



Canadians Under Fire: Infantry Effectiveness in the Second World War

Robert Engen

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Infantrymen have been the sledgehammer of land warfare throughout the twentieth century, but precisely how they fought at the tactical level has been difficult to determine. American historian S.L.A. Marshall, for instance, famously claimed that most Allied soldiers would not fight at all, even when their lives were at stake. In "Canadians Under Fire", Robert Engen explores the dynamics of what combat looked like to Canada's infantrymen during the Second World War. Analyzing unexamined battle experience questionnaires from over 150 Canadian infantry officers, Engen argues for a reassessment of the tactical behaviour of Canadian soldiers in the Second World War. The evidence also shows that Marshall's theory of non-participation in combat by Allied forces is demonstrably false: Canadian soldiers took a continued and aggressive part in the fighting. "Canadians Under Fire" forces a reappraisal of previous ideas about the behaviour of men in combat and offers new insight into how Canadians responded at the battlefield.



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