

WARREN, Jean-Philippe, ed. – *Les soldats du Pape. Les zouaves canadiens entre l'Europe et l'Amérique*. Québec: Presses l'Université de Laval, 2015, xviii + Pp. 143.

At the present time, it might not seem surprising that a transnational movement of religiously-motivated volunteers has attracted attention. While parallels to radical Islamist movements are generally avoided—and with good reason—it is certainly true that historians' interest in the multi-national Papal Zouaves is of relatively recent date. After the stream of memoirs, martyrologies, fictional works, and hagiographical accounts had dwindled to a trickle in the early twentieth century, the Papal Zouaves seemed to have sunk into obscurity. Even in the early twenty-first century, it was possible to publish a history of European Catholicism in which they do not merit a single page (Nicholas Atkin and Frank Tallett, *Priests, Prelates and People, A History of European Catholicism since 1750*). It was not until the close of the twentieth century that interest in the Zouaves was rekindled with Jean Guenel's valuable study, *La dernière guerre du Pape*. Prior to Guenel's work, there were only a few rare exceptions to this neglect; most notably, René Hardy turned his attention to the Canadian volunteers in two important works from 1976 and 1980. It is fitting that this pioneering scholar of the Canadian Zouaves supplies the foreword to this fine collection of essays that springs from a colloquium held in Rome, under the auspices of the Délégation du Québec à Rome, and the Canadian Papal College on the occasion of the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the latter's foundation.

Though invariably honoured, and, importantly, not just by their compatriots, barely 500 Canadians volunteered to come to the aid of the beleaguered papacy. Only 350 reached the eternal city; the seventh detachment of 115 men did not arrive in France until 11 September 1870. In the confusion of the fall of the Second Empire, this latter force were unable to cross France and within a few days of their arrival Rome had fallen to the forces of Victor Emmanuel. Moreover, due to a series of obstacles to recruitment—including a temporising response from the Vatican, more interested in financial aid than soldiers—the first detachment did not arrive until 1868; consequently, contrary to expectations and contrary to their legend, the Canadian Zouaves did not serve the papacy on the field of battle, and were unable to boast any actual martyrs for the papal cause. Attention was instead drawn to Alfred LaRocque, who volunteered independently and was seriously wounded at Mentana. “Un seul convalescent était suffisant, semble-t-il, pour bâtir une légende,” as Danielle Miller-Béland and Jean-Philippe Warren put it in a sharp survey of the military poetry devoted to the Zouaves. The ultramontane Mgr Bourget of Montreal would play on LaRocque's memory in launching the Canadian movement. Despite their relatively small number, the Zouaves were not only hailed as heroes on their return to Canada, but, as Diane Audy shows in the closing chapter, their memory was to endure. At the turn of the twentieth century, the veterans' *Union Allet*, in allowing not only Zouaves' sons but any young men who met the entry requirements to join, developed into an active movement that could boast nearly 2,000 members in the 1950s and 1960s. By contrast, the ambitions for a new settlement established by returning Zouaves were ultimately disappointed. Despite the optimistic propaganda, Piopolis did not

succeed in living up to the image of a new prosperous Christian community built by the “new crusaders” in a military-style campaign of colonisation.

This study is very much driven by its editor, Jean-Philippe Warren, who holds the Research Chair on the Study of Quebec at Concordia University, author of two of the eight chapters, co-author of a further two, and editor of the account left by Louis Dussault, one of the unfortunate final detachment. As Bruno Dumons and Warren point out in the introduction, notwithstanding the multi-national character of the movement, studies on the Zouaves frequently limit themselves to a national perspective. In part this reflects the often-declared patriotism of the volunteers, in part the distinctive characteristics and preoccupations of the different national groups, such as, for instance, the preponderance of bourgeois and nobles in the French contingent, their fervent legitimism, and their stress on the heritage of the Vendée. While it should be noted that Hugh Murray, a Zouave from Montreal who fought at Mentana died in the Carlist wars leading a corps of Spanish, Dutch, and Belgian volunteers, there was a specifically Canadian dimension to the Zouave enterprise. While the French Zouave legend played upon martyrdom, sacrifice, and expiatory suffering borne with Christian fortitude by pure and innocent volunteers who were more boys than men, the Canadian Zouave myth portrayed virile and fearless warriors. The Canadian Zouaves themselves were conscious of acting as representatives of their nation and, if their reception by the population of Rome was not wholly warm, the successive detachments that crossed France found themselves the object of considerable admiration. Dussault’s belief that France had become corrupt was endorsed by intransigent French Catholics and legitimists who celebrated the Canadian volunteers as embodying the values of ancient France. Their desire to serve the papacy co-existed with a strong belief that Canada should be better known to Catholic Europe. Indeed, as Warren demonstrates in his chapter on the Canadian Zouaves in Rome, notwithstanding the fact that they were too few to form a Canadian detachment, their consciousness of their Canadian heritage was only strengthened by their service in the Eternal City. The hard grind of a daily round of training and poor food was relieved by the refuge of the Canadian circle, “un petit Canada à Rome.” Therefore, while researching the Zouaves offers the prospect of a renewed “histoire plurielle” of Catholicism, it also sheds light on the nature and evolution of Catholicism in Canada. Ollivier Hubert argues what motivated young bourgeois men to volunteer was not so much the strength of ultramontane Catholicism as Canadian militarism, as embodied in the *milices collégiales*, a phenomenon most prominent in the province of Quebec.

Overall, what this stimulating collection demonstrates is the richness and potential of this field of enquiry. These short essays open up new perspectives and suggest new directions for scholars to take. In the very first chapter, Matteo Sanfilippo and Caterina Giannottu demonstrate the wealth of relatively unexploited material to be found in the Vatican archives and *Archivio di Stato di Roma*. Within this short work, there are the seeds of important and substantial contributions to the field. With a wealth of new material to explore and new areas of study to develop, the future of scholarship on the Zouaves is a bright one.

Martin Simpson  
*University of the West of England*