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— THE ART OF WAR —

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Painting—Major-General J.H. Roberts, CB, DSO MC, CD (1891-1962)  
Lawren Phillips Harris  
Major-General J.H. Roberts, DSO, MC  
CWM 19710261-3102  
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Major-General John Hamilton “Ham” Roberts was born in the southwestern Manitoba village of Pipestone on 21 December 1891. Educated at Toronto’s Upper Canada College and at the Royal Military College in Kingston, he proved a robust and active student, excelling in sports, particularly football, tennis, shooting and cricket. Upon graduation in 1914 he accepted a commission in the Royal Canadian Artillery and subsequently served with the Canadian Expeditionary Force during the First World War. In 1915 he arrived in Flanders and in 1916, while fighting at the Somme he won the Military Cross for gallantry. In 1918 he was wounded and removed to England to recover and served out the war as an artillery instructor.

Between the wars, Roberts remained active in the Permanent Force as a gunnery instructor. When the Second World War started Roberts was a Lieutenant-Colonel and deployed to Northern France with the 1<sup>st</sup> Field Brigade of the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division. This unit was later reorganized into the 1<sup>st</sup> Field Regiment, RCHA and deployed to France. In what became known as the Battle of France, Robert’s regiment was ordered back to England in a hasty retreat. On the beaches of Dunkirk, Roberts was the only commander in the allied forces to withdraw with all his guns. In the confusion he also returned with 12 Bofors, seven predictors, three Bren gun carriers and a number of technical vehicles.

A month later In England he was promoted Brigadier and was appointed commander of the Royal Artillery, 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division. A year later he was appointed Corps Commander, Royal Artillery, 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Corps, and in April 1942 was promoted Major-General and assumed command of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division.

In August 1942, MGen Roberts was appointed the commander of Operation JUBILEE, which has since become known as the Dieppe Raid. Though he had no part in the planning, he knew that his refusal to accept the appointment would only result in someone else taking his place, and so did his best to make the raid work. From his command post aboard the HMS Calpe, Roberts was under constant heavy fire with only sketchy reports being sent back from the shore. It was only when the troops were recalled to their transports that Roberts began understood how desperate the situation was: almost none of the objectives had been captured and two brigades out of three had been destroyed.

Though he was never officially blamed for the failure of the raid—indeed, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Order and the Croix de Guerre with Palm for his efforts—his removal from command would come in March the next year when he was severely criticized for his tactical weaknesses during Operation SPARTAN, in preparation for the D-Day landings.

A decorated and highly competent officer, MGen Roberts refused to blame others or even speak about the Dieppe Raid, accepting instead to take the whole burden upon his shoulders until the day he died. Major-General Roberts Died at his home in Jersey, the Channel Islands on 17 December 1962.

**About the artist**—The son of Group of Seven artist Lawren S. Harris, Lawren P. Harris trained in Boston at the Museum School of Fine arts and was encouraged to become an official war artist by the Canadian High Commissioner to Great Britain, Vincent Massey. Harris served with the Governor General’s Horse Guards (3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Armoured Reconnaissance Regiment) during the first three years of the Second World War. As a war artist he remained with them in Italy as part of the 5<sup>th</sup> Armoured division during 1944.

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