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**The Memoirs of Pierre Pouchot:
A Soldier's View
of a Doomed Campaign**

IN 1781, THERE APPEARED AT Yverdon in Switzerland a three-volume text entitled *Mémoires sur la dernière guerre de l'Amérique Septentrionale*.¹ Its author was Pierre Pouchot, a captain in the Béarn regiment of the French regular army, and the memoirs are largely concerned with his service in the North American campaign of the Seven Years' War against the British and Americans in the second half of the 1750s.² Pouchot served from mid-summer 1755 until his repatriation to France as a prisoner of war in the spring of 1761. He wrote the memoirs towards the end of the following decade, having been temporarily implicated in the *affaire du Canada*, the crisis of conscience through which French society passed after the loss of Canada and its attempt to identify and punish the culprits responsible for the defeat. Entirely exonerated in the course of the inquiries—although at one point he risked incarceration in the Bastille³—Pouchot, who was dependent on his army pay for his livelihood, volunteered for service during the troubles in Corsica and, at the age of 57, was killed there in a skirmish in 1769.⁴

After some preliminary remarks on Pouchot's text itself, on its composition and the likely reasons for its publication in the year it appeared, the first major purpose of this article is to draw from Pouchot's work certain aspects of the

narration likely to have captured the attention of the eighteenth-century public and to be of interest to the modern reader as well. A consideration of Pouchot's practice as a memoirist will then form the basis for reflection on the nature of military autobiography.

The first volume of Pouchot's memoirs is prefaced by substantial introductory material (I, iii-xli), most of it by an anonymous editor, or perhaps even the publisher, who also supplies copious notes to supplement Pouchot's narration and, occasionally, to correct errors of fact or perspective. The remainder of the first volume and the whole of the second are devoted to Pouchot's account of the campaign and his personal contribution to it. The third volume is a compendium of essays by Pouchot on the topography of the northeastern part of the continent, on the mountains in the area, on the falls at Niagara and on the customs and population of native peoples.

Little is known about the circumstances of either the composition or the publication of Pouchot's memoirs. They were certainly written in haste. His editor claims that Pouchot was composing them in the three months prior to his departure for Corsica, but the editor also states that Pouchot had time to do little more than arrange the material (I, xxv-xxvi). Pouchot recounts certain episodes in such detail that it is difficult to believe he relied on his memory alone to recall all the facts. Probably he had retained his field diaries and copies of his reports to superiors, together with notes he had made at various stages of the campaign, and used this material as a supplement to memory. His journal for the period from June - August 1757, during his first tour of duty at Niagara, has survived and has been published.⁵ Thus, it is more than likely that, when composing his memoirs before embarking for Corsica, he already had substantial portions of the text in draft form.

The reasons why Pouchot's memoirs appeared when they did must remain speculative for want of solid documentary evidence. It certainly seems strange that the work had to wait a dozen years before it was published. This wait coupled with the fact that the memoirs were privately printed in a tiny town in Switzerland—there is no publisher's name on the frontispiece—would seem to indicate that Pouchot's writings broached controversial matters. They undoubtedly contain an implicit indictment of many aspects of the French colonial administration in wartime. The reader also receives a strong sense of an army abandoned to its own devices without formal directives or substantive material support properly coordinated by the central government in France. More than twenty years after the events he recounted, Captain Pouchot's work might well have still appeared controversial. Such a view would explain the delay in publication. Alternatively, one might point to the special resonance in American history of the year 1781, the year in which Washington, assisted by Lafayette, forced the surrender at Yorktown of the British army under Cornwallis after the blockade of Chesapeake Bay by the French fleet commanded by Admiral Grasse. Eighteenth-century publishers were no less sensitive than their modern counterparts to the effect on book sales of events of the day. The topicality of the Yorktown campaign, reinforced by the sweet taste of revenge for the loss of Canada two decades earlier, may well explain why Pouchot's publisher, anticipating a welcome from the French public, chose to print the memoirs at that moment in time.

Captain Pouchot was an engineer officer, well versed in the writings of French military theorists in the tradition of Vauban, and he had had extensive experience of siege

warfare and military fortification in a number of campaigns in Europe before his arrival in North America in 1755. His talents were well suited to the military situation. Until the outbreak of war, the frontier situation was a relatively stable one. The French strategy was to command territory by means of a system of forts situated on or beyond the great waterways of the continent. (Paramount among these were Carillon, now Ticonderoga, on Lake Champlain, Frontenac, on the site of present-day Kingston, at the eastern end of Lake Ontario, Niagara at the western end of the same lake, Pontchartrain at Detroit and Duquesne which later became known as Pittsburgh.) The system of forts facilitated reconnaissance of the hinterland and harassment of the enemy by raiding parties equipped and briefed in the forts. The forts also acted as listening posts, a means of gathering intelligence, especially through contacts with the Indians who tended to settle around the forts and with others who travelled to engage in trade there. It was clearly essential for the French to keep these strategically sited forts, together with the outposts they serviced, in a good state of repair and siege readiness. Wherever Pouchot served, he took over responsibility for this essential work.

One of the forts whose reconstruction Pouchot supervised was Fort Niagara, which controlled the western end of Lake Ontario and all the hinterland. Pouchot had first been placed in command of the fort in the fall of 1756 and had involved the garrison actively in making the position ready for a siege. Almost exactly a year later, he was relieved of this command in favor of a Canadian officer more interested in making money from trade than in the kind of professional soldiering necessary to resist the military pressure increasingly being exerted by the British and American forces. After nearly two years of further service elsewhere, Pouchot's second command of the position occurred in the spring of

1759. Hearing of Indian unrest west of Niagara on the Ohio, the Governor of New France, Vaudreuil, decided to reappoint Pouchot to the key command. Pouchot was reluctant to go, knowing how desperate was the supply situation in that region. On taking leave of his commander-in-chief, General Montcalm, Pouchot remarked: "It appears that we shall see one another next in England" (II, 3-4). The prophecy was not fulfilled, of course, since Montcalm was killed a few months later at the battle for Quebec. Pouchot left Montreal on 27 March 1759 and arrived at Niagara on 30 April. He immediately set about strengthening the fort's defenses, which had been neglected during his absence. It was to be an irony of his career that, having done more than anyone to ensure the viability of the position as a defensible fortress, Pouchot was in command of Fort Niagara when, on 26 July 1759, the garrison, hopelessly outnumbered and very short of ammunition for its artillery, was forced to surrender. Pouchot's detailed account of the siege—over 80 pages of his text (II, 39-123)—remains an indispensable historical source for understanding the events that occurred.⁶ It should be noted that Pouchot everywhere stresses the impossibility of the position in which his garrison found itself, the valor of his troops' exploits, the ability of his officers and, by implication throughout, his own energy and decisiveness as a commander faced with overwhelming odds. In short, the surrender of the fort is placed into a context in which no blame could attach to the defenders. The detail of the narrative is intended as a plea before posterity, a defense against potential criticism because the fort was lost.

Although commissioned in the army, Pouchot understood perfectly well the imperative need for the French to control the St. Lawrence and the rivers and lakes that are its tributaries: mastery of the land depended absolutely upon domination of the water, as a glance at a map of the

northeastern sector of the continent will suffice to indicate. In the first instance, though, it was a question of ensuring the safe delivery of essential supplies across the Atlantic from France. As the British navy progressively established control over the Atlantic sea routes, supply and resupply became more and more problematic. By 1759, there was a crisis. Discussing the supply situation at the beginning of his second volume, Pouchot spoke of "the little that escaped the English in the crossing from France to Canada" (II, 1-2). New France may have been self-sufficient in most staple needs, but such self-sufficiency did not extend to modern military equipment. The system of forts and outposts could not last indefinitely in the dearth of essential armaments. However, Pouchot believed that New France could have held out for some considerable time inside its moat as long as its commercial shipping had been able to distribute the supplies that were available. That shipping required the protection of the warships France then possessed on Lake Champlain and Lake Ontario; their principal duty was to patrol the inshore waters for signs of the enemy, since armies on the North American continent at that period were very largely waterborne. Hence Pouchot, en route to Niagara in 1759, was extremely anxious to press ahead with the completion and commissioning of two warships then in the final stages of building. He noted how, in April of that year, he had doubled the workforce in order to get the ships, the *Iroquoise* and the *Outaouaise*, commissioned in advance of the imminent campaign (II, 5). The ships were indeed useful to Pouchot, but not so much as they might have been. The weather played a rôle: the *Outaouaise* lost its mainmast and bowsprit in a violent summer squall on Lake Ontario and had to put into port for repairs. Human error, too, made coordination of the different arms more difficult, as is illustrated by a passage which Pouchot, by now in command at Niagara,

devoted to serious dereliction of duty on the part of the captain of the *Iroquoise*, La Force:

On July 6 the *Iroquoise* entered the river at four in the afternoon. M. Pouchot learned from this corvette that there were no English at Oswego. If it had patrolled during its voyage and moved in close to the south shore of the lake, it would certainly have detected the enemy, who were advancing inshore with their barges. If it had seen them, it was sufficiently well gunned, with its ten 12-pounder cannons, to stop the enemy's advance or even to destroy them. The English would have been hard put to emerge unscathed, whether they continued their advance or turned back. This was a misfortune, since these ships were armed for no other purpose. The squall that one of them experienced was a contributory factor also. While one ship was journeying up and down the lake, the other was supposed to be on patrol. (II, 40-41)

Clearly the tactics were right: the guns of the *Iroquoise* could have annihilated the British army, virtually unprotected and highly vulnerable in its lightly-armed barges. But good tactics are only as good as the men under orders to execute them properly. However objective and urbane the tone of the above report may sound, Pouchot must have fumed when he realized what a wonderful opportunity had been missed to slow down the British advance or even to inflict such damage that it could not proceed.⁷ Quite obviously, Pouchot understood the necessity of coordinating land-based and waterborne forces. As a footnote to this section, it may be remarked that the *Outaouaise* was later captured by the British and used against the French in the battle for Fort Lévis, near present-day Prescott (Ontario), in the spring

and summer of 1760.⁸ Pouchot was in command of this fort too when the garrison was forced to surrender in August of that year. He supplies a further sustained description of its defense (II, 173-285).

The problems of military coordination were exacerbated by jealousy and rivalry between Canadians and French, especially at the officer level, where the acquisition of a command provided golden opportunities to make a fortune through trade. As already noted, Pouchot, having completed the defenses of Fort Niagara in September 1757, was immediately relieved of his command. The reasons he gives are revealing:

Since this fort was a very considerable one, because of its position and the large number of Indians who had dealings there and came from all parts to trade and form war parties, it was soon coveted by all the officers of the colony. Moreover, they were extremely jealous that a Frenchman was commander at a posting where they thought they might be able to do good business. (I, 113-114)

As is almost inevitable in an uncontrolled wartime economy, it was a period of scarcity and, consequently, inflation. At various stages of his narration, Pouchot supplies price lists of basic foodstuffs and commodities.⁹ These lists illustrate that commercial opportunists seized the chance to indulge in profiteering and that what would now be called a black market developed and flourished. Peculation, fraud, theft and diversion of the King's equipment to private ends are all revealed as rife in Pouchot's savage indictment of the venality and corruption that characterized military personnel and civilian suppliers alike. After the capture of Oswego in August 1756,

Pouchot observes sardonically: "All the provisions were immediately distributed to the Canadian officers and the officials. They only left for the King's use things that were difficult to carry away" (I, 78). Captured supplies thus disappeared at once into the private market. It is a constant theme in Pouchot's writings that the colonials placed their private interests well before service to the King. In his account, the principal victims of inflation and profiteering were always the officers and men of the regular army. That is why Pouchot was able to contemplate his first tour of duty as commander at Niagara with some satisfaction. As he notes: "... during M. Pouchot's stay at Niagara, no-one made the kind of fortune so fashionable at that time, a fact which greatly displeased the Canadians under his command" (I, 118). Such probity was only too rare, however, and Pouchot wished his actions to stand in contrast with his condemnation of the greed of merchants and the non-military activities of Canadians holding the King's commission. As in his remarks on strategy, Pouchot seeks to vindicate the regular army which fought a campaign against considerable military odds and found those odds constantly being lengthened by the activities of those whose commitment to personal gain exceeded by far their interest in military victory. Pouchot also showed his attachment to a code of military honor that lay in sharp contrast with the far less exalted ideals of the Canadians, whether military or civilian. In short, he reveals two quite different cultures in conflict on the same side. He presents almost a paradigm of the manner in which a professional army at war inevitably becomes distanced from conscripts and non-combatants alike.

The Indians, too, created special problems for the eighteenth-century military mind. Like most officers fighting in the North American campaign, Pouchot realized perfectly well the necessity of recruiting Indians to the

French side, or at the very least the necessity of ensuring their neutrality. During his command at Niagara, Pouchot was proud of his ability to enlist Indian support, indeed to enjoy their friendship. The title they conferred upon him, *Sategariouaen*—“the center of good dealings”—illustrates the bond he was able to establish with them. Since he on several occasions provides verbatim accounts of the parleys he had with them, Pouchot’s text remains a useful source for the manner in which the Indian nations conducted their diplomatic dealings with Europeans in the eighteenth century. Moreover, the discourse of Indians contributed to renewed conceptions of rhetoric in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The following message sent by the Seneca tribe to the Hurons and the Ottawas and reported by Pouchot illustrates the spare but metaphorical language that is a far cry indeed from the measured and sober oral style of most educated Europeans of the eighteenth century:

My brothers and my cousins, we consider ourselves dead. The English and the French cover our mats with blood. They are so large that we are crushed. Consider us as dead men. But the smoke from our bones spreads over you and over all the nations of America and you in your turn will die. We invite you to grasp each other by the hand in order to defend your mats and your lives. But do not rely on us, for we are dead. (II, 10-11)

It should be recalled that the late 1760s witnessed the beginnings of the cult of Ossian. Macpherson’s “discovery” and “translation” of the Gaelic bard profoundly influenced the late eighteenth-century sensibility throughout Europe and led to a fascination with the literary artifacts of *all* remote and primitive cultures. The language of Pouchot’s

Indians must have struck a chord in the minds of many of his readers.¹⁰

In the third volume of the memoirs, Pouchot satisfied the craving¹¹ of the eighteenth-century public for knowledge about the lifestyle of the native people by devoting 150 pages to a description of their customs (III, 227-365). But there are scores of references in the remainder of the text to Indians, simply because they participated on both sides in all the campaigns Pouchot describes. Moreover, the French military had noted over decades of contact and sometimes conflict, how effective and well-adapted to the environment the Indian style of warfare was, consisting as it did of raiding parties seeking to make unexpected lightning strikes on limited targets.

In the third volume of the memoirs, Pouchot describes a typical Indian assault. Having noted how extraordinarily skillful the Indians were at tracking,¹² Pouchot continues:

The party which picks up the trail first is almost certain to beat the others. They will track them for several days until they have caught them in a position which gives them the advantage, as for example in a hut where the enemy has spread out to sleep or in a stretch of country where they have become separated from one another. They hide near the place where they have decided to strike. Each man has his position decided by the war chief and lies low until the latter gives the signal, whooping by striking his hand against his mouth. The cry is taken up by all the assailants who have already drawn a bead on their targets. At the very instant of enemy surprise, they fire and rarely fail to shoot their man down. They immediately rush forward, axe in hand, throw

themselves on their adversary and do not desist
until he is finished off. (III, 345-346)

Pouchot clearly understood how effective such an attack might be in view of the nature of the terrain and the general military conditions. These tactics were adopted by the European troops themselves as a matter of survival and they proved extremely successful. As the campaign progressed, however, the French were increasingly outnumbered and outgunned. The British commander-in-chief, General Amherst, found that he could conduct his campaign at the rather measured pace of eighteenth-century warfare, which permitted him to execute the punctilious staff work that characterized his generalship. In the later stages of the war the French lost all the set-piece battles, in particular the sieges of their forts. Nonetheless, the small-scale tactical raids they continued to mount inflicted heavy casualties on the British and American forces. The term *guerilla*, a diminutive of the Spanish word for war, is a creation of the early nineteenth century and refers to the tactics employed by the Spanish and Portuguese in the Peninsular War against Napoleon. There is plenty of evidence to show that the style of warfare in question was being elaborated in North America through lessons learned from the Indians as the colonial régimes established themselves on the continent. Students of the Second World War will recall that active groups of resistance in European countries occupied by the Germans were called *partisans*. Significantly, Pouchot used the word *partisan* to mean something like "one who participates in a raiding party." This mode of warfare has proven ever since to be a successful military model for groups of underarmed, outnumbered but determined irregulars.

When the Indians were recruited to fight in the more formal context of eighteenth-century warfare on the North

American continent, they fought bravely on both sides, though some commentators have noted how difficult it was to coordinate different Indian nations under the same command and that the warriors tended to break ranks in the face of sustained bombardment from artillery.¹³ Moreover, the Indians could not be relied upon and even less could they be made subject to military discipline when not engaged in action. They were, however, incomparable scouts and played an essential rôle in the reconnaissance of both sides; there is considerable evidence in Pouchot to illustrate how much he depended upon them for intelligence. He also shows, though, that their penchant for brandy and lack of military discipline made them a liability on occasions.

Any eighteenth-century writer with Pouchot's special experience of North America would have been sufficiently conscious of contemporary taste to want to include in his text as much material about the Indians as possible. The European public had been fascinated since the very beginning of the Age of Discovery by the modes of being of peoples in every sense remote from themselves. The plethora of travel writing in many languages attests to the impact knowledge about strange and exotic cultures made on the European consciousness. Pouchot's readers must have been impressed by the manner in which the Indians seemed able to cooperate in coping with a sometimes harsh environment. His readers may also have been titillated by Pouchot's accounts of the Indians' sexual freedom and may have experienced a *frisson* of horrified delight at the cruel manner in which they treated their enemies.¹⁴ There exist no clues in the text as to the reader Pouchot had in mind when composing his memoirs. It must not be forgotten, though, that while Pouchot's text evinces an attempt at impartial reporting characteristic of the military mind, the fact that he was an army officer can never be discounted

by the reader. There are, for example, echoes throughout the memoirs of a topic that would have interested every eighteenth-century army officer: how should troops be clothed and equipped, what means of transport were required, in short what were the military logistics, of mounting a major offensive in winter? In the topographical sections of his work, Pouchot constantly assesses positions for their defensibility, determines the best place for siting artillery, matches geographical with tactical and strategic considerations. His training as an engineer officer obtrudes at every point of his narrative. Pouchot's assumption seems to have been—it should be recalled that he was writing in the late 1760s, less than a decade after the surrender of Quebec—that the French would return in an attempt to reconquer New France. Not surprisingly, he considered the Indians a crucial factor in any subsequent military enterprise, as they had been in the North American campaign of the Seven Years War.¹⁵ While Pouchot fed his general readers' appetite for picturesque and exotic details about the Indians, much of his discourse about them concerns their military potential and the best manner to deploy them in the context of war on the North American continent.

Just over halfway through volume two of his memoirs, Pouchot embarks upon a description of the operations leading to the surrender of Fort Lévis to General Amherst. Pouchot observes that the events in question had not been recounted by anyone and that he therefore intended to enter into great detail in the narration. At this point, the editor intervenes in a note with the following remark: "This section could have been shorter, but the pleasure of speaking of events in which one has participated oneself always induces the authors of historical memoirs to get

carried away" (II, 173). This editorial comment again raises the whole question of the nature and purpose of memoirs.

When Pouchot was writing, the word *autobiography* did not exist—it was a coinage of the early nineteenth century modelled on the neologism *biography*, which dates from the 1740s. The French equivalents were based on the English words. In the period prior to around 1800, autobiographical writings were generally called *memoirs* or, occasionally, *confessions*. The genre had no fixed form and was associated in the minds of many eighteenth-century readers with the first-person novel of the period, a genre itself in the process of evolution.¹⁶ In order to satisfy the artistic criteria of the time, which required authenticity of fictional writings, eighteenth-century novels were often presented as though they were autobiography. It was only during the late Enlightenment that literary theorists began to appreciate the need to treat autobiography as a *literary* genre and to distinguish it from prose fiction. One of the first literary theorists to take the genre seriously was the French writer, Jean-François Marmontel, in his substantial article "Mémoires", which first appeared in 1786 in the *Encyclopédie méthodique*. Writing in the virtual absence of any sustained reflection to that point in time on the nature and form of autobiographical texts, Marmontel characterized as follows the kind of person likely to write an interesting and durable autobiography: "Only outstanding and unusual personality traits, situations and adventures of striking singularity or morality can justify the effort of composing a serious account of what one has done or what one has been."¹⁷ Autobiography thus belonged as a right to those who considered their personality to be unusual or to those who had witnessed or participated in extraordinary historical events. Clearly, Pierre Pouchot qualified on the second of those two counts.

In the twentieth century, two French scholars, Philippe Lejeune and Georges May, have published some of the most thoughtful writing on the autobiographical genre that has yet appeared.¹⁸ In his books, Lejeune consistently argues against the normative tendency of modern autobiographical criticism, preferring to envisage the genre as one in a permanent state of evolution over the past two hundred years and thus identifiable by no fixed formal characteristics. Both Lejeune and May have illustrated the manner in which autobiographers recreate reality and their relationship to it in order to give themselves a central rôle in events to which they may have been no more than peripheral. Rearrangement of fact and perspective, whether deliberate or unconscious, seems to be endemic to the genre. Moreover, no discourse is, or can be, entirely impartial; it is always sustained by a set of assumptions, a value system, that will obtrude to a greater or lesser extent according to the depth of feeling the autobiographer experienced in the presence of a given event. And the reader of autobiography should always recall that, while a text may transcend its historicity, it can never entirely escape it.

On the other hand, soldiers are trained to provide objective reports, since subjective reporting, i.e., seeing what one wants to see, can have disastrous consequences in a military situation. In his memoirs, Pouchot attempted to give an impartial account of his participation in the North American campaign of the Seven Years' War; one sign of his desire to achieve impartiality is his use of third-person narration, rather like Julius Caesar in *De Bello Gallico*.¹⁹ Pouchot also took pains to insert individual operations into the overall strategic context of the war. Nonetheless, he was not writing a history of the war but memoirs about it, a distinction which his editor certainly failed to appreciate and which no doubt accounts for his editorial intervention at the moment when Pouchot was about to undertake his

detailed description of the siege of Fort Lévis. Pouchot knew best the actions in which he himself had participated. Inevitably, he devoted more space to his own experiences as participant and eyewitness. Pouchot's narration of those experiences constitutes the best written and most gripping pages of his work.

The Roman historian Livy implied that victory in war justified a nation in imposing its version of historical events upon posterity.²⁰ According to this view, the pen is not so much mightier than the sword as its very powerful reinforcement. Such an approach raises the question: what discourse is appropriate to the vanquished? A reading of Pouchot's memoirs may supply part of the answer, since he was confronted with the problem of writing from the perspective of a soldier who had occupied commands in which surrender had been inevitable and, in addition, of one who had fought on the losing side.

Through detailed accounts of the siege of the two forts he had commanded, Niagara and Lévis, Pouchot sought to demonstrate that, in each case, he had no choice but to surrender and that capitulation had only occurred after a brave and skillful defense when stocks of munitions were low, his troops were exhausted, and his subordinate officers all advised giving up the struggle. The detailed accounts also enabled Pouchot to bring into prominence his own energetic conduct of the defense, his own able performance as a commander facing hopeless odds. It is a proud and brave soldier's *apologia pro sua vita*. The relative impartiality of the discourse and the third-person narration allow readers to draw the appropriate conclusion themselves, however. Nonetheless, the autobiographical self manipulates reality, without betraying or falsifying the facts of any given situation, in order to show Captain Pouchot playing the leading, and heroic, rôle.

At the end of his second volume, Pouchot notes that the French colony in North America was “very feeble and often on the point of perishing from starvation as a result of the lack of help it received from France” (II, 292). Pouchot was a loyal soldier, devoted to his King and to the good of the service. Nonetheless, at the end of any war, the principal participants tend to stake out their positions and to allocate praise or blame. One of the major purposes of military memoirs is vindication, both of the individual writer’s contribution to events and of the peer group to which he belonged. Pouchot was an officer of the French regular army *en mission* in New France. He was expected to fight alongside the colonial regulars and two groups of seasonal conscripts, the Indians and recruits levied from among the young French-Canadian population. The problems of coordination and training presented by such troops require little comment. Moreover, the army was overextended, defending a vast frontier running from east of Quebec City, through Ticonderoga on Lake Champlain and Niagara on Lake Ontario to Pittsburgh in the west. The problems of supply and the difficulty of coordinating land-based and waterborne forces are obvious. These factors emerge clearly from Pouchot’s narration as does his condemnation of the greed of civilians and the venality of Canadian officers, men who placed their private secular interests over the good of King and country.

Pouchot also blames the central government for its unwillingness to deploy sufficient resources in an all-out effort to win the war. Throughout, he sought to vindicate not only his own rôle in events, but also that of the regular army, which respected its mandate and carried out to the best of its ability the almost impossible task assigned to it. While aiming at a plain, unvarnished narration of events, Pouchot cannot avoid the allocation of blame, which, whether implicit or explicit, must surely characterize

particularly military memoirs written from the perspective of the losing side. It is an "if only" discourse, a speculation on the outcome had the prevailing conditions been quite different. As a result, the reader senses in Pouchot's text the bitterness of a soldier lamenting the loss of a war that, with material support and a greater effort of will on the part of the central government and the population of New France, he felt might have been won.

After the capitulation of Fort Lévis and the subsequent surrender of Montreal, Pouchot left New York as a prisoner of war on an English ship, arriving at Le Havre on 8 March 1761. He returned to a France embarrassed by the débâcle in North America and anxious to identify scapegoats to salve the guilt of national disgrace. His conscience clear, his reputation intact as a result of the inquiries, Pouchot continued to exercise his profession of arms in Corsica, where he met his death at the hands of an enemy whose tactics so closely resembled those of the Indians he had both admired and feared during his service in the North American campaign. Today, near the site of Fort Lévis, the siege that reached its culmination in August 1760 is commemorated by a plaque which notes Captain Pouchot's rôle as commander of the French garrison. The memoirs remain his best and most enduring monument, however. This writing recreates, often with considerable power, a small part of the world we have lost. Pouchot's memoirs are still capable of transporting the reader into the historically crucial actions fought on the North American continent in the second half of the 1750s. □

Notes

1. *Mémoires sur la dernière guerre de l'Amérique Septentrionale, entre la France et l'Angleterre ...* Par M. Pouchot ... (Yverdon, 1781), 3 vols. The memoirs have been translated once into English as *Memoir upon the late War in North America ...* Translated [from the French] and edited by F.B. Hough ... (Roxbury, Mass., 1866). For reasons now unknown, Hough believed that Pouchot's first name was François. The author of this article, together with Brian Leigh Dunnigan, the Executive Director of Old Fort Niagara, is preparing a new translation and an edition of the work. All quotations are from the new translation and volume and page references, which are incorporated into the text, are to the French original.

2. For the overall context to Pouchot's memoirs and a sound, historical account of the last years of the French régime in North America, see George F.G. Stanley, *New France: The Last Phase, 1744-1760* (Toronto, 1968).

3. See F. et L. Ravaisson-Mollien, *Archives de la Bastille: documents inédits* (Paris, 1866-1904), xviii, 281, for a letter of 1 February 1762 in which Sartine, the chief of police in Paris responsible for conducting the investigations, explained to a subordinate that Pouchot's whereabouts had been sought in Béziers, Grenoble and Metz to no avail. Sartine had discovered that Pouchot was in Paris but had not yet located his address. Pouchot was able to convince the authorities that he was entirely innocent of any wrongdoing, indeed that his conduct as an officer had been honorable throughout his career.

4. There is a substantial entry on Pouchot by Peter N. Moogk in G. Brown, D. Hayne and F. Halfpenny (eds.), *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (Toronto, 1974), III, 534-537. According to Moogk (p. 537), Pouchot "was a professional soldier whose abilities were superior to those of most officers in the colony" and who "executed his duties with intelligence, zeal and imagination.

5. H.-R. Casgrain, *Guerre du Canada: Relations et journaux de différentes expéditions faites durant les années 1755-56-57-58-59-60* (Québec, 1895), XI, 87-115.

6. See, for example, Brian Leigh Dunnigan, *Siege - 1759: The Campaign Against Niagara* (Youngstown N.Y., 1986).

7. Extracts from the ship's log, or journal, kept by La Force during the crucial period of the siege have been published as an appendix in Arthur G. Doughty (ed.), *The Journal of Captain John Knox* (Toronto, 1914-1916), 3 vols., III, 233-241. It is clear from this account that La Force had no idea of the extent to which he had failed Pouchot—and his country.

8. There exists no comprehensive account of the naval conflicts on the Great Lakes during the Seven Years War.

9. For instance, in the winter of 1759, following the fall of Quebec, Pouchot notes that "wine cost 2,400 livres for a barrel of 240 bottles ... salt 300-400 livres a box, wheat 30-48 livres a bushel weighing 45 pounds, mutton three livres a pound, horsemeat one livre four francs, a beef carcass 400-500 livres, a calf 50-60 livres, a turkey 50 livres, a pair of shoes 30 livres ... A cord of wood which normally cost six livres sold for from 80-100 livres" (II, 156). Comparisons of currency values and prices across time are notoriously difficult. What matters in this instance is the galloping rate of inflation, illustrated by the rise in price of a cord of wood.

10. Two works by major writers that could be cited as evidence of the susceptibility of European literature to the primitive eloquence of the language of North American Indians are Wordsworth's poem "The Complaint of a Forsaken Indian Woman" and Chateaubriand's novel *Atala*. The second stanza of Wordsworth's poem will illustrate his attempt to incorporate into English something of the nature of Indian rhetoric, though Wordsworth was of course concerned, in the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*, to elaborate a more general theory of the renewal of poetic language:

The fire is dead: it knew no pain;
Yet it is dead, and I remain.
All stiff with ice the ashes lie;
And they are dead, and I will die.
When I was well, I wished to live,

For clothes, for warmth, for food and fire;
But they to me no joy can give,
No pleasure now, and no desire.
Then here contented will I lie;
Alone I cannot fear to die.

The continued vogue of poetry and fiction about Indians throughout the nineteenth century and the cult of the western movie in the twentieth require little stress.

11. The word is used advisedly. Despite the huge bibliography of writings in French about the Indians of North America from Jacques Cartier onwards, the public taste for more on the topic seemed insatiable. For a substantial anonymous article on the Iroquois published just prior to the period when Pouchot was composing his memoirs, see "Mémoire sur les coutumes et usages des cinq nations iroquoises du Canada" in *Variétés Littéraires* (Paris, 1768-1769), 4 vols., I, 503-560. For a translation of this text, which was probably written by Captain Pierre-Jacques Payen de Noyan, see Michael Cardy, "The Iroquois in the Eighteenth Century: A Neglected Source," *Man in the Northeast* 38 (1989), 1-20. French discourse about North American Indians continues to fascinate scholars. For a recent and very stimulating collection of essays devoted to the topic, see Gilles Thérien (ed.), *Les Figures de l'Indien* (Montreal, 1988).

12. This was a commonplace of European perceptions of North American Indians. See, for example, Baron de Lahontan, *Dialogues curieux ... et Mémoires de l'Amérique Septentrionale*, publiés par Gilbert Chinard (Baltimore, 1931), p. 145:

The Indians possess extraordinary talents in conducting warfare by surprise, for they have a better knowledge of the tracks of men and animals on grass and leaves than Europeans could have on snow and wet sand. Besides that, they can easily distinguish whether the tracks are old or fresh, as well as the number and species revealed by them. They follow these trails for days on end without losing the scent.

Lahontan, who was also a military man, first published his work in 1703.

13. The latter point is made by Stanley, *op. cit.*, p. 103.
14. It is as well to recall that one notable author writing in the last quarter of the eighteenth century was the marquis de Sade.
15. Pouchot was, of course, right. On the significance of the Iroquois a little later in the century, see Barbara Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution* (Syracuse, 1972).
16. For aspects of the novel in the eighteenth century, see Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel* (London, 1957); Vivienne Mylne, *The Eighteenth-Century French Novel: Techniques of Illusion* (Manchester, 1965); English Showalter Jr., *The Evolution of the French Novel* (Princeton, 1972).
17. Jean-François Marmontel, *Oeuvres Complètes* (Paris, 1818-1820), 19 vols., XIV, 232.
18. Philippe Lejeune, *L'Autobiographie en France* (Paris, 1971), *Le Pacte autobiographique* (Paris, 1975), *Je est un autre* (Paris, 1980); Georges May, *L'Autobiographie* (Paris, 1979).
19. Modern examples of third-person narration in military autobiography are to be found in Charles De Gaulle, *Mémoires de guerre* (Paris, 1959-1960), 3 vols. and William C. Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports* (New York, 1976). It would be wrong to construe the procedure as a *proof* of impartiality, even less as a sign of humility.
20. Livy, *The Early History of Rome*, trans. Aubrey de Sélincourt (Harmondsworth, 1960), pp. 17-18.