

## CHAPTER EIGHT: POSTWAR CANADA AND THE WORLD

The situation in the years immediately following World War II was far different than that faced by Canada after the end of the World War I. The massive reconstruction of Europe that began in 1945 created a great demand for Canadian goods in Europe, and the nation would not experience a postwar depression as it had in the decade after 1918. Veterans returned to a booming economy, and they found many employment opportunities in the civilian sector. The government had also instituted a far more comprehensive program for the re-integration of returning soldiers into civilian society.

For the most part, veterans were happy with the provisions of the Veterans Charter. It gave returning veterans a gratuity based upon their years of service. Many veterans took advantage of the program to attend post-secondary institutions, while others were settled on farms or established small businesses. The government provided re-establishment credits that helped veterans purchase homes and furnishings. The enlightened provisions of the Veterans Charter did much to avoid the difficulties that veterans had experienced after the World War I. However, there was one group of returning servicemen who had a very different experience in the war, and their return to Canada was in many ways a far more traumatic event. Thousands of Canadians had been prisoners of war.

### The Prisoner of War Experience

Of the many Canadians who were interned as prisoners of war, those who were taken by the Japanese at Hong Kong suffered most at the hands of their captors.

Many were shot. Disease took a heavy toll because the Japanese refused to provide medical services. Those who were taken to Japan to work in mines were subject to back breaking labour on an inadequate subsistence diet. Of the almost seventeen hundred who were captured in 1941, nearly twenty-five percent would die in captivity.

The poor treatment of prisoners was not a deliberate policy of the Japanese army. It was due primarily to the Japanese soldiers' concept of duty and honour, the code of *bushido*. Allied veterans who served in the Pacific unanimously agree that the Japanese soldier possessed courage to an unbelievable degree, and the men of the Japanese Imperial Army and Navy took the expression "fighting to the death" quite literally. Many Japanese soldiers were astounded by the surrender of allied troops who still had weapons and ammunition, yet had surrendered. They had an attitude of disdain, if not contempt, for such "dishonourable" men.

In western armies, there had been a long-standing tradition of surrendering when troops were in a hopeless situation. In this way, the needless deaths of soldiers were prevented. In Japan, however the tradition of the *samurai* had molded the attitudes of the modern Japanese soldier. To perish in the face of insurmountable odds was not a futile act. Every soldier was prepared to resist as long as he was physically capable and to kill as many enemies as possible. If units ran out of ammunition, they still had bayonets. The horrendous casualties suffered by the Americans in the Pacific war were a result of the fearless tenacity of the Japanese soldier.

In the German camps, the majority of Canadian prisoners were RAF and RCAF airmen, and there were also a considerable number of merchant seamen. Many of the Canadian POWs had been captured at Dieppe, and both Reverend John Foote and Cecil Merritt were informed of their Victoria Cross awards while in captivity. While the physical conditions of the camp were bearable, the long years of imprisonment took a considerable toll on the men. They were overcome by a sense of helplessness while the war continued, and the endless days of boredom and despondency were oppressive.

However, many prisoners decided to wage war in the only way that they could: escape. For many, it was the principal way that they could strike at the enemy. Every enemy soldier that was added to the camp security squads was one less soldier available for combat. Canadians played a major role in the large escape from *Stalag Luft III*, which became well known in books and films as "The Great Escape." The man in charge of the tunnel operations in *Stalag Luft III* was Wally Floody, a Canadian engineer. After most of the escapees were re-

captured, the Gestapo shot six Canadians along with the others who had been apprehended.

There were times when allied actions at the front created serious problems for the POWs. After the Dieppe raid, German officers had found copies of an order that instructed Canadian troops to tie the hands of German prisoners so they could not destroy documents. The Canadian commander General Roberts had opposed the directive but higher authorities insisted upon its inclusion in the battle orders. As a result, the Germans responded by having all British and Canadian POWs bound. Initially they were bound with ropes, then handcuffs, and finally shackles. The British and Canadians responded by shackling German POWs, and it was not until the fall of 1943 that both sides agreed to discontinue the practice after negotiations conducted through the Red Cross.

Generally, the POWs received letters from home, and were allowed to reply, although German authorities read, and at times, edited the letters to and from home.

The prisoners also felt the effects of the allied bombing campaign. While German war industries continued to increase production, there were great hardships endured by the German civilian population. There was widespread shortage of food, and the supply of food to the POWs was affected as well.

Many of the prisoners assigned to camps in eastern Germany were ordered to the west as Soviet troops approached. The Russians subjected the German civilians to harsh treatment, and there was no guarantee that allied prisoners would be safe in Soviet hands. Many Russian prisoners of war had been shot by the advancing Soviet troops as deserters, and

British, American and Canadian POWs may well have met the same fate.

For these POWs, the last weeks of the war were spent in exhausting forced marches westward until their final liberation by western allied armies. For the Canadian POWs returning home, the experience of the war had left scars that no combat soldier could comprehend.

## The Dawning of the Atomic Age

The end of the war had witnessed the debut of a new weapon of unprecedented destructive power, the atomic bomb. In the weeks following the end of the war, the American bomber crews that had dropped the bombs accompanied scientific teams to Hiroshima and Nagasaki as they gathered information regarding the effects of atomic weapons. They were visibly disturbed when they saw the human victims, and even more shaken when scientists told them that the bombs that had been used against Japan were primitive weapons, and far more powerful atomic bombs were already being developed. Albert Einstein declared: “Our technology has surpassed our humanity.”

Atomic research had actually been started before the outbreak of war in 1939. Canadian physicists had discovered how to refine uranium into a fissionable isotope, laying the groundwork for the production of plutonium. By 1942, the British and Canadians had established an atomic research facility at Chalk River. The Eldorado mine in northern Canada supplied the uranium for the Anglo-Canadian project, and would later supply all the uranium used in the Manhattan Project.

The Americans had initiated their own program, and invited the Canadians and British to join the project. Despite the fact that the Anglo-Canadian team had already constructed a large research facility in Canada, the Americans insisted that the Project should be located in the United States for reasons of security. Subsequent events would indicate that the American security was breached relatively early in the program. A member of the technical crew responsible for machining bomb components and the final assembly of the atomic bomb was in fact a Soviet agent who passed on a significant amount of technical data to the Soviet Union. Furthermore, the activities of Soviet agents as early as 1942 indicated that the Soviet Union already regarded the allies as potential enemies.

The Manhattan Project completely altered the nature of any future conflict. With conventional weapons, war had taken on an extremely destructive nature. The damage to the economic infrastructure of a nation was crippling, and the civilian casualties had reached alarming levels. But the destructive capabilities of conventional weapons were minimal compared to those of atomic bombs. In addition, the long-term effects of radiation on the population and environment were staggering. War had evolved to a state bordering on madness.

## The Beginning of the Cold War

The first shots in the “cold war” were fired at Yalta in February of 1945. At the summit, Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin wrangled over the future of Europe and the respective spheres of influence. Stalin was reluctant to relinquish the Soviet hold on eastern Europe, but eventually conceded to American and British de-

mands that democratic elections would be held in all the areas occupied by allied troops.

When the allied leaders met again at Potsdam at the end of July, the differences became even more evident (President Roosevelt had died and been succeeded by Vice-President Harry Truman). There were disagreements over the Polish borders and which Polish government would be the “official” one.<sup>1</sup> There was also a considerable difference of opinion over the future of Germany; the Soviets rejected any proposal that would result in the unification of occupied Germany.

When elections were held in Eastern Europe, the Red Army suppressed any political parties that opposed the Communists, and in the ensuing elections the Communists won easily. One of the first acts of these communist administrations was to “invite” the Red Army to remain and provide security for the new regimes. In Germany, attempts to cut off western allied troops in Berlin from West Germany were countered with the Berlin Airlift, and thousands of tons of supplies were delivered to the allied troops and Berlin civilians.

In Canada on 5 September 1945, the defection Igor Gouzenko, a clerk in the Soviet embassy, resulted in the exposure of extensive Soviet spy activity in Canada. Evidence gathered by the RCMP indicated that the Soviets had

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<sup>1</sup> The 1939 Polish government had continued as a “government-in-exile” in Britain, while the Polish Communist Party had established a rival administration, the “Lublin” government. When pro-western forces fought the Germans in the Warsaw Uprising, the Red Army had not intervened, although it was only across the river from the Polish forces. Its inaction allowed the German forces to crush the uprising.

infiltrated the National Research Council, the External Affairs Department, the Munitions Department, the British High Commission as well as the armed forces and atomic energy research programs. Many historians feel that this incident was the real beginning of the Cold War.

When the Soviets detonated their first atomic bomb, the cold war entered a new phase. Any strategic advantage that the United States had possessed would soon be nullified, and the potential existed for a war that would be as devastating for the victor as for the vanquished. By sheer necessity, any conflict must stop short of open hostilities. The Americans and Soviets would wage an ideological campaign, and in subsequent years would fight by proxy,<sup>2</sup> in the Middle East, Latin America and other areas, forces armed by the Soviets and Americans would confront each other in bloody conflicts.

## Canada and the Cold War

While Canada had demobilized a significant portion of its armed forces, the Soviet Union and the United States had not appreciably reduced their military strength.

At the end of the war, the Soviet armed forces had twelve million men under arms, and a substantial portion of the Red Army occupied Eastern Europe. With the rapid deterioration of relations between the Soviet Union and the western powers, the Soviet presence in Europe was regarded as a real threat to the security of western European nations.

In August 1947, Escott Reid of the Canadian External Affairs department proposed the

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<sup>2</sup> Using a substitute to act in place of another party.

## Window on War: The Cold War Begins Ottawa: 5 September 1945

On the evening of 5 September, Igor Gouzenko walked out of the Soviet embassy vowing never to return. The cipher clerk was careful that no one had seen him slip dozens of documents under his shirt, and he made certain that there were no obvious bulges when he put on his coat. Thirty minutes later, he was in his apartment. His wife was relieved to see him come in the door, as she was well aware of what Igor was planning.

The papers that Gouzenko had spirited out of the Soviet Embassy contained evidence of a widespread Soviet spy network in the Canadian government. The only embassy staff members permitted access to the documents were the chauffeur and the doorman; both were Red Army Intelligence officers and aides for the Soviet Military Attaché, Colonel Nicholai Zabolin.

Gouzenko wasn't exactly sure what to do with the documents, and after much deliberation decided to go to the *Ottawa Journal*. Much to his amazement and fright, the senior night editor expressed no interest in Gouzenko's story and suggested that the clerk should talk to the RCMP. He did just that, asking for the Minister of Justice and adding that the matter was urgent. The constable on duty told him to come back in the morning.

When Igor Gouzenko returned the next day, he was told that the minister was unable to see him.

Exasperated, Igor went to the *Ottawa Journal* a second time. There was a somewhat more sympathetic response to his story, but the staff told him that there was little they could do. One reporter told him: "Nobody wants to say anything but nice things about Stalin these days."

The Gouzenkos went to the RCMP again, as well as the Crown Attorney's office, and finally another newspaper. No response. They returned to their apartment tired and despondent, and had barely shut the door when a loud knock echoed through the apartment. Someone called "Gouzenko," and Igor immediately recognized the voice of Lieutenant Lavrentiev, the "chauffeur." The Gouzenkos did not answer, and as soon as they heard Lavrentiev leave, rushed to their neighbour, an RCAF sergeant.

He listened to their story and had some difficulty believing it, but he agreed to help. He called the city police and convinced them to watch the apartment building for the rest of the night. Shortly after midnight, a squad from the Soviet Embassy broke into the Gouzenko apartment, and was promptly arrested by the Ottawa constables. That convinced the RCMP that there was something to Igor Gouzenko's story, and they immediately put him under their protection.

formation of a collective security organization for Western Europe. The Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs, Louis St. Laurent, and his deputy minister, Lester Pearson, wholeheartedly endorsed the idea, and the American government supported the initiative. In 1949, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization was established.

It allowed the member nations to protect their individual sovereignty without being faced with the enormous expense of maintaining a large military force.

For Canada, it was a radical change from its pre-war foreign policy of isolationism and non-involvement. The traditional goal of Canadian foreign policy had been independence. Initially, it had been aimed at advancing Canadian interests in the context of the British Empire. Once Canada had gained full autonomy from Britain, it refused to have its freedom of action compromised by its membership in the League of Nations. With the formation of NATO, Canada committed itself to a more active role in international affairs.

NATO was essential in the establishment of collective security because it was evident that the United Nations was severely limited in its actions by the structure and composition of the Security Council. According to the UN charter, the Security Council must approve any military action taken to enforce collective security. The five permanent members of the Council, Britain, France, the United States, the Soviet Union and China,<sup>3</sup> had the power to

<sup>3</sup> In 1945, China was represented by Chiang Kai-shek's administration. The Communist government of Mao Zedong, which took control of Mainland China in 1949, was not recognized by the United States.

veto any proposed action. As a result, the UN was rendered powerless if any proposal threatened the interests of one of the permanent members of the Security Council. The UN was able to act in Korea only because the Soviet Union was absent from the Council when the vote was taken to authorize UN military intervention.<sup>4</sup>

In 1950, the Soviet Union responded to the creation of NATO with the formation of the Warsaw Pact, which included the Soviet Union and its eastern European satellites.

While the Americans regarded NATO as an organization to maintain the security of Western Europe, the Soviets viewed it as part of a policy of encirclement, and NATO was seen as an offensive alliance aimed at the Soviets. As a result, both maintained a substantial military force in Europe.

In addition to NATO, Canada also became closely tied to the United States in matters concerning the security of North America. In the decade after the war, three lines of radar installations were constructed, the Pine Tree Line, the Mid-Canada Line and the DEW (Distant Early Warning) line. These were designed to provide warning of an attack by long-range Soviet bombers over the arctic. The development of Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs) considerably reduced the potential effectiveness of these warning systems. In 1958, the Canadian and American air forces became more closely linked with the establishment of NORAD (North American

<sup>4</sup> The Soviet Union was boycotting the Security Council because of the UN's refusal to assign China's seat on the Security Council to the new Communist government in China.

Air Defence). However, the first confrontation between the West and Communism would take place in Korea under the auspices of the United Nations.

### The Korean Conflict

At the Yalta conference in February 1945, Korea had been included in the Soviet zone of influence in return for Soviet participation in the war against Japan. However, Stalin was slow to act, and it was not until the United States had dropped the second atomic bomb on Nagasaki that the Soviets took military action against the Japanese. They quickly overran Manchuria, and were poised to enter the Korean peninsula when the Japanese government surrendered.

The Americans proposed that the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel be designated as a line of demarcation between the Soviet and American zones of occupation, and Stalin accepted the proposal. While the Soviets advocated the establishment of a Communist regime in Korea under the leadership of Kim Il Sung, the United States supported Syngman Rhee.

Both nations began to pour troops into the Korean peninsula, and the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel was solidifying into a fixed boundary.

The Americans felt that if the UN could deal with the situation, there was a possibility that a solution acceptable to the Soviets could be formulated, and both the U.S.S.R. and the U.S. could withdraw their forces. The United Nations General Assembly established the United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea (UNTCOK) to supervise free elections in the entire country and oversee the withdrawal of Soviet and American troops. But the U.S.S.R. refused to recognize the UN commission on the grounds that Korea was not a

member of the United Nations, and therefore the UN had no jurisdiction. As a result, Syngman Rhee was elected as President in South Korea in 1948 while the Soviets established a Communist government in the North.

In December of that year, the Americans began to withdraw troops from the south, and, while the Soviets followed suit, Stalin supplied the new communist regime in North Korea with hundreds of Soviet military advisors, pilots and vast amounts of military equipment. Syngman Rhee was disappointed with the American withdrawal because there had been no additional provisions made for military aid, and the Republic of Korea (ROK) was left extremely vulnerable should North Korea decide to take any military action against the South.

Canada had been selected as one of the eight member countries of UNTCOK, and Mackenzie King had been reluctant to approve of Canada's participation because of the Soviet Union's refusal to recognize the UN mission. He feared that Canada might be obligated to send troops to Korea to enforce UN decisions. However Louis St. Laurent, Secretary of State for External Affairs, insisted that Canada must assume a more prominent role in international affairs and threatened to resign if King did not support Canada's participation in UNTCOK. When it became clear that the majority of the cabinet shared St Laurent's view, King relented. As subsequent events would show, King was correct in his assessment.

As early as 1949, Kim Il Sung had indicated to Stalin that he planned to take military action against South Korea. In his words he would "prod South Korea with the point of a bayonet" and this would spark a popular uprising against the ROK government in which "the power of the people would prevail."

Following discussions with Mao Zedong, Stalin did nothing to dissuade the North Korean leader, although he did insist that Soviet advisors be withdrawn from North Korea so there would be no evidence of Soviet complicity in the “liberation” of South Korea.

On 25 June 1950, the North Korean army attacked. Only five days earlier, American officials had publicly dismissed the possibility on any North Korean invasion. On 26 June, the UN called for the withdrawal of North Korean forces, and the following day passed a resolution to support the ROK with military action. Within four days, Communist forces had taken Seoul and continued to advance southward. The well-armed North Korean Army easily swept aside ROK forces, and it was not until 5 July that the first substantial numbers of American troops were deployed. A unified UN command was established under the American General Douglas MacArthur on 7 July. However, the UN forces were pushed steadily southward and by September 10 only a small area around Pusan in the southeast corner of the Korean peninsula was still in UN hands.

On 15 September, MacArthur executed a daring counterstroke. The UN forces landed at Inchon, and the next day a counteroffensive was launched from the Pusan sector. The North Korean army was completely surprised by MacArthur’s offensive, and soon their army was streaming northward in chaos. A second landing was carried out at Wonsan and by early November, the American led forces were approaching the Yalu River and the Chinese-Korean border.

The Communist Chinese government became alarmed at the developments in Korea, and on

26 November, Chinese troops poured across the border into North Korea.

The American and UN troops were routed. Several units were encircled and had to be evacuated by sea. By the last week of January, the Chinese had retaken Seoul, and the UN forces had managed to re-establish defensive positions fifty kilometers south of the ROK capital. Once UN reinforcements arrived, a series of offensives and counteroffensives ensued, and eventually the respective positions of the opposing forces approximated the 1949 boundary along the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel. On 27 July 1953 an armistice was signed and the UN’s “police action” was at an end.

### Canadians in Korea

When hostilities first broke out, Canada announced that the destroyers HMCS *Cayuga*, *Athabaskan* and *Sioux* would be dispatched to the area, and Lester B. Pearson insisted that it was “no mere token” force.<sup>5</sup> On 14 July, the UN Secretary General requested fifty-three member states to contribute ground forces. Five days later, Prime Minister St. Laurent<sup>6</sup> issued a statement to the press indicating that the situation did not warrant the sending of Canadian troops. In reality, the Canadian armed forces were in no position to make a contribution because its numbers had been reduced drastically after the end of World War II. There were less than thirty thousand men and women in all three branches of the armed forces by 1950.

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<sup>5</sup> One U.S. State Department official commented: “Okay, let’s call it three tokens.”

<sup>6</sup> Louis St. Laurent had succeeded King as Prime Minister late in 1948. King would die on 22 July 1950.

The British and Australians announced that they would be committing troops to Korea, and the Americans formally requested that the Canadians send a brigade as well. The fact that St. Laurent had consistently stressed the importance of collective security only added to the international pressure that was being exerted on Ottawa to make a meaningful commitment to the UN police action. On 7 August, St. Laurent announced that a Canadian brigade would be raised and dispatched to Korea.

The Canadian Army Special Force (CASF)<sup>7</sup> was formed around a core of three regiments, the PPCLI, the Royal Canadian Regiment, and the Royal 22<sup>nd</sup>. There was an immediate flood of volunteers to join the CASF. While volunteers went through basic training, the established regiments were sent overseas. The PPCLI were the first to arrive and take up positions along the Pusan perimeter. After the spectacular success of the Inchon landings and UN offensive, it appeared as if the Korean conflict was almost over.

There was no hurry to ready the recruits for combat, and it wasn't until late November that the first units began to reach South Korea. By the time the rest of the reinforcements had arrived, the Chinese offensive was about to begin, and any illusions about a brief war would soon be dispelled.

The Royal Canadian Navy had provided fire support for the Inchon landings, but it was during the Chinese offensive that it was to provide a far more vital role in UN operations. On 4 December, Captain Jeffrey Brock received orders to take his destroyers to

Chinnampo to cover the U.S. Navy transports as they evacuated American troops. The estuary that led to the city was a maze of narrow channels and dangerous shoals. The route was even more hazardous because the North Koreans had mined the waters. Regardless, Brock managed to negotiate the route and the *Cayuga* arrived at Chinnampo in the early hours of 5 December. The rest of his force followed him, and by noon the evacuation was well underway. Late in the afternoon, as the last troop transport pulled away from the docks, the Canadian destroyers turned their guns on the harbour, demolishing docks, warehouses and anything else that might be of use to the Chinese army.

Although the front had begun to stabilize by the third week of April 1951, the Chinese troops were determined to launch one more massive assault in an effort to push the UN forces back. On 24 April, near Kapyong, the Chinese focused their efforts on the British Commonwealth Brigade, consisting of the Royal Australian Regiment (Hill 504) and the PPCLI (Hill 677). The furious fighting raged for two days, and the Chinese threatened to overwhelm the Brigade by sheer weight of numbers. Grenades and automatic weapons were used at point blank range. The Australians managed to withdraw intact on that day. In the early hours of the 25 April, one platoon of the PPCLI was cut off and hordes of Chinese threatened to annihilate the battalion. In the pre-dawn light, Captain Mills made a daring decision. He ordered his men to take cover in their foxholes and called for artillery fire on his own position. The exploding shrapnel shells devastated the Chinese ranks while the Canadian troops were protected. As the sun rose, the regiment was out of supplies and still isolated, but it had held hill 677.

<sup>7</sup> The CASF was renamed the 25th Canadian Infantry Brigade.

Later that morning, American planes dropped much-needed ammunition and food to the Canadians.

The PPCLI defence of Hill 677 had been crucial, as it had covered American units as they withdrew and established stronger defensive positions. The dogged resistance of the RAR and PPCLI had taken the momentum away from the Chinese, and by the end of April their offensive had ground to a halt. Truman issued Presidential Unit Citations to the RAR and PPCLI; and the PPCLI is the only Canadian unit ever to have been awarded this distinction.

In July, the UN forces prepared for a push northward and the Commonwealth Brigade spearheaded the advance. By September the Commonwealth Brigade had crossed the 38<sup>th</sup>

parallel and launched operation Commando. Between 11 September and 5 October, the British, Canadians and Australians ousted the Chinese 192<sup>nd</sup> Division from its defences along the Imjin River. As the month wore on, Commonwealth and American troops dug in along the new defensive line. By the end of the October, the Royal Canadian Regiment, the Royal 22<sup>nd</sup>, and the PPCLI were deployed on hills 187 and 355.

The Chinese attacked the position with massive forces on 2 November. It was the beginning of a month-long offensive aimed at pushing the UN forces back. The Chinese were well-equipped and supported with self-propelled artillery and Katyusha rocket batteries. In the face of unrelenting assaults the Americans pulled back but the Royal 22<sup>nd</sup> continued



National Archives of Canada (PA-114890, photo by Bill Olson).

**Korea April 1951:**

Major Flint of the 2nd Battalion of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry and his officers plan their defensive alignment.

to hold, as did the RCR and PPCLI. Several times the Chinese almost engulfed the Canadians, but the grim and determined resistance of the Canadian regiments had prevailed. When the attacks had finally subsided, the UN positions were secure.

When 1951 drew to a close, the UN forces had managed to thwart all attempts to push them south of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, and, until the end of hostilities, the front would remain essentially unchanged. The Canadian contribution to the UN force was small in comparison to the American contingent sent to Korea, but they had played a major role in the success of the operations.

For the western powers, the Korean conflict was seen as the first serious confrontation with the Communists. There had been the widespread feeling that the Soviets were behind North Korea's actions, and the intervention of Communist China confirmed fears in the west of a growing Communist menace. The activities of insurgents in French Indochina and Malaysia were seen as further evidence of Communist aggression.

## Canada and NATO

The creation of NATO and the Korean conflict had resulted in a significant increase in the quality and quantity of the Canadian armed forces from 1950 to 1960.

In 1951, plans were announced for Canadian rearmament. They included an increase in RCN combat vessels to one hundred, forty RCAF squadrons and a full army division. Canadian bases would be made available for the training of NATO pilots, a proposal reminiscent of the BCATP. By 1953, the Canadian Armed forces had expanded to

over one hundred thousand men and women, and the defence budget was ten times the 1947 level.

The Canadian forces were equipped with modern conventional weapons and maintained several bases in Europe. Although the Soviets had a considerable advantage of manpower and weaponry over the NATO forces in Europe, the American nuclear arsenal provided the ultimate deterrent to Soviet aggression in Europe. However, increased Canadian involvement in UN peacekeeping operations began to put a strain on Canadian military resources.

In addition, the Canadian government had started to make considerable reductions in defence spending. The size of Canada's armed forces began to dwindle, and successive governments were reluctant to spend the capital needed to provide the latest equipment for the army, air force and navy. The unification of the armed forces in 1968 was essentially a cost-cutting measure. Canadians were beginning to regard the armed forces role as primarily peacekeepers, and politicians seriously questioned Canada's continued membership in NATO. By 1975, Canada's armed forces were under strength and poorly equipped. The Canadian contingent in Europe had steadily decreased, and participated in NATO exercises with obsolete tanks and aircraft. When Mikhail Gorbachev assumed the leadership of the Soviet Union, the Cold War appeared to have ended. Although the Canadian government undertook to re-equip the armed forces with CF-18 fighters, little else was done to upgrade the military.

## The United Nations and Peacekeeping

While the Korean conflict could be regarded as a victory for the United Nations, it must be noted that UN intervention had only been possible because the Soviets had been absent from the Security Council. Elsewhere, wars were being waged, and the UN was unable to back any resolutions with military action. Invariably, the wars involved communist insurgents against colonial governments or regimes supported by the United States. The veto power of the five permanent members effectively rendered the UN powerless to enforce collective security.<sup>8</sup>

However, many of the UN delegates realized that if the Soviet Union had been present in the Security Council when the Korean resolution was presented, it would have used its veto to stop UN intervention. In November of 1950, a “Uniting for Peace” resolution was passed. It stipulated that the responsibility for collective security would be transferred to the General Assembly if a Security Council initiative was blocked by veto. What Lester Pearson had called the “irresponsible and unprincipled use of the veto” could be legally circumvented by members of the General Assembly.

The United Nations had established international forces to supervise and observe in areas of dispute. By 1954, Canadian troops had participated in observation groups and truce supervision missions in Southeast Asia and the Middle East. In 1956, the Suez crisis created a situation that was beyond the scope of UNTSO (United Nations Truce Supervision

<sup>8</sup> The Soviet Union and the United States made the most liberal use of their veto powers.

Organization). Canada’s Lester B. Pearson was to play an instrumental role in redefining the role of the United Nations in international disputes.

### The Suez Crisis

In 1956, the Egyptian President, Gamal Abdul Nasser, nationalized the Suez Canal. The British and French jointly owned the canal, which was vital for shipments of oil to Western Europe. In October, French, British and Israeli forces moved to regain control of the canal. The British and French presented the Egyptian government with an ultimatum that would require Egypt to accept temporary occupation of Port Said, Suez and Ismailia. When Nasser refused, the Israelis defeated Nasser’s army while the French and British conducted sea and air operations that eliminated the Egyptian Air Force.

The Anglo-French-Israeli action was condemned by other western powers, and the United States introduced a motion in the Security Council to demand an immediate Israeli withdrawal. The British and French vetoed the motion, and the Uniting for Peace resolution was first used. The French and British vetoes were overridden by the General Assembly. Pearson used the opportunity to unveil his plan for the creation of a United Nations peacekeeping force.

The fighting continued, but now the French and British were demanding a UN force before any ceasefire would be considered. There were several obstacles to overcome before Pearson’s proposal could become a reality. The Soviet Union threatened to use nuclear weapons against the aggressors, and then proposed that a joint Soviet-American force be used to stop the “aggression” against Egypt. Clearly, any troops that were included in the proposed



United Nations (UN 126967).

**Cyprus, 1964:**

Canadian peacekeepers patrol the area between Greek and Turkish Cypriot settlements in armoured personnel carriers.

force could not come from any of the belligerents or nations that had a vested interest in the conflict.

Pearson tirelessly worked to provide a solution that would be acceptable to all parties and approved by the General Assembly. The UN force would be under the control of the Secretary-General. Members of the Security Council would not be permitted to contribute troops, and Egypt must agree before the UN force could be deployed on Egyptian territory. Pearson managed to create a politically neutral force and establish a mechanism for collective security. It was only logical that the duties of the United Nations Emergency Force would

be assumed first by Canadian troops. Fortunately, the recent expansion of the Canadian armed forces to meet NATO commitments enabled Canada to make an immediate contribution to the United Nations Emergency Force.

Since the creation of the first peacekeeping force, Canada has played a role in virtually every UN operation since it first sent observers to the India-Pakistan border in 1949:

## United Nations: Canadian Participation

UN Military Observer Group India-Pakistan:	1949
UN Truce Supervision Middle East:	1954
International Commission for Supervision and Control	
a.    Cambodia:	1954-69
b.    Laos:	1954-74
c.    Vietnam:	1954-73
UN Emergency Force I:	1956-67
UN Observation Group Lebanon:	1958
Belgian Congo:	1960-64
UN Security Force New Guinea:	1962-63
UN Observation Mission Yemen:	1963-64
Cyprus:	1964–1993
UN India-Pakistan Observation Mission:	1965-66
Dominican Republic:	1965-66
International Observer Team Nigeria:	1968-69
UN Emergency Force II Middle East:	1973-79
UN Interim Force Lebanon:	1974
UN Disengagement Observer Force Middle East:	1974
Multinational Force and Observers Middle East:	1986
UN Good Offices Mission Pakistan-Afghanistan:	1988-90
UN Iran-Iraq Military Observer Group:	1988
UN Observer Group Central America:	1989-90
Desert Shield and Desert Storm:	1990-91
UN Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission:	1991-
UN Protection Force Yugoslavia:	1992-

Peacekeeping in many ways proved to be far more demanding upon troops than participation in combat. Soldiers were required to exercise restraint and maintain an emotional detachment that would allow them to fulfill their role without prejudice. Many experienced the stress of witnessing violent and even murderous acts without having the authority to take overt action. Yet Canadian troops seemed to have developed particular skills that have made them invaluable in a peacekeeping role. They have consistently and successfully dealt with potentially explosive situations and at the same time earned the trust and respect of all parties.

However, as the 21<sup>st</sup> century dawns, armed confrontations throughout the world have not diminished. The Balkan area is no less volatile than it was before World War I, and Serbian nationalism has once again destabilized south-eastern Europe.

Hostilities have escalated to alarming levels as ethnic and religious minorities have sought to break away in the Philippines, Indonesia and Ceylon. In Africa, war has become almost endemic in many areas, and even children have become combatants.

The long-standing hostilities between India and Pakistan have assumed an ominous new charac-



United Nations (UN 79799).

**Peacekeeping in the Congo, 1963:**

A Canadian peacekeeper contacts headquarters while monitoring a cease-fire.

ter as both nations have recently developed nuclear weapons.

It has become clear that the success of future peacekeeping operations will depend upon a substantial military presence, and that peacekeeping forces must be well equipped and deployed in sufficient numbers to deal with any situation. While the Canadian government continues to commit troops to UN operations, it has done little to ensure that Canadian units have the men and resources to be effective peacekeepers. The Canadian contribution to the UN forces in the Gulf War was a clear indication of how unprepared Canadian forces are for any large scale and potentially dangerous UN missions. ■

## Chapter Summary

The period after World War II has been one of dramatic transition for the Canadian military. The more active involvement of Canada in international affairs has had a great effect upon the armed forces. The Korean action continued the tradition of combat excellence, and the formation of NATO represented an initial commitment by Canada to take a more active role in collective security.

Yet by 1960, Canada had assumed the mantle of peacekeeper, and successive Canadian governments did not maintain the armed forces that would allow Canada to continue its full commitment to NATO. The end of the Cold War has done much to reinforce that attitude. But the years of neglect are beginning to create serious problems. Canadian peacekeepers are being placed in positions where the hostile

parties are better armed and equipped than they are. Even in the role of peacekeeping, the enforcement of any ceasefire or peace agreement is ultimately dependent upon superior military strength.

Ironically, for the first half of the twentieth century, Canada struggled to chart an independent course in foreign affairs. Laurier, Borden and Mackenzie King had all attempted to pursue Canadian interests and an independent foreign policy. Yet in the years following World War II, Canada has become heavily involved in international affairs. At the same time, Canadian security has come to depend upon the military might of the United States to a great extent, and Canadian foreign policy has for the most part reflected this dependence.

## Chapter Review

1. How did the experience of prisoners of war differ from those of combat troops?
2. What were the implications of the Gouzenko affair?
3. What were the factors that led to the creation of NATO?
4. How did the structure of the Security Council affect the ability of the United Nations to enforce collective security?
5. Outline the events that precipitated the Korean conflict.
6. What were the contributions of the following to the UN Operations in Korea?
  - a. The 25<sup>th</sup> Canadian Brigade
  - b. The Royal Canadian Navy
7.
  - a. Why was the “Uniting for Peace” resolution passed in 1950?
  - b. What was the significance of the “Uniting for Peace” resolution? in the Suez crisis?
8. What was Lester B. Pearson’s role in the establishment of a UN Peacekeeping Force?

## Critical Thinking

### Research

Prepare a brief report on one of the following:

The Avro Arrow

The Cyprus Peacekeeping Mission

The Cuban Missile Crisis

### Evaluating an Opinion

*“The United Nations has only taken decisive action when the economic interests of the major powers have been threatened.”*

Comment on the validity of this statement with a view to UN policies from 1985 to the present.