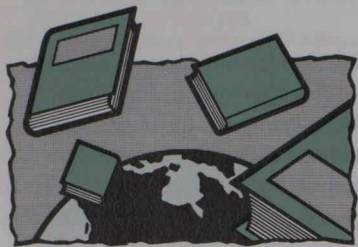


REVIEWS



Breaking with History The Gorbachev Revolution: An Eyewitness Account Lawrence Martin

Doubleday Canada Limited, Toronto,
1989, 356 pp., \$26.95 cloth

■ The eyewitness to the Gorbachev "revolution" is the *Globe and Mail's* first correspondent in Moscow, Lawrence Martin. He was fortunate to be able to watch as the Soviet Union transformed itself from Brezhnevian stagnation into Gorbachevian activism.

Those first three or four years of Mikhail Gorbachev's leadership have probably been the most exciting times in Soviet history since the Second World War and Martin brings out clearly and vividly the stimulating atmosphere and the stunning changes he witnessed. That these changes are revolutionary, as radical as anything that has happened in that vast country since the October revolution, is the principal point of "Breaking with History."

Since Gorbachev's appearance on the Soviet scene there have been so many outside observers and American Kremlinologists who have doubted his intentions, pooh-poohed his reforms, and predicted his imminent demise, that it is refreshing to have a Canadian eyewitness who believes what he sees and reports it as honestly as he can. Martin is obviously not a naive Gorby fan and he reports how difficult it is, and will be, to turn around a society where three or four generations have been brought up under the deadening constraints and fears of a totalitarian system.

Gorbachev, he writes, though a product of that system, that establishment, was set apart "by his exposure to the West, his education, his youth, his openness, his perspective." His insistence on open-

ing up a secretive society, his *glasnost* policy, was essential for revolutionizing Soviet political institutions, for changing attitudes to human rights, for supporting his new foreign and defence policies, and for attempting to make his essential *perestroika* policy for restructuring the economy, work.

Martin describes the difficulties Gorbachev has had, the unexpected concessions he has made, to persuade that other superpower, the United States, to halt the arms race, to seek nuclear disarmament, and conventional force reductions – an opportunity still not fully grasped by a suspicious US administration. Aside from his pertinent vignettes of life in Gorbachev's Soviet Union, his encounters with earnest activists and *lumpen* disbelievers, Martin outlines the great obstacles.

The USSR is a superpower, in its 70th year of the Great Revolution and the second year of the Gorbachev reformation, that can produce the world's biggest nuclear missiles and its best tanks, but can't produce enough toothpaste, sugar, meat, potatoes, porridge oats, wallpaper and writing paper, ball bearings or hearing aids to meet its peoples' needs. The necessities of life still come second to the sinews of war, despite Gorbachev's serious efforts to curb the arms buildup and divert its industries to peaceful pursuits. It has been his least successful revolution.

It is little wonder that he has unleashed a volcano of unrest – economic, social, and ethnic – and why so many wonder whether this Russian Martin calls "a man of moral vision" can survive. Yet can they put his revolutionary genie back in the bottle now? Martin seems to think not, and his informative book is a most useful introduction to the biggest story of the nineties. – *John R. Walker*

Mr. Walker is a freelance columnist and former foreign affairs analyst for Southam News.

A Nation Forged in Fire: Canadians in the Second World War 1939–1945

J.L. Granatstein and
Desmond Morton

Toronto: Lester and Orpen Dennys,
320 pp., \$35.00 cloth

■ J.L. Granatstein and Desmond Morton have inherited the C.P. Stacey mantle; by now one expects a book a year from them on some aspect of Canadian military history. Unlike Stacey they have become popularizers, on the whole a good thing. However, both Granatstein and Morton have written far more thought provoking works on Canada and war than *A Nation Forged in Fire*. Professor Granatstein's *Broken Promises: A History of Conscription in Canada* should be required reading in a country that suffers from split-brain memory – neither English nor French Canadians have a complete and accurate memory of the war.

This book is the Canadian "book of lists" about the Second World War. It begins to make sense, after a fashion, when you remember that this is an anniversary book, rather like a high school yearbook for the alumni of 1939–1945 – there are lots of pictures and snappy quotes.

The first lists are about the woeful inadequacy of the armed forces, and since this is early in the book, it takes three or four more before you recognize the pattern:

Before the war, Canadian shipbuilding had been insignificant, but between 1939 and 1945, 391 cargo vessels, 487 escorts and minesweepers, and 3,600 specialized craft came down the ways. The story was the same for military vehicles: at the peak of production in 1944, 4,000 trucks and 450 armoured vehicles a week were built. In the aircraft industry....

Employment statistics for women, records of what women collected in salvage campaigns, and inventories of food parcels follow, as well as long lists of casualties. But somehow a sense

of horror at all the destruction and death is lacking. The language used to describe battles is reminiscent of the Boy's Own Annual: "the assault at Puy saw the Royal Regiment and the Black Watch destroyed by withering fire ..." "there was much heroism at the charnel-house of Dieppe." And Canadian corvettes "eventually packed a wallop" (a very small one).

In spite of the authors' awareness that the country went to war because of "ties of sentiment, blood and culture" on the part of English Canadians – and despite a great deal of attention to the issue of conscription – this is essentially another book written about English Canada's war. Of course French Canadians play a role, but the voice is from Toronto, fifty years ago.

This book is strongest as a visual reminder of the transmuting effects of war. A picture really is worth a thousand words, particularly Alex Colville's drawing of bodies in a concentration camp, Miller Brittain's "Night Target, Germany" and Lawren P. Harris's paintings of Ortona. The large number of photographs and paintings give this book its emotional depth, but they cannot make up for the sketchy treatment of a number of subjects – from the Enigma codes to the treatment of the Hong Kong prisoners of war. This is a book for the initiated and for the war buffs; for the uninitiated there is both too much and too little. – *Tina Viljoen*

Ms. Viljoen is the co-author with Gwynne Dyer of a book forthcoming from McClelland and Stewart, The Defence of Canada: In the Arms of the Empire.

Cold Water Politics: The Maritime Strategy and Geo- politics of the Northern Front Ola Tunander

London: Sage, 1989,
194 pp., £22.50 cloth

■ This is a difficult book, not suitable for the general reader, but