

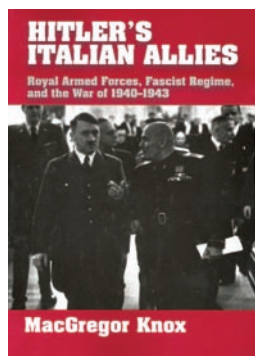
Indeed, the conclusion is the most thought-provoking chapter, in which the authors provide Canada with a report card on two significant northern issues: defence, and Canada's treatment of the North from a social, political, and economic perspective. The socio-political economic treatment receives an "F" because Canada fails to integrate the North into the national identity as anything more than a symbol; whereas, defence receives a "B-" for taking a proactive approach under the Harper government. However, the authors indicate that Canadian defence has a long way to go in terms of being operable in the Arctic.

Arctic Front provides a comprehensive and well-documented review of Canadian defence interests, capabilities, and requirements in the North. This book is recommended to the Canadian security and defence community, as well as anyone interested in past and present (and future) Arctic security issues.

HITLER'S ITALIAN ALLIES: ROYAL ARMED FORCES, FASCIST REGIME, AND THE WAR OF 1940-43

MACGREGOR, Knox, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, paperback, 207 pages, \$24.95, ISBN 978-0521747134

Major A.B. Godefroy, CD, PhD, plsc



Perhaps no other military force in recent history has suffered greater popular ridicule for its combat performance than the Royal Armed Forces of Italy during the Second World War. Beginning with its difficult campaign to annex Ethiopia in 1935-36, the Italian military suffered continual defeat at the hands of its adversaries in Africa, Greece, Albania, and Russia until its final capitulation in 1943 following the Allied invasion of Sicily and the Italian mainland. At first glance, it seemed almost incredulous that any military could plan so badly and fight so poorly. Dr. MacGregor Knox, however, explains how this denouement occurred in his book, *Hitler's Italian Allies: Royal Armed Forces, Fascist Regime, and the War of 1940-43*.

Despite its ultimate success in the First World War, Italy's military institutions stumbled during the interwar period for a number of reasons ranging from strategic incompetence to tactical indecisiveness. As Knox explains without sympathy or even empathy, the Italian Armed Forces suffered a tremendous degree of intellectual and innovative paralysis after the Great War, was plagued by intrigue and political infighting at its most senior levels, and ultimately failed to realize even the most basic doctrinal and tactical practices that may have given its combat forces a chance against Italy's much better prepared and equipped adversaries.

Using almost exclusively Italian and German primary sources, Knox paints a dismal picture from the Italian perspective of its own strategic, operational, and tactical ineptitude during war. There is little need for the author to further expand or explain Italy's failings, in fact, as the surviving documents and memoirs speak largely for themselves. Knox reveals high-level decisions made, for example, to retain biplanes in favour of monoplanes; to reject German offers to build Panzers in Italy; to flippantly accept that as much as 60 percent of its merchant shipping would be lost after declaring war, to purposely deny air escort for its naval convoys, to refuse rotation of its troops out of combat zones, and even to deny the delivery of mail to its soldiers, considering it a wasteful and unnecessary exercise.

Yet Knox takes these seemingly bizarre and incredulous decisions and places them within the greater context of Italy's politics in the years leading up to and during the Second World War. What the reader discovers is a monarchy and government in opposition, a society in political and social crisis, and after the war, a government and military feeling greatly held hostage to their Nazi 'allies'. It is this context that explains some, though not all, of the indecision of the Royal Armed Forces, and is what makes this book a worthy read for those interested in this period and theatre of war.