

defeat was the great westward migration of Euro-American settlers who deprived them of the resources to make a living.

Weaver's thesis applies very well to the western Canadian model, which sits on the peaceful end of the violence spectrum. The relative lack of bloody clashes between Euro-Canadians and First Nations owed more to isolation and a harsh climate than to restraint of government and colonists. The lack of efficient transport to markets, of farming techniques powerless to cope with prairie conditions, and of grains unable to mature in short, often dry and plague-infested summers made the Canadian Northwest uncompetitive with other arable places. Yet the battle of la Grenouilliere, Red River, in 1816 was a disturbing portent of the future, repeated at Grand Couteau in 1851 and again in Red River in 1869–1870, to culminate on the Saskatchewan in 1885. By then, the introduction of steam technology and improved farming methods and crop species permitted thousands of European farmers to settle on the Canadian plains and ship their products to global markets. Meanwhile, the decimation of the enormous bison and other large mammal herds had whipped the starving original prairie dwellers into submission. Subsequently, government policies and heartless bureaucrats kept them on the peripheries of Canadian society while the newcomers took possession of the best lands.

The Great Land Rush deals with more than dispossession and environmental influence. Weaver traces in considerable detail the instruments devised by the imperial and colonial governments to facilitate the speedy and effective taking and transfer of lands. Systematic surveying, deed registration, and laws were constantly reformed to permit the rapid colonization of supposedly empty and unimproved arable lands. Thus within two and half centuries virtually all available tillable lands in the British settlement colonies and the United States were taken.

Weaver's comprehensive study is a monumental accomplishment. Based mainly on a huge bibliography of secondary works, amply supplemented with archival research and published government documents, it presents an important, informative analysis. A work of this magnitude, with its sweeping synthesis and broad generalizations, will probably attract the specialist criticism of local historians more familiar with the peculiar nuances of their regions. A South African historian, for example, may wish the author had used an editor to proofread Afrikaans titles. Generalist readers may prefer a more chronological rather than a topical organization. These as other cavils, however, will not detract from the book's main, weighty argument, and it will long remain an important reference.

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WILMOT, Laurence E. — *Through the Hitler Line: Memoirs of an Infantry Chaplain*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2003. Pp. 148.

This memoir is a recent addition to the "Life Writing Series" from Wilfrid Laurier University Press. Reverend Wilmot was regimental chaplain to the West Nova Scotia

Regiment in 1944–1945. The West Novas (as they are known colloquially) participated in heavy fighting in the Italian Campaign from 1943 until February 1945 as a component of the 1st Canadian Division; they were then transferred north to join the other Canadian forces in France and the Low Countries in February 1945 and participated in the final stages of the liberation of the Netherlands. Wilmot arrived in Italy only late in December 1943 and was appointed regimental chaplain in February 1944, just after the Battle of Ortona. Thus the memoir deals with his experience with the West Novas from that time until the end of the war in May 1945.

One of the values of the memoir is that Wilmot provides a comprehensive answer to the question, “What does a chaplain do in a war zone?” According to his account, the job is much more than just holding religious services and offering up prayers. The chaplain was responsible for organizing the burial of those killed and the collection of their personal effects for shipment home to relatives; he visited the wounded. The chaplain also functioned as a counsellor and social worker to whom men brought their personal problems. Wilmot attempted to monitor and to maintain morale; the chaplain was continually travelling back and forth to the different companies of the regiment, giving him a broad overview of the state of morale. He organized singsongs, discussions, and debates and disseminated information to the men of the government’s proposals for assisting them back into civilian life after the war.

When the regiment was in action, the chaplain went to the aid station, where casualties were first treated, to comfort the wounded and to assist. However, Wilmot, on several occasions during heavy fighting when the stretcher-bearers were overwhelmed, stepped in and assisted in the dangerous task of evacuating the wounded from advanced positions in the midst of the fighting. For these actions, he was awarded the military cross. Of interest is the fact that Wilmot took care to carry and display large Red Cross flags, and the opposing German troops observed the conventions by not firing on him and the stretcher-bearers.

Maps are included showing the major actions in which the Canadian Corps and the West Novas participated during this period in Italy. For the most part, Wilmot does not dwell a great deal on military tactics or strategy; instead, we have his personal observations during major actions. The exception is his more extended discussion of the disaster that befell the West Novas at the Foglio River, August 30–31, 1944. On that occasion, the commanding officer, for reasons that are difficult to fathom, refused the assistance of artillery and tanks in sending two companies of the West Novas to attack an enemy that reconnaissance had established to be well prepared. Filled with a sense of foreboding, Wilmot accompanied the companies during the attack and participated in evacuating the wounded. Wilmot sums up, “This was a major tragedy, with all the officers and senior NCOs and 50 percent of the men of two companies either killed or wounded” (p. 86).

Wilmot did have several periods of leave, which enabled him to do some sight-seeing, especially in Rome, where he discovered opera. Rome was surrendered without fighting and suffered little destruction; although the city had been newly liberated and was still in the midst of war, Rome’s opera season was in full swing and Wilmot was able to attend a number of performances.

In addition to the maps, there are several pages of photographs. The book also

provides a useful aid for readers in a glossary of military names and terms; an omission in the latter is any definition of “pioneer”, part of the complement of a battalion.

Being outside the chain of command and having special responsibility to assist the men in the ranks with personal problems gave the chaplain a different perspective on the war. This memoir does not provide a grand sweep of the war, but it does offer some insights on and vignettes of the men in the West Nova Scotia Regiment who played their small, but heroic, part in defeating the Axis forces in Europe.

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WOLF, Joan B. — *Harnessing the Holocaust: The Politics of Memory in France*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2004. Pp. 249.

With *Harnessing the Holocaust: The Politics of Memory in France*, Joan Wolf brings an innovative approach to a well-studied subject. She examines the holocaust as an object of memory and focuses on the debate to which it has given rise in France. Hers is a study of discourse. Following the evolution and the various manifestations of this discourse from the postwar period to the present, she demonstrates how it has been used by different groups. At issue in the debate is the place of Jews in France, the French concept of integration, and the relation of Jews of France to Israel.

Wolf based her study on printed material: books and the Parisian press. She justifies this selection by pointing out the importance of Paris in reflecting and shaping national discourse and opinion. Wolf complements this body of sources by including a number of films, namely *Le Chagrin et la Pitié*, and a television series, *The Holocaust*. These also serve as chronological guide posts. Wolf organizes her material around a number of such guide posts, or significant events, which include the bomb attacks of the synagogue of the rue Copernic, the rise of the Front National in the mid-1980s, the trials of Klaus Barbie and of Maurice Papon.

For Wolf, the pivotal moment in the history of the discourse on the holocaust is the Six Day War. The threat to Israel and a hostile French Middle Eastern policy revived the psychological wounds dating from the period of the occupation. As of the spring of 1967, the holocaust was mentally revived and narrated as trauma, that is, as defined by Wolf, an event that marked a break in the normal course of events (pp. 6–12). Numerous Jews questioned the assumptions behind the French assimilation model going back to the revolution of 1789 and demanded the right to express their identity, a key feature of which was a connection to Israel and the heritage of victimization of the holocaust. But, as Wolf also shows, questioning the model of assimilation created some dissension, namely between older Ashkenazi leaders of Jewish organizations such as Guy de Rothschild (p. 35) and later the philosopher Finkelkraut, who was to denounce the “need for roots” as “the evil of this last quarter century” (p. 98), and Sephardic Jews from North Africa, who took a militant stance in favour of Jewish identity.