canadian soldiers were shipped to South Africa and seven journalists accompanied them.¹⁴ Most of their stories were filed from HQ, but some reporters did get into the field. The war was a low-water mark for journalism in general, distinguished by extreme jingoism, partisanship, patriotism, and outright fabrication. The line between journalist and soldier wasn't even clear. A young British lieutenant named Winston Churchill, for example, was also the special correspondent for *The Morning Post*. Churchill filed this lively account of the relief of Ladysmith. It was one of the more dramatic "eyewitness" reports of the war:¹⁵

I rode with these two squadrons, and galloped across the scrub-dotted plain, fired at only by a couple of Boer guns. Suddenly from the Brushwood up rose gaunt figures waving hands of welcome. On we pressed, and at the head of a battered street of tin-roofed houses met Sir George White on horse-back, faultlessly attired. Then we all rode together into the long-beleaguered, almost starved-out Ladysmith. It was a thrilling moment.¹⁶

A thrilling moment to be sure—and an entirely fictional one. Churchill was in fact, "miles away—galloping across the veld" according to historian Thomas Pakenham. The future First Lord of the Admiralty and later British Prime Minister was not alone in his creative embellishments of so-called eyewitness reporting. Accurate, balanced journalism was hardly common during the South African war, or during that period in general. The atrocities perpetrated against Boer women and children incarcerated in British concentration camps, where they died of disease and starvation in alarming numbers, was never reported by any correspondents.¹⁷ Nor was the grim reality of a new technological war divulged in the newspapers of the realm. The massacre of British troops at Spion Kop for example, where the dead lay several bodies deep in British trenches, was never accurately reported. Photos of

¹³ Knightley, *The First Casualty*, 56.

¹⁴ Thomas Pakenham, *The Boer War*. (London: Little Brown Books, 1979), 249 and Bourrie, *Fighting Words*, 131.

¹⁵ Pakenham, *The Boer War*, 365.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 365-366.

¹⁷ Knightley, *The First Casualty*, 75.

the battle that ran in British papers instead showed cheerful troops.¹⁸ Even the tactical development of increasing the use of trenches as a defense against a more technological war wasn't covered, or, if it was mentioned, wasn't recognized as a detail of any significance.¹⁹

Canadian coverage of the war in South Africa wasn't any better. Canadian reporters only filed stories that showed Dominion troops in the best, most heroic light. They ignored reports of Canadians having a reputation for shooting rather than taking prisoners, for example. "It was an open secret that some of the irregular colonial corps made it a principle not to take prisoners,"²⁰ Pakenham says, and goes on to cite a specific example of Canadian soldiers murdering Boer PoWs. Canadians saw action at the Battle of Paardeberg in February 1900—Canada's first military engagement on foreign soil. Coverage was, not surprisingly, overwhelmingly positive. "Immediately, Paardeberg became heralded as a great Canadian victory," historian J.L. Granatstein says,²¹ though Canadian casualties were comparatively heavy, and the victory was a hollow one after so many back-to-back British defeats.²² Canadian reporters also did their best to idealize the Canadian soldier. A heroic and sanitized Victorian death by single bullet to the heart was a common image in Canadian reporting. Here, Sam Brown, writing for a Conservative-party-affiliated Toronto publisher's syndicate, describes just such an end for one soldier in his coverage of the battle of Paardeberg. "Private Findlay of "C" Company, the first Canadian killed, fell shot through the heart at the spot where the "A" Company leader made his last stand."²³ Some Canadian accounts teemed with Victorian purple prose. "Like the great heroes of old they rushed upon the foe ... pierced through the body by two balls, a Canadian falls, but so strong is the combativeness of his nature that with his last effort he points his rifle toward the trench, presses the trigger and dies..." The terminology is even antiquated. The maxim gun spewed bullets, not

¹⁸ Ibid., 73.

¹⁹ Ibid., 78.

²⁰ Pakenham, *The Boer War*, 538.

²¹ J.L. Granatstein, *Canada's Army*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 42.

²² Pakenham, *The Boer War*, 339.

²³ Bourrie, *Fighting Words*, 137.

musket balls, at 600 rounds per minute.²⁴ This anonymous and highly dubious account of chivalrous derring-do was published in a special war issue of *The Canadian Magazine* in August, 1900. The jingoistic piece was titled ‘The battle of Paardeberg — In which more Canadians were killed than in any battle since 1814 – by a Canadian eye-witness.’²⁵

In spite of the imperialistic bent of most of the war reporting in South Africa, some real news did seep out. Reports of the terrible conditions of British hospitals (14,000 of the 22,000 British dead succumbed to illness, not wounds)²⁶ did find a way into print. Enough real reporting was done to attract the public’s interest and often, raise its ire. Granatstein concludes that this had a long-term effect. “The South African war alarmed the British Army, the government, the media and the public because of the weakness it exposed in tactics, training, equipment and leadership.”²⁷ As a result, Lord Kitchener continued to nurse an intense hatred of war correspondents that would have a direct effect on reporters in World War One. Bourrie puts it most succinctly: “The public relations disaster of the Boer War taught the British military that there was great danger in letting journalists move freely near front lines. The British, who still had control over the Canadian army, were determined to have a complete lock on information about the war.”²⁸ By the time an assassin’s bullets dispatched Austria’s Archduke Ferdinand and his wife Sophie in Sarajevo 12 years later, The Golden Age was clearly over.

Halifax lawyer W.F. O’Connor received vague instructions from a Liberal MP when he sat down to draft the most repressive piece of legislation ever passed in Canada. “Make absolutely sure that you omit no power that the government may

²⁴ Australian Boer War memorial site:

http://www.bwm.org.au/site/Machine_Guns.asp

²⁵ “The Battle of Paardeberg — In which more Canadians were killed than in any battle since 1814” in *The Canadian Magazine*, Vol. 15, No. 4, August 1900, p. 311.

²⁶ Knightley, *The First Casualty*, 74.

²⁷ Granatstein, *Canada’s Army*, 45.

²⁸ Bourrie, *Fighting Words*, 140.

need.”²⁹ O’Connor didn’t disappoint. The War Measures Act (WMA) became law in Canada a few weeks after World War One was declared and it was made retroactive to the start of hostilities.³⁰ The WMA was invoked to subdue any discontent.³¹ Its strictures, in a democracy, are shocking, but there was little if any public complaint at the time, doubtless because the Act rendered such outcries seditious. It was a piece of legislation explicitly designed to suppress free speech, providing “for censorship and control and suppression of publications, writings, maps, plans, photographs, communication and means of communication.”³² Those found in transgression of the WMA faced fines of \$5,000, imprisonment up to five years, or both. The Act contravened the English Common Law with its most draconian element—the onus of proof was placed on the accused.³³ Subsequent amendments tightened the state’s stranglehold over the press, or anyone advocating free speech.

On June 10, 1915 an amendment to the WMA established a Chief Censor’s office and Lieutenant Colonel Ernest J. Chambers was appointed to the post. A few months later, another amendment accorded Chambers the right to the modern-day equivalent of phone tapping. He could order phone operators to monitor conversations and report their contents to the relevant authorities. WMA Amendment PC 146, made law in January 1917, afforded the Chief Censor the right to suppress all films from the United States and Britain.³⁴ Chambers ordered that screenings of *The Battle of the Somme*, immensely popular in Britain where it earned 30,000 pounds by October 1916,³⁵ were shown in Canada without footage of dead Allied soldiers. Almost 13 per cent of the film was excised for potentially squeamish

²⁹ Desmond Morton and J.L. Granatstein, *Marching to Armageddon: Canadians and the Great War 1914-1919*. (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1989), 6-7.

³⁰ Jeffrey Keshen, *Propaganda and Censorship during Canada’s Great War*. Edmonton: (University of Alberta Press, 1996), 65.

³¹ Morton and Granatstein, *Marching to Armageddon*, 82.

³² Keshen, *Propaganda and Censorship*, 65.

³³ *Ibid.*, 65.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 72.

³⁵ Nicholas Reeves, *Official British Film Propaganda During the First World War*. (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 225.

Canadian audiences.³⁶ Other amendments to the WMA criminalized derogatory comments made about the motherland, outlawed publications in German, Bulgarian, Turkish, Finnish or Ukrainian, and banned all public meetings held in those and other languages. Chambers was himself a journalist, and he hired a cabal of former journalists to form his staff. Together, they convinced the postal service to spy on Canadians, getting 120 posties to open suspicious letters (those written in anything but English or French) and report on their contents.³⁷

State-sanctioned intrusions into the private lives of Canadians weren't reported in the press and most citizens submitted willingly to the Chief Censor's demands. "Rather than vociferously challenge let alone defy Chambers, most of those who were reprimanded promptly acquiesced, sometimes to the point of apologizing profusely and pledging extra care in future,"³⁸ says historian Jeffrey Keshen. During the war, censorship in Canada surpassed that of even Great Britain,³⁹ where the Defence of the Realm Act provided for newspaper censorship and the monitoring of cable communications.⁴⁰ In other words, Canadian culture was uniquely primed to unquestioningly accept the word of the state. Not even the press provided an alternative view. "Whether or not a Chief Censor existed, most mainstream Canadian publications would have cast the Great War in quixotic terms,"⁴¹ Keshen concludes. A total of 253 publications were banned in Canada by the Chief Censor.⁴² Strict government censure and an acquiescent population paved the way for the success of Max Aiken, who ensured the Canadian reading, viewing, learning and purchasing public received one version of the Great War—his own.

British-born Max Aitken, later Lord Beaverbrook, was a one-man propaganda machine of apparently limitless energy and determination. He was, according to historian Tim Cook, "the self-appointed historian and publicist for the Canadian

³⁶ Keshen, *Propaganda and Censorship*, 107.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 66-73.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 76.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 114.

⁴⁰ Knightley, *The First Casualty*, 80.

⁴¹ Keshen, *Propaganda and Censorship*, 94.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 79.

overseas forces.”⁴³ In 1914 the Canadian Cabinet (at the urging of Minister of Militia Sam Hughes, a personal friend) made Aitken Canada’s official “Eye-Witness.” There were very few “eye-witnesses” even near the Front. Aitken was one of just a handful of British journalists permitted to the region while Lord Kitchener was still in charge. “Kitchener had hated war correspondents, since the Sudan” reports Knightley, “and was determined not to have them in France at any price.”⁴⁴ At first, any correspondent found near the front could be arrested, have his passport confiscated, and be kicked out France, effectively ending his career.⁴⁵ Aitken, as “Eye-Witness” was known for travelling behind the lines in a Rolls Royce where he interviewed soldiers and filed innocuous, puff pieces. Despite this, Cook argues “his information-gathering skills, money, and official status placed him in a better position to comprehend the events of war than anyone else in the CEF.”⁴⁶ Aitken, however, never had any intention of reporting what was really going on.

Aitken’s approach was similar to that of the British war correspondents, who, according to Knightley, “identified themselves absolutely with the armies in the field; they protected the high command from criticism, wrote jauntily about life in the trenches, kept an inspired silence about the slaughter, and allowed themselves to be absorbed by the propaganda machine.”⁴⁷ Aitkin’s reports were often wildly inaccurate. After the Second Battle of Ypres in which poisoned gas was used for the first time, Aitkin’s published account that ran in many Canadian newspapers made it, “appear that the untried Canadian Division had stopped the Germans alone.”⁴⁸ After the devastation of that battle, Aiken never again reported from close to the action. In 1915, he talked the Canadian government into allowing him to take control of the war records, creating the Canadian War Records Office, (CWRO) a shrewd maneuver, as Cook explains. “The nation that overseas its own archives is

⁴³ Tim Cook, *Clio’s Warriors: Canadian Historians and the Writing of the World Wars*. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006), 14.

⁴⁴ Knightley, *The First Casualty*, 85.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 88.

⁴⁶ Cook, *Clio’s Warriors*, 14.

⁴⁷ Knightley, *The First Casualty*, 81.

⁴⁸ Cook, *Clio’s Warriors*, 15.

able to shape and manufacture its own history and eventually guard its memory with creating its own identity.”⁴⁹ This was precisely Aitken’s intention. Posterity was very much on his mind.

Archives are not neutral, nor are their creation impartial ... Such was the case with the CWRO intent on documenting Canadian actions that glorified the heroics of battle over the futility of trench warfare, and emphasized the success of the democratic citizen in defeating the professional German military machine. These records eventually helped to form the official archives that subsequent generations of historians have used to formulate their views of the Canadian Corps.⁵⁰

Eventually, the CWRO, funded primarily by Aitken, had a staff of 60 writers, researchers, cameramen and support staff.⁵¹ “By 1918, much of the publicity surrounding Canada’s war effort could trace its origins to Aitken’s fertile mind and deep pockets.”⁵² With the establishment of the CWRO, Aitken ensured the archival survival of Canadian war records. He collected war diaries, the official notations officers were obliged to take in the field. Understandably, they were often scant, poorly kept, illegible and sometimes, missing altogether. “CWRO field historians played an important role in assisting in the creation of records,” Cook reports.⁵³ In other words, Aitken and his men could often literally write history. The entry for the first day of the Battle of the Somme, July 1, 1916 for the First Canadian Infantry Brigade HQ, for example, reads simply, “Fine and warm. Brigade in Corps reserve.”⁵⁴

Maintaining the integrity of war photography and film were not a priority to Aitken. When it suited his purposes, he staged shots and included them in the official war records. One widely circulated photo of Canadian troops supposedly in action at the Somme was actually taken behind the lines.⁵⁵ The shot, taken by CWRO

⁴⁹ Ibid., 16.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 38.

⁵¹ Jonathan Vance, *Death So Noble: Memory, meaning and the First World War*. (Vancouver, B.C.: UBC Press, 1997), 164.

⁵² Ibid., 164.

⁵³ Cook, *Clio’s Warriors*, 21.

⁵⁴ LAC - War Diaries 1st Canadian Infantry Brigade, July 1, 1916

⁵⁵ Keshen, *Propaganda and Censorship*, 36.

photographer Captain Ivor Castle, bore the original caption, “‘Over the Top’ Canadians on their way to victory at the taking of Courcelette.”⁵⁶ CWRO photographs by Castle, Captain M. Knobel and Lieutenant William Rider were widely distributed in England and Canada, as well as France and the United States.⁵⁷ Aitken even arranged for photographs to be shown in special exhibits of Canadian war photography in England.⁵⁸ All of the images adhered to Aitken’s patriotic vision of the war. Smiling, happy soldiers, and tidy trenches were the standard. He even instructed his photographers to “cover up the Canadians before you photograph them ... but don’t bother about the German dead.”⁵⁹ Canadians enjoying the novelty of film at home were treated to a similarly doctored reality in newsreels.

Aitken became chairman of the War Office Cinematograph Committee in October 1916, allowing him to directly supervise arrangements between British film companies and the Canadian and English governments.⁶⁰ Aitken had complete control of the moving picture message conveyed to Canadians. Every two weeks, newsreels called *The Topical Budget* were spliced together to create palatable two-minute vignettes featuring Canadian soldiers in ideal conditions.⁶¹ Footage of Prime Minister Borden’s visit to the Canadian troops at Shorncliffe, England in 1917, for example, shows Borden addressing the smartly attired Canadians, who enthusiastically doff and wave their caps in an en masse hip-hip-hooray after he finishes speaking—perfect *Topical Budget* fare. ⁶²

Canadian Newspapers served a similar function during World War One. They routinely published atrocity propoganda as news. Two of the most popular German atrocity myths published involved tall-tales of a crucified Canadian soldier and the

⁵⁶ LAC – Ivor Castle photograph, mikan number 3233071

⁵⁷ Keshen, *Propaganda and Censorship*, 35-36.

⁵⁸ LAC – war poster R1185-67-0-E

⁵⁹ Keshen, *Propaganda and Censorship*, 36.

⁶⁰ M.L. Sanders, and Philip Taylor, *British Propaganda During the First World War*. (London: MacMillan, 1982), 125.

⁶¹ Keshen, *Propaganda and Censorship*, 37.

⁶²NFB site– Sir Robert Borden with the Canadian Troops Clip 2:
<http://www3.nfb.ca/ww1/wartime-film.php?id=531253>

existence of a German factory where the enemy rendered fat from the bodies of the dead. All were played up in Canadian papers.⁶³ The proverbial wool was tugged most firmly over the unseeing Canadian public's eyes in the media coverage of the Battle of the Somme that began July 1, 1916. For a week, the British pounded the German lines with an unprecedented artillery attack, dropping 1,732,873 shells that were supposed to all but destroy the enemy.⁶⁴ British shrapnel shells, while effective against human targets on open ground, were useless in reaching bodies hunkered below in deep bunkers, and ineffective in cutting through German barbed wire defenses. Shelling did cause devastating losses to the Germans (thousands were buried alive), but when the shells finally stopped exploding, and the British whistles sounded the signal to go over the top at 7:30 a.m., German survivors resurfaced. They carried with them the ultimate weapon of defense—not attack, as the British had mistakenly first thought—MG-08 machine guns capable of firing 500 bullets a minute.⁶⁵ Historian Modris Eksteins describes the scene:

The victimized crowd of attackers in no man's land—a scene dramatically opposed to the hearty revelries between the lines at Christmas 1914—has become one of the supreme images of the war. Attackers moved forward usually without seeking cover and were mowed down in rows, with the mechanical efficiency of a scythe, like so many blades of grass. 'We were very surprised to see them walking,' wrote a German machine gunner of his experience of a British attack at the Somme. "The officers went in front. I noticed one of them walking calmly, carrying a walking stick. When we started firing we just had to load and reload. They went down in their hundreds. You didn't have to aim, we just fired into them."⁶⁶

British casualties numbered 60,000 on July 1. "The first day of the Somme offensive has gone down as one of the greatest disasters in military history,"⁶⁷ says Cook. Before the Somme offensive ended on September 1, 6,000 Canadians would die

⁶³ Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 116-118.

⁶⁴ Tim Cook, *At the Sharp End: Canadians Fighting the Great War 1914 - 1916 Vol. One*. (Toronto: Penguin Group, 2007), 410.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 410-413.

⁶⁶ Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: the Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age*. (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1989), 145-146.

⁶⁷ Cook, *At the Sharp End*, 415.

there.⁶⁸ The Canadian press, however, covered the Somme as though it were a victory.

In the *Halifax Herald*, this chillingly ironic headline appeared on page one, on July 6. “German losses in Battle of Somme, 60,000.”⁶⁹ The *Herald* followed up with this upbeat headline on July 10, even though casualty reports, by then, were coming in, and the “line” wasn’t advancing at all. “French and British advances continue on west: Teutonics in disorderly flight before General Brussile.”⁷⁰ In Ontario, Kingstonians had reason to be equally as optimistic. On July 4, the *British Whig* front page read, “Allies continue to push Germans back.” The subhead listed a litany of apparent triumphs for the British. “Allies pressing on in Somme region: capture six more villages...Germans captured number 12,300... enemy munitions reported scarce...heavy fighting along line.” The lead in the story that followed brings to mind a nineteenth-century charge, advancing for miles over an open plain, not a carnage waged over inches in the stinking mud.

Under a blazing sun, the Allied armies are pushing on across the rolling farm lands of the Somme region in what is rapidly developing into the greatest battle in the history of the world.⁷¹

The next day, the *Whig* made it sound as though the Allies were winning the battle with this headline, “British and French smash foe; battle of Somme continues.”⁷² Perhaps the *Whig* took its cue from the *The Globe*, where a near identical headline had run on July 3. “British and French smash foe: take 9,500 men; eleven villages.”⁷³ According to *The Globe*, on July 4, “Allied advance on Somme continues: Prisoners number 12,300; many guns taken.”⁷⁴ Phillip Gibb filed a smaller page one story under this jingoistic headline, “Haig’s men full of fight; make enemy beg for mercy.” The copy was full of alleged British manliness. Under the subhead “Deeds of Heroism,” Gibb wrote:

⁶⁸ Ibid., 429.

⁶⁹ MET, *Halifax Herald*, July 6, 1916.

⁷⁰ Ibid., July 10.

⁷¹ MET, *British Whig*, July 4, 1916

⁷² Ibid., July 5

⁷³ MET, *The Globe*, July 3, 1916

⁷⁴ Ibid., July 4

One boy of 18 years...was so good a captain, although a private soldier, that when the officers of his platoon were fallen he rallied the men and led them forward. "Come on, my lads," he cried, "we'll get them out." A Pipe major of the Royal Scots led his battalion forward to an old Scottish tune, and during the attack stood out alone in "No Man's Land" playing still, until he fell wounded.⁷⁵

A few days later, in the story, "Haig Guns do terrific work: German lines like a field of extinct volcanoes," Gibb's previous enthusiasm wavers in his lead, where he reduces the bloody stalemate to spectacular understatement. "No sensational progress has been made by us since I wrote my last dispatch, but our guns are in a good position to follow up our advance and the battle is developing."⁷⁶

In Vancouver, newspaper subscribers read more of the same. On July 3, the *Vancouver Sun* headline boasted, "After Desperate Fighting British Capture Fricourt, Allies Consolidate Gains." At least their readers had a sense that the fighting was heavy, but the accompanying subhead is pure fiction:

At all points both the British and French maintain the land and guns taken by them in the great offensive launched on Saturday morning: are steadily advancing in the face of determined efforts of the Germans to prevent the allies from widening their wedge into their lines; some of the German trenches were taken by British battalions without the loss of a man so effectively have the big guns done their work; Hun lie nailed⁷⁷

While the Canadian press trumpeted an unprecedented military disaster as victory, its patriotic enthusiasm for an actual military success story was unparalleled, and often, no more accurate than its Somme coverage.

"Canadians lead in triumph," blared *The Globe's* banner front-page headline on April 10, 1917, one day after the battle of Vimy Ridge. "Along the Vimy ridge Canadians achieved heroic success," ran another headline. Philip Gibbs' lead was speculative, at best. "Today at dawn our armies began a great battle, which, if fate has any kindness for the world, may be the beginning of the last great battles of the

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid., July 6.

⁷⁷ MET, Vancouver Sun, July 3, 1916

war.”⁷⁸ On April 11, the *Halifax Herald* led with this headline: “A terrible if not disastrous defeat.”

Anglo Canadians are rejoicing at the good news of the capture of Vimy Ridge, and Sir Robert Borden has sent a congratulatory message to general Byng, who commands the Canadian forces. The entire press rings with the exploits of the Canadians as they did at the battle of Ypres, but with more jubilation.⁷⁹

The *Regina Leader Post* ran a story filed by the first Canadian overseas correspondent, Stewart Lyon, who wrote for the *Globe*. In fact, Lyon did not witness the battle. None of the Canadian correspondents did. All of their copy was based on British army HQ briefings.⁸⁰ “The crest of the Vimy ridge has been carried. The strongest defensive positions of the enemy on the western front has been captured by the army of Sir Douglas Haig, and the Canadian corps had the place of honour in the great event.”⁸¹ The *Toronto Telegram* bragged, “Canadians captured 3,000 Huns,” of the 9,000 prisoners they reported being taken that day.⁸² *Saturday Night* ran a political cartoon on April 21, 1917, depicting Canadian soldiers lynching a German soldier from a tree. The rope was marked “Hindenberg Line.” The story, running under the headline, “Tangible victory at Vimy Ridge,” was exuberant in its praise of Canadian soldiers. “The valour of the Canadian soldier shines with an unquenchable and undimmed brightness.”⁸³ There is no denying that Canadians achieved an incredible feat that day, but they hardly marched up a mountain. J.L. Granatstein explains the actual logistics involved:

Vimy has achieved a status as *the* Canadian victory, the pinnacle of Canadian military achievement. Soldiers at the time and the media at home painted it as a triumph of arms—and so it was in some ways. Part of this myth making for civilians was the sense that Canadians had scaled a cliff, struggling to the top of the great ridge in the face of enemy fire ... Most of the enemy-controlled ground in front of the Canadians was characterized by a gentle upward slope. Courage, skill, careful planning and perfect execution were

⁷⁸ MET, *The Globe*, April 10, 1917

⁷⁹ MET, *Halifax Herald*, April 11, 1917

⁸⁰ Bourrie, *Fighting Words*, 142.

⁸¹ MET, *Regina Leader Post*, April 10, 1917

⁸² MET, *Toronto Telegram*, April 10, 1917

⁸³ MET, *Saturday Night*, April 21, 1917

needed to take the ridge, but no one needed pitons to scale the heights of Vimy.⁸⁴

Newspapers, in vastly greater circulation in Canada than they had ever been, cultivated a mythic representation of the Battle of Vimy Ridge. On the day after the battle, the *Toronto Telegram* ran a feature by driver W.A. Murton. It is the quintessential tale of nineteenth-century warfare, surrounding that most nineteenth-century of military icons—the loyal steed:

She knows by instinct to hurry away from the guns and the shelled areas... while bits of mud and bits of shell rattled down all around like hail, and the black withers quivered with nervous dread: Good old girl is Topsy! "Step light here, old girl," you can hear her driver murmur... she'll get a good feed of oats and a big flake of hay when she gets home ... Your King and country needed you and you are here. May you graze again in some green valley in dear old Blighty and lie down beside the hedge that you have fought for.⁸⁵

Horses were used in the preparation for the battle of Vimy Ridge. But they would never return to, "graze again in some green valley." They were literally worked to death by the hundreds.⁸⁶ According to the Canadian press, every time Canadians went into action they triumphed. Every skirmish was an "advance," every enemy a "Hun," every death a "selfless sacrifice." When faced with a true military success, like the capture of Vimy Ridge, the Canadian press didn't differentiate in its previous coverage of unmitigated military disasters. As far as the reading Canadian public was concerned, it was business as usual at the Front.

Lord Beaverbrook lost no time in getting his version of history to press in Canada. On friendly terms with Arthur G. Doughty, the Dominion Archivist,⁸⁷ he was able to produce the first volume of the wildly popular *Canada in Flanders* as early as January 1916. It went through 12 print runs in its first three months and was, Cook

⁸⁴ Granatstein, *Canada's Army*, 111-112.

⁸⁵ MET, *Toronto Telegram*, April 10, 1917.

⁸⁶ Tim Cook, *Shock Troops: Canadians Fighting the Great War 1917-1918 Vol. Two*. (Toronto: Penguin Group, 2008), 80-81.

⁸⁷ Vance, *Death So Noble*, 164.

says, a “supremely patriotic, sanitized and uncritical”⁸⁸ account of the CEF. The author wouldn’t disagree with Cook’s assessment. Its main purpose, Aitken admitted, was to “further the imperial cause by stimulating recruiting in Canada.”⁸⁹ Aitken, ever prolific, followed up with volume two of *Canada in Flanders* and in 1917 published the equally popular *Canada in Khaki*, purportedly a soldier’s account of the war, but actually, Aitken’s own take on events.⁹⁰ Aitken’s influence extended far beyond his own era. He had an eye on the future, as Cook asserts. “Aitken would provide a steady barrage of media product and manufacture a sense of distinctiveness and identity for the Canadian soldier, while at the same time getting, writing and preserving a legacy of war records that would be employed by future historians to understand the Great War.”⁹¹

Canadian historiography of the First World War was stymied from the start by the long delay in publication of the official history and the fact that its author, A.F. Duguid, refused other historians access to official war documents. “As both official historian and archivist, Duguid had ultimate leverage in how the war would be historically interpreted,”⁹² argues Cook. “The official historian understood the power of the war records, and he refused to allow anyone other than “accredited regimental historians” to use the material. As a result, Duguid almost single-handedly controlled the historical memory of Canada and the Great War.”⁹³ The official history of Canada’s participation in World War One was supposed to be a multi-volume account published over a short period after the cessation of hostilities in 1918. In actuality, it took a staggering 20 years to publish a single volume, the only one Duguid ever produced. By then, interest in an official history had waned significantly, and soon, the country would be wholly absorbed by the next world war. The full official history was never written. Duguid published too little, too late, and Canadian historiography of the Great War suffered. As a result, the country’s

⁸⁸ Cook, *Clio’s Warriors*, 16.

⁸⁹ Vance, *Death So Noble*, 165.

⁹⁰ Cook, *Clio’s Warriors*, 24.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 89.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 89.

collective memory of that war was blunted. When World War Two broke out, two strong Canadian traditions had been established; the acceptance of draconian censorship in time of war and an unquestioning press, acquiescent to all government and military authority and ready to operate the propaganda mill. The lack of scholarly analysis of the previous war, save Duguid's one belated volume, contributed to a vast collective ignorance of what had actually happened during the Great War. This was the journalistic tradition that Canadian war correspondents inherited in 1939.

With a few notable exceptions, there is little scholarship published regarding war correspondents in World War Two, and even less on Canadian war correspondents. In 1957, Joseph Matthews, an American historian, recognized that while journalism in World War Two was threatened by pressure to report the common good, concluded that in spite of this patriotism, the reporting was accurate.⁹⁴ In 1975, British journalist Phillip Knightley convincingly argued the opposite. He claimed war correspondents, since their inception, are little more than extensions of the propaganda arms of the governments and military systems they are forced to work within. Knightley's book, *The First Casualty: From the Crimea to Vietnam: the War Correspondent as Hero, Propagandist and Myth Maker* went on to win the Overseas Press Club of America Award for that year (not the Pulitzer as some historians have claimed). Knightley's book remains the most comprehensive piece on the subject. Subsequent scholarship tends to be less critical of war correspondents, aligned more with Matthews than Knightley.

Very recently, Canadian perspectives have been offered by historians Timothy Balzer, Jules-Aimé Bizimana and Eric Thompson, as well as journalists and historians Mark Bourrie and Gene Allen. Balzer and Bourrie primarily concern themselves with home-grown media censorship during the war, but Balzer also considers the war correspondents in the field, focusing his study on military censorship. Thompson's contribution is a short academic paper that profiles just

⁹⁴ Timothy Balzer, *The Information Front: The Canadian Army and News Management During the Second World-War*. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 3.

four Canadian warcos. Bizimana looks at the specific experiences of the French-Canadian press and the few French-speaking war correspondents deployed, while Allen tackles the role that the Canadian Press (CP) played during World War Two in a chapter of his new book, *Making National News: A History of Canadian Press* to be published in September 2013. Memoirs written by several war correspondents, and a biography about one, *The Toronto Star's* Greg Clark, round out the published literature available. The most significant Canadian scholarly contributions are made by Balzer, Bourrie and Allen, all writing in the last few years.

In his 2011 book *The Information Front: The Canadian Army and News Management During the Second World War*, Balzer, whose focus is military censorship, argues that during the war, the Canadian media remained a powerful force that was not rendered toothless by military and government controls.⁹⁵ Bourrie makes similar conclusions in his 2011 book *The Fog of War: Censorship of Canada's Media in World War Two*, focusing on the home front. Bourrie argues that while often problematic, press censorship in Canada during World War Two was still a vast improvement over the World War One system, and that the censorship imposed did not ultimately stifle freedom of the press.⁹⁶ In his next book, *Fighting Words: Canada's Best War Reporting* published in 2012, Bourrie, the more conservative of these two Canadian scholars, goes a step further. He categorically disagrees with Knightley's thesis, arguing that war correspondents were not propagandists. Journalist/historian Gene Allen is more aligned with Knightley in his analysis of CP during the war. Allen argues that the news outlet, which provided the most news copy by far to Canadian papers during the war, acquiesced to all censorship requirements, and like other Canadian news organizations, did not rock the boat, but chiefly provided the country with a diet of soft features rather than hard war news stories.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Balzer, *The Information Front*, 9.

⁹⁶ Mark Bourrie, *The Fog of War: Censorship of Canada's Media in World War Two*. (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2011), 264.

⁹⁷ Gene Allen, *Making National News: A History of Canadian Press*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 250 and 262.

How do we assess whether or not Canadian war correspondents were journalists or propagandists? Did they mindlessly take direction from army PR, fearful of rocking the boat and losing their jobs? Were they conscientious reporters who filed the most accurate copy they could under extremely difficult circumstances? Did they let their patriotism get in the way of the truth? Were they prevented by censorship from telling that truth? How well were Canadians informed about the war during hostilities? In order to answer these questions, we need to consider the parameters in which Canadian war correspondents operated in the field and the situation facing publishers at home. Any eyewitness accounts were provided either by the 120 accredited Canadian war correspondents,⁹⁸ or by the 73 cameramen and photographers of the Canadian Army Film and Photo Unit (CAFPU).

What were the censorship restrictions in the field, and in London, where all press copy had to be routed before being wired or transmitted to Canada? What were the expectations of editors and the strictures imposed on publications and broadcasters at home, and to what degree did the Canadian press adhere to those rules? To what extent did individual war correspondents impose self-censorship on their work? How, exactly, did Canadian print and broadcast journalists operate in the field? How well were they trained in army procedure and was it enough to enable them to understand the basics of military operations? How well were they briefed? Did they ever get the big picture, and if so, from whom? Finally, it's worth asking who were these brave men ‡ who accompanied Canadian troops into battle, and what was their motivation for doing so? Only after considering these many perspectives can we assess how well they did and how effective they were in keeping Canadians informed at home. In the final analysis, were the war correspondents, as Charles Lynch later told Phillip Knightley, simply propagandists?⁹⁹ Or did they manage to overcome the tradition they inherited from

⁹⁸ Aimé-Jules Bizimana, *De Marcel Ouimet À René Lévesque: Les Correspondents De Guerre Canadiens-Français Durant La Deuxième Guerre Mondiale*. (Montreal: VLB Editeur, 2007), 11.

‡ There were very few women warcos.

⁹⁹ Knightley, *The First Casualty*, 333.

the Great War to deliver the news, and deliver it well, despite the tight parameters and dangerous circumstances in which they worked?

An examination of samples of the print and broadcast coverage of three key Canadian engagements paints a clear picture of how Canadians were informed about the war, while also shedding some light on the peculiar difficulties facing war correspondents. Coverage of the disastrous Dieppe raid on August 19, 1942; the successful but costly invasion of Sicily in July 1943; and the soggy dangers facing Canadians in the flat, flooded terrain of the Scheldt estuary in the fall of 1944 will be considered. The stories Canadian war correspondents filed from the field during Operations Jubilee, Husky and Infatuate respectively were published and broadcast to some 11.5 million¹⁰⁰ Canadians where newspaper circulation was at an astounding 2.38 million high by 1941.¹⁰¹ Canadians were clearly hungry for war news, even before Private John Gray became the first Canadian soldier to be killed in action in Hong Kong on December 11, 1941.¹⁰² They were particularly anxious for news about their own troops, given that Canada was virtually ignored in American publications. (The average mention that Canada garnered in American newspapers was a paltry once every 45 days for the duration.)¹⁰³ Daily Canadian circulations averaged 5,000 subscribers in 1901. That number had grown to 25,000 in 1940.¹⁰⁴ "Print news set records for sales," Balzer tells us, with radio purchases up almost 30 per cent in the year after war was declared, and three out of four Canadians listening to daily war news broadcasts.¹⁰⁵ An examination of those newspaper stories, radio transcripts and broadcasts, as well as the personal papers of some of the journalists involved, is telling. In addition, photographs and film taken depicting the invasion of Sicily and the Battle of the Scheldt (there were no Allied photos or

¹⁰⁰ Statistics Canada, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/l01/cst01/demo03-eng.htm>

¹⁰¹ Balzer, *The Information Front*, 8.

¹⁰² Nathan M. Greenfield, *The Damned: The Canadians at the Battle of Hong Kong and the POW Experience 1941–45*. (Toronto: Harper Collins, 2010), 47.

¹⁰³ Gary Evans, *John Grierson and the National Film Board: the Politics of Wartime Propaganda 1939-1945*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 86.

¹⁰⁴ Kesterton, *A History of Journalism*, 71.

¹⁰⁵ Balzer, *The Information Front*, 182.

films released of the Dieppe raid) are also included. After considering the censorship systems in place in the field and at home, analyzing how war correspondents physically operated in the field, and considering some of the personalities involved, it's necessary to look at some of the stories they filed. An analysis of the news coverage from these three key Canadian engagements during the war poses and answers the deceptively simple question; how did Canadian war correspondents manage in World War Two and how effective they were in informing the Canadian public about what was going on Over There?

Chapter Two: Censorship

We've already seen how Canada surpassed even Great Britain in its zealous censorship of the press during World War One. This was the tradition that war correspondents carried with them into battle twenty years later. Any stories filed had to pass through a two-tiered field censorship system, and later, once transmitted to Canada, those stories passed through yet another round of vetting. The army field censorship system was complex. Greg Clark, a World War One veteran and later a war correspondent for the *Toronto Star*, kept his copy of the *1941 Regulations for Press Representatives with the Canadian Army in the United Kingdom*. On the frontispiece a colleague wrote "For Greg—which is the best of the three?" The forward, written by the Commander of the Canadian Corps reads:

The people of Canada have a right to be kept informed of the activities of the Dominion's forces overseas. Their natural desire for news of their sons and daughters on active service should be met through the Press of Canada and Military authorities fully appreciate the importance of this task. Accredited representatives of the Press will be treated by the Staffs and Commands of Canadian formations as valued colleagues with a most important mission to discharge. They will be fully trusted, treated with complete frankness and given every proper facility for their work. The sole restriction on their writings will be that they shall not contain information of value to the enemy.¹⁰⁶

That sole stipulation, that their writing "not contain information of value to the enemy" could, in fact, be interpreted to black out virtually anything from their copy. A further 19 pages is dedicated to elaborating on this warco prime directive, with three pages of appendices. The most telling of these restrictions can be found on pages 16 and 17, under the heading "The Collection of Information and Censorship:"

(v) Matters to which reference is forbidden: It is impossible to lay down permanent directions on this matter as, in certain cases, the list may be affected by developments in the situation. In the meantime, reference to the following cannot be made in Press reports: —

- a) Composition and location of formations.
- b) Details of troop movements.
- c) Operational orders.
- d) Criticism of a personal nature.
- e) Plans and intended operations.

¹⁰⁶ LAC – Gregory Clark Fonds R8258 Vol. 4, 1941 regulations for the press booklet

- f) Casualties.
- g) Organization.
- h) Place names.
- i) Camouflage methods.
- (j) Names of numbers of formations and units.
- (k) New developments in weapons and equipment.¹⁰⁷

Censors were certainly following these rules when they cut Marcel Ouimet's broadcast on the murder of Canadian soldiers by the 12th SS Panzer Division. In the first weeks following D-Day, 147 Canadian PoWs were murdered.¹⁰⁸ Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces (SHAEF) requested that nothing be printed until an official inquiry was made, which Canadian correspondents honoured.¹⁰⁹ In a 1969 letter to fellow CBC warco A.E. Powley, Ouimet reveals precisely what was cut from his original broadcast script of June 17, 1944:

The following paragraph was censored: 'Dans le village d'Audrieu, on a trouvé les cadavres de soldats Canadiens que les allemands avaient assassinés de sang froid. Les uns avaient été fusillés après qu'on leur eut lié les mains derrière le dos. D'autres avaient été blessés puis attabus de la même façon par une balle dans la nuque ou en plein cœur. L'incident a été porté à la connaissance des autorités par l'aumonier et le commandant en second d'un régiment britannique.'¹¹⁰

Ouimet goes on to explain why the cuts were made:

Security censorship refused to clear this paragraph on the grounds that Allied soldiers in German prison camps so fully outnumbered the German P.O.W.s in our hands that premature revelation of this act of atrocity might lead the enemy to retaliate by ill-treating our prisoners in Germany. On August 2nd, 1944, as a result of the findings of the Court of Inquiry, General Crerar confirmed the story which I had secured at the time from the mayor of the village. The official communiqué referred to the fact that soldiers of the Third Canadian Division captured by the enemy had been assassinated, near Pavié, in the Department of Calvados (later the village of Authie was mentioned) by soldiers of the German Army. The report goes on to say that nineteen Canadians, including one officer, were murdered in cold blood by

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Balzer, *The Information Front*, 146.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 148.

¹¹⁰ LAC, A.E. Powley Fonds, CBC Overseas Unit, MG30-E333, R2100-0-X-E, Vol. 1, letter from Ouimet to Poweley, 1969 re: Poweley's book

men of the 12th SS Division, Hitler Jugend, in complete violation of the laws and practices of the war.¹¹¹

In all cases, the very broad strokes of the censorship guidelines were subject to myriad interpretation in the field, depending on the censor. Often, censorship resulted in information being misconstrued back home. During the first two weeks of the devastating V1 rocket attacks on London that began June 13 and continued until the end of August in 1944, for example, the regulation that place names not be mentioned resulted in CBC reporters not being permitted to mention London in their broadcasts. “When we broadcast home a perfect flying bomb recording—the crescendo of the approach, the thirteen seconds of the silent dive after the engine cut off, and the roar on impact—we had to say it happened “in Southern England” ... It grew irritating to get letters from friends at home who were glad it wasn’t London that was being bombarded,” recalls CBC reporter A.E. Powley.¹¹² That particular regulation further stipulated that all copy for publication or broadcast must be okayed by British censorship and that journalists were forbidden from taking photographs, film or sketches.¹¹³ Transcripts clearly indicate this. All are stamped “Passed for Publication Field Press Censor ” and are initialed by the censor.¹¹⁴

The censorship system implemented by SHAEF was difficult to maneuver within and almost impossible to circumvent. The British Ministry of Information (MOI), formed immediately after war was declared, employed 1,000 personnel within the first month of its existence.¹¹⁵ From the beginning, control of the media was of vital importance to the Allies. The intention, Knightley argues, was to operate as they had during World War One in a virtual news blackout. “The Allied general staffs, alarmed by the development of short-wave radio, had decided in 1938 that as far as they were concerned the war would be a newsless one, and that the system

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² A.E. Powley, *Broadcast From the Front: Canadian Overseas Radio in the Second World War*. (Toronto: Hakkert, 1975), 95.

¹¹³ LAC – Gregory Clark Fonds R8258 Vol. 4

¹¹⁴ LAC - Peter Stursberg Fonds, articles and radio television, MG31-D78, R5637-25-5-E, Vol. 20, various stamped pages

¹¹⁵ Knightley, *The First Casualty*, 218.

for controlling war correspondents would be exactly the same as in 1914-1918.”¹¹⁶ The army’s military field press censors okayed all copy before transmission. Most big picture information was provided to war correspondents through press conferences at HQ—all information provided by the military and not through investigative reporting. In addition, the army provided war correspondents with Public Relations Officers (PROs) who liaised between the army and the reporters in the field, allowing them access to certain interviews and information while limiting access to other data and personnel. In this way, virtually every story was controlled by the army. There were no war correspondents accredited with the Royal Navy or the RCN and similarly, very few were affiliated with the RAF and RCAF. Before the war, the Canadian Army had no public relations body, but by 1945, hundreds of personnel were employed in its ranks, many of them trained journalists.¹¹⁷ All stories filed by Canadian warcos had to be vetted first by a military censor in the field, and then again by another censor at Allied HQ in London.¹¹⁸

Ralph Allen, a warco with *The Globe and Mail*, wrote scathingly about this two-tiered field censorship system in a column that was published on January 15, 1944 while he was back home on leave in Canada.¹¹⁹ It is one of the few examples of reporting critical of the military that was filed by a Canadian during the war. “Allen described the ways the army spoon-fed war correspondents with press releases and communiqués that were parroted back as news copy,”¹²⁰ Bourrie says. Allen didn’t mince words: “I am not fond of the censors. To tell the truth, I am no more capable of writing a fair or reasonable sentence about censors than composing a brochure in praise of Brussels sprouts,” he said.¹²¹ Allen elaborated:

The first story I wrote from the Mediterranean theatre was a frail little travelogue in which I mentioned in passing, probably with the object of impressing the boys in the back room at home, that I had recently been sitting under a date palm in North Africa. The only deletion the censor made

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 218.

¹¹⁷ Balzer, *The Information Front*, 2.

¹¹⁸ Bourrie, *The Fog of War*, 178.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 178.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 178.

¹²¹ Bourrie, *Fighting Words*, 212.

to the story was to cut the words “date palm.” From that moment on, I attempted to govern my actions by the conviction that all censors are maniacs, a hypothesis that has stood the test of time faithfully and well.

One time the censor passed the names of three towns which our troops had captured on the same road. The towns don’t matter anymore, but let’s say the sentence read: “The Canadians today took Capello and Broccoli and the intermediate village of Ravioli.”

The only cut here was the word “intermediate.” My contention was that, although the information that the Town of Ravioli lay between the Towns of Capello and Broccoli might well have been of use to the enemy, the enemy very likely had the information already, in view of the fact that he had lived in the vicinity for generations and probably had a map.¹²²

Allen went on to say he understood why there was a ban on publishing the names of the dead before next of kin were notified, but at the same time, provided a poignant example of why this did a disservice to families back home, who never heard about the actions of the dead in news reports:

I am thinking now of a little battle in which 15 kids from this part of the country attacked a company of Germans. They got into trouble but they kept going. Eight of them got back. Seven didn’t. The story of one of them I remember particularly well. He was covering his section with a Bren gun. A German bullet smashed his foot. Badly hurt, weak, dazed with pain, he left his gun and crawled painfully over the battlefield to a ridge that gave him cover. He was safe now. He would live. A minute before he had been going to die.

And then the youngster lifted his head a little and listened to the dreadful sounds of battle a hundred yards ahead. He didn’t have to see to know that on that fire-swept slope from which he had just found sanctuary his pals were fighting against terrible odds. The kid looked back over the valley that beckoned to life. Then, painfully, he crawled the other way, to where he had come from before. He found his Bren gun again and sprawled behind it with his broken foot and started shooting. He stayed with the gun, shooting, until he was killed.

The stories of this battle mentioned the names of the eight soldiers who got back. All the mother of the boy with the Bren gun heard about her son, at first, was that he was dead. If she knew what a magnificent son he had been, it was only because she had known it all along.¹²³

¹²² Ibid., 212-213.

¹²³ Ibid., 214-215

The policy on not printing the names of the dead before relatives could be informed was reiterated after D-Day in a letter from Canadian Military HQ to A.E. Powley at the CBC in London.

To prevent future stories and names of Canadian casualties reaching the next of kin before they have been properly notified, by N.D.H.Q., Ottawa, through premature publication, it is requested that you lead off on such stories (for publication in Canada) with the following — THIS STORY NOT TO BE PUBLISHED IN CANADA UNTIL PAPER HAS CLEARED WITH NDHQ THAT THE NEXT OF KIN ARE ADVISED.¹²⁴

Ralph Allen was the exception to the rule in even writing of his disdain for censors. As we will see later in the analysis of copy filed from the field, there is little criticism of the Allies, the Canadian Army, or of anything other than the enemy, in Canadian news reports.

Censorship on the home front was also complicated. Bourrie sums up the reasoning behind it.

In World War Two, the Canadian government tried to control news coverage as part of an effort to prevent the country's media from being used as sources of information by the Axis powers, prevent enemy propaganda from finding its way into Canadian publications and onto the country's airwaves, and prevent the publishing of news that would ruin public morale to the point that young men would not enlist to fight.¹²⁵

But the government did not assume control of the country's media, instead, implementing a voluntary system.¹²⁶ Technically, it was termed "self-censorship," but journalist/historian Gene Allen explains that while voluntary, and not required to pass stories through a censor, news organizations were expected to adhere to the regulations. In the case of CP and all other news outlets, voluntary cooperation was

¹²⁴ LAC, A.E. Powley Fonds, CBC Overseas Unit, MG30-E333, R2100-0-X-E, Vol. 1, letter from Canadian Military HQ, June 1944

¹²⁵ Bourrie, *The Fog of War*, 261.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 261.

complete. "CP co-operated actively with the domestic censorship system throughout the war," Allen tells us bluntly.¹²⁷

Kesterton devotes just four pages of his book to censorship during both world wars. He concludes that Canadian publishers and broadcasters did little, if anything, to oppose the system. "Probably the severest censorship regulation was Regulation 15 which empowered the Secretary of State to require submission of material for censorship prior to publication, but he never invoked this regulation."¹²⁸ He points out that only five publications breached the regulations during six years of war and that only 12 to 15 publications were suppressed, adding this was, "nothing compared with the widespread suppression of the foreign-language press which had occurred during the First World War."¹²⁹ The cost of transgressing the censorship regulations weren't serious for non-communist periodicals, amounting to small fines with no interruption of the publication schedule.¹³⁰

In addition to self-censoring news organizations, civilian public relations organizations were also widely used as propaganda and censorship vehicles during the war. England utilized the previously mentioned MOI with its vast personnel resources. At first, the MOI was the target of much derision from the few warcos permitted to accompany troops to the Maginot Line. Media sociologist Greg McLaughlin paints a vivid picture:

"The system of media control in France was so stringent that by the time a correspondent's dispatch reached the newspaper it was barely news anymore. Such was the dearth of hard news and skilful media management from the MOI, The Daily Express complained that Britain would need to launch a leaflet drop on itself to inform citizens about the course of the war so far."¹³¹

¹²⁷ Gene Allen, *Making National News*, 281.

¹²⁸ Kesterton, *A History of Journalism*, 248.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 248.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 248.

¹³¹ Greg McLaughlin, *The War Correspondent*. (London: Pluto Press, 2002), 65.

The Canadian counterpart was the Canadian Bureau of Public Information (BPI) which became the Wartime Information Board in 1942 (WIB) and churned out photographs, posters, newscasts, pamphlets, articles, publications and all films produced by the National Film Board. Together, they produced 25,000 photographs alone over the course of the war.¹³² This multi-layered domestic censorship system was largely self-regulated and voluntary due to a lack of enforcement agencies, argues Balzer, but Allen counters that news organizations, and CP, the largest news supplier in particular, was invested in total compliance with the system.¹³³ Canadian newspapers and radio submitted willingly to the censorship. There were few exceptions. Censorship under the Defense of Canada regulations, which accorded the government unusual powers during wartime, were an extension of the draconian WMA provisions used in World War One that were still in place. “These regulations potentially gave the state the ability to muzzle all dissent,” argues Balzer. In particular, Regulation 39 could be interpreted to prohibit just about any form of communications:

No person shall:

1. spread reports or make statements intended or likely to cause disaffection as to His Majesty or to interfere with the success of His Majesty’s forces or of the forces of any Allied or associated powers or to prejudice His Majesty’s relations with foreign powers
2. Spread reports or make statements intended or likely to prejudice the recruiting, training, discipline or administration of any of His Majesty’s forces or
3. Spread reports or make statements intended or likely to be prejudicial to the safety of the state or the efficient prosecution of the war¹³⁴

Regulation 39 was used to ban certain publications and organizations perceived to be anti-war—specifically, the Communist Party of Canada, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Technocracy Incorporated, and others.¹³⁵ The regulation was overtly flexed against mainstream politicians and media organizations, however, on just two occasions.

¹³² LAC online: <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/war-industry/025010-1000-e.html>

¹³³ Allen, *Making National News*, 250.

¹³⁴ Balzer, *The Information Front*, 6.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

First, against Camillien Houde, Montreal's mayor, who was interned for publicly opposing the King government's conscription policy. Threats were also made to various news organizations for quoting those statements, leading to the only real outcry for press freedom in this country during the war. The second instance involved George Drew, a conservative politician in Ontario, who was charged when he openly criticized the Duff Enquiry into the dispatch of Canadian troops to Hong Kong as a whitewash. The charges were eventually withdrawn.¹³⁶

While only a few examples exist of mainstream media and politicians being charged under the regulations, the fact remains that the environment at home was highly charged for journalists and news organizations. "While the government realized it could not push the regulations further than the mainstream media and politicians would allow without experiencing negative reactions, the Defense of Canada Regulations gave it extraordinary power to control freedom of expression, including the power to prosecute journalists who deliberately undermined Canadian military efforts by revealing secret information."¹³⁷ A total of 12 newspapers were banned under Regulation 15 of the Defence of Canada Regulation,¹³⁸ far fewer than the 253 outlawed during the Great War. And yet the threat was enough to convince most Canadian news agencies and journalists not to rock the boat.

Historian Eric Thompson argues that Canadian warcos were shamed by the inaccuracy of World War One reporting into performing better during the Second World War. "Reporters who simply wanted to do their jobs as well as they could were hampered by the burden of a widespread lack of credibility, stemming largely from irresponsible reporting, official cover-ups and propaganda practiced during the First World War."¹³⁹ There is, however, little evidence to support the claim that news organizations in Canada opposed this tradition of compliance established during World War One. In fact, Canadian newspapers folded entirely to the demands

¹³⁶ Ibid., 6.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 6.

¹³⁸ Bourrie, *The Fog of War*, Appendix A, 269.

¹³⁹ Eric Thompson, "Canadian Warcos in World War II: Professionalism, Patriotism and Propaganda," *Mosaic* 23 (summer, 1990), 56.

of the censors. “Most Canadian journalists reacted to censorship by playing dead,” argues Bourrie. “Canadian Press manager Gil Purcell later wrote that many journalists simply abandoned inquisitive journalism.”¹⁴⁰ Despite the fact that there were very few prosecutions under the draconian Canadian censorship laws, news organizations in Canada by and large heeded the threat and didn’t challenge the restrictions imposed upon them. Bourrie points out that it is actually difficult to know what the penalties for noncompliance were, because so few English newspapers and editors broke the rules.¹⁴¹ Their French-Canadian colleagues, by comparison, were more inclined to buck the system, recalling the vehement French-Canadian opposition to World War One, and to conscription in particular. But even concerning conscription, opposition to censorship laws in Quebec never materialized. When Mackenzie King’s weasel-worded “conscription if necessary” home-defense conscription only policy was finally overturned in November 1944, and the 12,000 of 17,000 available conscripted “zombies” headed overseas,¹⁴² protest was lukewarm. Before the war, several French-language newspapers were outspokenly neutral, including: *Le Devoir*, *Le Droit*, *L’Action Catholique*, *L’Evenement-Journal* and *L’Illustration Nouvelle*.¹⁴³ After war was declared, Kesterton reports that “even they were somewhat reassured by the manner in which the declaration had been made. They were reasonably happy that the Canadian response had not been an automatic or a sheep-like endorsement of the British decision (to go to war).”¹⁴⁴ *Le Devoir* remained anti-war and most French-language journals advocated for a limited, or even a strictly defensive engagement for Canadian troops.¹⁴⁵ Some English-language newspapers, on the other hand, like the *Ottawa Citizen* and the *Montreal Star*, called for immediate conscription.¹⁴⁶ But conscription never threatened the country the way it had during The Great War. “Conscription was not

¹⁴⁰ Bourrie, *The Fog of War*, 46-47.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁴² NFB online: http://www.nfb.ca/film/mackenzie_king_crisis/ “Mackenzie King and the conscription crisis,” directed by Erna Buffie, 1991.

¹⁴³ Kesterton, *A History of Journalism*, 200.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 201.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 201.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 201.

to become a truly divisive force in Canada until almost the end of the war.”¹⁴⁷ When the 1942 plebiscite verdict to send conscripts overseas when necessary was finally invoked late in 1944, there were some street fights in Montreal between servicemen and the so-called “zombies,”¹⁴⁸ but that was the extent of the dissent. Kesterton argues that even French-language coverage was restrained. “Dailies such as *Le Devoir*, *Le Soleil*, *La Patrie* and *Le Canada* counseled against reactions which could intensify racial bitterness...with the ending of the war the manpower problem disappeared.”¹⁴⁹ If even the potentially explosive government conscription policy received such tepid opposition, even in Quebec, it’s no wonder other potential anti-government stories failed to light a fire in newsrooms across the country.

“Reporters and editors, who usually talk a good fight about censorship, were actually quite willing—sometimes even eager—to be guided by the strong hand of government,” Bourrie says. This was even the case on domestic reporting. “They turned a blind eye to many of the social issues on the home front—drunkenness, an explosion in incidences of venereal disease, juvenile delinquency, family breakdown—and ignored signs of bureaucratic incompetence and corruption.”¹⁵⁰ CP, Canada’s largest war news supplier and employer of the famous Ross Munro, also adhered strictly to the rules. Gene Allen provides ample evidence of CP’s bending to the censorship regulations in his new book on the history of CP, in which he examined never-before accessed records from the CP archives. “Throughout the war, CP struggled with but mostly accepted a censorship regime whose own officials recognized that it often operated arbitrarily.”¹⁵¹ He goes on to describe the relationship between CP and the Canadian military as unusually cozy. “Both as a matter of policy and in practice, CP received preferential treatment, sometimes provoking resentment among its competitors.”¹⁵² In fact, this close relationship with the military predated the war. During the Great War, Allen reminds us, CP editors

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 201.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 202.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 203.

¹⁵⁰ Bourrie, *The Fog of War*, 10.

¹⁵¹ Allen, *Making National News*, 250.

¹⁵² Ibid., 257.

also acted as press censors. “As early as 1928 and again in 1936, 1938 and in the spring of 1939, CP executives discussed with government officials what kind of censorship would be applied in the event of another war, acting as de facto representatives of Canadian journalists generally.”¹⁵³ Motivation for news organizations caving in to home-grown censorship policy was doubtless tied to patriotism and a sincere belief that by following the rules, journalists were contributing to the war effort. The Great War’s lasting tradition of Canadian media compliance was never seriously challenged at home, or overseas.

There were real practical and ethical reasons for war correspondents to impose self-censorship on their work. Bucking the system, even when it apparently would cause no harm, was not tolerated by the military. The case of AP reporter Edward Kennedy is a good example of what happened to warcos who stepped over the line. Kennedy effectively scooped the German surrender at Reims by failing to adhere to the publication embargo on the story. Since the story had already aired in Germany, Kennedy didn’t see the military value of the embargo. He failed to predict its political importance, however, and with grave results. He singlehandedly ruined the plan to simultaneously publish the story in the three big Allied countries. Most newspapers led with Kennedy’s story, including the *Toronto Star*. Kennedy was immediately sent home, stripped of his accreditation, and fired from AP.¹⁵⁴ “Censorship—both self-editing and official cuts—along with the threat of discreditation, disgrace and imprisonment, kept the Canadian war correspondents in line. But so did the belief that the Nazis were going to wreck the world,” Bourrie concludes.¹⁵⁵ Kesterton attributes self-censorship to patriotism. “Their relative amenability was part of the spirit of patriotic self-sacrifice which nearly every citizen offers in order to preserve the national security and win victory in battle.”¹⁵⁶

¹⁵³ Ibid., 280.

¹⁵⁴ Bourrie, *The Fog of War*, 191.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 192.

¹⁵⁶ Kesterton, *A History of Journalism*, 246.

Official censorship also begat self-censorship. What was the point of writing something if the field press censor would apply his blue pencil to the juicy bits and ruin your copy? In response, warcos tried to salvage their own writer's voice by anticipating the censor's edits to avoid having their prose gutted. This is the argument Balzer and Richard Collier make, saying that by the end, self-censoring for this reason was almost automatic for most warcos, and was a direct result of the formal censorship process that ultimately inhibited the creative process.¹⁵⁷ Balzer concludes that as a result, Canadians received a sanitized version of the war: "What Canadians read in their papers had the flavour of *The Longest Day* rather than of *Saving Private Ryan*."¹⁵⁸ Another good reason to keep "schtum" and censor one's own writing was to prevent an upset to the career applecart. Working as one of the few accredited Canadian war correspondents in any active theatre during World War Two was a plum assignment, and one after which every journalist lusted. "Just about every Canadian correspondent in London had wanted to go to Sicily,"¹⁵⁹ A.E. Powley recalls in his memoirs, but that golden opportunity fell to just a lucky few. Punishment for just bending the rules a little, not even breaking them, could result in being pulled from duty, or even the loss of accreditation. Few were willing to risk it, and so they stuck resolutely to the army script.

A belief in doing one's patriotic duty for the cause of the greater good also led some of the warcos to censor their own words. "They saw themselves as part of a mission to break the Nazi grip on Europe,"¹⁶⁰ Bourrie tells us. The most famous Canadian warco, the CP's Ross Munro, certainly felt a patriotic duty in his work. Munro was commissioned as a Lieutenant in the Army Service Corps before becoming a warco.¹⁶¹ He was candid with Phillip Knightley about his motivation for going to war. "I was committed to the war completely and utterly, right from the start. I don't think young people today could ever feel the commitment that we had. Maybe it was just jingoism, chauvinism and stupidity, but we felt that the Germans

¹⁵⁷ Balzer, *The Information Front*, 185.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 186.

¹⁵⁹ Powley, *Broadcast From the Front*, 47.

¹⁶⁰ Bourrie, *Fighting Words*, 173.

¹⁶¹ Knightley, *The First Casualty*, 318.

were going to wreck this world of ours and that we would have to stop them. The troops were committed to it and I think the correspondents were—I certainly was. But it won't ever happen again. The war we were involved in was very clear-cut. It really was a crusade.”¹⁶² Gerald Clark, who wrote for *The Montreal Star*, summed up the attitude towards the war that he shared with many members of his generation: “I was born at the end of World War I, educated during the Great Depression, launched into a career at the start of World War II. It was a period of easy decisions: you accepted gratefully such comforts as you could find, without expecting too many more; you worked because there was no choice; you went to war without questioning it. Later generations might resist participation in such horrors as Vietnam, but few people doubted the justice in confronting Hitler in 1939. Realism and idealism dwelt amicably together.”¹⁶³ Bill Stewart, a CP reporter, denied that warcos were cheerleaders, as Charles Lynch famously described himself and his colleagues, but he did concede that patriotism was a factor: “I either wanted to go overseas as a war correspondent or go in the Air Force. I had three brothers in the services, and a sister, you know. So you weren't on the Germans' side, that's for sure. You wouldn't want to write anything that would help the Germans.”¹⁶⁴ Gene Allen concludes there was “a genuine belief among CP journalists that this was a “good war” and that adopting a largely supportive stance was the right thing to do.”¹⁶⁵

Whatever the motivation for warcos' self-censorship, there seems little doubt that it happened on a large scale. Phillip Knightley interviewed Charles Lynch, a Canadian who worked for Reuters during the war. Lynch freely admitted to self-censoring, and claimed all warcos did the same thing. Lynch's damning statement is the most quoted by anyone writing about warcos in WWII. Lynch pulled no punches:

It's humiliating to look back at what we wrote during the war. It was crap and I don't exclude the Ernie Pyles or the Alan Mooreheads. We were a propagand arm of our governments. At the start, the censors enforced that, but by the end we were our own censors. We were cheerleaders. I suppose

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 318-319.

¹⁶³ Gerald Clark, *No Mud on the Backseat: Memoirs of a Reporter*. (Montreal: Robert Davies, 1995), 20.

¹⁶⁴ Allen, *Making National News*, 287.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 313-314.

there wasn't an alternative at the time. It was total war. But for God's sake, let's not glorify our role. It wasn't good journalism. It wasn't journalism at all."¹⁶⁶

In order to fully evaluate Lynch's claim, we have to consider the conditions in which Canadian war correspondents operated in theatre.

¹⁶⁶ Knightley, *The First Casualty*, 333.

Chapter Three: How Warcos Operated in the Field

The first Canadian soldiers disembarked in England with the First Canadian Division on December 18, 1939. The second Division arrived in December 1940, joining the First Division to form the First Canadian Corps. Third Division, 5th Canadian Armoured Division and 4th Canadian Armoured Division, along with two independent tank brigades also shipped out over the next two and half years. This comprised the entire First Canadian Army.¹⁶⁷ In total, by December 31, 1944, there were 159,741 troops in Canada's fighting formations, and an additional 230,000 troops in support roles in England and in Canada.¹⁶⁸ By contrast, there were only ever about four dozen Canadian war correspondents¹⁶⁹ covering them in country at any one time. Bizmana puts the total number of Canadian warcos throughout the war at 120.¹⁷⁰ By contrast, in 1944 alone, there were 150 British and American warcos in all theatres of operation.¹⁷¹ Bizmana places the total number of SHAEF-accredited war correspondents in all theatres of operation during the war at 1,000,¹⁷² the vast majority of them American and British.

Army Public Relations Officers (PROs) were assigned to warcos and acted as their escorts and liaisons in the field. Many were journalists, including Gillis Purcell,¹⁷³ who was appointed as the Corps PRO. Purcell handled all PR for the divisions and was in charge of all war correspondents, until he lost his leg while training in England in 1941. He then returned to CP to become the General Superintendent of the Canadian Press.¹⁷⁴ Among the first correspondents overseas were *Toronto Star* reporters Greg Clark and Matthew Halton, who would later switch his allegiance to the CBC. Halton was the first Canadian war correspondent to

¹⁶⁷ Balzer, *The Information Front*, 24.

¹⁶⁸ Granatstein, *Canada's Army*, 188.

¹⁶⁹ Thompson, "Canadian Warcos in World War II: Professionalism, Patriotism and Propaganda," *Mosaic* 23 (summer, 1990), 57.

¹⁷⁰ Aimé-Jules Bizimana, *De Marcel Ouimet À René Lévesque: Les Correspondents De Guerre Canadiens-Français Durant La Deuxième Guerre Mondiale*. (Montreal: VLB Editeur, 2007), 11.

¹⁷¹ McLaughlin, *The War Correspondent*, 63.

¹⁷² Bizimana, *De Marcel Ouimet*, 11.

¹⁷³ Bourrie, *The Fog of War*, 185.

¹⁷⁴ Balzer, *The Information Front*, 18-25.

venture beyond England, sent to Finland in the winter of 1939.¹⁷⁵ The CBC eventually had a total of 18 journalists and engineers based in London, with its mobile unit later deployed to France and Italy. CP provided the only uniquely Canadian war copy to most Canadian newspapers. In addition to its superstar reporter Ross Munro, CP fielded 20 other war correspondents overseas,¹⁷⁶ including one of the only Canadian women journalists to work near the fighting—Margaret Ecker, who was stationed in Paris and covered the German surrender.¹⁷⁷

Ecker, the only woman CP sent overseas as a warco, worked first in the London bureau and after D-Day, went to Normandy with nurses.¹⁷⁸ She covered the liberation of Paris, the RCAF in Holland and Belgium, and was the only woman reporter to cover the surrender at Reims.¹⁷⁹ Perhaps Ecker's most impressive war accomplishment was her willingness to buck the system. When she got to France, she ducked out of the confines of a hospital where she was given official access, and instead toured through Cherbourg unescorted in August 1944.¹⁸⁰ Very few war correspondents openly defied their PRO handlers as Ecker did. The other Canadian woman correspondent was Gladys Arnold, a pre-war reporter stationed in France with CP who had worked in the mid-1930s for the *Regina Leader-Post*. CP refused to officially recognize Arnold as a warco, but she stubbornly remained until France fell and she was reluctantly evacuated to England.¹⁸¹ Neither was an accredited warco with SHAEF, and Arnold had to leave France or face imprisonment.¹⁸² Mollie McGee of the *Globe and Mail* was the first woman to gain accreditation from the Canadian Army in August 1944, though she reported strictly on "women's issues."¹⁸³ (In total, there were fewer than 100 women war correspondents working for all of the Allied

¹⁷⁵ Bourrie, *Fighting Words*, 167.

¹⁷⁶ Marjory Lang, *Women Who Made the News: female journalists in Canada 1880s-1945*. (Montreal: McGill Queen's University Press, 1999), 280.

¹⁷⁷ Bourrie, *Fighting Words*, 171.

¹⁷⁸ Lang, *Women Who Made the News*, 279.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 279.

¹⁸⁰ Balzer, *The Information Front*, 69.

¹⁸¹ Gladys Arnold, *One Woman's War: A Canadian Reporter with the Free French*. (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1987), 63.

¹⁸² Lang, *Women Who Made the News*, 277.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 278.

and Axis powers combined during the war.)¹⁸⁴ Initially SHAEF denied full accreditation to any women correspondents and the War Office prevented women from joining British units until May 1944.¹⁸⁵ Several American women, however, were given full media accreditation, and by 1944, some were even accredited in the Navy.¹⁸⁶ (No war correspondents, male or female, were ever accredited to the highly secretive Canadian Navy.)¹⁸⁷

Over the course of the war, 10 French-speaking war correspondents were accredited with Canadian news agencies, most with the CBC's Radio-Canada.¹⁸⁸ Marcel Ouimet was the most famous, and transmitted copy and broadcasts in both French and English. Other Radio-Canada francophone warcos reported from London. They included Gérard Arthur, Jacques DesBaillets, Édouard Baudry, Paul Barette, Francois Bertrand, René Lecavalier, Benoît LaFleur, and Paul Dupuis. Next to Ouimet, Maurice Desjardins was probably the most familiar to French-speaking Canadians. He filed stories for CP in London and later, in Italy.¹⁸⁹ Alain Gravel and Rooney Pelletier worked for the BBC's French-language service.¹⁹⁰ René Lévesque, though technically not a Canadian warco, bears mentioning. He served with the American forces, working as a warco in London for the American Broadcasting Station in Europe.¹⁹¹

Some Canadian newspapers were lucky enough not to have to rely solely on CP for their Canadian war news. *The Toronto Star*, as mentioned, originally had four war correspondents overseas, including Greg Clark. Allen Kent reported for the *Toronto Telegram*, while Ralph Allen worked for *The Globe and Mail*. *The Winnipeg Free Press* had J.A.M. Cook while the *Montreal Star* had Gerald Clark. Wallace Reyburn reported for the *Montreal Standard*. There were also Canadian

¹⁸⁴ Nancy Caldwell Sorel, *The Women Who Wrote the War: the Riveting Saga of World War II's Daredevil Women Correspondents*. (New York: Arcade, 1999), xiii.

¹⁸⁵ Balzer, *The Information Front*, 69.

¹⁸⁶ Caldwell Sorel, *The Women Who Wrote the War*, 296.

¹⁸⁷ Bourrie, *The Fog of War*, 52 and Balzer, *The Information Front*, 7.

¹⁸⁸ Bizimana, *De Marcel Ouimet*, 11.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 37-99.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 330.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 153.

correspondents working for international news agencies like Reuters, where Charles Lynch worked. There were typically only about seven Canadian print war correspondents assigned to the Canadian Division at any one time, spread thinly across all theatres. At first, for example, there were only two covering the invasion of Sicily.¹⁹² Later, in Sicily and Italy, the total quota of Canadian correspondents grew briefly to 20 but was then reduced again to 12 in September 1943. Most of them were initially restricted from accessing the front.¹⁹³

SHAEF's quota system, designating how many war correspondents per country could accompany troops on specific actions or campaigns, further curtailed Canadian journalists' participation in the field. Anthony Eden, the British Foreign Secretary, decreed there could only be two correspondents per newspaper, or six per news agency for the entire Mediterranean theatre.¹⁹⁴ During the Dieppe raid, for example, there were a total of 12 war correspondents allowed, only five of them Canadian.¹⁹⁵ For the Normandy landings, most of the Canadian rota went to the CBC and CP. The lone independent drawn was Ralph Allen of the *Globe and Mail*.¹⁹⁶ Of the 14 warcos accompanying Canadian troops to Normandy, only eight were Canadian. The rest were British and American.¹⁹⁷ Their numbers swelled at most to 30 Canadian warcos in France during the war.¹⁹⁸ At most, there were only ever a few dozen Canadian war correspondents in any one theatre of operation during the war; a monumental reporting task. The challenges facing this small band of brothers were just as immense.

In the front of Greg Clark's Canadian War Correspondent's 1943 accreditation book, opposite his picture, physical description (he was only 5'3) and license number, there is paragraph stamped by SHAEF (a.k.a the boss of all Allied personnel in the field, including war correspondents). It reads:

¹⁹² Balzer, *The Information Front*, 36.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 37.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 37.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 97.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 56.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 59.

Certified that the holder of this certificate, Mr. Gregory Clark who is employed as a War Correspondent is authorized to follow the Armed Forces of the Crown, and is entitled in the event of capture by the enemy to be treated as a Prisoner of War under the provisions of Article 84 of the International Convention relative to the treatment of Prisoners of War. For the purpose of such treatment his status is equivalent to that of an officer in the Canadian Army with the rank of Captain.¹⁹⁹

The paragraph is then repeated in German. The risks of being a war correspondent were obvious to everyone involved. The CBC's Clifford Speer died after VE day of injuries sustained in a car accident. The most dangerous media field-work by far was faced by the Canadian Army Film and Photography Unit (CAFPU). "In some cases, the camera was still running when the combat cameramen came under attack, as was the case for Barney Barnett who was filming from a Cessna Piper-Cub airplane when he was spotted by a Nazi Messerschmitt and shot down. The footage, was retrieved by Gordon Petty, a fellow cameraman, and eventually made its way into one of the Canadian Army Newsreels," says Dale Gervais on the CAFPU website.²⁰⁰ In total, four cameramen including Barnett were killed; Lloyd Millon, Jimmy Campbell and Terry Rowe. Navy photographer Jack Mahoney, unaffiliated with the unit, was also killed, as were two CAFPU drivers: Ralph Bush and Lewis Curry. Five more CAFPU cameramen were wounded in Northwest Europe.²⁰¹ NFB correspondent Julian Roffman was also seriously wounded.²⁰² The US army, by comparison, lost 37 war correspondents. Bill Kinmond from the *Toronto Star* was the only Canadian warco captured by the enemy. He survived the war.

Sometimes warcos were mistaken for the troops they covered, as they wore the same uniform. "The line between journalist and soldier was so faded that, looking at a Canadian war correspondent in World War Two, a person could easily mistake him for an army officer," Bourrie explains. The correspondents held honorary ranks, usually as captain. They were even given a driver when jeeps were

¹⁹⁹ LAC, Gregory Clark Fonds, R8258 Vol. 4, 1943 Canadian War Correspondents' Handbook

²⁰⁰ CAFPU online:

http://www.canadianfilmphotounit.ca/chuck_combat_cameraman.html

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Balzer, *The Information Front*, 64.

available, and were subject to the same military justice as the troops.²⁰³ Relations between correspondents and the military were consequently cordial, according to Balzer. He argued that the Canadian army intentionally cultivated a journalist-friendly environment, encouraging close ties between correspondents and the troops with which they were embedded in order to encourage positive stories. Making warcos honorary officers in uniform helped create the cozy relationship.²⁰⁴ Citing the 1943 warco regulations book stating that they had to comply with military orders and were subject to military discipline, Balzer argues that correspondents were, in effect, a part of the military—much more so than embedded journalists in subsequent conflicts.²⁰⁵ Additionally, the fact that the Canadian army employed so many former journalists as PROs contributed to the collegial atmosphere between the army and the correspondents, further blurring the lines between the military and the Fourth Estate. Using former journalists with minimal military training as PROs was a practice, however, that occasionally misfired. It created confusion in the field for Canadian correspondents, as their guides were not as well versed in army procedures as their American and British counterparts. (The British and the American military tended to use regular army personnel as liaisons for their warcos.)²⁰⁶

Bourrie disagrees with Balzer's interpretation, arguing that the military high-ups hated warcos, creating a less-than friendly atmosphere between the warcos and their army handlers. "Most of the army brass, mimicking their British colleagues, despised the press. They believed reporters were biased, sloppy, and inaccurate, and that their presence was a drag on military units."²⁰⁷ Bourrie also makes the point that the Canadian warcos' collective lack of military know-how annoyed the soldiers:

"Many reporters arrived in the field not knowing the difference between a company and a platoon and utterly ignorant about the weapons used by the

²⁰³ Bourrie, *The Fog of War*, 188.

²⁰⁴ Balzer, *The Information Front*, 31

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 31.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 29.

²⁰⁷ Bourrie, *The Fog of War*, 186.

soldiers. For months, these neophyte war correspondents would file copy riddled with factual errors. The soldiers they were covering would be embarrassed and annoyed.²⁰⁸

Greg Clark's 1943 handbook for Canadian war correspondents bears testimony to this woeful lack of military education, though Clark, a decorated World War One veteran, was very well versed in military procedures. Pages 3-9 give a chronological Coles-notes version of the war to date, as it pertained to Canadian troops, with tidbits like, "25 Aug: Small force of Canadian troops arrived in Spitsbergen." Several pages are dedicated to mini-biographies of Canadian brass while three are taken up by military abbreviations. There is a listing of the phonetic alphabet from Able to Zebra and even an explanation on time. "In the Army the 24-hour clock is invariably used." Organizational diagrams explaining basic army hierarchy take up another three pages. There is a page on rudimentary map reading and a section on how to identify officers by their badges. Finally, Emily Post's advice on how to behave in the army suggest, "as you have the status, though not the title or authority of a captain, it is courteous to salute officers of higher rank." Post goes on to suggest that the field service cap be "worn at a rakish angle fore and aft, with the front end about an inch above your right eyebrow." She also tells them not to slouch or smoke on a parade square because "it looks bad."²⁰⁹ Bourrie's criticism of the Canadian warcos' lack of military *savoir-faire* is certainly valid, but once "newbie" warcos were in country for any period of time, these teething problems would have doubtless worked themselves out. Journalists are known for their adaptability, after all, and war correspondents—presumably the best reporters available to their respective news agencies—would at the very least have been quick studies.

Getting a personal understanding of the big-picture, however, was all but impossible for most Canadian warcos, with their limited knowledge of military protocol, restricted access to personnel and utter reliance upon army communiqués for most war information. Bourrie seems to argue both sides, saying that reporters

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 186.

²⁰⁹ LAC, Gregory Clark Fonds, R8258 Vol. 4, 1943 war correspondents' handbook

at HQ did receive an accurate picture through this system, though he doesn't elaborate on why he believes this to be the case.²¹⁰ A few pages on, he concedes that journalists were hopeless when it came to understanding the war as a whole. "Quite simply, even discounting the effects of censorship, Canadian war reporters and their editors were fairly good at covering simple stories but terrible with the big picture."²¹¹

Problems with story transmission and lost equipment plagued the Canadian warcos, particularly the gear-dependent voice of the CBC. During D-Day and after the invasion, copy often went AWOL after being filed with MOI. "Canadian news stories routinely disappeared after entering the Ministry of Information—including one sent by Marcel Ouimet, the only French language correspondent in the assault (D-Day),"²¹² Balzer says. Similarly, Matthew Halton's first story submitted from the beaches of Normandy vanished.²¹³ In a June 1944 letter to Powley, Halton complains bitterly.

"The debacle really is too big to talk about, and you know what I mean by the debacle. The epoch-making balls-up. D plus 13 or something and still no equipment ... Marcel and I are using the army transmitter thing but haven't the faintest idea whether our stuff is usable when you get it ... encore une chose: each time we go there to broadcast the BBC has never heard of us and we have to persuade them that we are not gate-crashing Houyhnhynms but CBC men... It was heartbreaking about the first story. Quelle chose! You risk your life with an assault landing and then the story is lost in the Min. of Inf.!"²¹⁴

Difficulties in getting the story out were widespread and maddening for the warcos in all theatres of operation. Bourrie comments here on the "typical" system of story transmission from Sicily:

²¹⁰ Bourrie, *The Fog of War*, 178.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 182.

²¹² Balzer, *The Information Front*, 60.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 61.

²¹⁴ LAC, A.E. Powley Fonds, CBC Overseas Unit, MG30-E333, R2100-0-X-E, Vol. 1, letter from Halton to Powley June 1944

Those journalists who covered the Canadian advances in Sicily and on the Italian mainland had no choice but to rely on the army in order to get their stories out of the fighting theatre and back to Canada. Often, that meant typing up the story in a quiet place away from the front, giving it to an army dispatch rider who carried the copy on a motorcycle, a horse or, as sometimes happened in Italy, a donkey, to divisional headquarters and its censors, then hoping that the copy made the plane to London, where it was censored again and either telegraphed or put on a news wire. Photographs had to be developed in London so the British censors could look them over, and either flown back to Canada or sent over a very primitive fax machine. Some correspondents tried using carrier pigeons from the Normandy beaches..."²¹⁵

Transmission problems dogged the CBC team from the moment the mobile unit arrived in France. This was how it was supposed to work, as outlined in a letter dated May 16, 1944 from the CBC's A.E. Powley in London to the CBC's Dan McArthur in Toronto:

There will be radio transmission from Army Group H.Q. in the field direct to London over a four kilowatt transmitter which BBC will operate. It will be in operation 24 hours a day, and the division of time is to be 50 per cent for the US networks and 50 per cent for BBC plus CBC...Malcolm Frost, the BBC official in charge of this, says they should be able to clear any of our stuff within an hour of receipt at the transmitter. The material will be recorded in London, and as it will have been field censored, can be shot along to Canada in the next available period. It is expected that this field transmitter will be in operation two weeks after the start of the invasion. Until then our recordings will be flown to England, put on land lines to London from coast transmission points if already field censored, or brought to London for censorship if uncensored. BBC has arranged for any of our discs that are uncensored and unaccompanied by scripts to go through their telephoning and censorship routine as BBC material, thus giving us the advantage of a well-organized and channeled routine which will save us much time and trouble.²¹⁶

The reality was very different. To start with, the CBC recording equipment was late getting to its reporters on the beach.²¹⁷ On June 9, Powley writes McArthur again: "I'm glad you're gratified by the initial effort of all. I suppose it's easier to be gratified at your end than it is here, after attempting to cope with the inconceivable

²¹⁵ Ibid., 180.

²¹⁶ LAC - A.E. Powley Fonds, CBC Overseas Unit, MG30-E333, R2100-0-X-E, Vol. 1, letter from Powley to McArthur, May 16, 1944.

²¹⁷ Powley, *Broadcast From the Front*, 91.

and fantastic muddle that has been encountered in clearing the stuff. Getting Halton's two long pieces to you last night was a triumph of will power and profanity over the slap-happy nonchalance at the BBC receiving point and equally slap-happy dilatoriness at SHAEF censorship."²¹⁸ He went on to say that there was still no trace of Halton and Ouimet's cables from the beach after the landing. Those cables were the infamously lost reports mentioned earlier. Powley did his best to track them down: "I've been able to trace three Ouimet despatches of D+1 (D-Day plus one) to the SHAEF censorship room, but the trail ends there. And a roomful of censors is a hard thing to come to grips with—you get passed from man to man, and they're all quite sympathetic but obviously no-one could possibly be responsible."²¹⁹ The recordings that went AWOL had been taken at great risk to the warcos, using five-kilogram, hand-cranked monstrosities that unreliably recorded three minutes of sound on brittle, easily damaged wax discs.²²⁰

Transmission wasn't just a problem once the warcos arrived in France. Even at their base in London, the reporters and technicians had to contend with constant SNAFUS. Recording technology was still in its early days, the equipment unwieldy and cantankerous. The CBC relied on their mobile unit, a van shipped over from Canada. Powley waxes nostalgic about it in his memoirs:

"It was a huge vehicle and when he had driven it up to London and parked beside Broadcasting House, the office girls who came down to admire it named it "Big Betsy" at sight. There was nothing like Big Betsy in all England. She contained three turntables, which meant that one could go on recording without interruption for as long as one wanted, and she had playback equipment. One could dub from disc to disc, edit, and in fact produce a finished programme, ready to be fed into the short wave transmitters, without leaving her spacious interior. Intended for the battlefield in France, Betsy never got there."²²¹

²¹⁸ LAC - A.E. Powley Fonds, CBC Overseas Unit, MG30-E333, R2100-0-X-E, Vol. 1, letter from Powley to McArthur, June 9, 1944.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Bourrie, *The Fog of War*, 180.

²²¹ Powley, *Broadcast From the Front*, 15.

Bourrie is admiring of the CBC's performance, in spite of Big Betsy's troubles. "Despite being handicapped by technology, CBC reporters covered the 1940 Blitz (the building that housed its offices took a direct hit) and went on to distinguish themselves in Europe," he says, but in the next breath, accuses them of tampering with their news reports, which goes against the cardinal rule of news reporting. "Their reports were a combination of journalism and show: CBC star Matthew Halton practiced his lines and got as close as he could to the fighting to record the noise of it, but, if the battle did not provide enough colourful sound, special effects of fighting were added in the studio."²²²

The dangers and difficulties facing Canadian war correspondents in the field were serious and varied. We should now take some time to consider some of the personalities involved, and the stakes they were playing for in the biggest adventure of their lives.

²²² Bourrie, *The Fog of War*, 181.

Chapter Four: Who Were They?

What did it take to be a Canadian war correspondent in World War Two? To attain one of the few coveted positions with an accredited news organization presumably required talent, but also, great ambition, determination, and courage. A sizeable ego also helped, as Jock Carroll, biographer of *Toronto Star* warco Greg Clark observes:

Many of these writers were colourful, eccentric, competitive individuals, some of them with as little knowledge of the military as the military had of them. Both Matt Halton and Lionel Shapiro [with North American Newspaper Alliance and Maclean's magazine] felt and said, that they were the greatest war correspondents the world had ever seen. Halton rehearsed his radio broadcasts in press quarters until fellow correspondents cried for mercy. Shapiro, later a successful novelist, tore his stories from the typewriter and cried, "Listen to this beautiful prose!"²²³

Once they acquired the venerated status of war correspondent, warcos still had to claw their way to the top of that heap. With talent and more than a little luck, they might achieve one of the few SHAEF-approved spots on a big campaign. Marcel Ouimet and Matthew Halton were the CBC's lucky two to secure the ultimate warco assignment—landing with the troops at D-Day. Such ambitious personalities, however, weren't always pleasant to be around.

When the CBC's D-Day transmission plans became a casualty of war, Ouimet revealed himself to be a bit of a prima donna, publicly striking out, unmindful of the legions of hard-working fellow warcos who toiled thanklessly in support of him. Here is an excerpt from a melodramatic letter Ouimet sent to A.E. Powley on June 20, 1944, complaining about the situation in France:

I wouldn't be surprised to hear that people in Canada think I am dead since I haven't cabled since Thursday... There is no BBC transmitter yet and mind you the catastrophe is even worse for me than Matt... Now this whole situation is the greatest humiliation I have suffered in my whole career... We were proud in having shown the way in the Italian campaign but this time the CBC can hide its face in shame. God I was right to be worried about the arrangements regarding the equipment... Please take an hour of your time to

²²³ Jock Carroll, *The Life and Times of Greg Clark*. (Toronto: Doubleday, 1981), 231.

report fully on the situation. I need to know whether some of the stuff has gone through or not.

Ouimet signed off dramatically with, “yours in an unequalled mess.”²²⁴ Powley was singularly unimpressed, and winged back this missive to Ouimet. “Dear Marcel,” he began on June 24, 1944:

To begin with, I’m sure you’ll be interested to learn that your two long pages of upbraiding, sent on the 20th, went as a cable to Montreal instead of reaching me. That was through an error at the ministry, but might have been avoided had you thought to put my name on the first page. I presume that you did address the envelope to me.

This is not the letter I was going to send in reply; you are after all in a hazardous occupation and I should not express myself too unrestrainedly. But I must say I have never read a damnder lot of nonsense in my life and that stuff about CBC having to hang its head in shame and your personal humiliation etc. etc...I suggest that however much you may from time to time feel given to that kind of expression, you don’t try it on me anymore.

Of course I can understand how infuriating it was for you and Matt to be on the biggest story in the world and not able to record. But you knew in advance as well as I did that the only hope of recording from the start lay in getting the portables which didn’t come through ... It’s as unfair as it’s profitless to talk about bad planning and how right you were. I venture to say you were no more right than any of us; we were all just as anxious as you to get the gear in at the earliest possible moment, but the timetable for that was in the hands of PR, and we had to accept their arrangements...

...After midnight watches to intercept your stuff and make sure it was sent on when it did come, and midnight journeys on foot to SHAEF to send you messages, and midnight battles with the whole population of the MOI building to try to get a line on your cables, it is not pleasant to hear from Montreal about a message from you, and then to find that it was that kind of message. And incidentally, I am sending a copy of this to Dan [McArthur]. Since he has had your letter, and the benefit of your apparent conviction of a general nitwittery in London, he might as well have this too....

And if you wonder why a daily report hasn’t come automatically winging your way, you might bear in mind that it has sometimes been an exhausting

²²⁴ LAC - A.E. Powley Fonds, CBC Overseas Unit, MG30-E333, R2100-0-X-E, Vol. 1, letter from Ouimet to Powley, June 20, 1944.

process just to extricate your material from the incoming tangle and get it on the air. I think that should be all for now. Except that Montreal reports Schick razors unobtainable. Sorry. Good luck.²²⁵

Ouimet behaved like a spoiled celebrity in this case because he was one. Bourrie writes that “most of the overseas correspondents became stars in Canada and went on to brilliant careers,”²²⁶ but he doesn’t comment on their considerable celebrity status during the war. Many were, in fact, famous before becoming war correspondents. Greg Clark was so well known in Canada that Jock Carroll subtitled his biography “Canada’s Favorite Storyteller.” Clark had been a personality at the *Toronto Star* since the end of World War One. He befriended Ernest Hemingway during his stint at the paper in the early 1920s, reading the fledgling novelist’s work. Clark later joked about the value Hemingway placed on his literary criticism:

“If I said it was too jerky, too queer, too lean, Hemmy would set it aside and mail it next day to Ezra Pound in Paris who would publish it in the *Transatlantic Review*. But if I cried: ‘Ah, now you’ve got it, Hemmy! This is swell! Anybody can read this,’ he would wait until I had gone home then quietly drop it in the waste basket.”²²⁷

Clark was so well-known that when the war broke out, Prime Minister Mackenzie King invited him to be his speech-maker.²²⁸ Clark declined. By the time he was a war correspondent, Clark had a long list of famous acquaintances. “Like many others, Malone [Lt.-Col Dick] was surprised to discover the people whom Greg knew—and who knew Greg—from the Pope, the Duke of Windsor, President Roosevelt and on down the list,” Carroll says.²²⁹

During the war, many warcos were certainly treated like celebrities. Sufficiently famous by the time of the Sicily invasion, they were even featured in a story that appeared in the September 14, 1943 issue of the *Globe and Mail*. Written by the CP’s Bill Stewart, the story trumpets Munro’s scoop and *Globe* staffer Ralph

²²⁵ LAC - A.E. Powley Fonds, CBC Overseas Unit, MG30-E333, R2100-0-X-E, Vol. 1, letter from Powley to Ouimet, June 24, 1944.

²²⁶ Bourrie, *Fighting Words*, 173.

²²⁷ Carroll, *The Life and Times of Greg Clark*, 13.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 222.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 229.

Allen's work, among others.²³⁰ The fact that often, their last names appeared in the headlines of the stories they filed, also indicates their celebrity status.²³¹ The primary function of a headline, then and now, is to catch the reader's attention. For this reason, copy editors know that only the famous can carry the weight of a headline.²³² Otherwise, the copy editors would have followed another time-honoured tradition in headline writing: "When in doubt, leave it out." Again and again, Canadians were lured into newspaper stories by the names Munro, Allen and Clark that beckoned to them from the headlines. Sometimes, the warcos' celebrity status was even recognized in theatres of operation. "Often they lived better than the officers they covered," Bourrie says. "CBC reporter Peter Stursberg was given the captain's cabin on the U.S. destroyer *Hambleton* for the invasion of Southern France."²³³ That Stursberg accepted it says even more about his sense of entitlement to such special status. The most famous Canadian warco by far, however, was Ross Munro. By the end of 1945, CP paid Munro \$130 a week—50 dollars more than its most senior employees.²³⁴ He was the wartime superstar of the Canadian correspondents. Even his wedding was filmed, with Munro and his bride appearing on Newsreel No. 9: "Recently married were Ross Munro, the Canadian Press war correspondent and nursing sister Helen Stevens of Number One General Hospital," the narrator gushed as the uniformed couple got into a car. "Ross has written more about the Canadian Army than probably any other war correspondent. And now he really does have something to write home about." Munro and his bride smiled and waved at the camera from inside their car, like a feted Hollywood couple.²³⁵ Munro and the CBC's Stursberg made a starring appearance again in Newsreel No. 13,

²³⁰ DAW, *The Globe and Mail*, Sept. 14, 1943, "Ralph Allen Among first to File Landing Story"

²³¹ DAW, *The Globe and Mail*, Oct. 12, 1944, "Allen finds beachhead Along Scheldt Estuary Loneliest Spot in the World"

²³² Paul Tasko, editor, *The Canadian Press Stylebook*, 15th edition. (Toronto: The Canadian Press, 2008), 75-78.

²³³ Bourrie, *The Fog of War*, 188.

²³⁴ Allen, *Making National News*, 303

²³⁵ Newsreel 9, Canadian Army Newsreels, 13138 – discs 1-2

featuring Sicily. It was that celebrity status that partially enabled Munro to step outside the confines of most warcos and get the world scoop on the invasion of Sicily.

Munro's account was the first one published anywhere, and yet he was one of 20 correspondents covering the invasion.²³⁶ Allen says the story was handled irregularly from the start. Written from the beach, Munro sent it to the HQ ship. It was then censored by a ship's intelligence officer, not a field press censor as it should have been. At that point, the ship radio operator transmitted it to Malta, though he wasn't supposed to handle any press copy. In Malta, it was forwarded with the message "urgent" to London over RAF channels, and the Air Ministry passed it on exclusively to CP—a highly irregular move, considering the fact that there was a story-pooling arrangement in effect imposed by MOI.²³⁷ The rest is history. So too, very nearly, was Munro's career. His celebrity and CP's preferred status saved him. Allied Forces Headquarters was sufficiently enraged by Munro using unauthorized communication channels and bypassing all censorship protocols, that they wanted "dramatic disciplinary action."²³⁸ Lieutenant Cliff Wallace, the head of the Canadian Army PR outfit, had to personally intervene on Munro's behalf or he would have been arrested.²³⁹ Balzer accepts Munro's explanation—that Canadians knew nothing about the AFHQ instructions to warcos and hadn't been properly briefed—but this doesn't wash with Allen. "Munro's advantage reflected a combination of resourcefulness, assistance or at least non-interference by several military personnel, and good luck," Allen says.²⁴⁰ He attributes Munro's Sicily scoop to his special superstar status, and to CP's preferred treatment. Munro remained in Sicily alone, popping Benzedrine to stay awake and cover the story. CP couldn't get another reporter accredited until a month after the

²³⁶ Allen, *Making National News*, 270.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 270-271

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 271.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 271.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 270.

landings. Munro eventually collapsed from exhaustion after mainland Italy was invaded.²⁴¹

Many warcos wrote their memoirs, and some didn't even wait for the war to be over to rush those accounts into print. Munro's *Gauntlet to Overlord*, an oddly organized compendium of his war experiences, was on bookshelves by 1945. Munro quickly received more accolades in the form of one of the highest literary honours in Canada—the Governor General's Award. Matthew Halton managed to get *Ten Years to Alamein* to press in October 1944.²⁴² Peter Stursberg's war-time chronicle, *Journey Into Victory* also hit the press in 1944, as did Lionel Shapiro's *They Left the Back Door Open*.²⁴³ Stursberg also had a starring piece appear in the September 1, 1943 issue of Maclean's magazine titled "Assignment in Sicily." It was a big enough "get" for the editor to make a special note of it in his comments at the front of the magazine. Clearly, he was banking on Stursberg's cache to sell copies.²⁴⁴ The glory they experienced, coupled with their collective ambition and drive to capitalize on their wartime successes, made war correspondents protective of their position at the top of the journalism food chain.

Having celebrity status afforded some warcos special privileges during the war, which in Munro's case, even included a world scoop. Once they had been given the captain's quarters, appeared on newsreels and enjoyed the publicity of front-page byline fame, who would want to give that up by rocking the boat? Their counterparts in the army—men behind the cameras of the Film and Photo Unit—never experienced the same kind of celebrity, though they risked a great deal to bring images of the war to Canadians.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 272.

²⁴² Thompson, *Canadian Warcos*, 58.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 64.

²⁴⁴ Peter Stursberg Fonds, scrapbooks and miscellaneous, MG31-D78, R5637-26-7-E, clippings/articles, Vol. 27, Maclean's Magazine article clipping.

Chapter Five: The Canadian Army Film and Photo Unit

The footage is iconic, powerful and silent. The camera rolls from a stationary position at the back of a Canadian landing craft as it pitches and yaws through the swells. The heads of three soldiers bob up and down—in anticipation? In reaction to gun fire? The troops hunker below the lip of the craft while two men steering the vessel work with their heads exposed. Former holiday homes that skirt the beach now loom menacingly above the gunwales—they provide a perfect vantage point for machine guns. The doors finally swing open. The ramp drops. Ahead are the iron I-beam “hedgehogs”—like menacing jacks tossed by a malevolent giant—preventing the landing craft from getting any closer. The first two soldiers descend in a running crouch, one awkwardly carrying a ladder. They jump into the sea at mid-thigh level. Troops move quickly down the ramp, single file, one after the other, all laden with gear. One reaches up to repeatedly pat the shoulder of the man in front of him before it is his turn down the ramp. There is a wedding ring on his finger, or it could be a bandage.²⁴⁵

This film, depicting about 45 members of a company of the North Shore New Brunswick regiment landing at Bernières-sur-Mer, was the first footage of the D-Day landings seen by anyone, anywhere. Shot by Sergeant Bill Grant of the Canadian Army Film and Photo Unit (CAFPU), the two minute, 10-second clip was the only one to make it off the beach that day in a press bag marked “rush.” It was sent on a ship returning to England, where it went directly to MOI at Merton Park Studios in South Wimbledon, London, where all MOI films were produced.²⁴⁶ By June 11, Londoners were watching it in movie theatres, and by June 15, so were New Yorkers. The footage opened newsreels internationally.²⁴⁷ The clip was shortened to a mere 18 seconds by the time it was viewed by Canadian soldiers and citizens in theatres, community halls and army barracks back home. Newsreel No. 33, Titled “Crusade

²⁴⁵ <http://www.members.shaw.ca/junobeach/juno-11.htm>

²⁴⁶ <http://www.mpsland.com/>

²⁴⁷ Balzer, *The Information Front*, 58.

for Liberation!” was 11 minutes long and also featured segments on Canadians in Italy, reaching the Hitler line and taking Rome.²⁴⁸

Forty-nine combat film cameramen and 24 still combat photographers served with the CAFPU during the war.²⁴⁹ Twelve of them were officers and the rest enlisted men.²⁵⁰ The unit was created in 1941 under the auspices of the public relations branch of the Canadian Army.²⁵¹ Until the invasion of Sicily, they were limited to filming exercises and training. Soldiers of the CAFPU used Bell & Howell Eyemo cameras, which were loaded with 100-foot rolls of 35 mm nitrate film. One roll only lasted for about two and a half minutes,²⁵² which explains the length of the famous D-Day footage. Regular army themselves, the CAFPU followed strict guidelines on what they could and could not film. Any film identifying a soldier’s regiment, for example, had to be excised. They were not journalists filing stories to news organizations. Always soldiers first, under direct control of Canadian Military Headquarters, (CMHQ) and in turn, ultimately answerable to SHAEF, they filed their film and photographs directly to CMHQ PR section where it was edited before distribution.²⁵³ In Canada, 106 newsreels, all shot by the CAFPU cameramen—more than 20 hours of edited footage—was eventually screened in theatrical and non-theatrical locales. Miles more ended up on the cutting room floor. The first Canadian newsreel was released in November 1942, followed by the second a month later. Soon, newsreels were produced bi-weekly, and, by the war’s end, every week.²⁵⁴

The most powerful news medium geared to reach the most people—film—was also the most censored in Canada. For this reason, newsreels shot in the field by soldiers were no different than other Canadian film propaganda. Joseph Goebbels, the Nazi’s propagandist, knew the power of broadcast versus print, and tailored a propaganda system that focused on visuals and constant repetition of simple

²⁴⁸ Newsreel No. 33, Canadian Army Newsreels, 13138 – disc 1-2

²⁴⁹ <http://www.waramps.ca/military/canr.html> -

²⁵⁰ Balzer, *The Information Front*, 27.

²⁵¹ http://www.canadianfilmphotounit.ca/stills_photographers.html

²⁵² http://www.canadianfilmphotounit.ca/history_in_the_taking03.html

²⁵³ Balzer, *The Information Front*, 33.

²⁵⁴ <http://www.canadianfilmphotounit.ca>

messages.²⁵⁵ Goebbels's approach, eerily reflected in today's reality TV shows, was also knowingly employed by the head of both the Wartime Information Board (WBI) and the National Film Board of Canada (NFB); John Grierson. Film historian Gary Evans explains:

He admitted that the war itself was less important than the planned use of propaganda as education. He wanted to create a kind of Ministry of Education. Information, education, and propaganda were interchangeable words...At one point he described his philosophy of information as being 'totalitarian for the good.'²⁵⁶

Grierson's motion picture message was carefully and completely controlled before being packaged for public consumption in Canada.

Ever since the first motion picture was screened in this country in Ottawa in 1896,²⁵⁷ Canadians exhibited a voracious appetite for the new medium. A 1943 survey of media effectiveness revealed that while film was pooh-poohed by intellectuals, with well-educated males wanting to digest their news in solid print format, film was the cheap soda-pop preference of the poor and youth.²⁵⁸ "It was clear to Grierson that the National Film Board had more to do to win the minds of the less literate and young," Evans says. "The watchword was 'more.' Film propaganda needed to be more inspirational and more ideological."²⁵⁹ Grierson knew, as Goebbels did, that he had to pitch film to the lowest common denominator—egg-heads be damned. That's precisely what he did.

While under Grierson's stewardship, The NFB swelled to 800 employees. Its reach and influence was tremendous. The NFB produced several series of war propaganda films, including the best-known, six-part *Canada Carries On* series, which, Evans tells us, "put into practice Grierson's functional principle of modern propaganda as education and inspiration, against a backdrop of total war."²⁶⁰ That

²⁵⁵ Gary Evans, *John Grierson and the National Film Board: the Politics of Wartime Propaganda 1939-1945*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 25.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 94.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 16.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 109.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 109.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 113.

series alone was screened by an astonishing 2.25 million Canadians per month by 1944.²⁶¹ The NFB showed its films in 800 theatres across the country,²⁶² but its non-theatrical influence was greater still. With regional circuits visiting remote and rural churches, schools and other venues in every province, including French-language screenings in Quebec and Manitoba, 761 films were shown to an average monthly non-theatrical audience of 465,000.²⁶³ Those screenings included the newsreels—all totalitarian fare for the good, presumably.

Newsreels were among the most popular films during the war, with a worldwide distribution of between 40 and 50 million viewers a week by 1944.²⁶⁴ Newsreels shown theatrically and in community halls, churches and schools had enormous cultural impact on Canadians.²⁶⁵ Ostensibly they were produced for soldiers, as the narrator of Newsreel No. 49 informs us:

Produced by, of, and for the Canadian Army, the Canadian Army weekly newsreel is your newsreel. Its job is to portray faithfully the life of Canadian soldiers wherever they may be. They are shown from front line theatres to headquarters in Canada to keep you posted on the deeds of Canada's fighting army.²⁶⁶

The newsreels were also an important propaganda tool geared to Canadian civilian audiences. The message was clear, simple and repetitive. Each roughly 10-minute newsreel began the same way—with 18 seconds of a rousing military score as a maple leaf appeared onscreen emblazoned with “Canada.” The words “Canadian Army Film Unit presents Canadian Army Newsreel” and the issue number appeared next, followed by “Recorded at Merton Park Studios.” “Western Electric Microphonic Sound System” appeared below in smaller letters and these eventually faded away with the trumpets. Another score began with the main title of the newsreel.

Narrated by different people, (unlike the other NFB propaganda films that were all

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 224.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, 33.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, 162.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 224-225.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 162.

²⁶⁶ Canadian Army Newsreels, Newsreel No. 49, 13139, DVD 3-4.

narrated by Lorne Greene, whom Evans describes as “the fatherly, reassuring voice of democracy,”²⁶⁷ the newsreel voices, though varied, were at least ever-upbeat or melodramatically somber, depending on the segment. The editor’s aim, as with all NFB fare, was comforting constancy. The same patriotic tones played at the end, when the maple leaf triumphantly returned to the screen with “Canadian Army Newsreel Issue No.” appearing in small print above the unnecessary block capitals, “The End.” There was little subtlety involved. All of the newsreels follow Goebbel’s keep-it-simple formula, as outlined in his own words:

“In the long run, only he will achieve basic results in influencing public opinion who is able to reduce problems to the simplest terms and who has the courage to keep forever repeating them despite the objections of the intellectuals.”²⁶⁸

There is no CAFPU footage of the Dieppe raid, but there are several newsreel references made to Dieppe in subsequent years. Part six of Newsreel No. 1 features “Dieppe heroes honoured.” Filmed outside Buckingham Palace after veterans received medals and commendations, the clip shows soldier after soldier, identifies each and the honour bestowed upon him by the King. The narrator booms, “Finally they appeared, the soldiers sailors and airmen whose deeds on that fateful day had won them recognition—heroes all these men, heroes who helped to write a page of history.”²⁶⁹ There is no mention of the carnage they faced at Dieppe, or of its disastrous result. In newsreel 15.2 there is another brief account of Dieppe, featuring veterans being honoured again by the King, who presents them with colours.²⁷⁰ Newsreel 42.6 has the longest and most glorified footage dedicated to the memory of Dieppe. Shot when Canadians arrived for the second time, unopposed in September, 1944, the army brought all its pomp and circumstance to bear on the ceremony honouring the returning veterans on September 3.

The newsreel differs from others in that it opens with footage taken by Germans after the raid in 1942. The music is ominous. It begins with shots of

²⁶⁷ Evans, *John Grierson and the National Film Board*, 116.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 122.

²⁶⁹ Canadian Army Newsreels, Newsreel No. 1,13139, DVD 1-2

²⁷⁰ Canadian Army Newsreels, Newsreel No. 15,13139, DVD 1-2

wrecked Canadian equipment littering the beach. “Dieppe 1942. Two years ago German cameramen record the landing of the second Canadian Division on the beach that was transformed into a living hell,” the narrator is all gloom and doom. A highly unusual image in Canadian newsreels comes next; a picture of Canadian dead beside the seawall, taken at some distance. The casualties—a shocking 65%— had long been published by the time this newsreel played in theatres.²⁷¹ Perhaps that explains the army’s willingness to break the taboo of filming Canadian dead. The narrator continues, spinning the disastrous raid into pure propaganda. “Canadians hold their position for eight terrible bloody hours. Their objective achieved at frightful cost, they pioneer the plan for a future greater invasion.” Shots of marching Canadian prisoners are shown, with their hands up rather than shackled, as many would be in the future, due to one of the Allied blunders precipitating the raid. ‡ Now the music swells and the narrator changes gears to upbeat newsreel voice. “Dieppe 1944,” he says, as Canadian troops in smart, tight, squared formations march down the street, six abreast. “They thirst to settle the score with the German garrison.” Here, the narrator dips into uncharacteristic World-War-One style Hun-demonizing in reference to the enemy—another anomaly in this newsreel. “But the Germans have scurried like rats along the coast road.” An army band plays as the soldiers march and spectators line the street several deep. The veterans march past Lieutenant General Harry Crerar, by then commander of the Canadian Corps, having replaced General Andrew McNaughton, ousted before the Normandy invasion.²⁷² “There are 855 crosses—erected by the French to mark the places of the gallant Canadians who fell in the Dieppe raid. Their memory is forever as fresh as the flowers brought by kind hands to their graves,” the narrator says, as a woman and child carry bouquets past the camera. “Glory and honour to these men from across the sea who gave their all that that the torch of liberty might shine again,” he

²⁷¹ Denis and Shelagh Whitaker, *Dieppe: Tragedy to Triumph*. (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1992), xii.

‡ The capture of a Canadian officer at Dieppe with written orders to shackle German prisoners resulted in Germany shackling Allied PoWs until December, 1943.

²⁷² Granatstein, *Canada’s Army*, 231.

concludes.²⁷³ There is no mistaking the message; the Canadian heroes who died at Dieppe did so serving the greater good and advancing the Allied cause. Their contribution enabled the Allies to later successfully invade France. This was the message, filmed by the CAFPU, packaged by army PR, and repeated by the war correspondents in the field. It was the position some historians took long after the war had ended—a position predicated entirely on army PR spin, as we shall see in the next chapter.

The Allied invasion of Sicily was the first opportunity CAFPU cameramen had to film soldiers in action. They would have ample chance, as 26,000 Canadians were involved in Operation Husky.²⁷⁴ The newsreels understandably teem with references to Sicily. Canadians landed on July 10, 1943, near Pachino to light Italian resistance and Canadian losses (seven killed on the first day and 25 wounded.)²⁷⁵ Writer Farley Mowat, who served as a Lieutenant in the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment (the Hasty Ps) summed up the situation best. “General Montgomery was faced with that abhorrent thing, a vacuum, between his beachhead troops and the real enemy.”²⁷⁶ That real enemy—including two crack German Panzer Divisions — had taken a position further inland and would fight the Canadians fiercely in the coming weeks.²⁷⁷ Over the course of the ultimately successful 38-day campaign, 526 Canadians were killed, 1,664 wounded, and 84 were taken as PoWs.²⁷⁸ The newsreels would have Canadians believe that it was all fun and games.

Newsreel No. 12.6 includes a segment on Canadians embarking for Sicily. “Canadian soldiers are pretty cynical about departures now. They have been too close to battle too many times before to believe it before they see it,” the newsreel begins. The narrator echoes an oft-repeated myth of the war, voiced by many war correspondents—that Canadian soldiers were eager to get into the thick of battle.

²⁷³ Canadian Army Newsreels, Newsreel No. 42, 13139, DVD 3-4

²⁷⁴ Mark Zuehlke, *Operation Husky: The Canadian Invasion of Sicily*. (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2008), 23.

²⁷⁵ Granatstein, *Canada's Army*, 221.

²⁷⁶ Farley Mowat, *The Regiment*. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1955), 64.

²⁷⁷ Zuehlke, *Operation Husky*, 69.

²⁷⁸ Granatstein, *Canada's Army*, 227

Historian Denis Whitaker finished his war service as a Lieutenant Colonel, but he began it as a captain at Dieppe, where he won the DSO, later adding a bar to that honour for bravery in the field at the Battle of the Scheldt. Whitaker was also the highest-ranking officer in his brigade to come off the beach alive at Dieppe. He soundly opposes the assumption that Canadian troops were eager for blood:

So many myths have persisted over the years about the Canadian troops in England during those early war years. The propaganda that the media and the government doled out to the Canadians back home in 1941 and 1942—that *we* were the ones who wanted action, that *we* were bored and demoralized—is pure nonsense. *They* were the ones who were trying to justify action—action for action’s sake. Action for votes. Canadian troops *were not* spoiling for a fight.²⁷⁹

The newsreel narrator blithely continues, to footage of troops walking up a ship’s gangplank. “Hearts were light and smiles were happy, for this was it.” Subsequent newsreels continue to flog the same dead patriotic horse. “This was no ordinary convoy. It was destined to be a part of the greatest armada in history and troops aboard were a part of the First Canadian Division. For at long last, Canadian troops were to go into action and it had fallen on the First Division to lead the way after waiting for over three years,” gushes the narrator on Newsreel No. 13. The accompanying footage showed happy men literally playing on ships. The game was checkers, the message simple; Sicily was going to be such a lark. Newsreel No. 14.2 makes no mention of the bitter fighting the Canadians experienced at Agira. “This fighting was the heaviest the Canadians faced in Sicily,”²⁸⁰ Granatstein tells us. “They defeated the Germans, who invariably had the high ground for their emplacements. It was no mean feat, as the 438 Canadian casualties demonstrated,” Granatstein concludes. Of Agira, the newsreel narrator verges on playful, as images of smiling soldiers and Sicilians predominates:

The back of the enemy's resistance was broken by the endless barrage. Canadians moved into town while the pulverized remnants of the famous 15th Panzer Division moved out. Agira was one of the main pieces on the German defense line and its capture made possible the final breakthrough later on. It had to be cleared street-by-street and house-by-house. German

²⁷⁹ Whitaker, *Dieppe: Tragedy to Triumph*, 75.

²⁸⁰ Granatstein, *Canada’s Army*, 226.

snipers were at a considerable disadvantage because Sicilians treated the whole thing as a game and pointed out German positions to the Canadian patrols.²⁸¹

Canadians faced some of their toughest opposition in the Scheldt estuary in the fall of 1944, where they were charged with clearing the path to Antwerp, a harbour critical to the Allied supply route and consequently, to the end of the war in Europe. Granatstein says it was the toughest campaign the Canadian Army faced in the war.²⁸² Clearing the Scheldt ultimately cost the Canadians 15,000 casualties.²⁸³ The fighting here took place on some of the trickiest terrain imaginable—dead flat ground affording zero cover, across canals and over the water-logged polders with earth incapable of supporting heavy tanks or guns, as it was the consistency of fudge. Once again, the newsreels glossed over the less savoury aspects of this cold, wet, miserable battleground. Newsreel No. 46.5 is euphemistically titled “Scheldt mouth housecleaning:”

Clearing enemy troops on the Dutch mainland, Canadians smash the Scheldt pocket. Advancing through flooded areas, battered Breskens is overrun. The back door assault loosens up German defenses. A veteran Canadian brigade jars Jerry loose from his toehold in the vital territory. They attack with such gusto that hardly a stone is left unturned in the annihilated town. Hardly had the smoke of battle cleared in the once picturesque landscape (the narrator pauses as a shot of a working windmill appears) and soon grist will come to the mill. Happy peasants free from oppression go their way in a new found peace.²⁸⁴

The locals on their bikes don't, in fact, look particularly happy in the newsreel. It continues:

Across the Scheldt, valuable ground is gained to free the approaches to the great harbour of Antwerp. Field regiments of artillery move in close support of armoured and infantry, providing the blasting power to keep Jerry on the move. Meanwhile on the south bank of the Scheldt, other elements of the Canadian Army prepare for an amphibious attack. American-made Alligators—the last word in amphibious craft—take our troops to the attack

²⁸¹ Canadian Army Newsreels, Newsreel No. 14, 13139, DVD 1-2.

²⁸² Granatstein, *Canada's Army*, 286.

²⁸³ Mark Zuehlke, *Terrible Victory: First Canadian Army and the Scheldt Estuary Campaign*. (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2007), 460.

²⁸⁴ Canadian Army Newsreels, Newsreel No. 46, 13139, DVD 3-4.

covered by naval and air support. Though the Battle of the Scheldt moves into its final phase, once cleared and the first freighters sail into Antwerp, men of the First Canadian Army will have obtained the most important objective since D-day. With the great port available to the Allies, a set blow could be delivered to Berlin, removing the enemy's finger from the dike to allow the Allies to surge forward.²⁸⁵

Granatstein sums up what Canadians actually experienced in the turbulent wake to Antwerp:

The challenge of clearing the Scheldt was horrendous. The weather was cold and wet, the battlefield a sea of mud. Virtually all the area was below sea level, the North Sea held back by dikes and much of the land reclaimed polders. The dikes, as much as 15 feet high, and two canals offered natural defensive positions for the well-supplied and well-equipped enemy. And the Germans understood that if the water route to Antwerp opened, their chances of holding back the Allies were all but over."²⁸⁶

Historians, including Granatstein, have since been critical of SHAEF, and Montgomery in particular, for failing to make the order to clear the way to Antwerp earlier, at the beginning of September, when the German position wasn't as dug in.²⁸⁷ There is, not surprisingly, no hint of criticism of Allied strategy in the newsreels.

The CAFPU newsreels, shot at great peril to the men behind the camera, who, since the invasion of Sicily, risked their lives to show Canadians their troops in action, were edited into propaganda pieces by army PR. They served no legitimate newsworthy function throughout the course of the war.

The army also controlled the second most powerful reporting medium available during World War Two—photography. A tradition of exacting standards in reportage here was wanting as well. (Roger Fenton, the first war photographer, decided not to take any photos when confronted with the butchery of the ill-fated

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ Granatstein, *Canada's Army*, 287.

²⁸⁷ Ibid., 286.

Charge of the Light Brigade in the Crimea.)²⁸⁸ As with filmed images, virtually all stills appearing in Canadian print media and government propaganda were vetted by the army and heavily censored. British soldiers, and, by extension, Canadian troops, were forbidden to take photographs. The task fell solely to the photographers of the CAFPU, like Major Ken Bell who landed with Canadian troops in Normandy and took many famous images of the war. The October 6, 1944 shot of Canadian sniper Sergeant Harold Marshall of the Calgary Highlanders as he clutches his gun and looks imposing during the battle of the Scheldt, is a Bell classic.²⁸⁹ Both the *Toronto Star* and the *Globe and Mail* requested to field their own photographers, to no avail.²⁹⁰ As early as 1940, the Canadian Bureau of Public Information, predecessor of the WIB, insisted that all army photographs had to go through the bureau and not be distributed directly to news outlets.²⁹¹ This added a second domestic layer of censorship to the already heavily vetted images, resulting in fewer than 10 per cent of available war photographs appearing in newspapers.²⁹²

It's not surprising, then, that by today's standards, very few photographs accompanied breaking news stories during the war. Maps and illustrations predominated, punctuated by the occasional photograph of an individual soldier, usually a headshot, or, very rarely, a candid. Even several weeks after an action, photographs were slow to find their way into Canadian newspapers. In the case of Dieppe, where very few photographs were taken and even fewer okayed, the visual coverage relied almost exclusively on maps, graphics and headshots, as was the case in a CP feature that ran in the *Globe and Mail* on September 19, 1942, exactly one month after the raid. There is one photograph—a distant shot of smoke on the beach taken from a ship—that could be a generic “anywhere” war image.²⁹³ In the first story out of Sicily, Ross Munro's famous world scoop that ran in July 12

²⁸⁸ McLaughlin, *The War Correspondent*, 29.

²⁸⁹ Ken Bell, *The Way We Were*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), frontispiece and http://www.cmhg.gc.ca/cmh/image-611-eng.asp?page_id=682

²⁹⁰ Balzer, *The Information Front*, 175.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 24.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, 24.

²⁹³ DAW, *Globe and Mail*, September 19, 1942, page 8.

newspapers in Canada, the only photograph was a prominent head shot of the star reporter.²⁹⁴

When photos did run, they were typically the staged sort that the army favoured. In Sicily, CMHQ PR, in charge of all Canadian photos and films, dictated the kinds of photos the CAFPU photographers should take. Shots of Sicilian girls kissing Canadian troops were suggested, as were photos of kids and dogs frolicking and “French Canadians in Catholic settings.”²⁹⁵ Those were exactly the images that ran in Canadian newspapers. Captain Jack H. Smith’s photograph of four grinning, healthy Canadian dispatch riders astride their motorcycles met the CMHQ criteria for the suitably innocuous, and ran in several newspapers.²⁹⁶ The parameters in which army photographers operated became even more proscribed by D-Day. SHAEF dictated the subjects of photos to be taken in an 18-page memorandum issued before the invasion.²⁹⁷ Formalized requests had to be made for specific kinds of pictures from then on. Any images that were published in Canadian newspapers during the war conformed to these sanitized conditions imposed by the highest brass, not a condition associated with high-quality photojournalism.

²⁹⁴ DAW, Hamilton Spectator, “First Day’s Casualties Light,” by Ross Munro, July 12, 1943.

²⁹⁵ Balzer, *The Information Front*, 175.

²⁹⁶ <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/in-pictures-canada-on-the-march-in-sicily-1943/article13009903/?from=13014093> -

²⁹⁷ Balzer, *The Information Front*, 175.

Chapter Six: The Coverage—Dieppe

The objective was to conduct a raid on the French town of Dieppe, to capture the port, take prisoners and blow up enemy materiel. Originally called Operation Rutter, the plan was to include heavy naval and air bombing, and flank support from paratroopers, in addition to the frontal assault by infantry and Churchill tanks. That plan, conceived in April, approved on May 13 and scheduled for July 4²⁹⁸ was delayed at the last minute due to weather. The troops were already being tossed about in vessels off the Isle of White before the operation was canceled. A month later it was remounted as Operation Jubilee. Churchill later claimed that it was in the interests of maintaining secrecy that no records of Operation Rutter were kept,²⁹⁹ but the advantage of surprise may well have been forfeited when paratroops and glider pilots were briefed long before the original Rutter operation was recalled.³⁰⁰ Regardless, the controversial lack of records has muddied the historiographical waters for Dieppe scholars ever since.

Over the ensuing six weeks, the original Rutter plan that called for heavy support was whittled down into Jubilee—a sort of Rutter Light. Jubilee was so hastily christened before zero hour, August 19, 1942, that Churchill mistakenly referred to it by its old moniker in his cable enquiring about it a few days before the operation.³⁰¹ But Jubilee was not Rutter. Whitaker argues that Rutter safeguards were eroded one by one, leaving Jubilee doomed to fail. Bombers weren't used in significant numbers nor to any effect, no battleship was deployed, resulting in ineffective naval gun fire, critical flank support from gliders and paratroops wasn't forthcoming, meaning the whole operation was entirely dependent on a frontal assault—arguably the least effective offensive tactic in modern warfare.³⁰² Furthermore, tanks proved to be useless in that frontal assault, as they got mired in

²⁹⁸ Winston Churchill, *The Hinge of Fate*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1950), 509.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 510.

³⁰⁰ Whitaker, *Dieppe: Tragedy to Triumph*, 173.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 227.

³⁰² Ronald Atkin, *Dieppe 1942*. (London: Macmillan, 1980), 14.

the stones of the beach. Additionally, intel reports indicating that German defenses were strong, were ignored, and, worst of all, according to Whitaker, secrecy had been compromised. The Germans knew the attack was coming.³⁰³ It all spelled disaster for the troops. Of the 5,000 Canadians who landed, 3,367 became casualties.³⁰⁴

Most of the 12 correspondents and nine photographers watching from ships were unable to discern much. Only three of them made it anywhere near the action—a British journalist, Wallace Reyburn of the *Montreal Standard* who was the only one to actually set foot on the beach and was subsequently wounded, and Ross Munro who watched the carnage unfold from a landing craft on Blue Beach.³⁰⁵ The only photographer to land didn't return, so there were no allied photographs taken from shore. By far, Munro's reports were the most significant, running in most Canadian dailies.³⁰⁶

Later, in his book, *Gauntlet to Overlord*, Munro described what he saw that day in terrifying detail:

The men in our boat crouched low, their faces tense and grim. They were awed by this unexpected blast of German fire, and it was their initiation to frightful battle noises. They gripped their weapons more tightly and waited for the ramp of our craft to go down. We bumped on the beach and down went the ramp, and out poured the first infantrymen. They plunged into about two feet of water and machine-gun bullets laced into them. Bodies piled up on the ramp. Some staggered to the beach and fell. Bullets were splattering into the boat itself, wounding and killing our men ... I saw the slope leading a short way up to a stone wall littered with Royal casualties. There must have been 60 or 70 of them...they had been cut down before they had a chance to fire a shot. A dozen Canadians were running along the edge of the cliff towards the stone wall...one by one they were cut down and rolled down the slope to the sea...It was brutal and terrible and shocked you almost to insensibility to see the piles of dead and feel the hopelessness of the attack.³⁰⁷

³⁰³ Whitaker, *Dieppe: Tragedy to Triumph*, 142.

³⁰⁴ Balzer, *The Information Front*, 89.

³⁰⁵ Timothy Balzer, *Selling Disaster: How the Canadian Public was Informed of Dieppe*. MA Thesis, University of Victoria, 2004, 32.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 31.

³⁰⁷ Ross Munro, *Gauntlet to Overlord*. (Toronto: Macmillan, 1946), 325-326.

But this was not the account Munro filed for CP immediately after the raid. “The correspondents who had gone to France with the Canadians wearily sat down to write their stories. There were many things we could not tell,” he says later in his book.³⁰⁸ The botched coverage of the botched raid, however, was much more than simply a sin of omission due to censorship. In this instance, Munro knowingly served Canadians fiction as news.

After being awake for three days straight with the help of Benzedrine tablets, Munro filed his first cable.³⁰⁹ It was “compelling and demonstrated his personal courage and resourcefulness,”³¹⁰ Allen says. Munro’s Dieppe coverage established him as a superstar reporter, not just back home, but internationally. “It was widely admired at the time and reprinted in many U.S. newspapers via Associate Press and broadcast worldwide by the BBC,” Allen tells us.³¹¹ While Allen notes that Munro’s first cable “frankly reported at least some of the Canadian casualties,” he says it also gave the impression that the battle was an overall success.³¹² That first cable, and all subsequent copy he filed, was embargoed until the next day. At first, newspapers and broadcasters relied on the largely fictitious series of army communiqués, which also described Dieppe as a success.

Munro’s lead, from a story in the *Globe and Mail* dated August 20, read: “Canadian shock troops, carrying the main Commando assault on Dieppe, met the Nazi enemy in the streets of the French town yesterday, fought him with every weapon they had and captured the main portions of the town.”³¹³ In fact, very few troops made it into town, let alone captured it, and most of those who did ended up dying or becoming PoWs. Munro continued. “Dieppe, smashed also by naval guns booming from the English Channel and by bombs from the R.A.F. and R.C.A.F., was in flames when we left it, as planned, nine hours after the raid started.” The air force

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 330.

³⁰⁹ Bourrie, *The Fog of War*, 186.

³¹⁰ Allen, *Making National News*, 263.

³¹¹ Ibid., 263.

³¹² Ibid., 265.

³¹³ DAW, *Globe and Mail*, August 20, 1942, “3 Ontario Regiments Ashore with Raiders,” by Ross Munro.

bombs were in fact, negligible, and in the absence of a necessary battleship or cruisers to really do the job, the Hunt-class destroyer's 4-inch guns proved entirely insufficient.³¹⁴ One veteran described them as being about as effective as pea-shooters.³¹⁵ Still, Munro's report continued in the same vein. "Assault operations were successful all along the beach though our losses will probably not be small."³¹⁶ Munro had no way of knowing personally if any actions other than the one he witnessed were successful.³¹⁷ Like the other warcos, he relied on the same four army communiqués to fill in the blanks of his copy. In fact, few of the assault objectives at Dieppe were met.³¹⁸ After moving to another landing craft that never made it to the beach, Munro watched and wrote that "smoke was so thick that one could not see much of the town," but he went on to conclude that "Canadians seemed to have the town well under control."³¹⁹ In the report he filed the next day, Munro did give a toned-down version of what he actually witnessed on the landing craft, as soldiers were killed all around him, but he also continued the charade. "It was in Dieppe that Canadian tanks played havoc with German positions, pulverizing them with point blank fire from heavy tank guns."³²⁰ In fact, the Churchill tanks were utterly useless, their tracks grinding without purchase and clogging on the small chert stones of the beach at Dieppe—a landing surface upon which they had never been tested.³²¹

Different interpretations over why Dieppe happened have been bandied about over the years: As a feint to keep the enemy's focus away from North Africa; as an appeasement to Stalin's call for a second front; the result of bungled secrecy after the original raid was delayed; or just a poorly thought-out SNAFU in which

³¹⁴ Whitaker, *Dieppe: Tragedy to Triumph*, 145.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 148.

³¹⁶ DAW, *Globe and Mail*, August 20, 1942, "3 Ontario Regiments Ashore with Raiders," by Ross Munro.

³¹⁷ Balzer, *Selling Disaster*, 32.

³¹⁸ Balzer, *The Information Front*, 95.

³¹⁹ Balzer, *Selling Disaster*, 32.

³²⁰ DAW, *Globe and Mail*, August 21, 1942, "Met Withering Fire at Dieppe Says Witness," by Ross Munro.

³²¹ Whitaker, *Dieppe: Tragedy to Triumph*, 151.

Canadian troops were mindlessly sacrificed. Historians have been picking over the bones of Dieppe for more than 70 years. The official rationalization cast it as a noble sacrifice not made in vain; that the Allies learned valuable lessons later applied at Sicily and on D-Day. This disaster and triumph rationalization was a line taken by the official historians, Colonel C.P. Stacey and G.W. Nicholson. Stacey, however, was strong-armed into it. Tasked with drafting the original white paper, he was compelled by Lord Louis Mountbatten to revise his original account filed a few weeks after the raid. Mountbatten wanted more heroism injected, and to heighten the illusion of success. Stacey eventually had a chance to set the record straight in his memoirs, but the doctored, Mountbatten-approved white paper was the version released to Canadian newspapers on September 18, 1942. That was the official version upon which they based their coverage.³²² Churchill's view best sums up this official word on Dieppe as a victorious failure.

Looking back, the casualties of this memorable action may seem out of proportion to the results. It would be wrong to judge the episode solely by such a standard. Dieppe occupies a place of its own in the story of a war, and the grim casualty figures must not class it as a failure. It was a costly but not unfruitful reconnaissance-in-force.³²³

Churchill also fuelled the theory, contested by Whitaker and others, that Canadians were spoiling for a fight. "The Canadian army in Britain had long been eager and impatient for action," Churchill pronounced.³²⁴ But then, Churchill wasn't known for his powers of journalistic or historical accuracy, as we saw in his Boer War reportage, and he spent little time analyzing the raid. For him, Dieppe was virtually a footnote, unworthy of its own chapter or even sub-head in a six-volume history of World War Two.³²⁵ The official story was one to which Ross Munro firmly adhered. "Lessons were learned at Dieppe," he insists in his book, "lessons which gave the Allied command the key to invasion."³²⁶ The military and government army spin applied to the Dieppe raid was immediate, intense and effective. It may not have

³²² Balzer, *The Information Front*, 105-106.

³²³ Churchill, *The Hinge of Fate*, 511.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, 510.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, 509-511

³²⁶ Munro, *Gauntlet to Overlord*, 294.

been humanly possible for any war correspondent to avoid being sucked into its fantastical vortex.

At first, the warcos just followed their own noses. “The correspondents initially wrote about what they had personally seen and experienced,”³²⁷ says Balzer. Most were severely limited in what they saw shipside, and Munro had only the telescoped view afforded from the vantage point of a landing craft under intense fire. “Later, they wrote stories based on interviews of other participants who were also ignorant of the big picture and told sometimes contradictory accounts. Neither approach produced a complete overview of the raid,”³²⁸ Balzer concludes. Full casualty reports weren’t available until September 15, almost a month after the raid, and were publicly released in Stacey’s white paper a few days later. Human-interest stories, chiefly to do with the heroism of individual soldiers, prevailed because reporters couldn’t tell the whole story, Balzer says.³²⁹ Most newspapers portrayed Dieppe as a heroic success, even after the casualty figures became public.³³⁰ The *Globe and Mail* was the exception. As an anti Mackenzie King publication, it took the editorial position that there was little evidence to support the success of the raid.³³¹ “Most of the press, however, was either silent or accepted the official version of the Dieppe story,”³³² Balzer concludes. In an interview with Phillip Knightley in the 1970s, Ross Munro conceded that he led readers astray with his Dieppe reporting:

Munro agrees now that the raid was an utter tactical failure, that practically everything that could have gone wrong did so, that, ‘looking back, it seems to me to have been an incredibly risky task with only a gambler’s chance of success. ... I never really felt, except maybe on the Dieppe raid, that I was really cheating the public at home.’³³³

Munro later recanted, saying he did not cheat the public. Bourrie places most of the blame for the inaccurate Dieppe coverage on army censorship. “After Dieppe, the

³²⁷ Balzer, *Selling Disaster*, 32.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, 32.

³²⁹ Balzer, *The Information Front*, 110.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, 104.

³³¹ *Ibid.*, 102.

³³² *Ibid.*, 107.

³³³ Knightley, *The First Casualty*, 319.

British kept the worst details of the botched raid out of its papers through censorship and a news blackout.”³³⁴ Censorship alone, however, can’t account for the publication of false information. The warcos in this case, and Munro in particular, must shoulder much of the blame for blindly regurgitating army spin that ultimately misled the Canadian public.

The news coverage of the Dieppe raid wasn’t much different, in the end, from the official propaganda issued by the WIB in the months that followed the disaster. A poster from the “Men of Valor” series features the words “they fight for you” and depicts a graphic of a hulking soldier carrying two guns, while explosions and running figures dot the background. In the foreground lies a helmet and tangles of barbed wire. The caption reads: “When last seen he was collecting Bren and Tommy Guns and preparing a defensive position which successfully covered the withdrawal from the beach.” – excerpt from citation awarding Victoria Cross to Lt.-Col. Merritt, South Saskatchewan Regt., Dieppe, Aug. 19, 1942.³³⁵ In the end, the reports filed by Ross Munro and the few other warcos who witnessed a raid gone terribly wrong, failed utterly to deliver the news.

³³⁴ Bourrie, *The Fog of War*, 186.

³³⁵ Evans, *John Grierson and the National Film Board*, 115 – PAC 87124

Chapter Seven: The Coverage—Sicily

During Operation Husky, from July 10 until August 17, 1943, 160,000 Allied troops landed in Sicily.³³⁶ The First Canadian Division operated as a part of Montgomery's 8th Army. The Canadian landing near Pachino was almost bloodless, with only seven killed on its first day.³³⁷ Over the next month, Canadians would take part in fighting at Valguarnera, Assoro, Catenuova, Regalbuto and Agira. Canadian casualties totalled 2,310 with 526 killed.³³⁸ Overall, the Sicily campaign resulted in German troops evacuating across the Straits of Messina to mainland Italy, where the fighting would continue, almost to VE Day.

Canadian war correspondents, hampered by the usual wartime censorship regulations, were further taxed by a lack of personnel. At first there were just nine cameramen, seven photographers and only one PR officer to share between Ross Munro and the CBC's Peter Stursberg. By June 21, Lionel Shapiro of the North American Newspaper Alliance, BUP's W.A. Wilson and eight others were assigned to the Sicily contingent. Two more independent correspondents were held in reserve in North Africa but never deployed to Sicily.³³⁹ Once troops landed, access to them was severely restricted. A small group of correspondents had to cover a lot of ground, all the while receiving conflicting reports from army PR. It was a complicated maze for the warcos to negotiate on their own end. Translating the censored text into clean copy for Canadian newspapers and broadcasts proved very difficult. It didn't help that stories were embargoed and then released for publication in a glut. This was the case on July 30, when a week's worth of stories were suddenly okayed for print. The sudden blizzard of non-chronological Sicily coverage must have been confusing for readers.³⁴⁰ Balzer quotes Ross Munro complaining about it in a letter to his boss, Giles Purcell:

It must have been a muddle to the people at home ... We were often prevented from giving adequate pictures of tactical situations. Details which

³³⁶ Balzer, *The Information Front*, 113.

³³⁷ Granatstein, *Canada's Army*, 221.

³³⁸ Balzer, *The Information Front*, 113.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, 117.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 125.

would have made situations intelligible were cut out for so-called security reasons which I felt did not exist.³⁴¹

Munro didn't have much to complain about, given the accolades he received for his famous 7.5 hour world beat of the other 53 Allied correspondents covering the Sicily invasion.³⁴² We've already examined the bizarre circumstances and unique privileges afforded CP, and Ross Munro in particular, contributing to that journalistic coup. Let's take a moment now to look at some of Munro's specific coverage of the Sicily campaign.

Munro's world beat story contained much of the dramatic, first-person writing style for which he was renowned. Munro didn't hesitate to place himself in the thick of the action, and to remind readers of the coverage he had provided for them at Dieppe:

Canadians were swarming over the beach and our craft leaped through the surf in smoke, confusion and noise. The landing craft hit the sandbar and stopped short. We piled over the side and plunged into four feet of water. My typewriter was dunked. I suddenly thought of Dieppe and wondered who would be writing this story for it looked pretty hot here.³⁴³

And later, "I started this story on the first day in a slit trench on my cliff-top position and it is being finished now in the early morning aboard a headquarters ship. This is the story now of my trip onto the beaches ..." ³⁴⁴ The story that ensued was a long feature that went into detail about Munro's three-mile march through the interior following the troops. It was part travelogue, as he described things like melons getting ripe, and only mentioned in passing the real difficulty troops experienced finding potable water on the hot, dry advance. He described what he saw as best he could, but based the substance of military information on army PR releases. The story was certainly impressive in its scope, length and vividness, given how quickly Munro produced it and under sleep deprived, amphetamine-fuelled conditions.

³⁴¹ Ibid., 127.

³⁴² Ibid., 117.

³⁴³ DAW, Hamilton Spectator, July 12, 1943 "First Day's Casualties Light" by Ross Munro.

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

Coverage of Operation Husky in general emphasized damage done to the enemy and the bravery of Canadian troops.³⁴⁵ This was certainly the case in Munro's reporting. "Now our guns are going at the Germans with rapid fire. There is a steady boom, boom, boom, and crack, crack, crack, as if some Giant was hammering the earth," Munro enthusiastically wrote in a July 30 story.³⁴⁶ Balzer points out that his report of the retreat of Canadian forces from Nissoria on July 24 and 25 was particularly skewed. In a story that ran in the July 30, 1943 edition of the *Globe and Mail*, Munro claimed that rather than retreat, the 48th Highlanders were "ordered to withdraw while a bigger attack was prepared to finish off the Germans."³⁴⁷ The story described the ill-fated situation for the Canadians in toned-down and even misleading language. "The Highlanders went right up the slope and got close to their objectives when the Germans began firing,"³⁴⁸ Munro reported. Getting close to an objective, however, is rather beside the point in a turkey shoot. The Canadians had walked into an ambush and were being fired down upon from German machine gun positions above. Munro continued. "Some artillery fire from Canadian guns preceded the infantry attack." Again, this information was superfluous as clearly, the preliminary artillery attack didn't do any good against dislodging the German guns that went on to spray Canadian soldiers with deadly enfilading fire. In fact, the scramble from Nissoria, where 187 men of the 48th Highlanders and the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment were killed, was a definite if temporary set-back in the campaign, and one of the nastiest bits of fighting the Canadians experienced in the war. Farley Mowat, who served as a Lieutenant in the Hasty Ps, describes it best. In a Chapter titled "The Flavour of Defeat" that appears in his memoir *The Regiment*, he sets the scene: "Nissoria itself was an abject collection of stone hovels huddled on the road where it crossed a high col...Directly behind the villages two massive hills rose north and south of the road, and on these the Germans waited in carefully prepared positions." The Canadians attacked just after midnight:

³⁴⁵ Balzer, *The Information Front*, 126.

³⁴⁶ DAW, *Globe and Mail*, July 30 1943, "Nazis driven out of town," by Ross Munro.

³⁴⁷ Balzer, *The Information Front*, 125-126.

³⁴⁸ DAW, *Globe and Mail*, July 30 1943, "Nazis driven out of town," by Ross Munro.

...even as the platoons crawled the last few feet into battle positions fate played against them. Two men of another company, lost from their platoon, came stumbling up the slope and blundered into the German positions. The night exploded. A star shell illuminated the attackers, caught without cover on the slopes. More than fifteen enemy machine guns immediately began to sweep the exposed ground with interlocking cones of yellow and red tracer. Close patterns of mortar bombs, previously ranged on all avenues of approach, began to thump wickedly into the shallow gulleys where the balance of the Regiment lay waiting. Three MK. IV tanks, dug-in to their turrets, sent their shells screaming over the low crest.³⁴⁹

Mowat goes on to describe some individual acts of heroism as the Canadians struggled to survive the onslaught of enemy fire. “But guts and endurance alone could not save the battle,” he adds. “The unit’s casualties were mounting fearfully, and it was clear that the Regiment must move or be destroyed.”³⁵⁰ That’s when the retreat was ordered, but there was nothing textbook about the extrication either. “No man who was on the slopes that day will forget the frightful sensation of turning his naked back on the enemy as he ran his own private race with death,” Mowat says.³⁵¹ He continues: “It was the unit’s first experience of failure and retreat, and the effect on the men was incalculable. Those who survived the battle carried with them the knowledge of a new and terrible experience—panic.”³⁵² There is no mention of retreat, failure, and certainly not panic in any copy filed by the warcos who covered Nissoria.

Ralph Allen was very enthusiastic about another incident, reported in the *Globe and Mail* the day after Munro’s fudged account of the retreat at Nissoria. “Bren-toting Canadian rubs out 2 Truckloads of Germans in Sicily,” the eye-catching headline reads. It’s an account of Hasty Ps Captain Alex Campbell’s single-handed Bren gun assault on enemy trucks on the road to Enna. “... steadying the spitting Bren on his hips, he stood in the centre of the road with legs far apart and kept up his fire. Two truckloads of Nazis spilled out, fumbling for pistols, rifles and grenades, but not one got a shot away. All of the batch of 20 either were killed or wounded

³⁴⁹ Mowat, *The Regiment*, 95.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 96.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 97.

³⁵² *Ibid.*, 97.

before the winded Canadian infantrymen, attempting to meet their officer's pace, could join in the fight."³⁵³ Allen didn't personally witness the incident, but interviewed those who had.

Lieutenant Farley Mowat was there, and he paints a different picture of the early morning attack that took sleepy German recruits so completely by surprise that most never escaped the truck:

Campbell was one of the few men in the Regiment who, at that time, actively hated Germans. His hatred was almost a mania, but on this occasion, he nearly satiated it, for when he was done, the truck that bore the brunt of his rage was silent and in its body, like sardines packed in tomato sauce, twenty of the enemy lay dead and dying.³⁵⁴

A hate-crazed man, cutting down the enemy while they dozed in a tight, enclosed space wasn't the image conveyed to Canadians when they opened their *Globe and Mail* to read Ralph Allen's story on July 31, 1943.

Chief among the CBC's worries in Sicily, along with the usual equipment and transmission concerns, was cost. In an August 7 letter to A.E. Powley, Dan McArthur outlined what the corporation wanted from its correspondents—simple, effective and cheap sound-bites, with only the occasional and costly informative feature:

Our Algiers signal is still lousy and the BBC retransmissions have saved the day in that regard. We can arrange a New York pickup for special occasions (as we did for the first four Stursberg talks) but it costs like hell. What we'd like is more short cable items of news bulletin length (not over 300 words) voice inserts approx 2/12 min. when really hot and newsy, and some good 10-15 min. descriptive talks about the fighting, the Ital.-civilian reactions, the terrain, interviews with guys who have seen some hot fighting (not putting them on the air, but interviews detailed by our men) etc. We don't want anything heavy or dull, or long listings of names of people who have been met at such and such a place, unless linked with something pretty interesting. If you get stuff of this kind, and in your judgement is isn't very hot, don't bother retransmitting."³⁵⁵

³⁵³ DAW, *Globe and Mail*, July 31, 1943 "Bren-toting Canadian rubs out 2 Truckloads of Germans in Sicily," by Ralph Allen.

³⁵⁴ Mowat, *The Regiment*, 79.

³⁵⁵ LAC, A.E. Powley Fonds, CBC Overseas Unit, MG30-E333, R2100-0-X-E, Vol. 1, letter from McArthur to Powley, Aug. 7, 1943.

Balzer's overall analysis of the Sicily coverage in Canada is damning:

The war news from Sicily was a public relations triumph for the Canadian Army. The press coverage was overwhelmingly positive, so much so, that it influenced the Canadian government's decision to dispatch an armoured division to the upcoming Italian campaign that the Allied command did not really want. The Canadian newspaper accounts, hampered by censorship restrictions and other delays, did not really provide a clear narrative of the campaign.³⁵⁶

In addition to the fluff filler they included in their reports, Canadian warcoros left the substance out of any stories that reflected poorly on the military. "Not only did Canadians receive an incomplete picture, but potentially embarrassing incidents remained unreported,"³⁵⁷ Balzer says, citing the example of Montgomery refusing to let McNaughton visit the troops after the landing. (Monty even threatened to arrest him if he showed up), but Canadian warcoros didn't breath a word of this newsworthy detail to their editors.

Much more serious incidents of omission occurred. There were several cases of friendly fire that killed Allied troops in Sicily, including Canadians. All were conspicuously absent from Canadian news stories and broadcasts.³⁵⁸ In particular, Balzer cites the killing of three Canadians in an RAF bombing and strafing SNAFU at Leonforte on July 22. Regalbuto was also bombed after Canadian forces took the town. Again, the press was silent. Canadian warcoros faced innumerable problems in Sicily. There were very few of them, some had to operate on the cheap, and all had difficulty accessing information in a highly-censored campaign. These problems, however, don't entirely explain the lack of good journalism coming out of Sicily. "The press coverage of the Sicilian campaign contained many flaws: lack of info, faulty chronology, and a tendency towards uncritical heroic portrayals,"³⁵⁹ Balzer concludes. In other words, it was business as usual for Canadian warcoros.

³⁵⁶ Balzer, *The Information Front*, 113-114.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 127.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 128.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 129.

Chapter Eight: The Coverage—Battle of the Scheldt

The Canadian assignment to clear the path to Antwerp was a monumental task that presented the army with unique difficulties. Granatstein called it the Canadian army's "hardest struggle of the war."³⁶⁰ Here's why:

The problem was that the great port was 50 miles inland and the water route to the city was the River Scheldt, which passed by the South Beveland peninsula and Walcheren Island. At the beginning of September 1944, these places might possibly have been cleared of a shaken enemy with relatively little cost. In late September, when the First Canadian Army received orders to clear the Scheldt estuary, the Germans were well entrenched, fortified by their Fuhrer's order to hold to the last.³⁶¹

The plan of attack was simple, as was the case with Dieppe and Sicily. Granatstein tells us that the Third Division and Fourth Armoured, along with the 52nd British Division were assigned to clear the south bank that included the Breskens pocket. Meanwhile, the Second Division would take Woensdrecht, eliminating the German route from Beveland.³⁶² None of this proved easy. "The standard tactics of fire and movement, one section supporting another while it moved, did not appear to work well under water," Granatstein sarcastically observed. "The conditions were impossible and casualties high."³⁶³ His assessment of one objective is particularly grim: "The Walcheren causeway was a death trap. Impassable to tanks and trucks, good German soldiers with artillery, machine guns, and mortars covered the causeway, but the Canadians' orders were to assault across it."³⁶⁴ Bourrie adds that the defenders had a pointed motivation not to give up. The Scheldt was held by, "Soviet deserters who knew surrender meant repatriation and death at the hands of the NKVD, Stalin's secret police."³⁶⁵ It is no wonder that casualties were high. In the

³⁶⁰ Granatstein, *Canada's Army*, 286.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 286.

³⁶² *Ibid.*, 288.

³⁶³ *Ibid.*, 288.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 291.

³⁶⁵ Bourrie, *The Fog of War*, 188.

Scheldt estuary campaign from September 13 until November 6, 1944, there were 6,367 Canadian casualties, and an equal number of British as well.³⁶⁶

Most of the copy filed by Canadian warcos, however, was vanilla-flavoured, family-friendly fare—the only limited menu of heroic, non-critical stories available to the Canadian public. Ross Munro’s by-line provides perfect examples. As always, Munro highlighted the Canadian offensive actions and downplayed the horrendous conditions. In an October 17 *Globe and Mail* piece titled “Ontario men push deeper into pocket,” Munro reported that the Germans retreated “as the Canadian attack gathers momentum and hammers the enemy from dawn to dusk.” He conceded that the troops, “slogged forward all day through the pouring rain and mud,” and that the terrain meant, “it will take dogged fighting to overrun the area,” but he glossed over the details, avoiding specifics and relying instead on hackneyed, meaningless phrases. “Meanwhile, the Canadians have a good grip on this pocket south of the Scheldt and are beginning to shake it to pieces.”³⁶⁷ The devil truly lies in the details, and in his reporting from the Scheldt, Munro apparently pretended not to see him.

CBC had several warcos on the Northwest Europe Campaign, covering the Scheldt from the battleground and from bases farther away. Don Fairbairn covered the RCAF from Brussels. On September 18, he described RCAF and RAF transport planes fly in formation overhead:

Here today, one of the largest airborne operations in history is underway. I can see now a group of about 25 fighters at tree-top level, just over to my right, whisking along at an amazing speed ... and it’s now a steady stream of transport planes just as far as I can see—just one after the other going towards their targets – and that’s it, Hitler, here we come.”³⁶⁸

There is nothing more substantive in the piece, but at less than 300 words and peppered with lots of roaring engines, it certainly fulfilled the CBC criteria for a short, exciting sound-bite. On September 20, Matthew Halton also filed a report

³⁶⁶ Granatstein, *Canada’s Army*, 291.

³⁶⁷ DAW, *Globe and Mail*, October 17, 1944, “Ontario men push deeper into pocket,” by Ross Munro.

³⁶⁸ LAC, A.E. Powley Fonds, CBC Overseas Unit, MG30-E333, R2100-0-X-E, Vol. 1, Fairbairn transcripts folder.

from Brussels. Known for his dramatic delivery, passionate patriotism and sentimentality, “the war-time voice of the CBC” didn’t disappoint when describing the liberated town of Eindhoven:

If the German air force dared to fly by day, there would be shambles on these roads, packed with our vehicles. But they appear only at night to vent their savage spite. The Germans know that they are detested and the knowledge enrages them ... It’s thrilling to be a Briton in Europe today. It must be galling to be a German. Tears come to men’s eyes in Holland when they speak of the days when Britain stood alone. They tell you that they went to their bedrooms and knelt down and prayed for Britain. The name of Britain is brighter in Europe now than it ever was before. And still the British and the Canadian and the Americans have to fight. With victory in sight they still go into battle with extraordinary dash and élan. You see the graves along the roads of Holland, as you’ve seen them along the desert tracks and the Burma jungles; in Sicily and in Italy and Normandy ... the war is not won until the last shot has been fired. This is Matthew Halton for the CBC.³⁶⁹

There were other cheerleading warcos covering the Scheldt, though perhaps none as enthusiastic as Halton.

Lionel Shapiro of the North American Newspaper Alliance employed the ubiquitous “Go team!” lead, but at least accurately described the fighting conditions facing the soldiers at the Scheldt in this October 4 story transmitted by the CBC:

I have just returned from the Antwerp front where the Canadians, veterans of the Normandy battle, victors of the Falaise Gap, liberators of Dieppe and the Channel coast, are fighting and winning perhaps the strangest action of the whole campaign of the Western front ... there is no field of battle in the accepted sense of the term. There are no hill features; no charging masses of infantry; no churned earth filled with the debris of conflict. The bizarre action north of Antwerp is being fought in a maze of modern engineering and water works. The infantry deploys along sluices and lock gates; alongside canals, docks and irrigation ditches and within huge warehouses and factories. The purpose of the battle is to clear the Germans from their last foothold on the great port of Antwerp, [sic: Antwerp was already in Allied hands] and to open its magnificent harbour ... already the task is well underway. In two days of fighting, the Canadians have pushed back the Germans from five to eight miles and the harbour works of the great European port are safe within our hands.³⁷⁰

³⁶⁹ LAC, A.E. Powley Fonds, CBC Overseas Unit, MG30-E333, R2100-0-X-E, Vol. 1, Matthew Halton transcripts folder

³⁷⁰ LAC, A.E. Powley Fonds, CBC Overseas Unit, MG30-E333, R2100-0-X-E, Vol. 1, Shapiro transcripts folder, Oct. 1944.

Perhaps this was one of the pages Shapiro tore from his typewriter, exclaiming “listen to this beautiful prose!”³⁷¹ Gerald Clark of the *Montreal Star*, writing in late October from Germany, toured the town of Aachen which the Americans had just clobbered. In his story broadcast by the CBC, Clark waxes almost as patriotic as Halton. Worse, he makes no secret of his apparent hatred of Germans:

I felt intense satisfaction seeing so called German ‘Kultur’ lying in ashes. Hardly a building in Aachen remains undamaged. Hardly a street is not piled high with rubble. This is Caen in a greater edition. But Caen was on French soil and Aachen is in Germany. There is no sadness in us. There is sadness only in the people who tolerated Hitler and who gave their children to the Wermacht.³⁷²

The tone of most Canadian stories issuing from the Scheldt estuary, Brussels, and the Siegfried line, were patriotic to the extreme. While some warcos did a bare-bones job of describing the difficult fighting terrain, most glossed over the details, delivering optimistic reports about the Canadian troops and with much Union Jack flag-waving. Ralph Allen was the refreshing exception to this rule.

Allen’s coverage of the Battle of the Scheldt in the *Globe and Mail* was the high-water mark of journalism produced by Canadian war correspondents in World War Two. Allen, who had already broken ranks with the uncritical mass of warcos by publishing his acerbic anti-censorship column while on leave in January 1944, was now unapologetically critical of the Allied military strategy. Bourrie summarizes:

Ralph Allen’s analysis in the *Globe and Mail* of the British failure to clear the Scheldt estuary at the time of the capture of Antwerp was extremely critical of the British for shifting their strength to the Arnhem offensive, leaving the bloody fighting in the Belgian and Dutch Polder country to the Canadians.³⁷³

Allen was vocal in his disgust with a strategy that he believed needlessly sacrificed Canadians. He had little faith in Canadian military leadership. In a 1946 letter to CP’s

³⁷¹ Carroll, *The Life and Times of Greg Clark*, 231.

³⁷² LAC, A.E. Powley Fonds, CBC Overseas Unit, MG30-E333, R2100-0-X-E, Vol. 1, Clark transcript folder, Oct. 1944.

³⁷³ Bourrie, *The Fog of War*, 189.

Gillis Purcell, in which he states that censorship resulted in the intentional masking of military ineptitude, Allen makes his position on the Scheldt and its coverage clear:

It was also true that while some of our Canadian commanders were displaying highly dubious qualities of leadership on the road from Caen to Falaise, in a month of time-wasting shadow boxing before the Germans got set for the bloody battle of the Scheldt, in their head-on drive through the heart of Hochwald, and in their general inflexibility and pedantic mania for set-piece battles—the same possibly necessary but convenient strictures on free reporting were working for them.³⁷⁴

In spite of these strictures, Allen managed to file story after story depicting a far more realistic version of what Canadian soldiers faced in the Scheldt than any of his contemporaries.

In an October 12 story, under the unusually gloomy headline, “Allen finds beachhead along Scheldt estuary loneliest spot in the world,” Allen’s lead was far from the upbeat, cheerleading norm. It was downright cynical:

A fresh-won beachhead is usually the military equivalent of Broadway and 42nd Street—a place that lives and throbs with the rush of hasty traffic and a thousand urgent missions. But this slender Canadian foothold on the southwest bank of the Scheldt Estuary is the loneliest place in the world, as lonely and bleak and bare as a few acres dropped from the surface of the moon.³⁷⁵

Allen continued his grim assessment:

Behind, the estuary stretches, like a vast, dead canal of black sandbags and black water. The thick black mud of the tidal shoreline lies like a bed of primordial ooze against the grey flat bulging dike... there are no beachmasters. No military policemen, no permanent residents of any kind. No signs and no formal roads except the muddy tracks of jeeps and carriers funneling out across the dike from the curious, spraddled trails of the amphibious vehicles that brought them here... everyone who steps on the beach has the same idea—to get away from it as quickly as possible. There is no cover on the beach. The Germans can shell it, and often do, from either side—from the Zeeland islands of Walcheren and South Beveland...or from

³⁷⁴ Balzer, *The Information Front*, 185.

³⁷⁵ DAW, *Globe and Mail*, Oct. 12, 1944, “Allen finds beachhead along Scheldt Estuary...”

this island stronghold ... You can't dig six inches without hitting water. The round dike gives no protection.³⁷⁶

Of his brief trip to this horrid place the day before, Allen went on say that the only indication anyone had been there before him was "a pile of twisted ammunition boxes and a wrecked jeep behind which three dead Canadian soldiers lay under blankets."³⁷⁷ Then he described, in detail, a German shelling of the beachhead. Allen's coverage was unwavering in its honest depiction of the terrible conditions facing Canadian soldiers who successfully, but painfully, cleared the way to Antwerp. In this, he stood alone as a Canadian war correspondent who was not simply a cheerleader.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

Chapter Nine: Conclusion

In the absence of real news to report, Canadian war correspondents relied heavily on what was known in the trade as “Little Joe” stories. Bourrie explains: “To make up for their inability to understand the big picture, reporters went looking for the stories of ordinary soldiers. They understood the power of stories of individual heroism. They were popular at home, but they were also ingratiating to the front-line troops.”³⁷⁸ In a theatre of operation where information was tightly controlled by the army and few correspondents had ready access to the front, these stories and travelogue pieces were often used as filler. “Little Joe” stories were quickly churned out, involved zero analysis, and scored points with both readers and troops. In other words, they were easy. The CBC’s Peter Stursberg mastered the art form while covering the Italian campaign. There was little public interest in stories from Italy after the Normandy invasion, and Stursberg was chomping at the bit to get to France. In the meantime, he filed stories like this:

During the fighting for this city a Canadian took one of the bridges across the Tiber by himself. I met him today among the soldier tourists outside the Coliseum. A big tall fellow with a deeply sun-tanned face — Sgt. William Knutson of Clive, Alberta, seemed to have a greater interest than any of the other troops in the massive stones of the ancient amphitheatre. He stood staring at one of the arches and when I asked him what he was thinking about he turned around and replied “I was wondering what happened to those Germans that disappeared into the Coliseum during the fighting.” Sergeant Knutson’s platoon had orders to take the Duke of Aosta’s Bridge — which is one of the northern bridges in Rome — but the sergeant got lost during the scrap outside the Coliseum. That’s why he got to the bridge first and held it for an hour and a half till his platoon arrived.³⁷⁹

Little Joe stories had no news value, though they did serve a purpose; to buoy the spirits of the troops and Canadians back home. Travelogues, on the other hand,

³⁷⁸ Bourrie, *The Fog of War*, 190.

³⁷⁹ LAC, Peter Stursberg Fonds, articles and radio television, MG31-D78, R5637-25-5-E, Vol. 20, CBC war correspondent scripts 1944, folder 20-8.

didn't fulfill even that propaganda function. Ralph Allen snortingly dismissed his own early work filed from the Mediterranean theatre as a "frail little travelogue."³⁸⁰ Poor Stursberg was forced to comment on the scenery in Italy in late June, 1944, as there was little else to report:

The Apennines were magnificent in their grandeur and even the Liri Valley with all its memories of dust and sweat and blood was beautiful with the sinister Mount Cairo looking down on it. They admired the Abruzzi but they like Umbria and Tuscany – because – well, it's a friendlier sort of a country. It's more like England than anywhere else they've been with its hills and dales and golden yellow and bright green colours.³⁸¹

More damaging by far than the fluff filed as news, however, were the stories published as truth that were patently wrong.

Bourrie cites several examples of the Canadian press rushing to print innuendo as gospel, including the rumour that Rudolph Hess had committed suicide and that the Canadians had taken Caen on D-Day plus one.³⁸² Bourrie excuses these FUBARS as a result of cutthroat newspaper competition that spurred editors to publish first and check facts last, if ever. He also blames censors, claiming they ripped the juicy meat from any real stories, leaving just the dry bones for publication. As a result, he says, correspondents and editors embellished. Bourrie lets both editors and correspondents off the hook far too easily. "There were no real consequences for these mistakes, and, in the end, they seemed to do very little harm, although Canadians who cared about current events must have spent a lot of time after the war relearning them."³⁸³ He can't possibly know whether or not there were consequences. We do know that the Canadian media's credibility took a serious hit following World War One, when all rumours were deemed fit to print. There is every reason to conclude that credibility similarly took a nose-dive when fiction made its way into the dailies during World War Two.

³⁸⁰ Bourrie, *The Fog of War*, 212.

³⁸¹ LAC, Peter Stursberg Fonds, articles and radio television, MG31-D78, R5637-25-5-E, Vol. 20, CBC war correspondent scripts 1944, folder 20-8.

³⁸² Bourrie, *The Fog of War*, 183.

³⁸³ *Ibid.*, 183.

The history of Canadian war correspondents from 1939-1945 can be categorized as a history of what was left unsaid. In this way, the Canadians were no different from their Allied counterparts who also failed to report on some of the biggest stories of the war while hostilities still continued. Paul Fussell provides a litany of these unspoken events in his book *Wartime*. Overwhelmingly, they were stories of military blunders. Perhaps the most notorious was kept securely under wraps for 40 years. Fussell recounts the Slapton Sands disaster in horrifying detail. During an invasion exercise off the Devon coast on April 28, 1944, 200 vessels carrying the 4th American Infantry Division steered unknowingly into the path of nine German torpedo-equipped E-boats. "In the immense confusion, not just between friends and enemies, but between training and the real thing, the E-boats sank two LSTs."³⁸⁴ The American dead numbered 749. "Their bodies were secretly bulldozed into a mass grave on the Devon farm of Mr. Nolan Tope while the wounded were quarantined and threatened with court-marshal if they talked," Fussell continues.³⁸⁵ "But if one believed the *Time Life* volume devoted to the invasion, the preparatory maneuvers at Slapton Sands were marred only by 'traffic jams and confusion.'"³⁸⁶ He later says that the phrase "death on active service" was often the euphemism used for someone killed in an Allied military blunder.³⁸⁷ Blunders, and with them, the requisite analysis and criticism of the cause of those blunders, were never seriously undertaken by members of the Canadian press during time of war. Certainly, they weren't tackled by the few war correspondents accredited to active theatres of operation.

Censorship, Balzer concludes, was the main culprit in preventing stories from being reported, including tales of military blunders. "The censorship regulations ensured that most of what might conceivably decrease morale never left the theatre of war. Thus, the Canadian public rarely if ever read about cowardice, blunders by

³⁸⁴ Paul Fussell, *Wartime: Understanding and Behaviour in the Second World War*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 25.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 25.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 26.

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 34.

commanding officers, graphic horrors, looting, the shooting of surrendering troops, venereal disease, the inferiority of some Canadian equipment to that of Germans, and much else.”³⁸⁸ Certainly they never heard about this story, told to Fussell by a Canadian who fought at Normandy:

“I killed a Yank once. I know he’s going to get me. My intuition tells me I’m for it, so I give it to him. Poor bugger. A Corporal from some Texas outfit ... He was shooting at me as if I was a German. It’s him or me. So I shoot that boy even though I know he’s a Yank”³⁸⁹

Gene Allen’s assessment of CP’s performance during World War Two is more in line with Knightley’s analysis, who concluded that all war correspondents are essentially propagandists. “Over all, CP’s experience during the Second World War suggests that journalism’s typical assessment of its own functioning—providing a “detached, impartial, factual account of the day’s most important events”—did not apply.”³⁹⁰ He concludes the chapter on the war with this sentence. “On balance, the war brought a significant diminution of the press’ traditional critical, watchdog role—although CP was far from being alone in this.”³⁹¹ Allen is right. The Canadian warcos had a long tradition of bending to authority and caving to all forms of censorship.

Bourrie hotly contests this position, delivering a shot below the belt to Charles Lynch, whom he categorizes as a talentless hack.³⁹² “Charles Lynch would describe their work to Phillip Knightley as propaganda, but Lynch’s opinion doesn’t bear scrutiny.”³⁹³ Bourrie doesn’t support his position well, however, when he continues. “The Canadian reporters abroad did, for the most part, write articles that were not critical of the war effort. They also ignored the grievous lack of talent among the Canadian officer corps in France, Belgium and Holland.”³⁹⁴ For Bourrie, Ralph Allen’s critical stories about how the Scheldt was taken were enough to prove

³⁸⁸ Balzer, *The Information Front*, 174.

³⁸⁹ Fussell, *Wartime*, 23.

³⁹⁰ Allen, *Making National News*, 314.

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 317.

³⁹² Bourrie, *Fighting Words*, 173.

³⁹³ *Ibid.*, 14.

³⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.

that war correspondents did their jobs, and did them well.³⁹⁵ One example does not, however, constitute a strong counter-argument to Knightley. “These reporters did give the Canadian public a very vivid and accurate account of the war, within the boundaries and restrictions placed around them,” Bourrie insists, but the evidence just doesn’t support his theory. By his own account, “the correspondents did succumb to pressure to make heroes of the Canadian and British commanders.”³⁹⁶ He even concedes that they occasionally did act as propagandists. “Sometimes Canadian reporters crossed whatever was left of the line between correspondent and propagandist.”³⁹⁷ He refers here to Canadian correspondents, already relocated to England in February and March of 1945, agreeing to allow army PROs to slap their by-lines on PR stories, supposedly written by them, in Italy.³⁹⁸ Bourrie isn’t alone in his overall positive assessment of how Canadian war correspondents covered the war. Kesterton is their biggest cheerleader:

Usually the violence of battle was conveyed to the newspaper reader and radio listener with speed, directness and absence of misunderstanding unknown during the 1914-1918 war. The writing triumphs scored by Ross Munro for the Canadian Press in his coverage of the Dieppe raid and the Normandy invasion and his world beat in reporting the Sicily invasion, the dramatic radio accounts of battle action in Western Europe by Matthew Halton and Marcel Ouimet for the CBC, and Stanley Maxted’s graphic voice-descriptions of Arnham paratroop fighting brought a new realization of what war meant.³⁹⁹

But was that depiction of what war meant accurate? The analysis offered here of the examples he cites suggest a different conclusion.

In the preface to his remarkable book *Wartime: Understanding and Behaviour in the Second World War*, Fussell, who was a Lieutenant in the American 103rd Infantry Division, explains his motivation for unearthing these stories:

“The damage the war visited upon bodies and buildings, planes and tanks and ships, is obvious. Less obvious is the damage it did to intellect, discrimination, honesty, individuality, complexity, ambiguity, and irony, not

³⁹⁵ Ibid., 14.

³⁹⁶ Bourrie, *The Fog of War*, 189.

³⁹⁷ Ibid., 191.

³⁹⁸ Ibid., 191.

³⁹⁹ Kesterton, *A History of Journalism*, 201.

to mention privacy and wit. For the past fifty years, the Allied war has been sanitized and romanticized almost beyond recognition by the sentimental, the loony patriotic, the ignorant, and the bloodthirsty. I have tried to balance the scales."⁴⁰⁰

Those scales had little to no chance of being balanced in Canada during the war. The men who volunteered to go weaponless into battle, who stayed up all night under enemy fire to write stories for the Canadian reading and listening public, were, without a doubt, a brave and talented group of writers. Many of them became some of our most celebrated writers and media personalities. But they were not reporting the news.

Hampered by censorship, inflated by their own celebrity, operating without information, propaganda-fed by their handlers, and poorly trained in the ways of the military, Canadian war correspondents were unmoored from the basic tenets of good journalism and set adrift. The system in which they operated made real reporting all but impossible. They were, as Charles Lynch attested, cheerleaders. A balanced and neutral Fourth Estate, though an ideal, is still the standard to which reporters should aspire. That standard, soiled in Canada by a tradition of press acquiescence to authority, was dragging in the mud long before the correspondents' boots marched down the gangplank alongside the first Canadian troops sent to war in December, 1939.

⁴⁰⁰ Fussell, *Wartime*, ix.

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Saturday Night, February 10, 1917 – October 27, 1917

Toronto Telegram 1916, 1917

Vancouver Sun 1916

Online Resources: Primary and Secondary

Australian National Boer War Memorial Site

http://www.bwm.org.au/site/Machine_Guns.asp

- re: Maxim gun

Canadian Army Film and Photo Unit

<http://www.waramps.ca/military/canr.html> -

- number of cameramen

http://www.canadianfilmandphotounit.ca/cine_cameramen.html

- number of photographers

http://www.canadianfilmandphotounit.ca/stills_photographers.html

- when established

http://www.canadianfilmandphotounit.ca/history_in_the_taking03.html

- details about the cameras

http://www.canadianfilmandphotounit.ca/war_amps_newsreels.html

- guide to all newsreels:

http://www.waramps.ca/uploadedFiles/English_Site/Military_Heritage/Media/PDF/Newsreels/CANR_Booklet.pdf

- CAFPU killed

http://www.canadianfilmphotounit.ca/chuck_combat_cameraman.html

- quote re: cameraman killed

http://www.canadianfilmphotounit.ca/chuck_combat_cameraman.html

- regarding Merton Park Studios

<http://www.mpsland.com>

Canada at War

www.canadaatwar.ca

- posters collection

Democracy at War: Canadian Newspapers and the Second World War online collection, The Canadian War Museum (DAW)

- collection of 144,000 wartime newspaper clippings

http://www.warmuseum.ca/cwm/exhibitions/newspapers/aboutarchives_e.shtml

Library and Archives Canada (LAC), Government Records

www.collectionscanada.gc.ca

Records of War Diaries: the Battle of the Somme

Records of Soldiers of the First World War – CEF, Box 4158-16, Box 4158-17, Box 4052-59

– number of WIB NFB photos produced

<http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/war-industry/025010-1000-e.html>

National Film Board of Canada (NFB)

Sir Robert Borden with the Canadian Troops Clip 2:

<http://www3.nfb.ca/ww1/wartime-film.php?id=531253>

Mackenzie King and the conscription crisis – NFB film directed by Erna Buffie 1991

http://www.nfb.ca/film/mackenzie_king_crisis/

Misc.

Juno Beach site: for full-length film clip:

<http://www.members.shaw.ca/junobeach/juno-11.htm>

Ken Bell photograph details:

http://www.cmhg.gc.ca/cmh/image-611-eng.asp?page_id=682

Picture of motorcycle brigade in Sicily

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/in-pictures-canada-on-the-march-in-sicily-1943/article13009903/?from=13014093> -

Statistics Canada

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/l01/cst01/demo03-eng.htm>

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