

4-30-2012

The Canadian War Museum and Bomber Command: My Perspective

David J. Bercuson
University of Calgary

Recommended Citation

Bercuson, David J. (2011) "The Canadian War Museum and Bomber Command: My Perspective," *Canadian Military History*: Vol. 20 : Iss. 3 , Article 6.
Available at: <http://scholars.wlu.ca/cmh/vol20/iss3/6>

This Feature is brought to you for free and open access by Scholars Commons @ Laurier. It has been accepted for inclusion in Canadian Military History by an authorized editor of Scholars Commons @ Laurier. For more information, please contact scholarscommons@wlu.ca.

The Canadian War Museum and Bomber Command

My Perspective

David J. Bercuson

Four years ago I became embroiled in the controversy arising from the Canadian War Museum's exhibit of the Allied bomber war, also called the "Combined Bomber Offensive" or CBO. That controversy came to the public's attention in the fall of 2006 due to the objections of the portrayal of the bomber war in the museum by Canadian veterans of Bomber Command. The veterans were joined by, among others, former Canadian chief of the defence staff Paul Manson, who had also been commander of Canadian Forces Air Command and a fighter pilot with the Royal Canadian Air Force in Europe during the Cold War.¹ They made various claims that the exhibit had, deliberately or inadvertently, portrayed the bomber war as terror bombing and akin to a war crime. They made their case in the media and in front of a Senate committee.² Eventually they succeeded in having the words of the exhibit altered. At no time did I ever have any connection to any of those activities nor did I register any opinion about what they were saying. I had played a role in an earlier kerfuffle as an advisor to the CBC Ombudsman at the time of the "Valour and the Horror" series; I had no intention of getting involved in any such public controversy again.

I first saw the magnificent new Canadian War Museum a few months

Abstract: This article is based on David Bercuson's keynote address at the 22nd Military History Colloquium held at the University of Waterloo in May 2011. Bercuson discusses his role in the controversy over the panel text about the Combined Bomber Offensive at the new Canadian War Museum. Arguing that the original text was not wrong, but reflected older scholarship, he concludes by observing that no serious scholar, whether a single author or a museum staff, should be saved from the age-old processes of historical review, revision and re-writing to reflect more recent research when it is more accurate.

after it opened in 2005 when I was invited to sit on a panel organized by the Canadian Council of Chief Executives at the museum. I cannot remember the topic. I do remember that we panellists were given a guided tour of the museum and I distinctly remember being disturbed by the words of one panel of the bomber exhibit which declared: "The value and morality of the strategic bomber offensive against Germany remains bitterly contested. Bomber Command's aim was to crush civilian morale and force Germany to surrender by destroying its cities and industrial installations. Although Bomber Command and American attacks left 600,000 Germans dead, and more than five million homeless, the raids resulted in only small

reductions in German war production until late in the war." The pictures on the panel to the immediate left of those words showed, from top to bottom, a heavily damaged factory complex, a heavily damaged German city with a destroyed bridge and finally pictures of burned German corpses lying in a street or square.

I had little argument with the statement of Bomber Command's aims. I was more than familiar with the history of Bomber Command and its commander, Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Harris, including his refusal to accede to the wishes the chief of the air staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Charles Portal, expressed so often in 1944, that Harris ease off his area attacks and focus on major strategic targets such as oil, transportation and the aircraft industry. I also knew that about one quarter of Bomber Command's targets were German war industry. I was also fully aware that the United States Strategic Bombing Survey (USSBS) and the British Bombing Survey Unit (BBSU) – and some historians of the air war – had concluded that bombing Germany had limited results through most of the war.³ Indeed, volume III of the official history of the RCAF, *The Crucible of War*, had arrived at the same conclusion⁴ though with little research and analysis of its own. But other historians and air power

theorists had concluded that bombing had indeed done much damage to the German war economy.⁵ My initial reaction was that Canadian War Museum historians had come down on the side represented by the USSBS and the BBSU. But so what? History is replete with conflicts of interpretation.

I visited the museum twice more in the fall of 2006 and amidst the rising public controversy I e-mailed a friend at the war museum. I said this: "I am not getting into this [controversy] at all because at the end of the day I strongly defend the Museum staff's duty to depict events as they see them. But my personal view is this: to say flat out that German war production was not affected until the end of the war completely ignores the great slack in the German war economy that existed in 1939/40. The real question is, how much more would the Germans have produced if there had been no bombing? I'll leave it at that. If asked I will say this. If not, I will stay out. So far no one has asked."⁶

**An Enduring Controversy
(original panel text):**

The value and morality of the strategic bomber offensive against Germany remains bitterly contested. Bomber Command's aim was to crush civilian morale and force Germany to surrender by destroying its cities and industrial installations. Although Bomber Command and American attacks left 600,000 Germans dead, and more than five million homeless, the raids resulted in only small reductions in German war production until late in the war.

Now, the question I posed in that e-mail is a counterfactual question. But then much of the controversy over the actual effect of the Combined Bomber Offensive is built on counterfactual discourse. To an extent, the amount of damage done to Germany by the bombing can be measured, and has been, several times over. So we can roughly estimate what happened even though some controversy remains as to when the bombing began to have a real and incontrovertible impact. But

we cannot know what else might have happened if, say, Harris had gone along with Portal and shifted completely to industrial targets. Thus the conclusions reached by both the USSBS and the BBSU, as well as a number of historical observers – most recently Randall Hansen – that different outcomes might have occurred if this or that had changed in the course of the CBO is entirely counterfactual. I believe that the very business of history often takes us very close to counterfactual argumentation, but I also believe that once our opinions begin to be based on what we think *might have been* as opposed to what *was*, we are on very dangerous ground.

There is a point in "Godfather III" where an aging Don Michael Corleone declares: "Just when I thought I was out... they pull me back in." That's how I got involved. In mid-December Dr. Victor Rabinovitch, president and CEO of the Canadian Museum of Civilization, called me to ask if I would join a number of other historians in evaluating the bomber

The German city of Cologne, smashed by Allied bombing, as it appeared in 1945 .



war display. I was very reluctant to get involved and I told him about the note I had already written to my friend at the museum. He did not change his mind. I then told him that I wanted to consult with another colleague of mine before giving him my answer. I talked to Jack Granatstein. He urged me to accept. I did. Then I informed my friend at the museum on 11 January 2007. I wrote: "I stressed to Mr. R. my absolute confidence in you and the rest of the staff. The professionalism, etc. Your credentials. I told him I'd write nothing that I would not say to you over a scotch."⁷

I went to look at the exhibit for a fourth time on the last day of January 2007. This time I read every word of every panel and took copious photographs. Then I wrote up my report. It is on the record, and I will not read it here in its entirety. None of the complaints made by the veterans changed my own view of the panel. I basically ignored the public debate. I believed then and I believe now that every Canadian has a right to his or her own opinion on just about anything and veterans no less. But I am also mindful of the words of the late US Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan that "everyone is entitled to his own opinion, but not to his own facts," and I didn't think that the public debate was producing any new facts or adding new information to the historical record. So I based my report on my reading of several dozen books and many articles that had appeared on the bomber war up to that point including those that had concluded that the bomber war was largely a waste. This is how I started my report:

The Combined Bomber Offensive was of inestimable value in the Allied victory over the Axis in the Second World;

- *An enormous amount of resources was devoted to the CBO in both men and materiel and I seriously doubt whether or not any "reliable"*

**The Bombing Campaign
(revised panel text):**

The strategic bombing campaign against Germany, an important part of the Allied effort that achieved victory, remains a source of controversy today. Strategic bombing enjoyed wide public and political support as a symbol of Allied resolve and a response to German aggression. In its first years, the air offensive achieved few of its objectives and suffered heavy losses. Advances in technology and tactics, combined with Allied successes on other fronts, led to improved results. By war's end, Allied bombers had razed portions of every major city in Germany and damaged many other targets, including oil facilities and transportation networks. The attacks blunted Germany's economic and military potential, and drew scarce resources into air defence, damage repair, and the protection of critical industries. Allied aircrew conducted this gruelling offensive with great courage against heavy odds. It required vast material and industrial efforts and claimed over 80,000 Allied lives, including more than 10,000 Canadians. While the campaign contributed greatly to enemy war weariness, German society did not collapse despite 600,000 dead and more than five million left homeless. Industrial output fell substantially, but not until late in the war. The effectiveness and the morality of bombing heavily-populated areas in war continue to be debated.

or "scientific" answer will ever be given as to whether or not those resources were "well" or efficiently spent as compared to other possible use of those resources;

- *Allied war leaders from President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill to the air chiefs sincerely and deeply believed that the CBO would contribute enormously to the winning of the war – Sir Arthur Harris seems to have believed that bombing alone might win it;*
- *Bombing alone did not win the war.*
- *The nature of the war – total war – frames this controversy;*
- *The Allied leaders of 1941/42 had little choice but to use an air war as*

one means of striking at Nazi power until sufficient ground forces were available to do so;

- *The smashing of German cities was a deliberate act. Enemy morale was most certainly a target of the CBO and although the outright killing of civilians is almost never referred to in wartime documents as an actual aim, other euphemisms are employed (such as "de-housing") so as to give a general picture that German cities, and everything in them that sustained the life, civilization, and culture of the enemy, and specifically his productive capacity, were legitimate targets of war;*
- *They most certainly were legitimate targets of war...;*
- *The utter devastation visited upon German cities, and German society, economy, infrastructure, way of life, etc, by the CBO was a major factor in both dispelling any "stab in the back" myth following the Allied victory and in convincing post-war German leaders to pursue economic integration with the rest of Europe as a means of ending intra-European conflict.*

I also said "I believe that, on the whole, the museum has provided a balanced presentation of Canada's role in the bomber war." I observed that a panel on the other side of the room had declared that "Attacks on industrial centres, military installations and cities devastated vast areas and killed hundreds of thousands. They also diverted German resources from other fronts and damaged essential elements of the German war effort." I pointed out that those words contradicted the words in the panel that was the centre of so much controversy.⁸ So here was the same museum and the same staff but with different words about the same set of events. That was puzzling.

As to the panel in question, I agreed entirely with the first sentence of the panel which said that both the

value and the morality of the CBO “remains bitterly contested.” I then suggested that the words “one of” be inserted into the second sentence of the panel statement so that it would read “one of Bomber Command’s aims was to crush civilian morale...” instead of “Bomber Command’s aim was to crush civilian morale.” I made that suggestion because although Harris declared from time to time that his aim was to destroy virtually every German city and kill as many civilians as he could, his aircraft did attack precision and industrial targets from Peenemünde to the dams raid to the Dortmund-Ems Canal to major oil and transportation targets and so on. To declare that Bomber Command’s sole aim was to crush German morale was simply wrong. This is not a matter of interpretation. It is a matter of fact.

I found two things troubling about the third sentence which began with the word “although,” as in “Although Bomber Command and American attacks...” I thought then and I think now that the word “although” added an editorial tone to the statement. It implies that the great loss of German life was inflicted for little positive return to the Allied war effort. I thought that was taking sides in the controversy by suggesting that the bombing was a waste of resources and took “innocent” civilian life to no real effect. The second problem with the sentence was that it ignored the whole issue about what impact bombing had on Germany’s mobilization of its war resources after 1942/1943.

Now admittedly, as I said earlier, I was raising a counter factual point. No one can ever know what might have happened to the mobilization of German war production after Albert Speer became minister of armaments and war production in early 1942 had the CBO been terminated at that point. Thus I admit that there were better arguments I could have made. My excuse is that I had neither the

time nor the space to summarize the literature as it existed in 2006. Had I had more time and space, I could have marshalled the massive evidence then in existence which showed that the sentence was historically faulty in two significant ways. First it says that the reductions in German war production were “small” and then it says that they only really had an impact until later in the war.

Let’s look at the first point. Recent scholarship – but scholarship available to the Museum staff by 2006 – shows that early conclusions arrived at by J.K. Galbraith and the USSBS, the BBSU, Max Hastings, *The Crucible of War*, and others about the ineffectiveness of the bombing were quite simply wrong. There is no time here to do a thorough literature review of some of those works but I will mention Richard Overy, *Why the Allies Won* (1995), Gian P. Gentile, *How Effective Is Strategic Bombing?* (2001), Alan J. Levine, *The Strategic Bombing of Germany, 1940-1945* (1992), Robin Neillands, *The Bomber War* (2001), Stephen L. McFarland, *America’s Pursuit of Precision Bombing, 1910-1945* (2004), Stephen Bodiansky, *Air Power* (2004) and last but not least, Adam Tooze, *The Wages of Destruction: The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy* (2006). All of these historians came to essentially the same conclusions: Allied bombing began the systematic destruction of the Luftwaffe by early 1944. Allied bombing destroyed the German synthetic oil industry by the fall of 1944. Allied bombing wreaked havoc with the German rail transportation system by mid-1944 and the canal system by the fall of 1944. German war industry was dead by the start of 1945. All from bombing.

Adam Tooze, whose primary sources were largely drawn from the Third Reich’s own statistics or from German wartime industry, discusses some of these impacts in minute detail. He shows how bombing literally cut the Ruhr off from the rest

of Germany, and warped the already overstretched German war economy to such an extent that virtually every kind of economic activity in Germany was dedicated to war production and everything else was stamped out by the Nazis. He shows that the impact of the bombing on fighter production, for example, was to force the Germans to keep on building more and more obsolete aircraft like the Bf 109. He concludes that “it was not territorial losses that paralyzed the German economy but the onset of a campaign of aerial bombardment, of completely unprecedented intensity.”⁹

Virtually all these authors wrote about both the RAF’s “area” bombing campaign and the USAAF “precision” campaign. It can be argued that it was really the US bombing that did most of that damage; Speer certainly declared that to be so.¹⁰ But in the last sentence of the Canadian War Museum panel, the words refer to “Bomber Command and American attacks” killing 600,000 Germans. It does not separate the two campaigns. It is a fair statement because the USAAF did engage in area bombing in Europe, although not nearly with the ferocity that Bomber Command did.¹¹

The later authors I mentioned above are no more the guardians of historical truth than the earlier ones, but there is, in my view, a clear trend that has emerged over the last 15 or so years in those whose work has been rooted in German sources. Namely, that the Combined Bomber Offensive was, as Overy claimed, a decisive factor in Allied victory. That point of view is completely ignored in the offending paragraph. I must say that even more recent scholarship such as Randall Wakelam’s *The Science of Bombing* (2009) and Robert S. Ehlers Jr., *Targeting the Third Reich* (2009) have added to the mountain of evidence that now exists. It is a fact, not interpretation, that the bomber war added greatly to Allied victory and that the bombing campaign



A Canadian Halifax awaits its next mission. In the foreground sits the cache of deadly bombs.

began to seriously erode Germany's capacity to re-arm itself at least as early as Operation Pointblank in February 1944 – a date that was certainly not "late in the war."

Now to the second point. There is an implication in using a phrase such as "late in the war" that it was essentially all over but the shouting. Or, we had pounded them enough by then, the war was as good as won, so it was time to let up, at least with area bombing. The argument is often made when referring to the bombing of Dresden in mid-February 1945. But what does "late in the war mean?" What did the war museum's staff mean when they used the words "late

in the war"? Could they have meant, say, 12 January 1945? That was the day the Red Army launched its last great offensive of the war. It is also a date by which Hitler's Ardennes offensive had been completely snuffed out at terrible cost to the *Wehrmacht* and the *Luftwaffe*, and the western Allies were entering the last phases of preparing for the Battle of the Rhineland that would begin on 8 February. The war in Europe had raged for roughly five years, four months and two weeks; it had about 115 days – eleven weeks – to run.

Well, what did happen after 12 January 1945? Someone has made the calculation that about 22,000

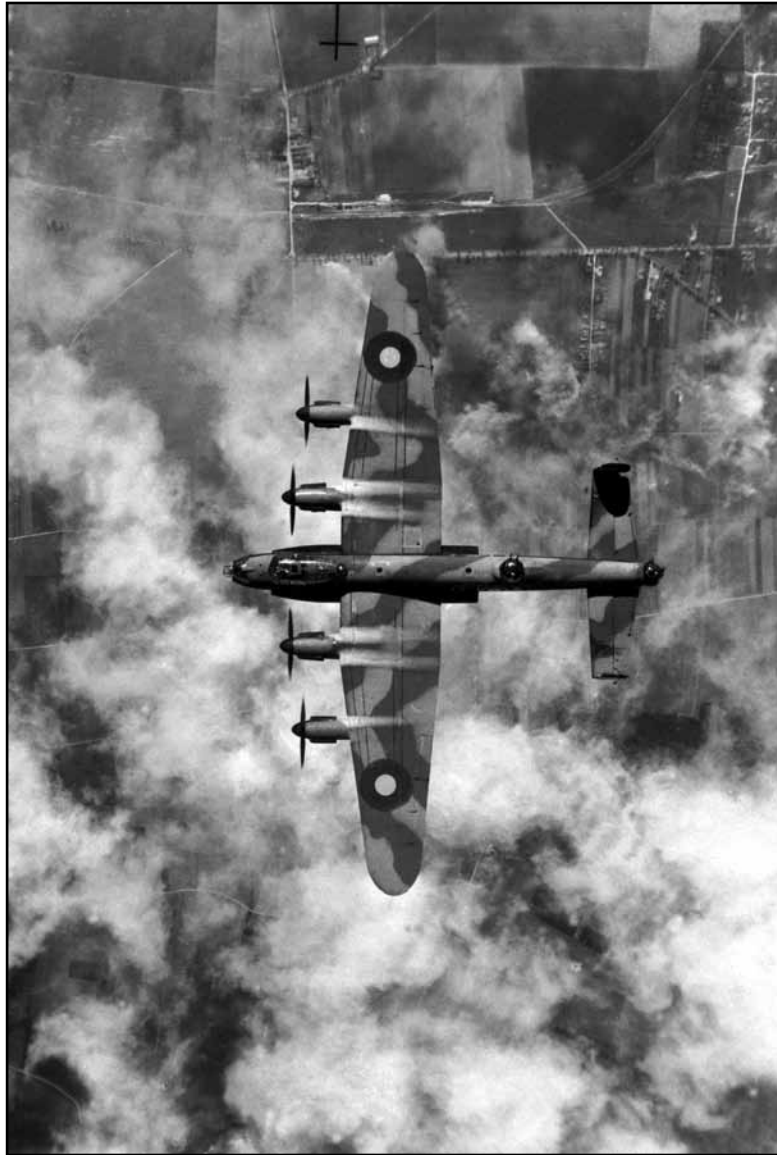
people – soldiers and combatants – were killed each day of the war. That is a very rough and perhaps unfair figure to use in an analysis such as this, but the point can be made that if 12 January 1945 was "late in the war," then about 2.5 million more people were yet to die in cities, in death and concentration camps, in underground rocket manufacturing bunkers and, of course on the fighting fronts, at sea and in the air. Hitler had 11 weeks yet to shoot himself in his bunker in Berlin. So even by 12 January 1945 there was a huge chunk of the war remaining and although German chances of victory were nil by then, a lot more people were killed

before the end came because Hitler would not surrender, and the high ranks of the Nazi Party – including Speer – stood with him and did all they could to keep the war going.

And what of Canada's soldiers? If 12 January is taken as "late in the war" – and thus of little real consequence – what are we to make of the approximately 5,300 Canadians who were killed or wounded in the Battle of the Rhineland alone. If the war was all over but the shouting on 12 January 1945, a lot of Canadians were yet to be killed or wounded. Thus to declare that Allied bombing had little effect until "late in the war" is virtually meaningless because the phrase "late in the war" is only true in the temporal sense if we accept 12 January 1945 as the point where "lateness" begins.

But the phrase "late in the war," like "late in life" or "late in the game" is not precise. Churchill became prime minister "late in life." The Blue Jays won their second World Series "late in the game." The phrase is descriptive in some ways but is close to useless if we seek precision. When a museum, or a historian, uses but three sentences to summarize a long-standing controversy, the words chosen should be selected with great care to convey as much clarity as possible.

These factors were behind the conclusions I arrived at: "that the exhibit as it now stands does not



CFJIC PL 144257

A Lancaster, with its bomb bay doors open, flies over Munich, Germany, 19 April 1945.

violate the Interpretive Development Guidelines of the Canadian War Museum as circulated to me. However, whether intended or not (and I do not believe that it was *the intent* of the CWM) it is possible for some visitors to conclude that the CBO exhibit has "taken sides" in the now long running controversy that pits the morality of the CBO against its utility due to some unfortunate wording and the juxtaposition of both text and photos...." I was referring here to the photo of burned German corpses that had been placed to the left of the panel in question.

I went on to say :

I believe that the attempt to achieve balance is, in fact, too balanced and that one statement in the exhibit, namely "Attacks on industrial centres, military installations and cities devastated vast areas and killed hundreds of thousands. They also diverted German resources from other fronts and damaged essential elements of the German war effort" – which in my view is correct – is in direct contradiction to the statement... "Although Bomber Command and American attacks left 600,000 Germans dead, and more than five million homeless, the raids resulted in only small reductions in German war production until late in the war." The contradiction should be resolved.... I think that is easily remedied by, say an *additional* photograph [of German aircraft grounded due

to lack of fuel] and a graph or chart [of the decline of German war production].... I think that although the text panel in question does present some current understanding of "some of the impacts of the bombing campaign," it could very easily present more of the actual dilemma faced by Allied leaders by presenting a greater emphasis on the damage done to the German war effort by the CBO. The CBO killed large numbers of German civilians. It was intended to do so whether or not air crews were let in on the secret. The killing of those civilians was an

inevitable outcome of the need to critically damage the German ability to wage war well in advance of the break-in to Germany on the ground. War is by its very nature a collective act and no one who is a part of the collectivity that is at war can expect to be saved harmless from it. The ultimate immorality would have been to not fight the Nazis with all the power at the command of the Allied leadership. In my view, this is a truism that is not put clearly enough in this exhibit.¹²

To summarize, I challenged the historical accuracy of the panel and suggested some minor changes in the text to make it right. I suggested adding a chart showing the decline in German war production as it was and a photo of German aircraft sitting idle due to the success of the bombing campaign against German fuel production. I did not draw conclusions based on the objections of the veterans and I did not disparage the professionalism nor the integrity of the CWM's historical staff. I thought they had got it wrong and that since the matter was now in the public realm, they ought to make the very slight modifications I suggested to get it historically accurate. Let me emphasize; in my reading of dozens of books and articles on the bomber war including the Speer memoirs and other related sources, there is simply no doubt that the bombing campaign made a contribution to Allied victory and to state that it did not "until late in the war" is just plain wrong.

My position four years ago and now is that when unwarranted changes to an exhibit are demanded by a part of the public for emotional or political reasons they ought to be strongly resisted. I do understand why many veterans were offended. But that was and is not sufficient reason to alter the conclusions that historians arrive at. On the other hand, all of us historians make mistakes. When those mistakes are

pointed out to us, we ought to revise our work. With great respect, I don't know why the collective historians of the CWM should live by a different set of rules than I do. And that is why I made the suggestions I did.

In the end my report and those of my three colleagues were submitted to Dr. Rabinovitch. Desmond Morton and Margaret MacMillan had urged that no changes be made in the exhibit, while Serge Bernier questioned whether the panel was even necessary. Dr. Rabinovitch summarized our findings in a 7 March 2007 letter to Claudette Roy, chair of the Canadian Museum of Civilization Corporation Board of Trustees. In that letter Dr. Rabinovitch summarized the process by which we had been chosen and what we had written. In light of the lack of unanimity among us, he wrote, he would have to "draw his own conclusions," namely "that the bomber command section, including the text panel in question, provides a balanced presentation and does take into account the best information known to historians today." Thus he would "ask the museum staff to consider how to draw attention to the range of literature and opinions available on this subject" so that "visitors will thus be encouraged to enquire further in order to draw their personal conclusions." There was no indication whatever in the letter that the words of the controversial panel were to be changed.¹³ On 11 March Dr. Rabinovitch e-mailed all of us, told us of his letter to Ms Roy, and made no mention of any decision to change the panel's wording.¹⁴ In fact I did not learn until October when I was contacted by a CBC reporter that a new text for the panel had been decided on. I thought the new wording more accurate but confusing and somewhat convoluted. Certainly it was too long and it meandered like a yazoo stream. It reminds me of the proverbial camel – a horse invented by a committee.

My role in the controversy ended then. But the controversy was not over. The Senate conducted hearings into the panel; I did not take part and I did not approve of the hearings. In the fall of 2008 Margaret MacMillan, Robert Bothwell, and Randall Hansen, who had just published *Fire and Fury: The Allied Bombing of Germany, 1942-1945* co-authored a *Queen's Quarterly* article entitled "Controversy, Commemoration, and Capitulation; The Canadian War Museum and Bomber Command." Several pages into the article the authors wrote "the other two historians [David Bercuson and Serge Bernier] admitted the fact of the controversy but found the exhibit tendentious and hurtful to the veterans."¹⁵ That was wrong. What I did say was that "whether intended or not (and I do not believe that it was the intent of the CWM) it is possible for some visitors to conclude that the CBO exhibit has 'taken sides' in the now long running controversy...". I also said "As to the photos, I believe that the photos, especially that of partially denuded, burned, etc., human remains has added to the sting of the words for some veterans." Those were the only times I used the word "veteran" in my report. The authors of the *Queen's Quarterly* article defended the panel's statement that "bombing had relatively small effects on German industrial production until late in the war." They did point out that some people disagreed with that conclusion, but the only challenger they mentioned was retired CDS Paul Manson. They did not mention Tooze, Gentile, Levine, or any other of the reputable scholars who took opposing views. Their main thrust was that the war museum had been attacked by the veterans, that the museum had caved in and that the precedent set was a very bad one. That may be so – I still have no idea why the panel was changed or how the new wording was arrived at – but

I never saw myself as being part of an attack on the war museum

Margaret MacMillan wrote of the controversy in her book, *The Uses and Abuses of History* (2008) repeating in a more condensed form the reasons laid out in the *Queen's Quarterly* article as to why she believed the exhibit ought not to have been changed. Randall Hansen's book *Fire and Fury* summarized the dispute in its preface but one of the strongest and most ironic themes of his book is just how truly effective American bombing became by mid-1944, especially in hitting oil targets and the aircraft industry. Hansen contrasts the US air campaign to that of Harris, who in Hansen's view, stuck to area bombing and to his intention to kill as many Germans as he could wherever they were no matter how much his boss Portal tried to convince him otherwise. The key chapter is entitled "Oil and baby Killing."¹⁶

One of the most cogent analyses of the controversy to appear was that of Professor David Dean, director of the Carleton Centre for Public History. In a March 2009 article for *Museum and Society* Dean pointed out that although the war museum's mandate is to be a museum and not a memorial – unlike the Australian War Memorial – the CWM is in reality "both a history museum and a palace of memory; indeed for some it is a secular sacred space." He points to the presence of the Royal Canadian Legion Hall of Honour, the model of the War memorial, Regeneration Hall and the memorial Hall "dominated by the grave of the Unknown Soldier, stone walls cut to resemble the thousands of tombstones marking graves of the Canadians fallen in Europe..." This is, he says, not only a museum, but a "sacred site, a site of memory, of contemplation."¹⁷ His point, I think, is that the very layout and construction of the building may

have led some to believe that the CWM's job was to honour without hesitation and to write no words or display no panels or artefacts that jarred the process of honour no matter what the museum's official mandate is.

But that is part of another debate. My reason for being here today is to set the record straight about how I became involved in the controversy, how I arrived at the conclusions I did, and what role I played in re-writing the panel in question – namely, none at all. The controversy about the morality of killing German (and Japanese) citizens will go on. It should go on. And more research is necessary from Axis public and private sources to determine the actual impact of the bombing. It is surely time to end the almost slavish reliance of early writers on the opaque findings of the USSBS and the BBSU. The evidence is still there and more and more scholars will find it. Indeed, in that part of his book about the US air war, even Randall Hansen found it. In a telling passage of his book describing a conversation before the December 1944 Battle of the Bulge between Speer and Albert Vögler, who was both a strong Nazi and an industrialist, Speer declares: "I think...that Hitler is playing his last card and knows it, too. Vögler flashed Speer an almost contemptuous look. Of course it's his last card, now that our production is collapsing right, left, and centre."¹⁸ No serious scholar, whether a single author or a museum staff, should be saved from the age-old processes of historical review, revision and re-writing to reflect more recent research when it is more accurate.

Notes

1. Paul Manson, "A Poor Display of Canada's Military History," *Globe and Mail* website, posted 09/01/07

2. Val Ross, "Museum, veterans continue battle," *Globe and Mail* website, posted 10/01/07
3. Max Hastings, *Bomber Command* (New York: Dial Press, 1979).
4. Brereton Greenhous, et al., *The Crucible of War: 1939-1945, The Official History of the Royal Canadian Air Force, Volume III* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), pp.865-867.
5. Williamson Murray, *Luftwaffe* (London: Nautical & Aviation Publishing Company of America, 1985).
6. Author to X, e-mail of 1 December 2006. In my possession.
7. *Ibid.*, 11 January 2007.
8. Taken from my report to Dr. Victor Rabinovitch as attached to Jourdain to the four historians, 18 April 2007. In my possession.
9. Adam Tooze, *The Wages of Destruction: The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy* (New York: Viking, 2006), p.648.
10. Randall Hansen, *Fire and Fury: The Allied Bombing of Germany, 1942-1945* (Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 2008) p.271
11. See Conrad C. Crane, *Bombs, Cities, & Civilians: American Airpower Strategy in World War II* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1993).
12. Taken from my report to Dr. Victor Rabinovitch as attached to Jourdain to the four historians, 18 April 2007. In my possession.
13. Rabinovitch to Roy, 5 March 2007. In my possession.
14. Rabinovitch to Bercuson et al, e-mail of 11 March 2007. In my possession.
15. Robert Bothwell, Randall Hansen, Margaret MacMillan, "Controversy, Commemoration, and Capitulation: The Canadian War Museum and Bomber Command," *Queen's Quarterly* 115, no.3 (Fall 2008), p.369.
16. Hansen, p.181.
17. David Dean, "Museums as conflict zones: the Canadian War Museum and Bomber Command" in *Museum and Society* 7, no.1 (March 2009), pp.10-11.
18. Hansen, p.223.

Since January 1997, David Bercuson has been the Director of the Centre for Military and Strategic Studies at the University of Calgary and is also the Director of Programs of the Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute, based in Calgary. He is a member of the Board of Governors of the Royal Military Academy. He has published on a wide range of topics specializing in modern Canadian politics, Canadian defence and foreign policy and Canadian military history. His most recent book is *The Fighting Canadians; Our Regimental History from New France to Afghanistan* (2009, paperback)